Emotions of Captivity : Australian Airmen Prisoners of Stalag Luft III and their Families

Author:
Alexander, Kristen

Publication Date:
2020

DOI:
https://doi.org/10.26190/unsworks/2194

Emotions of Captivity: Australian Airmen Prisoners of Stalag Luft III and their Families

Kristen Margaret Alexander

A thesis in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Humanities and Social Sciences
University of New South Wales, Canberra
June 2020

UNSW SYDNEY | Australia's Global University

Thesis/Dissertation Sheet

Surname/Family Name	:	**Alexander**
Given Name/s	:	**Kristen Margaret**
Abbreviation for degree as give in the University calendar	:	**PhD**
Faculty	:	**UNSW Canberra at ADFA**
School	:	**Humanities and Social Sciences**
Thesis Title	:	**Emotions of Captivity: Australian Airmen Prisoners of Stalag Luft III and their Families**

Abstract

This thesis analyses the captivity experience of Australian airmen prisoners of war and their loved ones from capture until death. It explores their emotions, motivation, memory, and accounts of captivity, as well as the affective aspects of agency, community, altruism, duty, identity, resilience, relationships, masculinity, prison camp domesticity, faith, grief, and death. Many of these, as historian Stephen Garton notes, are central themes in contemporary social and cultural scholarship.(1) This thesis, however, is the first scholarly work to examine through a cultural lens, within the context of history of the emotions, the experience of and responses to captivity of Australian Second World War prisoners of Germany and Italy and their families.

In addition to autobiographical evidence which narrates lives and reveals traces of intimate and public responses to captivity, this thesis draws on medical evidence which depicts post-war psychological, emotional, and moral responses. In particular, it features testimony contained in confidential medical records compiled by the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

The Australian airmen of Stalag Luft III did not passively accept captivity. They exerted personal and collective agency to actively manage and mitigate the strains of confinement, including threats to their martial masculinity. Even as they maintained their air force identity in the barbed-wire battleground, the airmen reinforced their emotional and romantic links to home. Through their loving and sexual agency, wives, fiancées and sweethearts forged a firm role in captive lives and laid the foundation for their romantic futures. Captivity did not end at liberation. Many former prisoners of war faced physical, psychological, emotional, and moral challenges. As they had done in captivity, they actively attempted to overcome them, either through personal agency or familial support. They also tried to make sense of their experiences. Loved ones, too, bore the legacy of captivity. Some effects were intergenerational.

This thesis is an original and significant contribution to Australian and international captivity studies, Australian air force history, Australian post-war social and medical and psychological history, and moral injury enquiry. It allows for a deeper and more nuanced understanding of wartime captivity and its legacy.

1. Garton, *The Cost of War*, p. vii.

ORIGINALITY STATEMENT

'I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and to the best of my knowledge it contains no materials previously published or written by another person, or substantial proportions of material which have been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at UNSW or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the thesis. Any contribution made to the research by others, with whom I have worked at UNSW or elsewhere, is explicitly acknowledged in the thesis. I also declare that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work, except to the extent that assistance from others in the project's design and conception or in style, presentation and linguistic expression is acknowledged.'

Signed .....

Date .....

UNSW SYDNEY | Australia's Global University

INCLUSION OF PUBLICATIONS STATEMENT

UNSW is supportive of candidates publishing their research results during their candidature as detailed in the UNSW Thesis Examination Procedure.

Publications can be used in their thesis in lieu of a Chapter if:

- The candidate contributed greater than 50% of the content in the publication and is the "primary author", ie. the candidate was responsible primarily for the planning, execution and preparation of the work for publication
- The candidate has approval to include the publication in their thesis in lieu of a Chapter from their supervisor and Postgraduate Coordinator.
- The publication is not subject to any obligations or contractual agreements with a third party that would constrain its inclusion in the thesis

Please indicate whether this thesis contains published material or not:

☐ This thesis contains no publications, either published or submitted for publication
(if this box is checked, you may delete all the material on page 2)

☒ Some of the work described in this thesis has been published and it has been documented in the relevant Chapters with acknowledgement
(if this box is checked, you may delete all the material on page 2)

☐ This thesis has publications (either published or submitted for publication) incorporated into it in lieu of a chapter and the details are presented below

CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I declare that:

- I have complied with the UNSW Thesis Examination Procedure
- where I have used a publication in lieu of a Chapter, the listed publication(s) below meet(s) the requirements to be included in the thesis.

Candidate's Name	Signature	Date (dd/mm/yy)

Thesis publications and presentations

Publications

- '"For you the war is (not) over": Active disruption in the barbed wire battleground', *From Balloons to Drones*, 18 December 2017, <https://balloonstodrones.com/2017/12/18/for-you-the-war-is-not-over-active-disruption-in-the-barbed-wire-battleground/>.

Presentations

- '"For you the war is (not) over": airmen prisoners of war in the barbed wire battleground', Aviation Cultures Mk III, University of Sydney, April 2017.
- '"For you the war is (not) over": airmen prisoners of war in the barbed wire battleground', Don't Drown Postgraduate Conference, UNSW Canberra, October 2017.
- '"I miss you terribly darling": the sexual and emotional challenges of captivity', HASS War and Society Seminar, UNSW Canberra, May 2018.
- 'Active disruption in a disruptive world: the "naughty boys" in the barbed wire battleground', Sir James Rowland Air Power Seminar Series—Air Power in a Disruptive World, UNSW Canberra, May 2018.
- '"Touched the face of God": faith and airmen prisoners of war', Australian Historical Association Scale of History Conference, Australian National University, July 2018.

- ‘“Almost round the bloody bend”: Australian airmen and the psychological challenges of captivity’, HASS Postgraduate Symposium, UNSW Canberra, October 2018.
- ‘“My nervous condition has been getting increasingly worse”: Australian airmen and the psychological challenges of captivity’, Aviation Cultures Mk IV, University of Sydney, November 2018.
- ‘“War wounds of the spirit”: guilt, grief, PTSD, and moral injury. Remembering and interpreting wartime experiences’, Heritage of the Air Conference, Australian National University, November 2019.

BLANK PAGE

Contents

Acknowledgements

For over a decade I had written about the experiences of Australian pilots. Biography was my genre of choice, and I ranged from the transcontinental flying career of a notable aviatrix of the 1930s, through the Battle of Britain, the Western Desert, Darwin's skies, the Southwest Pacific Area, and the fjords of Norway. All of my subjects were imbued with the sheer joy of flying. Their careers, ultimately, were stopped by death, war's end, or old age. Even as they accepted that their flying days were over, the survivors felt a sense of regret that they no longer 'danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings'.[1] Recognising their deep, visceral connection to flight, I wondered how they would have coped if they could not fly—if they had been grounded not through illness, death, or choice, but because of captivity.

I decided Stalag Luft III and the Great Escape would provide an exciting basis for a group biography. The families of Albert Hake, Reginald Kierath, and Thomas Leigh supported the idea but fascinating evidence from family archives not connected to the Escape also came my way. There were too many 'names' for a group biography and the more I researched, the more I realised the Great Escape was not representative of Stalag Luft III's captivity experience. I couldn't write the book I had originally intended and did not have the skills to write an analytical survey which, as the evidence I had gathered suggested, was warranted. I did not know what to do.

In October 2014, I attended a friend's book launch. So too, did Michael McKernan. After the usual pleasantries, he asked how the book was going.

[1] John Gillespie Magee, 'High Flight'.

I'd known Michael for many years and so blurted that I had stalled, and explained why. 'Have you ever considered doing a PhD?', he asked. I had not. But by the time I'd walked back to the bus stop after the function, I had. Before the day was out, I had contacted Peter Stanley, who for many years had been my unofficial mentor, for advice. Six months later, with Peter as my principal supervisor and Michael my co-supervisor, I began my candidature at UNSW Canberra.

I have intellectually blossomed under Peter's and Michael's benevolent supervision which allowed me the opportunity to wander down research paths which did not take me where I wanted to go, and paths where, almost incredibly, pots of gold were hidden. In some instances, they shoved me kicking and screaming down tracks I had no intention of exploring. I have benefited much from their collective knowledge, inspired suggestions, and constructive criticism. This thesis would not be what it is without them. Although not an official supervisor, Eleanor Hancock adopted a *pro tem* role during Peter's absences overseas. Her illuminating comments and practical mentorship (as *pro tem* and my 'boss' on the *War & Society* journal) are reflected in this thesis. All three also provided wise counsel and support during some difficult personal times. Thank you Peter, Michael, and Eleanor.

UNSW Canberra has provided immeasurable assistance. I especially thank Bernadette McDermott for her friendship and photocopying, the 'Bernadette courier service', and so much support during the last five years, particularly in the lead up to submission. My thanks, too, to Vera Berra, for her help sorting out admin problems over the years, and especially towards the end of my candidature. I would not have been able to conduct interstate

research or present conference papers without grants from the HASS Postgraduate Research Fund and the Andrew Dennis Travel Fund. I am also grateful for the support I received from the Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship through its Tuition Fee Offset scholarship.

Two of this thesis' themes are altruism and community and I have been blessed by the selfless kindness of the historian community. Kate Ariotti, Clare Makepeace, Kerry Neale, and Aaron Pegram all shared their embargoed theses. John Broom found me via a Twitter post and graciously offered me his as well. Rob Boddice emailed me the manuscript of one of his books and Ned Dobos and Aaron Pegram shared draft extracts from their (then) forthcoming monographs. Frank Bongiorno, John Broom, Dan Ellin, Peter Hobbins, Clare Makepeace, and Noah Riseman all read early drafts of chapters or sections and I appreciate their insightful comments. Tom Frame critiqued an early version of chapter eleven, following it up with an invaluable two-hour conversation which helped crystallise my thinking on moral injury. Aaron Pegram and Michael Molkentin read more than their fair share of the early chapters. Both offered encouragement over the years, as did Clare Makepeace (who also gifted me her POW film collection) before her too-early death in April 2019. I especially thank Clare, Michael, and Aaron, for their enlightening advice, unstinting generosity, and friendship. (And thank you Michael for inviting me to your book launch which serendipitously sparked my academic life.)

I have enjoyed the warm friendship of the aviation community over the last two decades. The 'avgeeks' never knew when technical questions would wing their way and they always willingly responded. My particular thanks go

to David Fredericks, James Kightly, Mark Lax, Mike Nelmes, Geoff Simpson, and Andy Wright, and to Ian Jenkins who shared copies of RAAF pamphlets from his collection. Special thanks also to Martin Jackson of the RAAF/Rhodesia Association who provided me with copies of *'Repatter'*; Geoff Swallow who shared images from the RAAF Deaths Photographic Archive of Headstones and Memorials WW2; Roland Orchard of the 458 Squadron Association who sent me Bill Fordyce's hilarious after-dinner speech; Richard Munro of 460 Squadron Association who introduced me to Graham Berry; and James Oglethorpe who is a font of wisdom regarding the airmen of 3 Squadron RAAF, and who shared Tom Wood's diary. I also thank Dianne Rutherford, Curator of Military Heraldry and Technology at the AWM, for expert advice about POW identity badges and women's badges.

What would I have done without my own little community who listened to me warble on about the Australian airmen as we shared cake and coffee or tea and scones? Thank you Jill Sheppard, Jenny Middleton, John Quinlan, 'the Dorks', Jean Main, Kel Robertson, Anne-Marie Schwirtlich, and, of course, my husband, David. Extra thanks must go to David and Jill who read through the final manuscript looking for the last, stubborn typos. And an extra, extra (huge) thanks to David who continues to lovingly support and sustain me, and tolerate lengthy disappearances into my own little research and writing world.

I have had the great privilege of speaking with four former prisoners of war. Bill Rudd was not one of the former airman of Stalag Luft III. He, however, had endured incarceration in Europe and had for many years catalogued the experiences of Australian captives. He spoke to me about

captivity in general to ensure I avoided the common pitfalls and answered many queries. He also donated folders of research material relating to *Luftwaffe* camps. I spent an afternoon with Graham Berry who stressed to me the pride he felt when he harassed the 'goons'. Cy Borsht highlighted the importance of kriegie friendship. I also marvelled at his wartime log book. Bill, Graham, and Cy died before I completed this thesis. So too did Evelyn Johnston who shared her memories of waiting for her (then) sweetheart Eric, as well as stories of her married life with Eric. I am grateful for their assistance, and regret that they will not know how much their generosity contributed to this work.

Alec Arnel recently become a centenarian. He welcomed me into his home almost six years ago and loaned me the precious love letters he wrote to the woman he married. Candidly, during a series of ten interviews which extended over almost three years, he disclosed details of his experiences of service, captivity, and love. He also provided a clear perspective of the communal experience of wartime confinement. This thesis has been enriched by the recollections of all I have spoken to, but I owe a special debt of gratitude to Alec. After listening to him describe his religious and moral crises, I wondered whether other former kriegies had experienced moral troubling. Chapter eleven owes its existence to Alec.

I am honoured that many of the extended Stalag Luft III community spoke to and corresponded with me so openly about the experiences of 'their' POW, shared memories, and opened up intimate family archives. Thank you Margie and Jamie Bradbeer, John Carson and Toni Hinds, Lily Fordyce, Ian Fraser, Drew Gordon and Trudy Brentnall, Robert Douglas Hutchinson,

Evelyn Johnston, Colin Johnston, Peter Kierath, Jennifer Long, Cath McNamara, Anne O'Byrne, Ross and Jude Preen, Max Preen, Pat and John Martin, Mike Netherway, and Jennifer Walsh. Winifred Chevalier hosted two research visits, and also organised a family meeting so I could speak with her siblings Janie Miller, Trish Norman and Michael Bligh. When I was unable to travel, many of the extended Stalag Luft III family brought their precious documents and artefacts to me, or entrusted them to post, email, or courier. Richard Baines unwrapped his father's wartime log book at a convenient café, and Lee Baines later sent me a PDF of it. Peter Rees (in another handy café) acted on behalf of David Archer to transfer to my care for many months all of George Archer's wartime records. Charles Page in Western Australia liaised with Paul Royle and Alex Kerr on my behalf and professionally photographed their wartime records. (Some of these, along with Charles' photograph of Alex, are included in the image sections.) Others spoke to me on the phone or carried out lengthy email conversations. For overcoming the tyranny of distance so willingly (including from one side of Canberra to the other), thank you Stuart Baines, Bruce Bowden, Jane Bryce, Colin Burgess, Lisa Fardy, Barbara Fotheringham, Kylie Garcelon, Helen Green, Kim Griffiths, Drew Harrison, Peter Mayo, Greg McLeod, Michele McCormack, Craig Nightingale, Martyn Rees, Carlene Scifleet, Andrew R.B. Simpson, Jan Smith, Peter Todd, and Tony Wheeler. My thanks also to the extended Stalag Luft III community who contacted me over the years with supportive words, leads for more contacts, and clarifying advice. A special word of thanks goes to members of the Australians in Stalag Luft III Facebook group (https://www.facebook.com/groups/AustraliansinStalagLuftIII). I also

extend my thanks to Damian Coburn who referred me to Craig Nightingale; Garth O'Connell who asked Stuart Baines to share his family story; Mike Nelmes who introduced me to Peter Kierath and the Narromine Aviation Museum's collection; Louise Williams who referred me to Drew Gordon and Robert Douglas Hutchinson; Frank McCann who put me in touch with Anne O'Byrne; and Les Sullivan who led me to Alec Arnel.

The majority, by far, of the primary evidence which contributed to the richness of this thesis came from family archives. I also enjoyed consulting records held by the Australians at War Film Archive, Australian War Memorial, History and Heritage Branch–Air Force, the National Library of Australia, the National Archives of Australia, a variety of state libraries and archives, and British repositories. In addition, I took great delight in examining lesser known public collections. I particularly acknowledge the assistance of: Danielle Trewartha of the Marion Heritage Resource Centre, Adelaide; Peter Kierath and Mike Nelmes of the Narromine Aviation Museum; and Jenna Blyth and Neil Sharkey of the Shrine of Remembrance, Melbourne. My deepest thanks goes to Mark Neal of the Department of Veterans' Affairs. This thesis could not have been written without that Department's approval to consult veteran case files under Section 56 (2) of *The Archives Act 1983*. Over four years, Mark steered my application through the approvals process, briefed me on departmental collection practices, identified and retrieved files, and made them available for consultation in what I like to term, the 'research room with the best view'. While personal and medical testimony from these records is woven extensively throughout this thesis, chapters nine, ten, and parts of eleven could not have been written

without the support of the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA). A condition of the DVA access is that personal and medical details drawn from case files are not to be identified. Accordingly, pseudonyms are used where DVA material has been used. There are a handful of exceptions where families have given permission to identify 'their' former prisoner of war. Thank you Margie Bradbeer, John Carson and Julie Lowes, Drew Gordon, and Cath McNamara and Geraldine Smith.

Almost every day of my academic life has been a wondrous joy. Thank you, all, for your support and for sharing those intellectually challenging years. This thesis is partly yours. It belongs, too, to the former kriegies whose lives I have written about. But particularly I dedicate it to:

Alec Arnel who shared his experiences with me; Clare Makepeace who befriended and encouraged me; and David who loves me.

Notes on References and Terminology

References:

- **Footnotes:** Books, chapters, and articles are listed in the footnotes by author's surname and short title only. Full details are included in the Bibliography.

Terminology:

- **'airman'/'airmen':** Technically, 'airman', and its plural, 'airmen', is an air force rank. This thesis, however, uses 'airman' and 'airmen' as generic terms to collectively refer to all Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) and Royal Air Force (RAF) personnel.
- ***'air man'/ 'air men'*:** This study focuses on two distinct identities: '*air men*' (denoting a collective martial identity) and 'men of emotion'. To distinguish the former from the generic airman or airmen, Clare Makepeace's style, used to refer to analysis of her cohort *'as men'*, has been adopted.[1]
- **'British':** Stalag Luft III was a camp established by the German air force—the *Luftwaffe*—for allied airmen prisoners of war. As well as a large complement of American captives, it housed British, Empire, Commonwealth, and Dominion airmen. Administratively, Empire, Commonwealth, and Dominion airmen—including Australians—were considered British. As such, 'British' is used to collectively identify British, Empire, Commonwealth, and Dominion airmen.

[1] Original emphasis. Makepeace, *Captives of War*, p. 7.

- **Intergenerationals:** For ease of reference, following the lead of authors William Strauss and Neil Howe who are credited with dubbing those who attained young adulthood in or near the year 2000 'millennials', members of the second and third generation are collectively referred to as 'intergenerationals'.
- **'RAF Station Sagan' and 'room crew':** This thesis coins two terms to denote emotional communities of captivity relating to Stalag Luft III. Following traditional RAF station nomenclature, such as RAF Station Kenley or RAF Station Waddington, 'RAF Station Sagan' describes the martial and emotional community of Stalag Luft III. Deriving from an operational crew, 'room crew' equates to the emotional bond formed by roommates.
- **Rank:** Although airmen were formally 'struck off charge' after they became prisoners of war many continued to receive promotions. To avoid confusion airmen are not referred to by rank unless appropriate.
- **The Great Escape and Great Escapers:** The 'Great Escape' is an anachronistic, yet convenient term. It was coined in the early 1950s by the publishers of Paul Brickhill's *The Great Escape*.[2] Given its universal adoption to describe the March 1944 mass escape from Stalag Luft III, this form is used when discussing that event. 'Great Escapers' is used as a convenient collective term for those who participated in the Great Escape.

[2] Dando-Collins, *The Hero Maker*, p. 198; Brickhill, *The Great Escape*.

Abbreviations

CCC: Concentration Camp Committee

Dulag Luft: *Durchgangslager der Luftwaffe* (transit camp of the Air Force)

DVA: Department of Veterans' Affairs

EATS: Empire Air Training Scheme

Kriegie: Abbreviation of *Kriegsgefangener*—war prisoner

LMF: Lack of Moral Fibre

NCO: Non-commissioned officer

PDRC: Personnel Despatch and Receiving Centre

PG: *Prigione di Guerra*, prisoner of war

POW: Prisoner/Prisoners of War

POWRA: The Prisoner of War Relatives' Association

POW Trust Fund: Prisoners of War Trust Fund

PRC: Personnel Reception Centre

RAF: Royal Air Force

RAAF: Royal Australian Air Force

Maps and Images

Introduction

Chapter One

Chapter Two

Chapter Three

Chapter Four

Chapter Five

Chapter Six

Chapter Seven

Chapter Eight

Chapter Nine

Chapter Eleven

Chapter Twelve

Conclusion

Part One: Introductory Section

Introduction: Inner Lives

Wartime captivity encompassed capture, confinement, liberation, repatriation, and reintegration into civilian society. For many, it lasted a lifetime. This thesis analyses the emotional experience of, and responses to, captivity of a group of Australian prisoners of war (POWs) and their family members, from capture until death. It explores the inner lives of POWs and their loved ones: their emotions, feelings, motivation, sense-making, and memory. As such, it is influenced by historians of emotions including Rob Boddice, Clare Makepeace, Susan Matt, and Michael Roper.[1] It particularly draws on medievalist Barbara Rosenwein's concept of 'emotional communities', expressing a range of affective bonds through a variety of emotional outlets.[2] The affective communities explored in this thesis include the 'brotherhood of airmen', 'RAF Station Sagan', 'room crews', and home front familial and fictive kinship networks.

Captivity, for airmen, occurred after a traumatic event. Fighter pilots had been engaged in battle, other airmen were attacked during or after bombing sorties. They baled out of burning, plummeting aircraft, landing in water or on ground, often wounded. Many witnessed or heard the deaths of their companions. As Henry 'Harry' Train wrote of them and himself shortly

[1] Boddice, *The History of Emotions*; Boddice, *The History of Feelings*; Makepeace, *Captives of War*; Matt, 'Current Emotion Research in History: Or, Doing History from the Inside Out', pp. 117–124; Matt and Stearns, (eds), *Doing Emotions History*; Roper, *The Secret Battle.*
[2] Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*, p. 2; Rosenwein, 'Worrying About Emotions in History', pp. 842–843, 845.

after his capture, 'Pretty well every one of these boys have looked death in the face—proven odds are about 10 to 1 against getting away with being shot down'.[3] The memory of these traumatic events lingered and, as such, this study also explores the emotions of trauma during captivity and in post-war lives. Recognising that emotions drive action and reaction, the affective aspects of agency, community, altruism, duty, identity, resilience, relationships, masculinity, prison camp domesticity, faith, grief, and death are foregrounded.

Culture shapes emotional life.[4] Accordingly, this work is strongly influenced by the themes and approaches of cultural history.[5] Historian Gary Baines notes a cultural approach is 'almost, by definition, interdisciplinary' as it 'borrows insights' from a multitude of disciplines including material and visual culture, memory, and psychology.[6] Psychologist Nigel Hunt, who writes about the intersection between history, memory, and psychology, also highlights the value of an interdisciplinary approach.[7] All of these are drawn upon, as well as the science-based disciplines of medicine and psychiatry.

Dealing as it does with a military cohort—Australian airmen POWs—this thesis sits firmly within the purview of military social history which itself has provided much scope for reinterpretation through an emotional lens, particularly in relation to masculinities, subjectivities, and emotive responses

[3] Arnel archive: Train, 'A Barbed-Wire World', 15 May 1942, p. 8.
[4] Matt, 'Current Emotion Research in History', p. 117.
[5] Burke, *What is Cultural History?* p. 51.
[6] Baines, in Huxford, Alcalde, Baines, Burtin, and Edele, 'Writing Veterans' History: A Conversation on the Twentieth Century', p. 122.
[7] Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, p. ix.

to conflict.[8] It also has a place in psychology and psychiatry, where these disciplines study the affective dimension of war service- and captivity-related psychological disturbance, trauma, and moral troubling.[9] The emotions of captivity have attracted scholarly interest. Kate Ariotti discusses the affective responses of Australian prisoners of the Ottoman Empire.[10] Michael McKernan explores the emotional pain of former Australian prisoners of Japan and their families.[11] Clare Makepeace considers the feelings of British prisoners of Germany and Italy.[12] This study analyses Australian airmen captives both as military operatives and emotional beings.

Historians of emotions are not necessarily interested in what someone did, but in how they felt while doing it.[13] They are concerned with emotional motivation.[14] In drawing on the contemporary and late-life narratives of a group of Australian airmen and their families, this study then, in the words of Rob Boddice, is an 'attempt to understand what it felt like to be *there*, *then*, according to the terms of historical actors themselves'.[15] The airmen's emotional responses had a practical application: they provided the foundation

---

[8] Scates, *Return to Gallipoli*; Roper, 'Slipping out of View: Subjectivity and Emotion in Gender History', pp. 57–72; Roper, *The Secret Battle*; Scates, with McCosker, Reeves, Wheatley and Williams, *Anzac Journeys*; Robb and Pattison, 'Becoming Visible: Gendering the Study of Men at War', in Robb, and Pattinson (eds), *Men, Masculinities and Male Culture in the Second World War*, pp. 1–22.
[9] Macleod, 'The reactivation of post-traumatic stress disorder in later life', pp. 625–634; Hunt and Robbins, Telling Stories of the War: Ageing Veterans Coping with their Memories through Narrative', pp. 57–64; Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*; Litz, Stein, Delaney, Lebowitz, Nash, Silva, and Maguen, [Litz et al.], 'Moral Injury and moral repair in war veterans: a preliminary model and intervention strategy', pp. 695–706.
[10] Ariotti, *Captive Anzacs*.
[11] McKernan, *This War Never Ends*.
[12] Makepeace, *Captives of War*.
[13] Matt and Stearns, (eds), *Doing Emotions History*, p. 1.
[14] Suny, 'Thinking about Feelings', in Steinberg and Sobol (eds), *Interpreting Emotions in Russia and Eastern Europe*, pp. 103, 105; Matt, 'Current Emotion Research in History', p. 118.
[15] Boddice, *The History of Feelings*, p. 9. Original emphasis.

for managing captivity. This enabled them to mitigate and ameliorate the strains of wartime confinement. Airmen, however, were not alone. Positive emotional reactions of loved ones helped them to manage captivity. As such, this thesis examines the role played by wives, fiancées, sweethearts, parents and other family members, as well as supportive home front networks. It also explores the post-war psychological, emotional, and moral legacy of captivity for the Australian airmen and their families.

This study examines Australian airmen incarcerated in Stalag Luft III, a *Luftwaffe* camp in the German province of Lower Silesia. Australian airmen were present in that camp at all times after it opened in April 1942 until January 1945 when it was evacuated ahead of the Red Army's advance from the east. Approximately a quarter of all Australian airmen prisoners in Europe were incarcerated in Stalag Luft III at some point. Yet, while facets of captivity in that camp such as leadership, sport, atrocities, and escape have been examined, their emotional dimension has not.[16] This thesis, then, delves into the affective experiences of 351 Australian airmen of Stalag Luft III—hereafter termed the Stalag Luft III cohort, or more simply, the cohort.

While tenure in Stalag Luft III defines this thesis' cohort, this is not intrinsically a camp case study. It perhaps more resembles, as cultural historian Mark Steinberg would describe, a 'regional history of emotions', focusing not on a stable monoculture in a 'fixed and homogeneous cultural place', but on a 'space defined by relationships', with all their commonalities,

[16] Durand, *Stalag Luft III*; Meale, 'Leadership of Australian POWs in the Second World War', PhD thesis; Davison, 'Forechecking in Captivity', MA thesis; Jones, 'Nazi Atrocities against Allied Airmen', pp. 543–565; Vance, 'The War Behind the Wire', pp. 675–693; Vance, *A Gallant Company*.

differences, harmonies and conflicts.[17] The 'space' here is not necessarily (though often is) Stalag Luft III. It is the 'region' behind barbed wire. As such, evidence created in, or which refers to, other POW camps is not excluded. This thesis draws on a broad range of evidence emanating from Australian airmen and their close and extended families, or relating to them, which details their *entire* captivity experience, not just as it occurred in Stalag Luft III. Details of how the cohort is defined, along with a nominal roll of the 351 airmen, are included in the appendix.

This thesis explicates three central arguments. Following historians such as Kate Ariotti, Matthew Johnson, Aaron Pegram, Jonathan Vance, and Oliver Wilkinson the first argument is that the Australian airmen did not passively accept captivity.[18] They exerted considerable group and personal agency to manage and mitigate the residue of battle trauma, the shock of captivity, and the inevitable strains of captivity by modifying their environment, asserting their air force identity, resisting their captors, and participating in a dedicated programme of active resistance and escape. By consciously declining to succumb to 'the atrophying stagnation of a prisoner of war's life', as Paul Brickhill and Conrad Norton referred to it, they remained potent military operatives, albeit behind barbed wire.[19]

The dream of home and the prospect of homecoming is central to military experience.[20] For many, as historian Bart Ziino notes, 'home was

---

[17] Steinberg, 'Emotions and History in Eastern Europe', in Matt and Stearns, (eds), *Doing Emotions History*, pp. 74–75. Quotes: p. 93.
[18] Ariotti, *Captive Anzacs*; Johnson, 'Resisting Captivity', PhD thesis; Pegram, *Surviving the Great War*; Vance, 'The War Behind the Wire', pp. 675–693; Wilkinson, *British Prisoners of War in First World War Germany*.
[19] Brickhill and Norton, *Escape to Danger*, p. 113.
[20] Roper, *The Secret Battle*, p. 8.

more intimately represented as family'.[21] Michael Roper demonstrates the significant, emotionally-sustaining role of loved ones for servicemen in the trenches.[22] Familial affective bonds were just as crucial for captive airmen. They too looked homewards for help ameliorating confinement, to maintain a connection with their old lives, and to provide a bridge to their future world. Following historians such as Michael McKernan, Janette Bomford, Clare Makepeace, and Kate Ariotti, as well as nursing clinician and educator Betty Peters, who have all revealed how captivity entered the domestic realm to emotionally affect loved ones, this thesis secondly argues that captivity was not an individual or solitary experience.[23] It extended beyond the confines of the prison camp to home, embracing men's families and supportive networks. But family members were not simply helpmeets for the prisoners. Their own responses, including anxiety, anguish, and grief, are a significant part of the captivity experience, as is their agency: men and women at home did not wait passively.

The third argument builds on Michael McKernan's contention that 'this war never ends', for either POWs or their loved ones.[24] Recognising, then, that the effects of captivity did not cease at liberation or homecoming, this study examines the emotional, psychological, and moral consequences of wartime imprisonment which infiltrated and, in many cases, dominated, the former prisoners' post-war lives, and those of the hidden casualties of

[21] Ziino, 'A Kind of Round Trip: Australian Soldiers and the Tourist Analogy, 1914–1918', pp. 40, 51. Quote: p. 40.
[22] Roper, *The Secret Battle*.
[23] McKernan, *This War Never Ends*; Bomford, 'Fractured Lives'; Makepeace, *Captives of War*; Ariotti, *Captive Anzacs*; AWM MSS1500: Peters, 'The lived experience of partners'.
[24] McKernan, *This War Never Ends*.

captivity—the airmen's families.[25] As cultural historian Jay Winter states, 'the damage war does to families is generational; it doesn't stop when the shooting stops'.[26] Accordingly, this work also acknowledges the legacy of captivity on, and affective responses of, the cohort's children, nephews and nieces, great nephews and nieces, and grandchildren. Following authors William Strauss and Neil Howe who are credited with dubbing those who attained young adulthood in or near the year 2000 'millennials', these members of the second and third generations are collectively referred to as 'intergenerationals'.

For many years, captivity has occupied only a small niche in scholarly studies.[27] More recently, historians have moved from simple discussions of the various aspects of imprisonment and positioned captivity within major debates about the nature of humanity and memory.[28] The 1996 publication, *Prisoners of War and their Captors in World War II*, edited by Bob Moore and Kent Fedorowich, exemplified this approach.[29] Many Second World War prisoners of Germany and Italy have been studied as national groups.[30] Australian analyses of wartime imprisonment have largely centred on the experiences of prisoners of the Japanese. Until recently, those of other captors

---

[25] Ariotti uses the phrase 'casualty of captivity'. *Captive Anzacs*, p. 140.
[26] Winter, 'Foreword: Memory and Silence', in Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, p. xvii.
[27] Rolf, *Prisoners of the Reich*; Moore and Fedorowich, (eds), *Prisoners of War and their Captors in World War II*.
[28] MacKenzie, *The Colditz Myth*; Moore and Hately-Broad (eds), *Prisoners of War, Prisoners of Peace*; Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity*, 2005; Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War in the First World War*; Makepeace, *Captives of War*; Reiss, *Controlling Sex in Captivity*.
[29] Moore and Fedorowich (eds), *Prisoners of War and their Captors in World War II*.
[30] Americans: Durand, *Stalag Luft III*. Canadians: Vance, *Objects of Concern*; Davison, 'Forechecking in Captivity', MA thesis. New Zealanders: Johnson, 'Resisting Captivity', PhD thesis; British: Makepeace, *Captives of War*.

and eras have been overshadowed.[31] Current Australian scholarly attention now extends across a wider range of conflicts and theatres.[32] Great War studies include analyses of prisoners of the Ottomans, and those captured on Gallipoli and the Western Front, as well as studies of repatriation and return.[33] Yet Australian scholarship mainly concentrates on soldiers.[34] While historian Peter Monteath's *P.O.W.* includes some reference to airmen, this thesis is the first sustained scholarly assessment of Australian airmen within German and Italian captivity.[35]

'Escape' dominates popular accounts of captivity to such an extent that it has become a cultural phenomenon.[36] This is not surprising because action-filled epics full of daring, stoicism, and personal victory over the enemy have always appealed to publishers and a reading public primed by a steady diet of exciting newspaper articles and 'the literature of escape'.[37] Paul Brickhill's

---

[31] Compare the Second World War POW historiographies of the Middle East and European and Asia–Pacific theatres in Beaumont, with Joshi, Bomford, Blair and Pratten, *The Australian Centenary History of Defence Volume VI, Australian Defence: Sources and Statistics*, pp. 338–343.

[32] Beaumont, Grant, and Pegram (eds), *Beyond Surrender: Australian Prisoners of War in the Twentieth Century*. Chapters dealing with prisoners of Germany and Italy are: James, '"I hope you are not too ashamed of me": Prisoners in the siege of Tobruk'; Monteath, 'Behind the Colditz Myth: Australian experiences of German Captivity in World War II'; and Spark, 'Australian Prisoners of War of Italy in World War II: Private and Public Histories'.

[33] Ariotti, *Captive Anzacs*; Lawless, *Kismet: the story of the Gallipoli prisoners of war*; Pegram, *Surviving the Great War*; Ariotti and Pegram, 'Australian POWs of the First World War: responding to the challenges of captivity and return', pp. 72–89; Smart, 'It would be impossible to describe our feelings': the recovery and demobilisation of Australian prisoners of war after the First World War', pp. 90–108.

[34] Absalom, '"Another crack at Jerry"?: Australian Prisoners of War in Italy 1941–45', pp. 24–32; Beaumont, Grant, and Pegram (eds), *Beyond Surrender*.

[35] Monteath, *P.O.W.*

[36] Husemann, 'The Colditz Industry', in Cullingford and Husemann (ed), *Anglo-German Attitudes*, pp. 141–163.

[37] Husemann, 'The Colditz Industry', in Cullingford and Husemann (ed), *Anglo-German Attitudes*, p. 151. Refer also, Pegram, *Surviving the Great War*, pp. 7–8; Isherwood, 'Writing the "ill-managed nursery": British POW memoirs of the First World War', p. 267; MacKenzie, 'The Ethics of Escape: British Officer POWs in the First World War', pp. 1–16; Wilkinson, *British Prisoners of War in First World War Germany*, p. 282. For 'Literature of Escape refer 'Writers and Readers. Literature of Escape', *The Age* (Melbourne), 24 September 1932, p. 4. Escape related articles include: 'The Escaping Club. Annoying the Germans', *The Express and Telegraph* (Adelaide), 21 October 1921, p. 1; 'Current Literature.

and Conrad Norton's *Escape to Danger*, first printed in 1946, was in its third impression by the time Eric Williams' *The Wooden Horse* appeared in 1949.[38] Brickhill's *The Great Escape*, was published in 1951, with Pat Reid's *The Colditz Story* following closely in 1952.[39] (All are still in print.) The 'prisoner of war genre' with escape at its heart became firmly entrenched in popular culture through film adaptations of *The Wooden Horse*, *The Colditz Story*, and *The Great Escape*, and on television with the *Colditz* drama series and even situation comedy *Hogan's Heroes*.[40] Because of the Great Escape, one of the Second World War's most well-known mass breakouts, Stalag Luft III become one of the few 'celebrity' camps, receiving particular attention from popular authors.[41] Those writers have helped create a 'generic image' of POWs as escapers, rather than as captives.[42] Paul Brickhill's *The Great Escape*, as well as the film-of-the-book, have particularly enshrined Stalag Luft III and its escape-mindedness in popular memory and culture.

Escape, however, was not the only aspect of captivity. In *The Colditz Myth*, historian S.P. MacKenzie argues that the British officer escaping elite was not representative of all prisoners of war in Europe. Captivity was more

---

Two Captives', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 November 1921, p. 8; 'Escaping is their Business. Thrilling Stories of this War and the Last', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 June 1941, p. 6; 'Escape by Tunnel. The Holzminden Exploit', *The West Australian* (Perth) 7 May 1938, p. 5.

[38] Brickhill and Norton, *Escape to Danger*; Williams, *The Wooden Horse*.

[39] Brickhill, *The Great Escape*; Reid, *The Colditz Story*.

[40] Cull, 'Great Escapes: "Englishness" and the Prisoner of War Genre', pp. 282–292. *The Wooden Horse*, 1950; *The Colditz Story*, 1955; *The Great Escape*, 1963; *Colditz*, 1972 to 1974; *Hogan's Heroes*, 1965 to 1971.

[41] Colditz is another celebrity camp and both it and Stalag Luft III have found their place in popular culture. See Cull, 'Great Escapes: "Englishness" and the Prisoner of War Genre', pp. 282–295; MacKenzie, 'British Prisoners of War in Nazi Germany', p. 183. Popular accounts include Barris, *The Great Escape. A Canadian Story*; Brickhill and Norton, *Escape to Danger*; Brickhill, *The Great Escape*; Burgess, *The Longest Tunnel*; Carroll, *The Great Escapers*; Gill, *The Great Escape*; Pearson, *The Great Escaper*; Walters, *The Real Great Escape* 13; Read, *Human Game*; Williams, *The Wooden Horse*.

[42] Quote MacKenzie, 'British Prisoners of War in Nazi Germany', p. 183.

difficult than popularly portrayed, and much more complex.[43] Following MacKenzie, Peter Monteath and Aaron Pegram draw on Australian evidence to correct continuing misconceptions relating to the 'Colditz Myth' and, for the Great War, the 'Holzminden illusion'.[44] Monteath's and Pegram's findings are crucial for Australian historiography. Not only do they put the escape theme into perspective as just one facet of incarceration but they emphasise that prisoners of Germany and Italy suffered in their own right, a factor which for Australians is often overshadowed by the more brutal Japanese experience. In largely concentrating on escape or any other 'what-they-did' aspect, the emotional dimension of captivity is overlooked. While following MacKenzie, Monteath, and Pegram in revealing that there was more to captivity than escape, this thesis also contributes to captivity historiography in a number of ways.

As Clare Makepeace and Kate Ariotti have done, this study explores the subjective lives of captivity. In doing so, it is the first scholarly work to examine through a cultural lens, within the context of history of the emotions, the responses to captivity of Australian Second World War prisoners of Germany and Italy.[45]

Australian airmen prisoners of war have received little attention from Australia's official historians. The official history of RAAF operations in the

---

[43] MacKenzie, *The Colditz Myth*.
[44] Monteath, 'Australian POW in German Captivity in the Second World War', pp. 421–433; Monteath, *P.O.W.*, 2011; Monteath, 'Behind the Colditz Myth', in Beaumont, Grant, and Pegram (eds), *Beyond Surrender*; Pegram, 'Bold Bids for Freedom: Escape and Australian Prisoners of Germany, 1916–18', in Beaumont, Grant, and Pegram (eds), *Beyond Surrender*, 2015; Pegram, *Surviving the Great War*.
[45] Makepeace, *Captives of War*; Ariotti, *Captive Anzacs*.

Second World War includes only a chapter on POWs.[46] They are also largely absent from recent accounts. Indeed, the RAAF volume in the Department of Defence-sponsored Centenary History of Defence neglected to include POWs as a specific category of air force personnel; men captured after being shot down are only mentioned in passing.[47] Similarly, airmen captives appear only in a handful of popular aviation accounts.[48] Nor are there scholarly accounts focusing on or drawing on the evidence of Australian airmen POWs. Despite this omission, their experiences warrant attention because of the distinct nature of their captivity, which relates to their particular service culture. Accordingly, by analysing the active airman—the serviceman behind barbed wire—this thesis incorporates into Australian air force and scholarly historiography a hitherto largely unexamined cohort of Australian captives.

Cultural historian Martin Francis focuses on masculinity and the culture of British flyers. While he explores the mythology of dashing, glamorous airmen—particularly fighter pilots—and the ambiguities of their martial masculinity, airmen POWs receive scant attention.[49] Some scholars, however, have studied army captives through the lens of masculinity and their martial identities and agency as POWs are more relevant to this thesis. Matthias Reiss considers how the *Afrika Korps*' service culture contributed to its members' ability to maintain their masculine, soldierly identity in American captivity.[50] Clare Makepeace analyses how British prisoners of Germany and Italy made

---

[46] Herington, *Air Power Over Europe, 1944–1945*, Chapter 19, 'Evaders and Prisoners', pp. 466–498.
[47] Stephens, *The Australian Centenary of Defence Volume II: The Royal Australian Air Force*, pp. 87 and 101.
[48] Nelson, *Chased by the Sun*; Rees, *Lancaster Men*; Colman, *Crew*.
[49] Francis, *The Flyer*.
[50] Reiss, 'The Importance of Being Men: The Afrika-Korps in American Captivity', pp. 23–47.

sense of their captivity '*as men*'.[51] While some of Makepeace's cohort were airmen she does not focus on their particular service identity. There is currently no study which explores airmen captives as *air men* with a particular sense of masculinity within an entrenched and embraced cultural identity. This thesis, then, is the first to specifically analyse how Australian airmen POWs responded to captivity, both as *air men* and men of emotions.

This is also the first study to highlight the important place of family in the experience of Australia's Second World War prisoners of Germany and Italy, during and after captivity.

In her study of the mental health of British POWs, Clare Makepeace drew on contemporary and immediate post-war medical reports produced by psychiatrists, medical officers, and POW medical men.[55] Historians Janette Bomford and Christina Twomey examined applications to the Prisoners of War Trust Fund (POW Trust Fund), and Bomford consulted the Department of Veterans' Affairs' case files of former prisoners of the Japanese.[56] Stephen Garton studied a small number of case files of former POWs, the majority appearing to be of former prisoners of Japan.[57] In examining Department of Veterans' Affairs' case files of eighty-three former Australian prisoners of Germany and Italy to throw light on wartime experiences as well as the post-war—lifetime—emotional, psychological, and moral consequences of

[51] Original emphasis. Makepeace, *Captives of War*, p. 7.
[55] Makepeace, *Captives of War*.
[56] Bomford, 'Fractured Lives', PhD thesis; Twomey, *The Battle Within*.
[57] Garton, *The Cost of War*, p. 28 (note 51). Garton consulted 1,412 files for veterans of the two world wars and Vietnam, including some records of former prisoners of war. He does not state the number of case files for each conflict, nor how many related to former POWs in total, nor of prisoners of Europe or Japan.

captivity, this thesis not only addresses a significant gap in the medical history of Second World War captives, it is unique.

This study, then, presents an original and significant contribution to Australian and international captivity studies, Australian air force history, and Australian post-war social and medical history. Significantly, it adds an important, affective dimension to the captivity experience for the airmen prisoners and their families. In doing so, it allows for a deeper and more nuanced understanding of wartime captivity and its legacy.

Sources

The Australian airmen of Stalag Luft III collectively created a considerable distributed archive of autobiographical and visual evidence—diaries, letters, illustrations and art works, poetry, memoirs, oral history interviews—which narrates their lives and reveals the traces of intimate and public responses to captivity. As Norman Maxwell 'Max' Dunn states, their wartime narratives 'took structure and form / From the mood of my pen'.[58] This autobiographical and visual evidence is collectively referred to as 'personal narrative'.

The cohort's personal narratives, along with testimony from contemporary and post-war family, afford much insight into individual and collective experiences which lasted beyond the war, throughout their entire lives, and into the following generations. This distributed archive is so rich that many sources could be used to illustrate each argument or statement. Accordingly, references for generalisations based on a broad survey of

[58] Dunn, *Poems of Norman Maxwell Dunn*, 'Dedication to Mother and Barbara', p. 24.

evidence are omitted. All direct and paraphrased quotations, however, are sourced.

The archive's richness enabled selection of many illustrative examples to highlight collective experience. This was not, however, always the case. In some instances, particularly in chapter five (Faith and Religious Sensibility) and in part three, evidence was either limited or affective experience was merely suggested. In these chapters, synthesis and representative examples make way for more detailed accounts of individual lived experience and affective response. This is not simply making the best of the evidentiary situation. As literary scholar Samuel Hynes argues, 'If we would understand humankind's most violent episodes'—including traumatic events and experiences—'we must understand them humanly, in the lives of individuals'.[59] By introducing this microhistory-within-history approach, synthesis is enhanced by 'intensive historical investigation' of broader lived experience through the testimony of individuals.[60] Their deeply personal and specific accounts of trauma and traumatic response are akin to Hynes' tales 'of particulars', which highlight the human aspect of war and captivity.[61] The 'focal point'[62] created by the 'particulars' engenders reader identification and empathy with trauma victims. Their very scarcity renders the detailed individual accounts in these chapters valuable and significant.

[59] Hynes, *The Soldiers' Tales*, p. xvi.
[60] Magnússon, and Szijártó, *What is Microhistory? Theory and Practice*, pp. 4–5.
[61] Hynes, *The Soldiers' Tales*, p. xvi.
[62] Magnússon, and Szijártó, *What is Microhistory? Theory and Practice*, p. 4.

None of the cohort's personal narratives are 'raw or unfiltered'.[64] From the first moment the airmen picked up pencil, pen, or paintbrush, personal narratives were mechanisms to consciously deal with difficult emotions as they occurred, or emotions emanating from remembered events.[65] This 'processing' through narrative—particularly of disturbing or traumatic situations or events—as psychologist Nigel Hunt argues, is one of two fundamental ways in which people cope. The other is avoidance.[66] 'Processing' is an act of agency which equates to 'composure'. Coined by Graham Dawson, and developed by Alistair Thomson in the Australian context, composure has two meanings.[67] (Dawson and Thomson are both cultural historians with particular interests in oral history and memory.) The 'process of memory making' involves how the men wrote, shaped, fashioned, framed, or constructed narratives not just to record their experiences but to make sense of them. Those constructed narratives are 'composures'. The *act* of sense-making, particularly in late-life accounts, can bring about composure, that is, an ultimate calmness, acceptance, and understanding of their experiences.[68] This thesis explores a number of the cohort's wartime and post-war narratives—their composures—which helped manage the emotional, psychological, physical, and traumatic consequences of captivity: their continuing identity as men of war; the duty to escape and near-universal participation in Stalag Luft III's escape organisation; their narrative of

---

[64] Matt, 'Recovering the Invisible: Methods for the Historical Study of the Emotions', in Matt and Stearns, (eds), *Doing Emotions History*, pp. 42–44. Quote: p. 44.
[65] Hunt and Robbins, Telling Stories of the War: Ageing Veterans Coping with their Memories through Narrative', pp. 60–61.
[66] Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, pp. 78–79.
[67] Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, pp. 22–23, Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, (first published in 1994).
[68] Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, pp. 8, 11–12. Quote: p. 11.

wellness, or 'fit and well' composure (also coined for this thesis); their post-war protective silence; and attempts to construct meaning from wartime experience, including what this thesis terms a 'blessings and growth' narrative.

The Australian airmen's composures shaped their responses to captivity and mitigated its ill-effects. Their composures of duty to escape and near-universal escape-mindedness are inextricably linked. So too are the 'fit and well' and escape composures. 'Fit and well' is the foundation and driving force of the cohort's wartime agency. It also had far-reaching consequences on how society perceived the airmen in post-war life. This thesis also explains the part played by Australians Terence Officer and Paul Brickhill in formulating and expounding these composures; Paul Brickhill in particular ensured that Stalag Luft III's composure of apparent near-universal escape-mindedness and escape participation entered popular culture.

This study draws on the personal narratives and biographies of sixty-six former airmen—18.8 per cent of the cohort. They record feelings, emotions, and opinions, providing a potent affective response to their situations. The cohort's personal narratives include twenty-three wartime diaries and log books; twenty collections of correspondence, supplemented by letters published in newspapers and POW magazines and archived on service and casualty files held by the National Archives of Australia; twenty-three memoirs; one privately-published volume of captivity-composed poetry as well as other poems recorded in wartime log books; eight biographies; and late-life interviews with twenty-three former airmen.

These sources are not only representative. They are significant. Many are in private hands and even those in public collections have rarely been used in captivity studies, let alone presented as sources of emotions. Moreover, the quantity of personal records compares favourably with those used for other studies. For 9,140 New Zealand POWs from across three services, Matthew Johnson consulted twenty-five diaries, ten letters, forty-one memoirs, and one oral history recording.[70] For her study of over 140,000 British POWs across three services, Clare Makepeace drew on fifty-five diaries and wartime log books, twenty-eight letters, forty unpublished memoirs, and two oral history interviews.[71] Johnson's and Makepeace's evidence derived from less than 1 per cent of their potential cohorts.

Other than during the first year or so of its existence, Stalag Luft III was largely an officers' camp, so the majority of the 351 Australian airmen were officers. Only fifty-one were captured as either non-commissioned officers (i.e. sergeant or flight sergeant) or warrant officers. While most captivity accounts tend to be written by ex-officers, this thesis draws on an extensive range of officer, non-commissioned officer, and warrant officer testimony. Accordingly, both officer and non-commissioned officers 'speak' in this thesis of their emotions and experiences.

Rank, as Joan Beaumont demonstrates, mitigated the captivity experience and, indeed, the *Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War* (27 July 1929) (the Geneva Convention; the Convention),

[70] Johnson, 'Resisting Captivity', PhD thesis.
[71] Makepeace, *Captives of War*.

discriminated on the basis of rank.[72] Neither officers, non-commissioned officers, nor warrant officers were required to work. 'Other ranks' were. In addition, NCOs were housed in less salubrious quarters. Aside from its acknowledged war crimes, Germany, for the main part, adhered to the Geneva Convention (with the exception of Soviet prisoners).[73] This thesis discusses contraventions relating to provision of rations and interrogation practices. While prisoners of Germany experienced a number of food shortages, rations were distributed as appropriately as circumstances, availability, and logistics allowed. Deprivation had little to do with rank. During interrogation, many prisoners were treated harshly. Some were even tortured. This, again, had nothing to with rank: all airmen were deemed potential intelligence assets, and ill-treatment was considered a viable means to extract information.

As historian Bill Gammage demonstrates in *The Broken Years*, emotional lives are expressed in letters and diaries.[74] Letters, in particular, represent affective connection—they simultaneously evoke loved ones and establish emotive links as they bridge the emotional divide.[75] Personal narratives are imbued with emotions for creator, receiver, and keeper. Some of the cohort tried to make sense of their wartime experiences through memoir (both published and unpublished); a handful were the subjects of biographies. Their personal narratives are not the only private records which attest to affective experience. Medical records held by the Department of Veterans' Affairs include statements of experience and affect. Oral history interviews

---

[72] Beaumont, 'Rank, Privilege and Prisoners of War', pp. 67–94.
[73] Oppenheimer, '"Our Number One Priority": The Australian Red Cross and prisoners of war in the world wars', in Beaumont, Grant, and Pegram (eds), *Beyond Surrender*, p. 82.
[74] Gammage, *The Broken Years*, pp. xiv, xix.
[75] Roper, *The Secret Battle*, p. 49.

held by the Australian War Memorial, the National Library of Australia, the State Library of Western Australia, the Imperial War Museum, and especially the Australians at War Film Archive complement former prisoners' written evidence. They are supplemented by author interviews with three former prisoners of Stalag Luft III, as well as a number of family members. Of note is a series of ten interviews with Alec Arnel conducted over almost three years. All author interviews were carried out in accordance with UNSW ethical standards. (Refer ethics approval, HREA Panel A-15-22.)

The material world conveys and reflects emotions; objects—which can be evidence in their own right—are emotionally resonant and provide great insight into the affective dimension of captivity.[76] Recognising that experiences are not only conveyed by words, this thesis is enriched by the airmen prisoners' material culture—particularly written and visual culture—to record details of their lives for self, family, and posterity. This includes letters, photographs, paintings, sketches, portraits, cartoons, and visual anecdotes—drawings which poked fun at their circumstances. These objects, which have embedded emotive meaning, have been preserved in public and family archives by creators and loved ones not just because of their descriptive and factual content but because of their emotive value.[77] William Kenneth 'Ken' Todd, for example, treasured his wartime log book which he carried on the forced march. It then offered solace and something to do during

[76] Matt, 'Recovering the Invisible', in Matt and Stearns, (eds), *Doing Emotions History*, p. 50; Downes, Holloway, and Randles, 'Introduction', in Downes, Holloway, and Randles, (eds), *Feeling Things*, p. 1. Objects as evidence: Downes, Holloway, and Randles, 'A Feeling for Things, Past and Present', in Downes, Holloway, and Randles, (eds), *Feeling Things*, p. 14; Inglis, Spark, Winter, with Bunyan, *Dunera Lives: A Visual History*.
[77] Downes, Holloway, and Randles, 'Introduction', in Downes, Holloway, and Randles, (eds), *Feeling Things*, p. 2.

the final months of captivity in Luckenwalde. It remains a cherished family artefact. The original is kept in secure storage, but Todd's son, Peter, has had it professionally copied and bound. Recognising both the family and public history dimensions of the log book, he has given copies to each in the family, the RAAF Museum, Point Cook, Victoria, and the Stalag Luft III Prisoner Camp Museum in Żagań, Poland.[78]

This thesis foregrounds the wartime log book as a source of affective evidence. Provided by the British, American and Canadian Young Men's Christian Associations, it became a personal narrative unique to the European captivity experience. Containing photographic and artistic images, news clippings, observations, lists of recordings listened to, books read, and films watched, poetry, literary extracts, and recipes, wartime log books are similar to commonplace books and, as such, are different from the log books in which airmen recorded operational sorties and training flights. As well as being personal records of captivity, many wartime log books also include contributions by fellow prisoners. Accordingly, they serve as communal and personal records of captive life, and analysis of a broad range of wartime log books reveals many common themes and interests. Whether by amateur or future professional, art preserved within wartime log books allows the viewer to glimpse the martial and emotional dimension of captive lives. As well as creating a literary and visual record of their lives, accommodation, and friends, wartime log books also provide a permanent record of prisoners' practical material culture—the useful and ingenious items they devised and

[78] Alexander records: Peter Todd, interview 13 October 2015. Huie Bowden's and Cyril Borsht's family have also commissioned professional copies of wartime log books.

constructed to create and maintain a relatively comfortable and amenable domestic existence behind barbed wire. This thesis is illustrated with 135 images created by the Australians or relating to their experience. The majority are from their wartime log books. These photographs, drawings, and visual anecdotes narrate their experiences even as they depict the affective dimension of captivity for the airmen and members of their families.

Families are integral to the captivity experience yet, without the responses of family members as both helpmeets and active participants, captivity as a shared experience cannot be scrutinised. Australia has no repository of contemporary written evidence similar to Britain's Mass-Observation Archive and accounts by women about the emotional effect of captivity are not common.[80] Female voices in this thesis are heard through the correspondence and diaries of husbands, fiancés, sweethearts, and sons. This thesis also draws on women's writings and recollection. In addition to personal letters and notes to government officials from female correspondents which have been archived on service and casualty files, this work features the wartime correspondence of five women, and one widow's late-life recollections. Of particular note are two collections of reciprocal correspondences. Any letters from family members to prisoners of war are rare. Reciprocal correspondences are scarcer still. While the men treasured them in camp, many letters were lost or discarded on the forced march. Those between Beryl Smith and her fiancé Charles Fry exist because Smith, a confidential typist for an Australian government minister, made carbon copies

[80] McKernan, *This War Never Ends*, p. 39.

and kept them with the letters she received from Fry. As well as carrying on the forced march the letters he received in camp from his wife, Lola, Douglas 'Doug' Hutchinson preserved—and lovingly tied up with ribbon—all the letters he wrote to Lola during his wartime absence.

Family memory, too, is a significant source of female action and emotion. Twenty-four family members—two widows, six daughters, five sons and one son-in-law, four nephews, three nieces, two granddaughters and one grandson—have reflected in interview and correspondence on the experiences of their former POW relative and female members of their family, as well as their own experience of the legacy of captivity.

Three hundred and forty-five of the cohort survived wartime imprisonment.[81] Three men died in 1946: two in RAF flying accidents and one in a motor car crash. Post-war medical reports and testimony for the post-1946 survivors demonstrate that captivity, for many, never ended. It left a lifetime physical, mental, emotional, and moral legacy. In addition to the mortality evidence contained in the death certificates of seventy former airmen who died at or before the age of sixty-six, this thesis draws on medical evidence for 128 members of the cohort, including family records, statements provided in applications to the POW Trust Fund, coroners' reports, and testimonies relating to health and fitness provided to the Ex-Prisoner of War Association of South Australia. The most significant source of medical testimony for those 128 airmen, however, is contained in the confidential medical records compiled and maintained by the Repatriation Department,

[81] Five men were shot in the Great Escape reprisals. One man was killed in April 1945 by allied strafing during the forced march.

and, after its name change in 1976, the Department of Veterans' Affairs. (For simplicity, the department is hereafter referred to as DVA.) Access to DVA case files was granted under the Special Access provisions of Section 56 of *The Archives Act 1983*.

It was not possible to examine all DVA case files relating to the cohort. Limited personal time and resources were factors. More significantly, some records do not exist, including those of men who died at an early age or who never made claims for war-related incapacity. Some files have been destroyed. Record availability was also a matter of logistics. While the majority of extant files are stored in National Archives of Australia repositories, those held by private storage companies are difficult to retrieve. As such, DVA prioritised those files that are readily accessible. Those constraints aside, selection of case files was not entirely random. Twenty-three of the cohort's thirty-eight applicants to the POW Trust had suffered or were experiencing some degree of mental disturbance as a consequence of captivity. Accordingly, the files of those men as well as others revealed by other sources to have had mental health problems, or whose extreme captivity experiences may have precipitated mental disturbance such as the nine airmen incarcerated in Buchenwald, were requested. An element of randomness was introduced after excluding targeted files, and those of men still living: every third name on the Stalag Luft III nominal roll was provided to DVA.

Ultimately, DVA case files for eighty-three former airmen were consulted. Unfortunately, many which would have illuminated the 'what-happened-next' of civilian life and health were not provided through either lack of availability or randomisation. This, frustratingly, left unanswered

questions. Had those suffering early psychological disturbance as revealed by wartime records and applications to the POW Trust found relief? Did they manage to live with their conditions, or had they endured life-long distress? Were dormant conditions reactivated? Moreover, not all of the files for the nine airmen incarcerated in Buchenwald were made available, thus precluding analysis of potential entrenched long-term individual psychological damage or shared trauma.

Access constraints aside, DVA's case files reveal much about German and Italian captivity as well as the physical, psychological, and emotional legacy of wartime imprisonment. Principal among these are personal accounts of wartime experiences and post-war mental health, symptoms, and responses which are contained in claims for recognition of conditions or treatment, and appeals against adverse decisions. Medical and treatment histories compiled by the department as well as Repatriation Tribunal Statements of Reasons are also important. So too are family medical histories; interviews with spouses; and doctor and specialist reports which, along with diagnoses and treatment plans, include in some cases summaries of patient interviews which outline late-life triggers or reactivations of psychiatric conditions. Other useful documents are case-related questionnaires; life-style reports which include intimate details of marriages, family life and finances; and correspondence with the department. DVA officials also acquired RAAF service medical records. These include details of recruitment boards which contain physical and medical history as well as salient points about family history; results of medical examinations conducted during initial assessment, training, and operational service; and medical assessments conducted in Britain before

repatriation to Australia, at Australian-based medical rehabilitation units, and immediately before discharge from service.

Compared to Clare Makepeace's, Matthew Johnson's, and Peter Monteath's respective studies of 142,319 members of the British armed forces, 9,140 New Zealanders, and approximately 8,400 Australian prisoners in Italian and German captivity, and Christina Twomey's account of the 1,500 or so Australian civilians interned by the Japanese, a cohort of 351 Australian airmen constitutes a manageable sample which allows for detailed analysis.[82] Accordingly, 295 extant post-war debriefs, 308 RAAF service files, and a large proportion of casualty files were consulted. Much of this thesis' analysis is underpinned by demographic detail extracted from these and others sources such as country and place of birth; social background; age at enlistment, capture, and death; air force mustering; date of capture; marital status; and religion. The cohort's demographic data does not stand in isolation. This work draws on pertinent social studies conducted by Australian historians such as John Barrett's 1982–1984 survey of the background, social and cultural attitudes, and experiences, of 3,700 ex-servicemen the Second AIF.[83] No such equivalent survey exists for airmen and, as such, Barrett's examination highlights the attitudes of the cohort's other service contemporaries and reflects commonalities of social and cultural experience. Social and cultural attitudes are also contextualised by reference to John McCarthy's study of the

[82] Makepeace, *Captives of War*, p. 3; Johnson, 'Resisting Captivity', PhD thesis, p. 1; Monteath, *P.O.W.*, p. 9; Twomey, *Australia's Forgotten Prisoners*, p. 1.
[83] Barrett, *We Were There*.

Empire Air Training Scheme and Janet McCalman's analysis of middle-class Melbournians born in or near 1920.[84]

A number of data samples inform this thesis. They are separate, but overlap. The 'medical sample' is based on the medical conditions of 128 members of the cohort. Eighty-five of those 128 men experienced some degree of emotional or psychological disturbance after liberation and homecoming, in the immediate post-war years, and in later life. They form the 'psychological sample'. Forty-two of the airmen were morally troubled to some degree. These form the 'moral sample'. The 'war crimes sample' comprises data from war crimes questionnaires completed by 112 members of the cohort shortly after liberation. In addition, morbidity details were collated for seventy former airmen who died at or before the age of sixty-six.

Methodological Challenges

The evidence on which this study is based is rich yet cannot be treated as unproblematic.[86] Records created in POW camps were subject to official censorship. Accordingly, as S.P. MacKenzie notes particularly in the case of letters, it is possible that the author has hidden his 'real feelings from what he thought would placate the enemy'.[87] The airmen also self-censored. Many made light of their tribulations, writing cheery letters which revealed little, if anything, of the trials of captivity. Some avoided subjects or wrote about them obliquely using coded words such as 'gardening' and 'outdoor sports' when

[84] McCarthy, *Last Call of Empire*; McCalman, *Journeyings*.
[86] Burke, *What is Cultural History?*, p. 20. For recognition of methodological challenges with personal narratives from a history of emotions perspective, see also Matt, 'Recovering the Invisible', in Matt and Stearns, (eds), *Doing Emotions History*, pp. 41–53; Thomson, 'Anzac Stories: Using Personal testimony in War History', p. 1.
[87] MacKenzie, 'British Prisoners of War in Nazi Germany', p. 185.

alluding to their tunnelling work. Without the addition of commentary such as in Harry Train's appendices in the post-war version of his diaries distributed to family and friends, secrets may remain hidden, or the ordinary may take on a new, but erroneous meaning.[89]

As they had been during the Great War, the press were again censored but censorship, in the case of POW letters, became a virtue. When the Prisoner of War Relatives' Association side-stepped reports that prisoners in Europe were not treated well and reprinted letters which did nothing to give the true picture of life in German camps, the chief censor acknowledged that the prisoners' 'cheer-up letters … allay fears'.[90] As well as attesting to their emotional well-being, those bright and jaunty letters home are important relics of emotive material culture. They mirror the 'heightened expectation of cheerfulness' that families and society expected in private and public interactions.[91] Accordingly, many upbeat letters to parents were proudly forwarded to newspaper and POW magazine editors for publication. This thesis draws on many of those published prisoner letters. As such, they, and other personal narratives, are contextualised against other sources. These include official documents such as reports by Red Cross and Protecting Powers' visitors, camp histories, escape reports, post-liberation debriefs, official correspondence contained on service files, war crimes questionnaires,

---

[89] Arnel archive: Train, 'A Barbed-Wire World', 19 July and 3 August 1942, Appendix 6 and 7 indicates gardening and sports were code for tunnelling. NAUK WO 224/63A: Red Cross and Protecting Powers reports, 25 August 1943, appendices D and F indicate that sport and gardening were legitimate pastimes.

[90] See for example letters in NLA FERG/4550: *P.O.W.*, No. 1, 28 January 1942, pp. 3, 5; No. 5, 15 June 1942, pp. 1–2, 3, 7; and No. 8, 15 September 1942, pp. 5, 12. Chief censor, E.G. Bonney, quoted in McKernan, *This War Never Ends*, p. 32.

[91] Stearns, 'In Private: The Individual and the Domestic Community', in Davidson and Damousi, (eds), *A Cultural History of the Emotions. Volume 6. In the Modern and Post-Modern Age*, pp. 134–135.

and statements provided to the Directorate of Military Intelligence Section 9 (MI9) after liberation. While these official records provide little evidence of the airmen's emotional lives, they contain useful detail about the physical conditions of capture, captivity, escape, and evasion, which provoke emotion.

MacKenzie's assessment of the effects of censorship holds up in the case of descriptions of prisoners' lives in diaries, wartime log books and letters to family. But airmen in love rarely censored their emotions. Reflecting society's radical transformation where emotional expression pervaded popular, literary, and artistic culture, men and women were more open to expressing intimate feelings in private and in correspondence.[92] Love letters, accordingly, are often frank, raw, and emotional. Filial and maternal emotions are also revealed in correspondence between mothers and sons.

There are often problems with late-life written and oral accounts.[94] Their recollected facts need to be checked. Seemingly contemporary, 'original' material should be appropriately date-stamped but is not always. Ronald Baines' typescript diary, largely reproducing written entries in his wartime log book, has some post-war interpolations presented in diary form. Nor did he necessarily write about a day's events on the actual day.[95] Jock Bryce left his log book containing his 1944 diary behind during the rush to prepare for the January 1945 forced evacuation and his 'POW Diary 1942–45' compiled from memory was written in 1946.[96] Moreover, interviewees

---

[92] Davidson and Damousi in 'Introduction', Davidson and Damousi, (eds), *A Cultural History of the Emotions. Volume 6. In the Modern and Post-Modern Age*, p. 6.
[94] Thomson, Anzac Stories', p. 14; MacKenzie, 'British Prisoners of War in Nazi Germany', p. 186.
[95] Baines appended a prologue and epilogue, both taken from his post-war memoir. Baines FA: Baines, 'A Wartime Log'.
[96] Bryce FA: Bryce, 'Jock Bryce's POW Diary 1942–1945', p. 16.

may be selective in what they share and conceal. Alec Arnel, while proving engagingly honest and open in most respects, firmly avoided specific subjects which were too upsetting.[97] Hindsight also plays a significant role in shaping memoir and oral history testimony.[98] Indeed, the act of recollection is an 'imaginative reconstruction', relating to composure.[99] Alistair Thomson's research recognises how recorded memories are influenced by culture—in his case, the 'Anzac legend'.[100] Oliver Wilkinson notes that some of his Great War cohort framed their experiences to adhere to a dominant public narrative which focused on derring-do and consequently sparked the escape narrative.[101] While composure may result in long-rehearsed, perhaps embroidered or shaped accounts, and some men may even incorporate 'history' to contextualise memories, contemplation of long-past events also reflects emotion. As such, the strength of late-life accounts as affective documents outweighs their weaknesses. Moreover, the airmen's wartime narratives were calculated personal and collective responses to captivity which had far-reaching implications.

DVA case files provide a particular challenge. Created to record claims for pensions and health assistance, medical testimony rarely highlights the positive aspects of captivity or post-war management of conditions. Nor are statements entirely accurate. To strengthen claims, some facts were elided or distorted. Negative aspects of captivity were emphasised. Conditions were

---

[97] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 7 August 2014.
[98] Sheridan (ed.), *Wartime Women: An Anthology of Women's Wartime Writing for Mass-Observation 1937–45*, p. x; Raftery and Schubert, *A Very Changed Man*, p. 23.
[99] Sir Frederick Bartlett quoted in Harrisson, *Living Through the Blitz*, p. 324.
[100] Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, pp. 8, 11–12.
[101] Wilkinson, *British Prisoners of War in First World War Germany*, p. 20.

presented as unremitting, rather than intermittent. Claimants portrayed themselves as victims rather than active agents successfully managing their war-related physical and psychological states. Antagonistic relationships are foregrounded in case files, as claimants contested decisions rejecting claims that their conditions were war-caused. The department often saw them as malingerers or undeserving of benefit. Despite these limitations, DVA case files are a rich repository of emotional responses to war-related frailties. They include reference to how men and their wives managed their physical health and psychological well-being. They reveal lifetime emotional and psychological responses to captivity. DVA case files are, as such, invaluable historical, medical, and affective records.

One of the conditions of consultation imposed by DVA is that individuals are not to be identified. Even when medical evidence appears elsewhere, such as in family records, it cannot be joined with DVA evidence to provide a full account of a person's lifetime physical, mental or emotional state. Even more frustrating are cases where crew members were downed during the same operation. One pair, for example, remained together during captivity. They shared similar experiences in the same camps, and later exhibited similar psychological states. Their shared experience cannot be compared or contrasted because to do so would reveal their identity. While anonymity is 'at the cost of history', it is, however, a legitimate constraint.[102] Neither Second World War veterans nor their family members provided consent for scholarly scrutiny and subsequent public release of their sensitive

[102] Scates, 'How war came home: reflections on the digitisation of Australia's repatriation files', p. 207.

and intimate testimony. Other than where family permission has been granted, evidence drawn from DVA case files has been deidentified and pseudonyms in italics are used (for example *Martin Quinlan*). While some historical divorce records are publicly available, names of women and children who were subject to family violence have also been changed.

One final challenge must be discussed. How can one 'read' emotions from a past era when those who felt them did not record them and are no longer living to explain or recover them? As Susan Matt attests, historians deftly use multiple sources to find and then interpret traces of affect.[103] Following scholars such as Annette Becker, Stephanie Downes, Sally Holloway, Sarah Randles, and Matt herself, this thesis uses textual, image, and object analysis to 'read' emotions.[104]

As stated above, the wartime letters of airmen in love abound with emotion. So too do diaries, such as Guy Grey-Smith's and Ronald Baines' which also served as means to communicate directly with their wives. This thesis draws extensively on personal narratives which reveal how airmen and their families felt. The commonality of wartime images and poems across wartime log books showcase collective emotions. This thesis analyses the language of emotion including reappropriation of negative terms, the power of words themselves, mixed tenses, punctuation, italics, and capitals; Yorick Smaal suggests how feminine pronouns and nouns indicate acceptance of

---

[103] Matt, 'Recovering the Invisible: Methods for the Historical Study of the Emotions', in Matt and Stearns, (eds), *Doing Emotions History*, p. 42.
[104] Becker, Annette, 'Introduction, Part II, Languages of Captivity: Bodies and Minds Behind the Barbed Wire', in Pathé and Théofilakis (eds), *Wartime Captivity in the Twentieth Century*; Downes, Holloway, and Randles, 'Introduction', in Downes, Holloway, and Randles, (eds), *Feeling Things*; Matt, 'Recovering the Invisible: Methods for the Historical Study of the Emotions', in Matt and Stearns, (eds), *Doing Emotions History*.

female personas.[105] What could more stridently declare the heightened emotions of an airman recording his removal from operations than 'FUR SIE DER KRIEG IST BEENDET'[106] or 'I Wanted Wings!!!', the ironic acknowledgement that the dream of service aviation led eventually to captivity.[107] Choosing silence, as Jay Winter argues, is an emotional response.[108] Accordingly, the absence of words is also examined such as in the case of Charles Lark, whose authorial choice of silence was betrayed by the language he used in his memoir.[109]

Words (or their absence) are not the only means to record, declare, or imply emotion. Considering the intersection of materiality and emotions—the potency of 'things'[110]—this thesis canvasses a great range of visual and material objects. Many of these are imbued with emotion, even as they stand as evidence of experience, as is apparent by the ribbons carefully tied around bundles of Lola and Doug Hutchinson's wartime letters, left in place by their nephew (refer image 4).[111]

Drawing on the insights of Lucien Febvre, Susan Matt notes that 'human feelings are influenced by cultural and social life'.[112] Accordingly, this thesis also recognises collective affective states by foregrounding

---

[105] Smaal, *Sex, Soldiers and the South Pacific, 1939–45*, p. 21.
[106] Dack, *So you Wanted Wings, Hey!*, p. 74. Original emphasis.
[107] Baines FA: Baines, wartime log book, p. 93.
[108] Winter, 'Thinking about Silence', in Ben-Ze'ev, Gino, and Winter (eds), *Shadows of War*, pp. 3–31.
[109] Authorial choice: Winter, 'Thinking about Silence', in Ben-Ze'ev, Gino, and Winter (eds), *Shadows of War*, pp. 4–11.
[110] Downes, Holloway, and Randles, (eds), *Feeling Things.* Refer Part I, 'Potent Things'.
[111] Downes, Holloway, and Randles, 'Introduction', in Downes, Holloway, and Randles, (eds), *Feeling Things*, p. 1; and Downes, Holloway, and Randles, 'A Feeling for Things, Past and Present', in Downes, Holloway, and Randles, (eds), *Feeling Things*, p. 14;
[112] Matt, 'Recovering the Invisible: Methods for the Historical Study of the Emotions', in Matt and Stearns, (eds), *Doing Emotions History*, p. 41.

emotional communities such as the 'brotherhood of airmen', 'RAF Station Sagan', and 'room crews'. There is of course a 'gap' between historical feelings and what can be uncovered or inferred.[113] This thesis, then, also relies on family recollection to interpret the emotions of 'their' prisoner of war. In addition, it reveals their own relationship with objects of affect. This multi-faceted interpretative lens enables subtle recovery of past emotion as well as sensitive interpretation of gaps and silences. The result is a nuanced analysis of deeply private states and affective responses.

Outline

This is a thematic thesis, divided into four parts. Part one—the introductory section—delineates the thesis and central arguments. It also includes historiography, a discussion of sources, and this chapter outline. As chapter one is largely an expository narrative which serves to contextualise the succeeding chapters, it is included in the introductory part. It introduces the cohort by establishing their social and military contexts including background, airmindedness, and motivations for enlisting. It also outlines German and Italian captivity infrastructures, Stalag Luft III's history and organisation, and the arc of the cohort's captivity experience.

Part two contains seven chapters which focus on how the cohort managed captivity. These chapters highlight how they adapted to captivity as *air men* and men of emotions, exploring how service identity contributed to very specific strategies to mitigate and ameliorate the strains of wartime

[113] Matt, 'Recovering the Invisible: Methods for the Historical Study of the Emotions', in Matt and Stearns, (eds), *Doing Emotions History*, p. 44.

imprisonment. Chapter two discusses the airmen's responses to capture and interrogation. It highlights their personal agency in actively resisting real and threatened assaults to physical safety and mental well-being. It examines the cohort's personal and collective agency in managing the negative effects of indefinite confinement by instituting morale-raising strategies including a new POW identity which denied their seeming non-combatant status, and enforcing air force discipline by constructing a de facto RAF station. Chapter three analyses the emotional, pragmatic, and service motivations underlying the airmen prisoners' commitment to disruptive agency, including active resistance and escape. Chapter four examines the strong service-based fraternal bonds and familial ties which helped abate the strains of incarceration. Those bonds, however, were under threat and, as such homosexuality (real or imagined) and self-interest which jeopardised communal and altruistic behaviour are also examined. This chapter looks at the prisoners' concept of 'home' and how they sought to replicate it behind barbed wire to create a supportive foundation for camp harmony and escape work, as well as an emotional link to their pre-service lives and loved ones. It also considers the gendered nature of their domestic practice, as well as threats to masculinity, fraternity, and social accord. Chapter five analyses the emotional dimensions of faith, and how some members of the cohort drew on religious beliefs and practices to manage and make sense of their captivity, including the deaths of the airmen killed in the post-Great Escape reprisals. It considers those who struggled to find religious consolation. It also discusses the place of altruism in captive lives. Chapter six analyses the airmen's strong emotional connections to their wives, fiancées and sweethearts, paying

particular attention to how they actively maintained their long-distance relationships. It reveals how, in some cases, their committed romantic and sexual agency enabled them to alleviate the emotional strains of captivity, but in others made separation harder to bear. Chapter seven explores the emotional and psychological implications of not coping with captivity—of going 'round the bend'. As well as considering the reactions of close family members to captivity, chapter eight details the familial and fictive kinship networks which provided support to the prisoners, as well as community networks which also buttressed and sustained. It analyses women's affective responses, including anticipatory and actual grief. It focuses on the emotional and practical support provided by close and extended family to ensure the airmen were neither neglected nor forgotten. In exploring the emotional and sexual strains of separation, this chapter highlights female agency in relieving both their own suffering and that of their captive loved ones. It also discusses how six Australian families mourned those of the cohort who never returned.

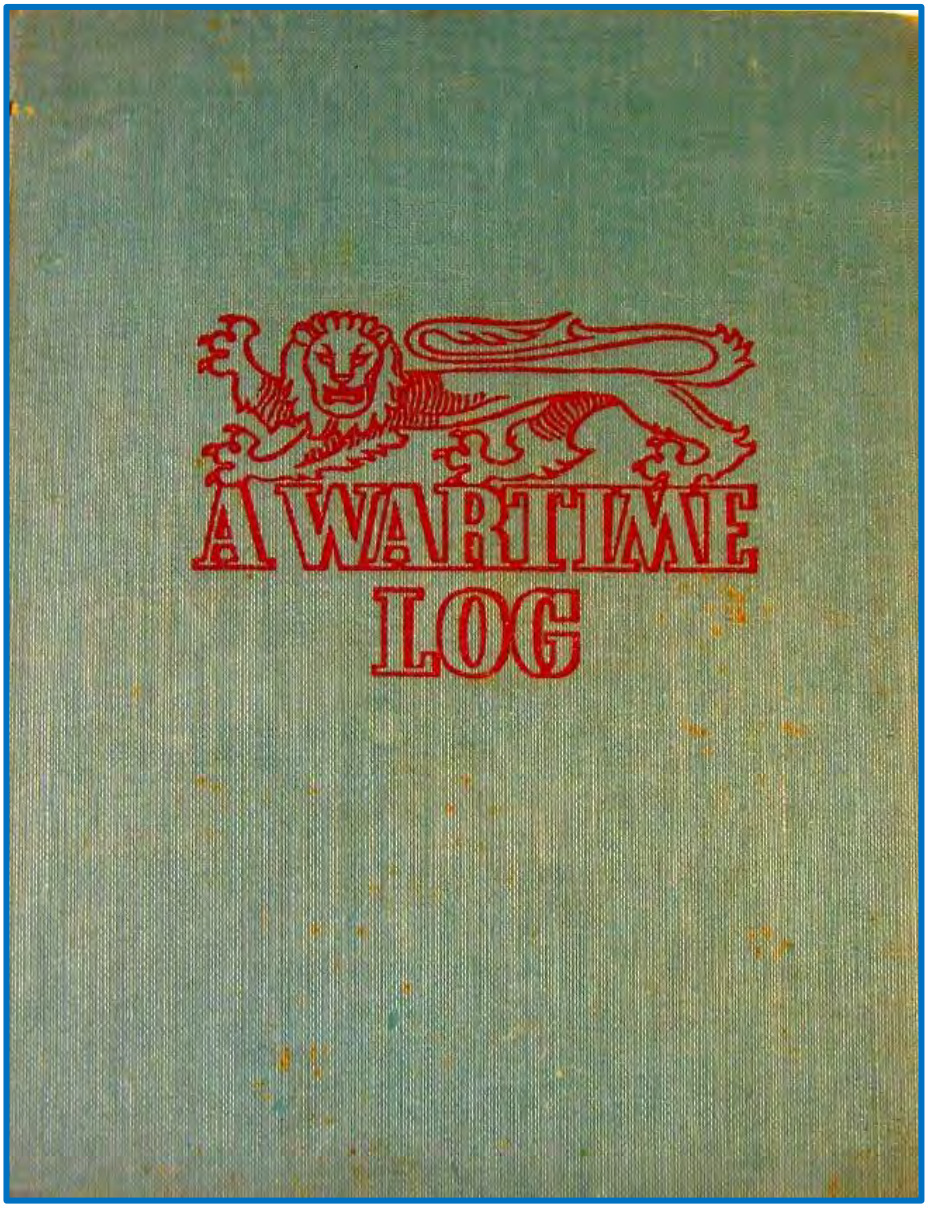
Part three turns to the cohort's post-war lives. Its four chapters analyse the long-term effects of captivity, which, for many, extended to death and, in some cases, permeated to members of succeeding generations. Chapter nine considers homecoming and how the former airmen adjusted to post-war life as they set aside their martial identities. Focusing on a 'legacy of loss' for both airman and family, it explores the challenges of return, including the loss of air force and captivity bonds, domestic unrest, employment difficulties, and compromised physical and psychological health.[114] It discusses how they

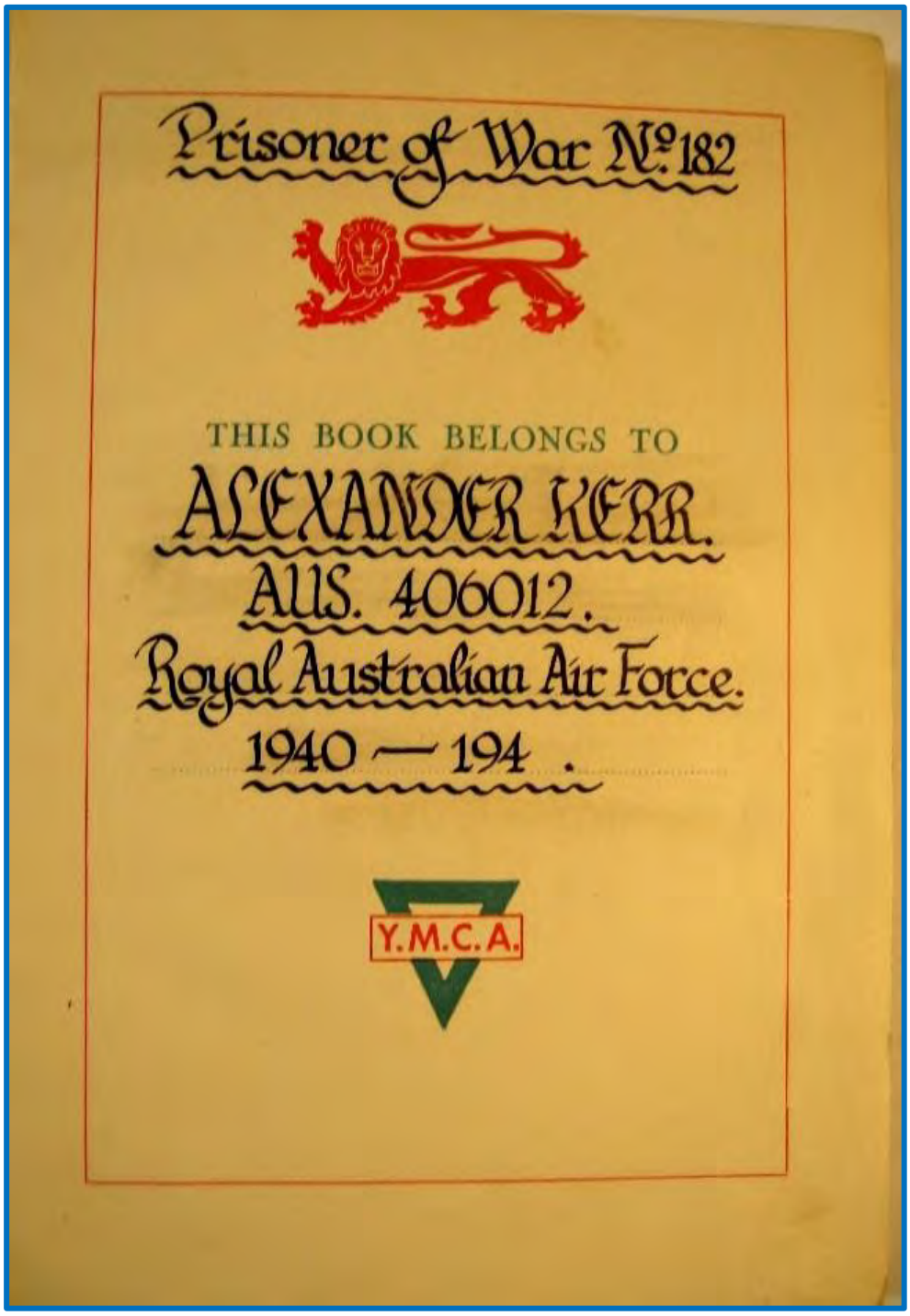
[114] Quote: Bomford, 'Fractured Lives', PhD thesis, p. 1.

managed those challenges. Chapter ten explores the physical, psychological, and emotional legacy of captivity, including the health consequences of long-term psychological disturbance, early deaths, suicide, and captivity trauma. It also considers how the mental resilience which underpinned successful management of captivity broke down in many cases, leading to psychological vulnerability. Chapter eleven explores the moral dimension of service and captivity and its relationship to war and captivity trauma. Chapter twelve looks at how the airmen composed meaning from their wartime experiences. It also explores how the cohort's loved ones made sense of those experiences and the legacy of them, including the airmen's silence. Part four consists of the conclusion. This thesis also includes one appendix which defines the Australian cohort. As no definitive roll of the Australians in Stalag Luft III exists, one was compiled for this study and is included in that appendix.

Introduction: Images

Wartime log books, provided to prisoners of war by the YMCA, were personal and communal resources. The Australian airmen wrote in or illustrated their own as well as others. Bill Fordyce's artwork appeared in many books. Image 3 reveals that drawing for others was not always an easy task.





Images 1–2: Alex Kerr's wartime log book. Kerr Archive.

Image 3: 'The 99th bloody log book!', 2 August 1944, by Bill Fordyce, in his wartime log book, p. 39. Fordyce Family Archive.

Letters are both historical and affective records because of what they say and what they represent. They record memory and invoke it. They are imbued with emotion. Lola Hutchinson's letters exist because her husband, Doug, preserved them during confinement in prisoner of war camps and, even when space was limited and extra weight was a trial on the forced march, carried them until he was liberated from captivity. Beryl Smith kept copies of each letter she sent her fiancé, Charles Fry. She and Lola kept every letter written to them while they waited for their men to return.

Image 4: The letters of Doug and Lola Hutchinson. Preserved by Doug, tied in ribbon. Hutchinson Family Archive.

Image 5: The wartime letters and records of Charles Fry and Beryl Smith, lovingly catalogued and preserved by their daughter. Fry Family Archive.

Chapter One: Overview

Resilience, the ability to adapt to new and threatening situations, is central to successfully adjusting to captivity.[1] The Australian airmen demonstrated a keen ability to acclimatise to their changed circumstances. It is clear from service records, family biographies, and late-life interviews that this capacity to adapt derived from a broad life experience and service culture. Accordingly, this largely explanatory section establishes the social and military frameworks which underpinned the cohort's responses to captivity. It surveys their backgrounds; considers their motivations to volunteer for service; outlines their wartime captivity experience; and includes an overview of Italian and German prisoner of war infrastructure.

Backgrounds

The majority of the Stalag Luft III cohort undertook aircrew training under the Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS), created in December 1939, by which the dominions provided trained aircrew for the RAF. Some of the cohort were pre-war RAAF enlistments; some had RAAF cadetships before receiving short service commissions with the RAF; and some enlisted directly into the RAF. Most were young men. At the outbreak of war, twenty-seven of the cohort had not yet celebrated their 17th birthday and 154 men—43.87 per cent—had not turned twenty-one. They came from a variety of social and family backgrounds. Just over half of the 320 Australian-born members of the cohort were born in capital cities, with most coming from Sydney and

[1] Ursano and Rundell, 'The Prisoner of War', in Jones, Sparacino, Wilcox, Rothberg, and Stokes, *War Psychiatry*, p. 435.

Melbourne. Many families, particularly from rural areas, suffered the effects of the Depression or failed soldier settler schemes, and experienced great poverty. Some were touched by the vicissitudes of life; parents died and children were sent to relatives or orphanages. Others were sons of businessmen or pastoral families.

Many of the cohort had served with the Militia during the interwar years or had trained with school cadets. Ultimately, they preferred the air force to wartime service with an uninspiring and—to some—boring army. In an attempt to determine their military destiny, most volunteered for aircrew training before reaching the age of compulsory Militia call-up including David Jennings, who applied shortly after he turned twenty because he did not want to be conscripted, and Rex Austin who joined 'as soon as I possibly could, which was shortly after my 18th birthday'.[2]

Joining the air force

Three hundred and nine of the cohort enlisted in the wartime RAAF, indicating considerable diversity and complexity in their individual decisions to volunteer. 'I've always been airminded', Jack Donald recalled in 1990. Like other boys, he was passionate about flying. He made model aeroplanes, participated in competitions run by the Model Aeroplane Association, gained a flying scholarship from the Australian Air League, and obtained his licence from the Royal Aero Club just before war broke out.[3] He was one of many brought up in a prevailing climate of 'airmindedness', where initial public

[2] AAWFA: Jennings 1704, 19 March 2004; Austin 0382, 5 June 2003.
[3] AWM S00952 KMSA: Donald, Jack, 4 July 1990.

awe at the concept of flight evolved from fascination with flying to a general appreciation of the benefits of an aviation industry, and recognition of a place for aviation in warfare.[4]

Aviation news featured frequently in the press. Pioneering pilots undertook grand tours after record-breaking flights and avid crowds attended aviation films. Seduced by the glamour, many of the cohort became 'hooked on flying' and dreamed of taking to the air themselves.[5] Many took joy flights. Some were enthused by aviation heroes such as Bert Hinkler, Charles Kingsford Smith, and Amy Johnson. Later volunteers were inspired by the successes of Battle of Britain pilots such as 'Cobber' Kane, 'Paddy' Finucane and Robert Stanford Tuck, (who would also later be imprisoned in Stalag Luft III). Some, like Jack Donald, took up flying scholarships. Others learned to fly privately, or joined university air squadrons. For *Robin Sumner*, almost impossible dreams of flying turned into a 'burning ambition'.[6] Australia's small post-Great War civil aviation industry could not accommodate many newcomers. Accordingly, some young men turned to service aviation to fulfil their dreams but it was by no means a second-best option. Service aviation represented modernity. Drawn to the distinctive cultures of the RAF and RAAF with their sleek, attractive, modern machines, many responded to recruitment campaigns.[7] The 'heroic identity' which prevailed after the Great

---

[4] Edmonds, 'How Australians were made airminded', pp. 183–206; McCarthy, *Last Call of Empire*, pp. 35–36; 'Air Trainees. Record Number for RAAF', *The Canberra Times*, 8 July 1936, p. 4.

[5] Quote: Kerr, *Shot Down*, pp. 23–24. In her study of veteran memoirists, Frances Houghton notes that many airmen were seduced by the apparent glamour of flying. Houghton, *The Veterans' Tale*, p. 216.

[6] DVA NMX272113-01: letter to Deputy Commissioner, Department of Veterans' Affairs, 27 January 1997.

[7] Hasluck, *The Government and the People 1939–1941*, p. 400; James, *The Paladins*, pp. 143 and 212; Coulthard-Clark, *The Third Brother: The Royal Australian Air Force 1921–39*.

War translated to a strong, glamorous interwar air force.[8] There was also a perception of service exclusivity, elitism, and social cachet; many believed only the fittest, brightest, healthiest, specimens were recruited for aircrew. (RAAF medical records reveal the high standard of health expected of recruits who were required to relate full family and personal health histories.[9])

Historians of emotions Ville Kivimäki and Tuomas Tepora argue that love, not hate, motivates people to fight. Duty to Empire, country, people, or family—even air force pride—are expressions of that love; altruism, they note, is one of the 'positive' emotions of war.[10] Some of the cohort, in late-life recollection, indicated a firm altruistic spirit, patriotism, or sense of duty when they decided to volunteer for the air force.[11] Many had a strong commitment to Australia, Britain, and Empire. Graham Berry 'went in because I wanted to fight for [my] country'.[12] John Williams believed that Britain, and consequently Australia, would have to take a stand against Hitler and Nazi Germany.[13] Kenneth Gaulton, as well as British-born Geoffrey

---

North Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991, pp. 86–87; Edmonds, 'How Australians were made airminded', p. 197. For RAAF recruitment advertisements, see *The Canberra Times*, 11 July 1934 and 28 January 1935; *The Mercury* (Hobart), 22 August 1931, 16 July 1932, 11 November 1933, 21 July 1934 and 31 August 1935.

[8] Paris, 'The Rise of the Airmen: The Origins of Air Force Elitism, c. 1890–1918', pp. 123–141. Quote: Mahoney, 'Trenchard's Doctrine: Organisational Culture, the "Air Force Spirit" and the Foundation of the Royal Air Force in the Interwar Years', p. 170.

[9] Many of these recruitment medical reports are on DVA case files. Most aircrew recruits declared little more than the usual range of childhood illnesses (mumps, measles) and removal of tonsils.

[10] Kivimäki and Tepora, 'War of Hearts: Love and Collective Attachment as Integrating Factors in Finland during World War II', pp. 285, 292, 293.

[11] In his study of British and German soldiers in the Great War, Alexander Watson notes duty as a significant rationale for enlisting. Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, pp. 51–53.

[12] Alexander records: Berry, interview 7 June 2016.

[13] Williams, *A True Story of the Great Escape*, p. 71.

Coombes and Robert Roy Nightingale (known as Roy), felt a keen need to come to the aid of Britain and family.[14]

Those with high-minded ideals, however, were countered by a number of men more interested in flying and adventure.[15] Self-interest, self-preservation, or even boredom, were other prime motivations. Geoffrey 'Geoff' Cornish calculated that the gratuity paid at the end of his short service commission would fund a considerable part of the tuition costs for a medical degree.[16] Despite his Militia experience, Paul Brickhill had 'no intention of going 12,000 odd miles to stick a bayonet in the insides of a man to whom I have never even been formally introduced—or, more to the point, have a total stranger stick a bayonet into my insides'. He would, however, reconsider if Australia was directly threatened, 'which is an unlikely necessity'.[17] Gilbert Docking, well-versed in stories of Great War combat on the Western Front, thought of his comfort. 'I joined the air force because at least you have a clean bed to sleep in at night. Not sleep in your muddy boots in more or less a trench [with] mud … up to your knees.'[18] Ronald Baines had 'no inkling to join' but, finding 'army life rather boring' when an air force officer came to his depot to recruit men for the expanding RAAF, 'I was easily swayed'.[19] In some cases, the horrific effects of trench warfare had reverberated through families,

---

[14] AAWFA: Gaulton 1276, 3 February, 2004; AWM S00551 KMSA: Coombes, Geoffrey Bernard, 23 March 1989; Nightingale FA: Nightingale, 'Wartime Records of Robert Roy Nightingale' [Prologue].
[15] Nelson, *If Winter Comes*, p. 2; Wickham, *We Wore Blue*, p. 9; Royle archive: Royle, RAF service record; SLWA: Royle, 4 March 2014; Alexander records: Pat Martin, interview 27 September 2016; AAWFA: Austin 0382, 5 June 2003.
[16] Hayes, *Beyond the Great Escape*, p. 30.
[17] AWM PR03099: Paul Brickhill, letter to Del Fox, undated [c. September 1939].
[18] NLA AHFC: Gilbert Docking, 2014.
[19] Baines, 'We are at War', unpublished manuscript, p. 2.

engendering a distaste of bayonet fighting, an aversion to soldiering, and a preference for the air force's remoteness from face-to-face combat.

The majority of the cohort were early volunteers. Thirty-nine were already in the air force by the end of 1939. Most were in RAF service. Thousands of young men rushed to join the wartime RAAF—Geoffrey Coombes enlisted on 25 September 1939—and the number of early aircrew applications overwhelmed the RAAF. Of the 11,500 men who had applied to join the air force by 30 March 1940, 4,617 had been interviewed and 1,973 selected, of whom 184 had actually started training and 1,789 had been put on the waiting list.[20] By the end of 1940, 144 of the cohort had enlisted in the RAAF and RAF, 116 had signed up in 1941 and fifty-two had attested in 1942. None of the cohort enlisted after December 1942.

Whether romantically idealistic, patriotic, altruistic, or self-interestedly pragmatic, the Stalag Luft III cohort indicated determined agency in choosing the air force before they were conscripted. Once the decision to enlist was made, however, new aircrew were largely at the mercy of air force requirements and organisation. As such, there was little personal choice in whether they would be mustered as pilots, navigators, or other crew positions, or even whether they would pass their preferred course. Some were 'scrubbed' (failed) and had to be remustered. The majority of the cohort—190 (54 per cent)—were mustered as pilots; 107 were bomber pilots and seventy flew fighter aircraft. (The higher number of bomber pilots is not surprising given the demands on Bomber Command.) Sixty-nine were

[20] McKernan, *The Strength of a Nation*, pp. 39–40.

mustered as navigators, mostly on bombers. Ninety-one qualified for other aircrew positions such as air gunners, and wireless operators. (76 per cent of the cohort were posted to bomber squadrons.) One man was a member of a desert ground crew. Just under 5 per cent of the cohort were attached to Coastal Command, photo-reconnaissance or other squadrons. Five of the bomber crew were still undergoing operational training when they were captured.

Prisoners of War

The first of the Stalag Luft III cohort to be taken prisoner—though he would not pass through the gates of the *Luftwaffe*'s principal prisoner of war camp for almost two years—was Peter Stubbs, an observer in the RAF who was downed on 11 May 1940 during the opening days of the Battle of France. Fourteen more of the cohort serving with the RAF were captured in 1940. The RAAF's first prisoners of war were ground crew captured in North Africa in early April 1941. Of these, only Lawrence Mostran spent time in Stalag Luft III. The first of the cohort's EATS captives was pilot Ronald Damman, a graduate of No. 1 Course, who was on his first operation.[21] A total of forty-three of the cohort went 'into the bag' in 1941, 105 in 1942, seventy-eight in 1943, and 110 in 1944. The last of the cohort to be captured were crew members David Jennings, Brian Hayes, and Gordon Hughes on 12 November 1944.

As signatories to the Geneva Convention, Germany and Italy were obliged to adhere to humanitarian governance and oversight which mediated

[21] HAHB-AF: RAAF Register of Prisoners of War or Internees, Part 1, 1–304.

captivity and precluded severe treatment of prisoners. Everyday life was made bearable through the Convention's welfare provisions and regular reporting by Red Cross and Protecting Power representatives. Protecting Power representatives were from neutral countries—originally the United States before it entered the war, and then Switzerland. They, along with Red Cross personnel, regularly inspected prisoner of war camps, spoke privately with prisoners, and reported on concerns relating to health, well-being, and the conditions of confinement. Many of the airmen were wounded during their final operational sortie, or when baling out, or crashing. The Geneva Convention called for adequate medical treatment but some of the airmen experienced deficiencies of care before they were sent to a permanent prisoner of war camp.[22] Kenneth 'Ken' Carson reported shortages of drugs and bandages. He was disdainful of the treatment he received in three Italian hospitals, including that at Caserta where a field dressing became embedded in his thigh and had to be surgically removed.[23] Alan Righetti, however, received decent care in that hospital and particularly commented on the kindness of the nuns.[24] The quality of German medical attention also varied. Hohemark clinic was often so full that many suffering only shock and minor wounds were neglected, and drugs were often in short supply.[25] Roy Nightingale reported that his captors were 'unwilling to give medical attention or bandages. They were short of medical supplies but were glad we

[22] Article 2 provides that they be treated humanely. Article 14 requires camps to possess an infirmary. 'Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War (27 July 1929)', Vance (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Prisoners of War and Internment*, pp. 508, 511.
[23] AWM 54 779/3/129: 11 PDRC post-liberation debrief, Carson; Alexander records: John Carson, interview 28 January 2016.
[24] AAWFA: Righetti 0984, 16 September 2003.
[25] Rollings, 'Dulag Luft', p. 24; AWM 54 779/3/129: 11 PDRC post-liberation debrief, Collings.

were wounded'.[26] Alexander 'Alex' Kerr considered that his slow recovery from wounds in action was mainly due to lack of fortifying foods to build up his strength.[27]

The earliest captured airmen were incarcerated in *Wehrmacht* (German army) camps until the *Luftwaffe* (German air force) established its own. Even after the *Luftwaffe* set up its own captivity infrastructure in 1940, some airmen prisoners were accommodated in *Wehrmacht* camps. Before they were extracted by the *Luftwaffe*, nine Australian airmen were illegally incarcerated in Buchenwald concentration camp, a facility for civilians run by the *Schutztaffel* (SS). Approximately 2,000 Australian prisoners of war captured in North Africa and the Mediterranean were accommodated in the more than seventy POW camps throughout Italy, including thirty members of the cohort.

A perception developed that captivity under the Italians was a relatively benign experience.[28] The reality was a great disparity of treatment which, in some instances, was severe.[29] The Italian system was overwhelmed by prisoners from North Africa, Greece and Crete. The Italians did not consistently separate British and Commonwealth men (they were all 'British'), nor did they segregate members of different services so smaller numbers of air force and naval personnel mixed with the tens of thousands of captured soldiers. As provided for by the Geneva Convention, officers and non-commissioned officers were, however, housed in different compounds or

[26] AWM 54 779/3/129: 11 PDRC post-liberation debrief, Nightingale.
[27] AWM 54 779/3/129: 11 PDRC post-liberation debrief, Kerr.
[28] Seumas Spark, 'Australian Prisoners of War of Italy in World War II', in Beaumont, Grant, and Pegram (eds), *Beyond Surrender*, pp. 135–152; Gilbert, *POW*, p. 69; Herington, *Air Power Over Europe, 1944–1945*, p. 474; Absalom, '"Another crack at Jerry"?', pp. 24–25.
[29] Seumas Spark, 'Australian Prisoners of War of Italy in World War II', in Beaumont, Grant, and Pegram (eds), *Beyond Surrender*, p. 135.

camps. Prisoners were often neglected and endured lengthy, unpleasant stays in transit camps. North Africa's main collection centre at Benghazi was squalid. The 'existence [there] was unutterably depressing' and Jock Bryce, who suffered hunger, septic sores, and dysentery, recalled that 'hundreds of the men were walking skeletons after five months of under-nourishment'.[30] It was perhaps worse at PG 75, Bari, a transit camp on the Italian mainland, where many, including Willard Fethers, Albert Comber, and Robert Condon were mistreated or endured substandard conditions.[31] (PG is short for *Prigione di Guerra*, prisoner of war.)

Accommodation improved once the men reached Italy's permanent camps and they received assistance from the Red Cross. There, the men 'embark[ed] on the very ordinary and uninteresting routine of captivity'.[32] Some existing structures such as the monastery at Padula were commandeered but, more usually, new barbed-wire camps were constructed.[33] Conditions, however, were still far from congenial. Horace 'Bill' Fordyce and Ken Carson recollected that PG 78, Sulmona was riddled with bed bugs.[34] Rations in some places were little better than in transit camps. Alan Righetti recalled they were 'absolutely basic' at PG 57, Gruppignano, a camp for non-commissioned officers. There,

---

[30] Bryce FA: 'Jock Bryce's POW Diary 1942–1945', p. 45.
[31] NAUK WO 310/9: PG 75 Bari, Italy: ill treatment of British personnel; Herington, *Air Power Over Europe, 1944–1945*, p. 477; AWM ART34781.001: drawing, Comber, 'In the cage at Bari, Italy', 1945; AWM 54 779/3/129: 11 PDRC post-liberation debriefs, Fethers, Comber and Robert Condon; SLSA SRG 869 Series 16: W.N. Fethers, item 35, 30 August 1991.
[32] Bryce FA: 'Jock Bryce's POW Diary 1942–1945', p. 63.
[33] Gilbert, *POW*, p. 69.
[34] AAWFA: Fordyce 0523, 19 June 2003; Carson, 'Brisbane's Ken Carson: Prisoner of the Axis. Part Four. From Sulmona as an Italian POW to Ford Bismarck as a German POW', p. 26.

supplementation by the Red Cross was essential and a parcel shared between four men was an 'absolute treat'.[35] Fordyce later claimed he would have starved without Red Cross parcels during his tenure in Italian camps.[36] Demonstrating considerable agency, prisoners in some camps were able to improve their diet through unofficial trading over the fence with civilians.[37] Others, such as Albert Comber in the officers' compound at PG 78, Sulmona, cultivated vegetable gardens.[38] Despite predominating recollections of poor rations, captivity in Italian camps was not a uniform experience. While Jock Bryce acknowledged that his 'first real experience of hunger' was at Bari, and that morale soared when the Red Cross parcels arrived, he enjoyed decent conditions and better food at PG 35, Padula. There, he and his fellow air force prisoners maintained a monthly tradition of RAF dinners. Similar in spirit to dining-in nights in pre-war messes, these were 'splendid affairs' with 'a good deal of wine and enough to eat'.[39] After Italy's armistice with the Allies in September 1943, several hundred POWs made their way to allied lines, neutral Switzerland or France, or joined local resistance forces.[40] The majority were taken into German custody.

Within weeks of the beginning of the war, the Germans recognised that allied personnel captured within Germany and German-held territories might provide intelligence about British morale, war-readiness, military strength, and matériel. Located just north-west of Frankfurt, one part of

[35] AAWFA: Righetti 0984, 16 September 2003.
[36] AAWFA: Fordyce 0523, 19 June 2003.
[37] AAWFA: Righetti 0984, 16 September 2003.
[38] Comber FA: Comber, letter to Win and George Dye, undated (after Easter 1943).
[39] Bryce FA: 'Jock Bryce's POW Diary 1942–1945', p. 90.
[40] Kittel, *Shooting Through*.

Durchgangslager der Luftwaffe (transit camp of the Air Force) known more simply as Dulag Luft, served as the *Luftwaffe*'s main transit camp.[41] The other half contained an intelligence-gathering centre.[42] There, captured airmen were subject to the challenges of interrogation in a well-established, professionally-operated facility. By intensively questioning new arrivals, scrutinising documents and equipment carried by the airmen, and examining crashed aircraft, intelligence staff developed a detailed knowledge of allied air operations. As a consequence, Dulag Luft, with its extensive archive, gained a reputation as the most efficient interrogation facility of the war.[43] Shortly after the *Luftwaffe* took control of captured airmen, a number of British and French prisoners of war were transferred to Dulag Luft as a cadre of permanent staff to help alleviate the shock of captivity and accustom new arrivals to the 'facts of life'.[44] Located in the main transit camp, the permanent staff also helped maintain air force discipline, and introduced mechanisms to negotiate captivity. In doing so, they cooperated with the Germans to the extent that many believed—erroneously—that they were collaborating.[45] The permanent staff implemented a POW administration system which, as well as senior staff positions, included posts such as Messing and Entertainments officers. They also devised ways to continue waging the war despite captivity. Coded letters were sent to MI9, escape efforts were coordinated, and Gardens

---

[41] Despite a number of name changes over the years, it continued to be referred to as Dulag Luft and, as such, for ease of reading, the complex is referred to in this thesis as Dulag Luft.
[42] The intelligence and transit sections were separated in September 1943; the intelligence staff remained at Oberursel but the transit camp was relocated to Frankfurt, near the railway station. That was destroyed in a raid in March 1944 and a camp was constructed at Wetzlar, about 48 kilometres north of Frankfurt. Interrogations continued to be carried out at Oberursel.
[43] O'Byrne FA: O'Byrne, untitled, undated account beginning 'Nine o'clock above!'
[44] Dack, *So you Wanted Wings, Hey!*, p. 81.
[45] MacKenzie, *The Colditz Myth*, pp. 137–138; AWM PR90/035: Ferres, 'A POW in Germany'.

Officer, Alexander 'Alex' Gould, who had previously studied geology, assessed suitable locations for escape tunnels.

After interrogation, prisoners were transported to a permanent camp. In July 1940, the *Luftwaffe* opened its first prisoner of war facility at Barth in western Pomerania, about 170 kilometres north-west of Berlin. Aircrew prisoners from army camps, such as Paul Royle, joined recently interrogated prisoners in the purpose-built facility which featured barrack blocks surrounded by barbed wire. (This provided the architectural template for later *Luftwaffe* camps.) As individual members of the permanent staff and new arrivals were transferred from Dulag Luft, the early lessons they had learned in captivity, the systems they had set in place, and their embryonic counter-intelligence and escape organisations transferred with them and were established in the permanent camps.

Officially, the complex at Barth was referred to as *Kriegsgefangenenslager der Luftwaffe*—the *Luftwaffe*'s prisoner of war camp—but was soon known as Stalag Luft. After more *Luftwaffe* camps were opened, it was referred to as Stalag Luft I. (Regardless of date, to avoid confusion, the camp at Barth will be referred to throughout as Stalag Luft I.) By mid-1941 it was obvious that Stalag Luft I would not accommodate all air force prisoners and so the *Luftwaffe* expanded its prison infrastructure. Herman Göring, *Reichsminister* of Aviation, the *Luftwaffe*'s commander-in-chief, envisioned a *musterlager*—warehouse—where all of the Allies' captured air force officers would be held. It had to be larger and more secure than Stalag Luft I, however, which had already seen a number of escape attempts, including by Paul Royle, Vincent 'Bush' Parker, and Ronald

Damman.[46] Accordingly, as well as serving as the *Luftwaffe*'s model camp, the new facility would draw on the lessons learned in earlier camps and would be, as much as possible, escape proof. Göring gave the order to commence construction in October 1941.

The *Luftwaffe*'s third camp, Stalag Luft III, opened in April 1942. It became the primary permanent facility for captured allied air personnel but failed to live up to Göring's expectations of a showcase camp. It was less comfortable than Stalag Luft I and Harry Train was one who thought the amenities of Dulag Luft's main compound were superior to those of Stalag Luft III.[47]

Stalag Luft III was constructed in the province of Lower Silesia, which was bordered by the Sudeten mountain range. It was a considerable distance from major population centres as well as neutral or friendly territory; Switzerland was approximately 690 kilometres away in a direct line. Fringed to the east, south and south-west by a dense coniferous forest, extending 30–48 kilometres towards the Czech border, the new camp was about 200 kilometres south-east of Berlin, about 177 kilometres north-east of Dresden, 160 kilometres from Breslau (now Wroclaw), and less than 2 kilometres from the centre of Sagan, (now Żagań, west Poland). It was tantalisingly close (from a prisoner's perspective) to what Stalag Luft III's first commandant, Friedrich Wilhelm von Lindeiner gennant von Wildau (von Lindeiner), termed a 'lively railway junction' of six lines connecting Sagan to most of

[46] Burgess, *'Bush' Parker*, p. 27; Royle archive: Royle, 'Stalag Luft III'; WO 208/3334/1574: MI9/SPG/LIB Liberation reports, Royle; AWM 54 81/4/135: MI9 report, Damman.
[47] Arnel archive: Train, 'A Barbed-Wire World', 30 May 1942, p. 11.

Germany and Eastern Europe.[48] If any prisoner managed to break out, Sagan's population of 24,000 and the *Wehrmacht* guards of nearby Stalag VIII-C would provide plenty of searchers.

German discipline and security within Stalag Luft III were strict and compounds were intentionally threatening environments, particularly, as Ken Carson, recalled, 'when pepped up' by a visit from the *Geheime Staatspolizei*, the Secret State Police more commonly known as the *Gestapo*.[49] Each compound was ringed by two barbed wire fences, three metres high, whose tops sloped inwards, making climbing out difficult. The two metre gap between, known as the *Löwengang*—Lions Walk—or 'no man's land', was filled with thick coils of barbed wire about a metre high. Nine or so metres from the inside barbed wire fence was a wooden rail. Prisoners were forbidden to cross it. If they did, they were given two alerts, after which the guards were ordered to shoot. Prisoners seen outside the barracks at night time were also fired upon. As John 'Jack' Morschel recalled, the forbidding barbed wire proved to be a 'persistent nightmare' for most of the prisoners.[50] On each corner of the fence, and every ninety metres around the perimeter, guards in watch towers armed with machine-guns overlooked the huts. Searchlights swept the compounds from nightfall until dawn. On an average, there was one guard per four prisoners. Armed sentries patrolled the wire and inside the compounds, manned the gates, and escorted all vehicles and visitors into camp. Sentries were doubled during air raids when lights were extinguished. *Hündführers* circuited the compound with Alsatian guard dogs. Following a

[48] Walton and Eberhardt, *From Commandant to Captive*, p. 55.
[49] Carson FA: Ken Carson, letter to mother and sister, 10 May 1945 (first letter).
[50] Morschel, *A Lancaster's Participation in Normandy Invasion 1944*, p. 64.

successful daylight escape through East Compound's perimeter fence in September 1942, patrols roved outside the fence between the watch towers, and in the nearby woods.

Stalag Luft III met the Geneva Convention's basic stipulation that prisoners be accommodated and victualled similarly to the detaining power's garrison troops. There were, however, many times when parity of rations was not possible and Red Cross food parcels were 'absolutely necessary … to sustain a healthy life'.[51] The Convention also provided that members of 'different races or nationalities' should not be grouped in the same camp.[52] As Australians were considered British, they, along with Canadians and other members of Empire, Commonwealth, and Dominion forces, were confined together.[53]

As the Convention provided for different treatment of different ranks, two compounds were built, one for officers (East) and the other for non-commissioned officers (Centre). After Stalag Luft III's non-commissioned and warrant officers were sent to Stalag Luft VI, Heydekrug in mid-1943, Centre became an officers' compound for Americans. While the *Luftwaffe* generally treated non-commissioned officers and officers similarly, officer camps were more congenial than those for non-commissioned officers. Accordingly, some, like Albert Hake and Ross Breheny, lied about their rank.[54] Officer compounds were serviced by non-commissioned officer

[51] NAUK AIR 40/269: Stalag Luft III reports and nominal roll.
[52] Vance (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Prisoners of War and Internment*, pp. 509–510.
[53] Americans lived with them for a time, until separate compounds were constructed. In the latter months of the war when the camp was full beyond capacity, some Americans were housed in the British compounds by further overcrowding already over-full rooms.
[54] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letter to Noela Hake, 23 November 1942; Harrison RC: Warrant Officer Ross Thomas Breheny, 404957, 145 Squadron RAF, [2008].

orderlies, usually army personnel—including a number of Australians—who performed 'household' duties and personal services, much as batmen did on RAF stations. While for much of its history after the exit of the non-commissioned officers Stalag Luft III ostensibly remained an officers-only camp, these were not the only exceptions to the camp's officer/NCO mix. The camp accommodated more non-commissioned officers after the Allied invasion of June 1944 when Germany's captivity infrastructure became stretched. In addition, all officer and non-commissioned officers extracted by the *Luftwaffe* from Buchenwald concentration camp were sent to Stalag Luft III. Recognising their rank, non-commissioned officers were required to carry out light orderly duties for the officers, such as sweeping huts and kitchen work.[55]

By August 1942, Stalag Luft III was full. Some of its prisoners, such as George Archer, Harry Train and Charles Fry, along with new arrivals, were sent to army camps until a new compound was built. Over time, more compounds were constructed. The third was referred to as West Compound when it opened in March 1943 but became known as North Compound from September 1943 when South Compound opened. (To avoid confusion, the third compound is hereafter referred to as North Compound.) The nearby satellite compound at Belaria was opened in early 1944 and West Compound followed in July 1944. Australians were held in East and Centre compounds, North Compound, and Belaria. Known variously as huts, blocks or barracks, the prisoners' single-story wooden quarters were built about 30 centimetres

[55] Burgess RC: Raymond Perry, 'War Diary', pp. 48 and 50.

off the ground to enable personnel from the *Abwehr*, the German anti-escape organisation, to crawl underneath searching for tunnel traps, fresh sand, and other signs of digging. Called 'ferrets' by the prisoners, they also entered the huts without warning, and ranged through roof cavities looking for evidence of escape work, and contraband. These 'blitz' searches were inconvenient and threatening. 'At any time', recalled Justin O'Byrne, 'dozens of Germans would rush into the barracks with bayonets fixed and kick us out. They would then proceed to upset beds, tear up linings of clothes, rip up floors and walls and pry into every minute corner of our belongings'.[56]

Huts were positioned at least 35 metres from the perimeter. They were, for Jock Bryce, 'drab' and 'in keeping with the general cheerlessness of our surroundings'.[57] Living quarters were functional. Depending on when a man arrived, they were just comfortable or hopelessly beyond capacity. An official report for North Compound, however, notes that apart from overcrowding, 'living conditions were at all times tolerable'.[58] Rooms were originally designed to hold six or eight men. When Stalag Luft III's population increased as the war progressed, some rooms held 'ten bods', such as in Paul Royle's, and in Ken Carson's room immediately before the camp was evacuated.[59] When Bruce Lumsden, Cyril 'Cy' Borsht, and Irwin John Dack (known as John) arrived at Belaria Compound in November 1944, they had to share a six metre square room with fifteen others.[60]

---

[56] O'Byrne FA: O'Byrne, '*Mercury* Radio Roundsman'.
[57] Bryce FA: 'Jock Bryce's POW Diary 1942–1945', p. 147.
[58] NAUK AIR 40/269: Stalag Luft III reports and nominal roll.
[59] Royle archive: 'Ten bods', coloured pencil drawing, Royle, wartime log. Carson FA: Ken Carson, letter to mother and sister, 10 May 1945 (first letter).
[60] Dack, *So you Wanted Wings, Hey!*, p. 85.

The airmen of Stalag Luft III almost immediately revealed their escape-mindedness. They started more than sixty tunnels in East Compound alone during the spring and summer of 1942 and many escape attempts were made during the camp's history. Stalag Luft III, however, is renowned for two escapes. The first, in October 1943, was the so-called Wooden Horse effort where three men from East Compound made a 'home run' to Britain. The second, more notorious scheme which has entered popular culture, is the Great Escape. Organised by the RAF's Roger Bushell, plans for a mass escape were implemented shortly after North Compound was opened in April 1942. The POWs dug three tunnels, which were known as 'Tom', 'Dick', and 'Harry'. One was discovered by the Germans, another was decommissioned, and 'Harry' remained the focus of the tunnellers' attention. Two hundred men tried to escape on the night of 24–25 March 1944. Six Australians were among the seventy-six who escaped. Bill Fordyce was still in the tunnel when the attempt was discovered. Many others, including Justin O'Byrne, had been awaiting their chance. Only three airmen made it back to Britain. Seventy-three were recaptured. Fifty were shot on Hitler's order in the post-escape reprisals, including Australians Albert Hake, James Catanach, Reginald 'Reg' Kierath, John Williams, and Thomas 'Tom' Leigh. Paul Royle, the only Australian Great Escape survivor, was sent back to Stalag Luft III.

In the latter months of the war, the Red Army advanced from the east. Germany evacuated many of its prisoner of war camps westward, including Stalag Luft III in late January 1945. The airmen were given little notice to quit and had to leave behind most of their personal belongings. This mass emptying of Germany's camps has been referred to by participants and

historians as the 'forced march', the 'long march', or simply, 'the march', and is recognised as one of the most challenging periods of German captivity.[61] 'It was no picnic trekking through the snow carrying on our backs everything we needed', Allan Mulligan told his mother.[62] Other prisoners hauled their possessions on makeshift sleds, sloshing through snow and, as it thawed, mud and slush, to Spremberg, about 96 kilometres from Stalag Luft III. There they were divided up and put into crowded, insanitary cattle trucks to embark on the 'next grim part' of their journey.[63] Approximately half of East Compound, along with the men of North Compound, were sent to *Marlag und Milag Nord*, a naval camp near Tarmstedt, arriving on 4 February. Between 9 and 28 April, they trekked another 149 kilometres to Trenthorst, near Lübeck.[64] The rest of East Compound and those in Belaria arrived at Stalag III-A, an army camp at Luckenwalde, on 4 February. The non-commissioned officers, who had left Stalag Luft III in mid-1943 for Stalag Luft VI, Heydekrug, were relocated to Thorn briefly in July 1944. They then moved to Stalag 357, Fallingbostel the following month, and were emptied out of that camp in early April 1945. 'Travelling in those boxcars was shocking', Ronald Baines wrote and, indeed, 45 per cent of the 'war crimes sample' reported appalling transport conditions.[65] '[N]o water issued for 30 hours—any signs of modesty I ever had left went by the board too—calls of nature were obeyed where you

---

[61] 'Forced march': Nichol and Rennel, *The Last Escape*, p. 326; Buckham, Robert, *Forced March to Freedom*. 'Long March': Makepeace, *Captives of War*, p. 2; Kerr, *Shot Down*, pp. 171, 194; Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'The Complete Tour', Lumsden, letters 23 March and 31 May 1989; AAWFA: Winn 1508, 4 March 2004. 'The March': Wickham, *We Wore Blue*, pp. 201–212; AAWFA: Fordyce 0523, 19 June 2003; NLA AHFC: Gilbert Docking, 2014.
[62] 'Bride Flew to Meet Freed P.O.W Husband', *The Sun* (Sydney), 1 July 1945, p. 10.
[63] Baines FA: Baines, wartime log book, 10 February 1945, p. 23.
[64] Taken from travel schedule in 3 Squadron RAAFA: 'Tom Wood Diary'.
[65] Baines FA: Baines, wartime log book, 3 February 1945, p. 71.

could, alongside the tracks; people passing by meant nothing', Baines recorded.[66]

After liberation, the airmen were flown back to Britain and despatched to RAF and RAAF personnel depots. There, the former prisoners were debriefed, medically examined, sent on leave to regain their health, and generally helped to settle into post-captivity life. When they were declared fit, the RAAF men enjoyed a long sea voyage to Australia. (RAF men stayed behind awaiting discharge. Some men married and remained in Britain.) After further assessment, including time spent in medical rehabilitation units, the majority were discharged from the RAAF and set about resuming their interrupted lives.

*****

In the wake of the Great War, many of the cohort or their families had experienced adversity on the land and during the Depression. One of the legacies of that hardship was, for many, a resilience which stood them in good stead during their childhoods, early manhood, army and air force training, operational careers, and captivity. 'There was a maturity in that sense; the people did seem to cope with the rough and tumble' of life, Alec Arnel reflected.[67] That resilience underpinned the cohort's ability to adapt to and manage the challenges they faced as prisoners of war, including, as discussed in chapter two, the shock of capture, interrogation, and indefinite wartime incarceration.

[66] Baines FA: Baines, wartime log book, 10 February 1945, p. 23.
[67] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 2 March 2017.

Chapter One: Maps and Images

Image 6: Stalag Luft III and other German POW camps in which Australian airmen were held: 1940–1945. Diane Bricknell.

Image 7: Location of Stalag Luft III in relation to escape routes, in Brickhill, *The Great Escape*, p. 181.

Many of the airmen depicted the stark parameters of their restricted lives of confinement in camp, compound, and room. The forbidding (foreboding) pine forest dominated many images. It, as well as the barbed wire, was as much a feature of confinement as the ubiquitous 'goon'. Turning to humour to manage despair, Bill Fordyce dubbed Stalag Luft III 'haven-in-the-pines'.[1]

Image 8: 'View of goon box from the trip wire', by Bill Fordyce, in his wartime log book [unpaginated]. Fordyce Family Archive.

[1] Fordyce FA: Fordyce, wartime log book, unpaginated section.

‘A dreary combination’, wrote Tim Mayo. ‘[B]arbed wire & an impenetrable wall of pine trees emphasising that hemmed in feeling.’

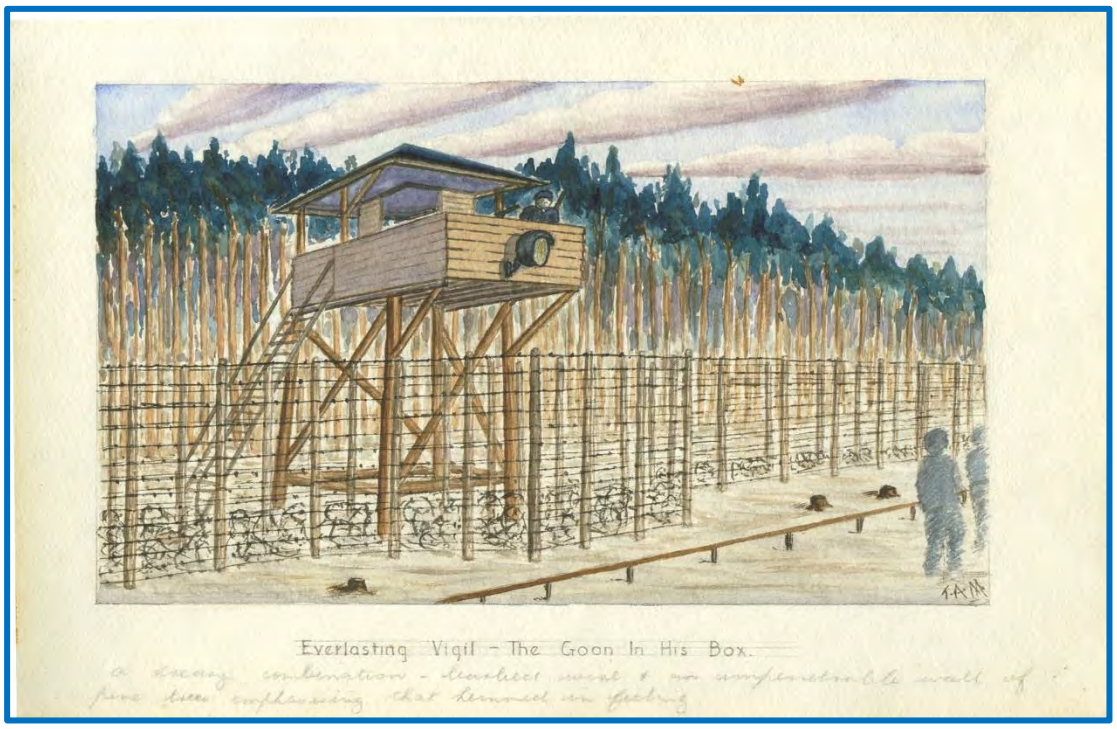


Image 9: ‘Everlasting Vigil—The Goon in His Box’, 1944. Watercolour by Tim Mayo. Mayo Family Archive.

Image 10: Goon on guard, by Ronald Baines, in his wartime log book, p. 103. Baines Family Archive.

Note the contrast of the heavily defined and coloured pine forest border in image 11 with the lightly sketched compound.

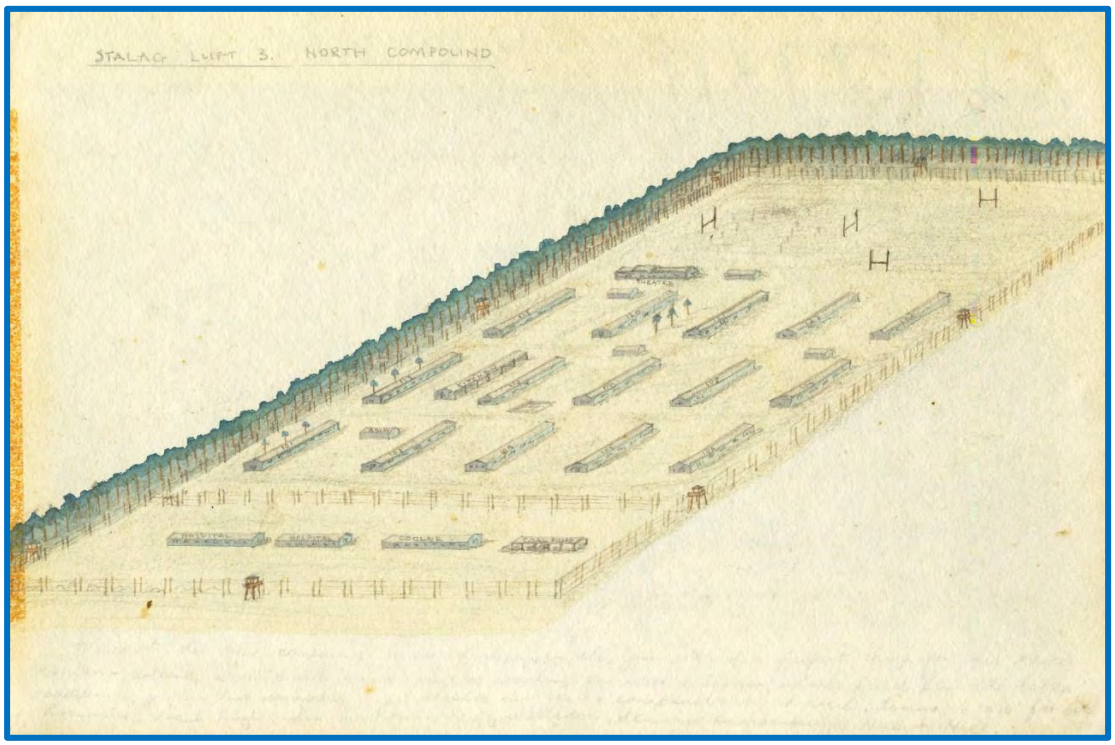


Image 11: Stalag Luft III, North Compound, by Tim Mayo. Mayo Family Archive.

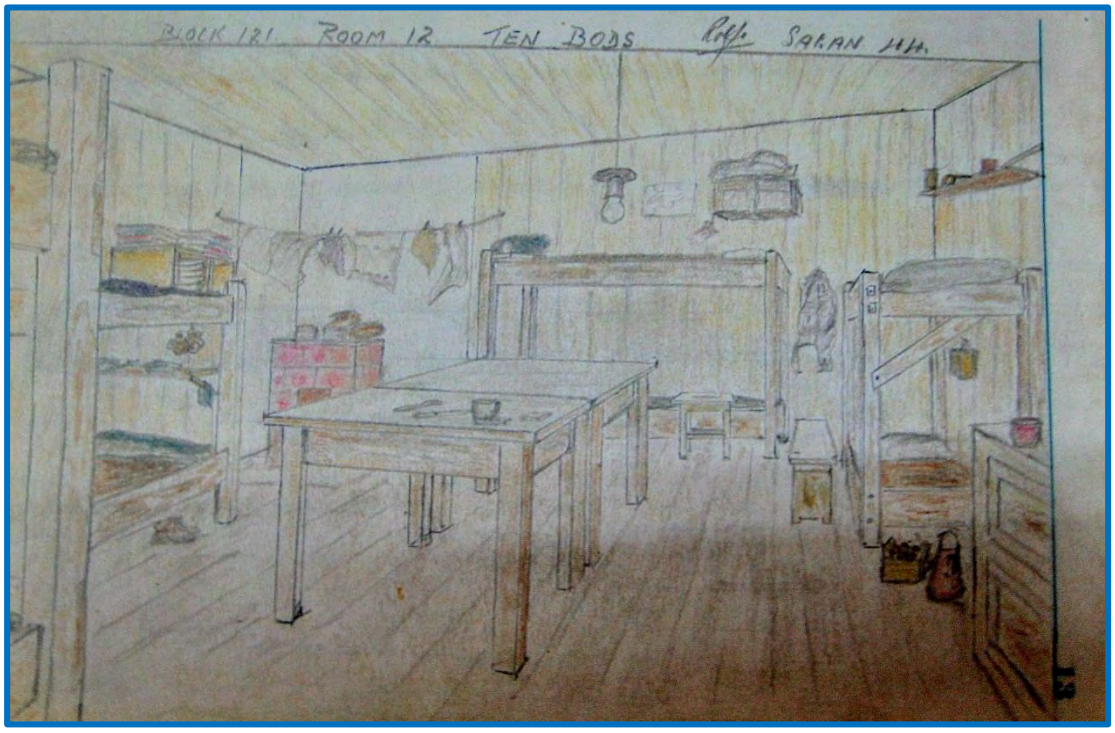


Image 12: 'Block 121, Room 12. Ten Bods', Sagan, 1944, drawing by [?] Rolfe, in Paul Royle's wartime log book, p. 13.

The forced march was a particularly challenging time for the airmen. This depiction by Albert Comber clearly reveals the exhaustion of the heavily-laden men as they paused to rest by the roadside with no amenities and little sustenance.

Image 13: 'Roadside Rest—The March from Sagan', by Albert Comber. Netherway Family Archive.

Families who received copies of this image of the Australian airmen in North Compound would have been cheered by the sight of their loved ones looking fit and smartly attired in uniform. But like many of the images painted by Tim Mayo (smiling, front row, second from left), this photograph is bordered by pine trees, as effective a barrier from the outside world as barbed wire.

Image 14: Australians in North Compound, Stalag Luft III, 25 April 1943 (Anzac Day). Fraser Family Archive.

Part Two: Managing Captivity

Chapter Two: Men of War[1]

Capture and its immediate aftermath was a time of acute psychological and emotional stress.[2] This chapter discusses the cohort's emotional responses during what is acknowledged as the most challenging period of captivity: capture; the first days as prisoners of war; and interrogation.[3] After detailing the prisoners' initial responses to the prison camp and the dispiriting effects of captivity, it then analyses how the cohort asserted their martial air force identities. It argues that, despite pain, shock, shame, helplessness, fear, and an initial sense of powerlessness, the airmen drew on personal resources and service protocol to overcome the shock of capture, resist passivity, and stand strong against the ordeal of interrogation. Once in permanent confinement, they exerted individual and collective agency to manage captivity through humour, leadership, and discipline.

The shock of capture

From the moment they baled out of, or crawled from, a crashed, burning, or sinking aircraft, many airmen suffered disorientating shock. This was both a powerful emotional reaction and physical state; it was often compounded by pain. Many airmen were psychologically disturbed by witnessing dead or

---

[1] Some of the text in this chapter appears in Alexander, '"For you the war is (not) over": Active Disruption in the Barbed Wire Battleground'.

[2] Ursano and Rundell, 'The Prisoner of War', pp. 176–180; Ursano and Rundell, 'The Prisoner of War', in Jones, Sparacino, Wilcox, Rothberg, and Stokes, *War Psychiatry*, pp. 431–455; Newman, 'The Prisoner-of-War Mentality: Its Effect After Repatriation', p. 8

[3] Monteath, 'Behind the Colditz Myth', in Beaumont, Grant, and Pegram (eds), *Beyond Surrender*, p. 119.

dying crew members. Frank Falkenmire, dazed after baling out, was confronted by the bodies of four of his crew mates; his captors told him that two others were still in the blazing aircraft.[4] Twenty-year-old Rex Austin, forced to identify his dead friends, found it difficult to tell who one of them was. 'I think my mental state was such that I didn't want to look too hard.'[5] John Dack's response to the accumulated shock of flying through flak, holding a burning heavy bomber steady while his crew baled out, searching for his parachute because his flight engineer had not passed it to him, half drowning before he remembered to inflate his Mae West, spending hours in the water before he was rescued, followed by being told that his captors had shot his crew, was to laugh hysterically.[6] Cy Borsht's reflections of the aftermath of his final operation and first hours of captivity, however, provide an important counterpoint. 'I don't think we were capable of feeling shock', he claimed, indicating a resilience born from the emotionally draining experience of operational service. 'We'd already seen so much, and this was just another bloody incident.' Looking back on that time seven decades later, he acknowledged that '[i]t's hard to pinpoint your attitudes in war because nothing is normal. Nothing'.[7] Borsht had become inured to shock.

Despite any personal fear, sense of helplessness, or shock, an airman's first duty was to his fellow crew members. This was particularly the case for captains of bomber aircraft who stayed at the controls until everyone who could had baled out; some lost their own lives by doing so. Other crew

[4] Spurling, *A Grave Too Far Away*, p. 201.
[5] AAWFA: Austin 0382, 5 June 2003.
[6] Dack, *So you Wanted Wings, Hey!*, pp. 74–75.
[7] Veitch, *Heroes of the Skies*, p. 54.

members looked to the safety of their fellows. The able-bodied tried to save the badly injured before they abandoned plummeting aircraft. Others pulled comrades from burning wrecks, hauled them into dinghies, or towed them to land. For some, like Douglas Hurditch who had nursed his aircraft to a safe belly landing, there was no thought of evading capture as he tended to his wounded crew; he carried his rear-gunner to a nearby farm house.[8] When duty to crew had been satisfied, the airmen fulfilled their obligations to King and service. They destroyed papers, secret devices, and intact aircraft to ensure they did not fall into enemy hands. They disposed of their parachutes. The injured hid escape kits. Then, if they had not already been taken prisoner, the hale tried to evade so they could return to Britain and active duty. The majority however, were captured.

Downed airmen experienced many emotions. Bruce Lumsden feared 'the unknown and what is going to happen'.[9] Alec Arnel could barely acknowledge his new status as a prisoner of war because it was 'too crushing'.[10] He felt 'very low emotionally'. He was overwhelmed by 'the awfulness' of the end of his fighter pilot career and the sense of isolation ensuing from his exclusion from aerial operations.[11] Arnel was so 'deeply depressed' when first captured that he hardly noticed his wounds. His depression worsened when he was paraded through the streets and jeered at by civilians. He laughed semi-hysterically during his preliminary interrogation. So shaken was he that when asked for his squadron call-sign,

[8] Younger, *No Flight From the Cage*, p. 58.
[9] Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'The Complete Tour', Lumsden, letter 24 June 1986.
[10] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 29 October 2015.
[11] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 2 March 2017.

he told his questioners that he could not remember it. 'My defence mechanism was at work and my memory was repressed.'[12] For Wesley Betts, the shock of preceding events was eclipsed by the realisation that 'you no longer have any control over your life. You are at the mercy of your captors'.[13] That sense of powerlessness was common and added to the all-encompassing emotions characteristic of the initial stages of captivity.

Shame is an overwhelming emotion. It expresses innermost feelings of self but it is also a social emotion, emanating from how others perceive us.[14] It manifests when we fall short of what we expect of ourselves, or what others expect of us (or what we believe they expect). While guilt is a separate emotion, shame often involves an element of guilt.[15] When Alec Arnel was brought down by flak and taken prisoner almost immediately, he felt more than a loss of dignity. Capture was, he recalled, 'a knockout blow'. The burning, personal shame at being removed from the air war was still acute in interview seventy-one years later.[17]

Arnel was just one of many servicemen throughout the history of war who experienced shame when captured.[18] Some confessed their imagined culpability in the deaths of comrades to chaplains.[19] They recorded their shame in the privacy of post-war reflective writings; it was apparent in their

---

[12] Arnel in Rolland (ed.), *Airmen I have Met*, p. 173.
[13] SLSA SRG 869 Series 14: Wesley H. Betts, item 92, 23 January 2002.
[14] Steinberg, 'Emotions and History in Eastern Europe', in Matt and Stearns, (eds), *Doing Emotions History*, p. 80.
[15] Stearns, 'Shame, and a Challenge for Emotions History', pp. 198–199.
[17] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 29 October 2015.
[18] Gilbert, *POW*, p. 41; Pegram, 'Bold Bids for Freedom', in Beaumont, Grant, and Pegram (eds), *Beyond Surrender*, p. 25; James, '"I hope you are not too ashamed of me": Prisoners in the siege of Tobruk', in Beaumont, Grant, and Pegram (eds), *Beyond Surrender*, pp. 101–102; Ariotti, *Captive Anzacs*, pp. 28–30.
[19] Thompson, *Captives to Freedom*, p. 162.

bewildered questions about their 'fateful day'.[20] They queried their competency: 'Why didn't I fly lower? Could I have weaved more? If only …'.[21] Some, like Calton Younger, felt 'miserable at my failure'.[22] Others dreaded that loved ones would be disappointed in them. Mixing his tenses suggests that Rex Austin had stepped from the present and returned to that emotional moment: '[w]hat's Mum and Dad going to say about this? I had a girlfriend in England, what's she going to say about this', he asked.[23] Shame, however, often mingled with an almost embarrassing relief. 'I think I was pleased to be alive to be honest', recalled Cy Borsht.[24] Even despite his deep shame, an unsettling 'sense of relief at having my feet on the ground' washed over Alec Arnel.[25]

Capture, many acknowledged on reflection, was a turning point.[26] On realising he was no longer an operational fighter pilot, Justin O'Byrne recalled the 'horrible thought' that 'passed through my mind, My God, I am a prisoner of war!'[27] Thomas 'Tom' Wood, acknowledged that he had transitioned to another phase of service life. 'It was at this time that my career as a prisoner of war began.'[28] Others also strongly remembered their captors uttering in English, German, and French, 'the usual taunt' offered to prisoners

---

[20] Ronald Baines: 'my downfall', Baines FA: Baines, 'Shock 1942', p. 16; Jock Bryce: 'that regrettable day' and 'the time of our downfall', Bryce FA: 'Jock Bryce's POW Diary 1942–1945', pp. 5 and 8; Ken Carson: 'fateful day', Carson, 'Brisbane's Ken Carson: Prisoner of the Axis. Part Two. From Alexandria to Tobruk', p. 22.
[21] Baines FA: Baines, 'Shock 1942', p. 18.
[22] Younger, *No Flight From the Cage*, p. 40.
[23] AAWFA: Austin 0382, 5 June 2003.
[24] Alexander records: Borsht, interview 28 January 2016.
[25] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 2 March 2017.
[26] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 2 March 2017; Nelson, *If Winter Comes*, p. 48; Fordyce in Billett, *Memories of War*, p. 188; Carson, 'Brisbane's Ken Carson: Prisoner of the Axis. Part Two. From Alexandria to Tobruk', p. 22; Nelson, *If Winter Comes*, p. 48.
[27] O'Byrne, 'Nine o'clock above!'
[28] 3 Squadron RAAFA: 'Tom Wood Diary', p. 26.

of war, 'For you the war is over'.[29] John Dack never forgot the moment when a German soldier told him that 'FUR SIE DER KRIEG IST BEENDET'.[30] Geoff Cornish recalled with wry humour that the words were uttered while a loaded, fully cocked pistol was pointed at his head.[31] For many, it became a standing joke and ultimately entered popular culture.[32] While the ubiquitous phrase features more in late-life accounts—neither George Archer, Alec Arnel, Reg Kierath, Charles Fry, nor Harry Train recorded it in their letters or diaries—the 'well-worn cliché' had already been bandied about so frequently that, in the earliest pages of Ronald Baines' wartime log book (started in July 1944) he dubbed it 'the classic phrase'.[33] Paul Brickhill, too, referred to the 'old formula'.[34]

As they grappled with the thought that, 'for [them] the war was over', some pondered their immediate future. Calton Younger remembered worrying 'about the inquisition that awaited me'.[35] The loss of freedom was a trial almost too difficult to articulate for Alec Arnel. Writing four months after his capture, he asked his confidante, his sweetheart's mother, to imagine a fighter pilot's 'thoughts when his free, vital life is suddenly exchanged for that of a prisoner of war'.[36] Ronald Baines, still dazed from being under fire and a crash landing, looked through the window of a German transport

---

[29] 'Usual taunt', Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'The Complete Tour', Lumsden, letter 24 June 1986.
[30] Dack, *So you Wanted Wings, Hey!*, p. 74. Original emphasis.
[31] AAWFA: Cornish 1388, 2 July 2004.
[32] Standing joke: Anderson and Westmacott, *Handle with Care*, pp. 4–5. Popular culture: Barker, *Keith Carmody*, p. 49; Vance, 'The War Behind the Wire', p. 675.
[33] 'well-worn cliché': Vance, 'The War Behind the Wire', p. 675. 'classic phrase': Baines FA: Baines, wartime log book, p. 8.
[34] Brickhill and Norton, *Escape to Danger*, p. 170. Brickhill was not identified in this account.
[35] Younger, *No Flight From the Cage*, p. 40.
[36] Arnel archive: Arnel, letter to Mrs M. Gray 30 October 1944.

aircraft at the disappearing African coast. He 'fell into a dark black hole of the deepest misery as the reality of the situation sunk in'. His emotions were stark. His first thoughts were of his bride of only a few weeks. 'I could no longer contact my beautiful wife. Would I ever see her again?' He then tried to contemplate his fate but it was useless. 'My future [was] a complete blank.'[37]

Rapid removal from the scene of their downing resulted in a strong sense of dislocation. *Marcus Myatt* was 'shocked and confused'; time had little meaning to him.[38] Jock Bryce and his fellow captives 'felt ourselves at the start to be strangers in a queer world'.[39] Everything was totally alien to their normal environment of well-apportioned and -provisioned British-based RAF stations or the dirty but convivial tented accommodation on desert landing strips. Their dislocation was not just geographical, however. It emanated from disbelief. While they accepted that they might die in action and had been briefed about the possibility, the 'idea of surviving, but as a prisoner-of-war' had never occurred to them.[40]

Disorientation, dislocation, and disbelief had a serious effect. The best chance of avoiding life in captivity was to either evade capture or escape before permanent confinement.[41] But not everyone could. Injury prevented it for some, like Rex Austin who broke his ankle on landing after parachuting,

---

[37] Baines FA: Baines, 'Shock 1942', p. 16.
[38] DVA NCPX25587-01: supplementary letter of explanation to injuries, 18 July 1970 [1978].
[39] Bryce FA: 'Jock Bryce's POW Diary 1942–1945', p. 86.
[40] Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'The Complete Tour', Lumsden, letter 5 March 1987.
[41] Bryce FA: 'Jock Bryce's POW Diary 1942–1945', p. 39; Pegram, 'Bold Bids for Freedom', in Beaumont, Grant, and Pegram (eds), *Beyond Surrender*, p. 25.

and Gordon Hughes who sustained second degree burns.[42] Continuing shock robbed some of the physically able of the will to try to escape. In his attempt to present a complete account while it was still fresh in his mind, Jock Bryce admitted in 1946 the 'sad truth' that his failure to escape was because he had 'suffered from what the R.A.F. calls lack of moral fibre'.[43]

'Lack of moral fibre' (LMF) was a disciplinary term which was applied to aircrew of both the RAF and RAAF who refused to carry out operations without a justifiable medical reason.[44] It reflected diminished operational effectiveness and efficiency rather than a psychiatric diagnosis.[45] There is also an affective dimension to LMF because of its connection to air force pride, service duty, and effective crew relationships. While a compassionate commanding officer might quietly organise a non-operational posting, Ministry guidelines were clear; airmen deemed to have LMF were to be sent to a disposal centre 'in disgrace', where they were subject to 'unsympathetic treatment'. The unfortunates 'had their rank and flying brevets taken from them and were given ground jobs'.[46] Airmen's emotional responses to an LMF designation were visceral. It has left a 'visible imprint' in many Bomber Command memoirs.[47] As well as the public acknowledgement that they had let down their comrades, airmen dreaded the taint of cowardice, the

---

[42] NAA B503 POW Trust fund application R528: Hughes, 417192, 2 April 1973; AWM 54 779/3/129: 11 PDRC post-liberation debrief, Austin.
[43] Bryce FA: 'Jock Bryce's POW Diary 1942–1945', p. 39.
[44] McCarthy, 'Aircrew and "Lack of Moral Fibre"', pp. 87–101; Wells, *Courage and Air Warfare*, pp. 70 and 189; Jones, '"LMF": The use of Psychiatric Stigma in the Royal Air Force during the Second World War', pp. 439–458.
[45] Jones, '"LMF"', p. 439.
[46] Quotes: Kerr, *Shot Down*, p. 37. Kingdon, 'Behind Closed Doors: Revisiting Air Command's "Lack of Moral Fiber and Waverer Disposal Policy" and its "Treatment" of Neurotic Cases, 1941–1945', pp. 14. For compassionate COs, refer Alexander, *Jack Davenport: Beaufighter Leader*, p. 168.
[47] Houghton, *The Veterans' Tale*, 2019, p. 199.

perception of character flaw, and the 'absolutely terrible' consequences.[48] 'It was a stigma you feared you'd have to live with forever', Cy Borsht recalled.[49] Accordingly, operational airmen wrestled with genuine flying fatigue and stress in order not to be designated LMF or 'waverers'. LMF was the antithesis of the active serviceman and, in his confession, it seemed as if Jock Bryce had succumbed to more than disorientation-induced docility. He explained that, while he had at first tried to gauge his chances of escape, he soon realised 'I had not the will to make the attempt'. The 'shock of being taken prisoner of war had robbed me of sufficient initiative to escape alone'.[50] Bryce was not the only airman who suffered from a lack of initiative, but he was wrong in his self-diagnoses. He did not have LMF. Lassitude was a common 'symptom' of early captivity. Many airmen experienced it, including Alec Arnel, Bruce Lumsden, and those whose final operational sortie and aftermath had been particularly harrowing. So too did many soldiers who had surrendered en masse.[51]

The early stages of captivity were challenging, dangerous, and often threatening. While some prisoners were treated well immediately after capture, not all were, including a number of airmen who recorded deficiencies of medical treatment. *Sean Hanrahan*, who had been trapped in the wreck of his aircraft for five hours with wounds to his leg that resulted in numbness for

---

[48] Jones, '"LMF"', pp. 439–458. Character flaw: Allport: *Demobbed*, p. 195. Cowardice: McCarthy, 'Aircrew and "Lack of Moral Fibre"', pp. 87–101. Quote: AAWFA: Kerr 1489, 3 March 2004.
[49] Borsht Archive: Borsht, 'A Life Well Lived', p. 16. Jack Morschel also considered LMF a stigma. Morschel, *A Lancaster's Participation in Normandy Invasion 1944*, p. 16.
[50] Bryce FA: 'Jock Bryce's POW Diary 1942–1945', p. 39.
[51] Arnel in Rolland (ed.), *Airmen I have Met*, p. 173; Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'The Complete Tour', Lumsden, letter 5 March 1987; Cochrane, 'Notes on the Psychology of Prisoners of War', p. 282.

nine months, recorded that, 'I had no medical attention at all'.[52] Prisoners were defenceless and, despite the 1929 Geneva Convention which provided that captives at all times were to be handled humanely and with respect, their captors tried to take advantage of that vulnerability, ensuring many assaults to the airmen's physical, psychological, and emotional well-being.

A soon as they were taken into enemy custody, prisoners of war found themselves in positions of physical powerlessness.[53] Eleven of the war crimes sample recorded that they had been subject to public exhibition or exposure to ridicule, or had witnessed it happening to others. Thirteen experienced, or witnessed, torture, beatings or other cruel acts. Alan McInnes was accosted by German civilians shortly after landing and was 'beaten and kicked sustaining a broken rib'. They 'had just brought in a coil of rope when police arrived and took charge of us'.[54] Post-war medical testimony and recollections also reveal violent acts. *Morton Layton* recalled that he had been '[u]nder threat of execution while held by the Gestapo'.[55] Ron Mackenzie was 'scared stiff' when threatened with torture at a local gaol, and 'lost the working part of one tooth to a rifle butt'.[56] *Lynchjustiz*—lynching by citizens of *Terrorfliegers* (terror flyers), *Luftgangsters* (gangsters of the air), and *Terrorbombers*—and general violence were common throughout German-held territories and a number of the cohort experienced it, particularly during the allied bombing campaign in the latter stages of the war. *Luftgangster* and other derogatory terms used to describe Allied airmen were often featured in

[52] DVA NCX065122-02: personal statement, 17 January 1980.
[53] Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War in the First World War*, p. 42.
[54] NAA A9300 McInns [sic], 410702: war crimes questionnaire.
[55] DVA VMX144931-01: MRU medical board 19 October 1945.
[56] Mackenzie, *An Ordinary War 1940–1945*, p. 36.

German propaganda.[57] 'Air Gangsters, the Terror Fliers, or the Murderers, as the air force was called were not very popular.'[58] After August 1943 *Volksjustiz* (peoples' justice), which could include lynching of downed airmen and summary execution in some instances, was an officially sanctioned form of civil vengeance.[59] Somehow, despite suffering personal harm, some of the men were able to look back on it with sardonic humour. When describing his capture by the *Gestapo*, Kevin Light noted they were a 'nice set of boys who are very handy with their feet'.[60]

Resisting pressure

Recognising that disorientated new prisoners of war would more easily succumb to the pressure of interrogation, captured airmen were rushed to preliminary detention for questioning by local military personnel. They were soon transferred to *Durchgangslager der Luftwaffe* (Dulag Luft), the *Luftwaffe*'s main transit camp located at Frankfurt. There they awaited interrogation at the co-located intelligence-gathering centre. Graham Berry believed the Germans abided by the Geneva Convention and, indeed, despite its catalogue of acknowledged war crimes, Nazi Germany is generally credited with adhering to the Convention's provisions, at least for non-Soviet prisoners.[61] Contemporary and late-life prisoner testimony, however, reveals many breaches of the Convention's articles. *Daniel Weller*, who witnessed a

[57] Hall, 'Luftgangster over Germany', pp. 277–312.
[58] Carson FA: Ken Carson, letter to mother and sister, 10 May 1945 (second letter).
[59] Hall, 'Luftgangster over Germany', pp. 277–312.
[60] AWM 54 779/3/129: 11 PDRC post-liberation debrief, Light.
[61] Alexander records: Berry, interview 7 June 2016; Oppenheimer, '"Our Number One Priority": The Australian Red Cross and prisoners of war in the world wars', in Beaumont, Grant, and Pegram (eds), *Beyond Surrender*, p. 82.

French prisoner being shot for not saluting a German guard, considered 'the Geneva Convention meant nothing to the Germans'.[62] There were also many breaches at Dulag Luft of the article which constrained captors from applying pressure in interrogation, insulting behaviour, and threating or exposing the prisoner to 'unpleasantness or disadvantages of any kind whatsoever'.[63]

It was a disturbing time. Richard Winn's emotions at Dulag Luft oscillated between despondency, near panic, and hope. 'These mood swings were very frequent.'[64] Every aspect of confinement was designed to increase mental distress, thus breaking down resistance to interrogation. Dulag Luft's experienced English-speaking interrogators took advantage of the prisoners' low state, and had considerable success in extracting 'gen' (information). Their techniques included 'softening up', repetitive questioning, wheedling details from the still shocked airmen, and alternately adopting friendly or menacing styles. They also deployed deliberate physical, psychological and emotional threats, and violence. Indeed, according to one of Dulag Luft's commandants, 'no amount of solitary confinement, privation and psychological blackmail was considered excessive'.[65] German staff erratically varied cell temperatures. Torres Ferres was in a 'constant state of heavy perspiration' from the 'soul-destroying treatment'.[66] The airmen knew the reason behind it. Gordon Hughes realised it was 'to condition one for the

[62] DVA MX211247-01: letter by R.D.W., 25 May 1992.
[63] Article 5, 'Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War (27 July 1929)', Vance (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Prisoners of War and Internment*, p. 508.
[64] Winn, *A Fighter Pilot's Diary of World War 2*, p. 44.
[65] Cited (without attribution) by the New Zealand official historian of prisoners of war. Mason, *Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War 1939–45*, p. 139.
[66] AWM PR90/035: Ferres, 'A POW in Germany'.

interrogation'.[67] Bruce Lumsden believed it was 'part of the game of prisoner harassment'.[68]

Ronald Baines was mortified when he had to pull a lever signalling that he needed to go to the toilet whereupon 'one ignominiously waited for the guard to answer the call'.[69] The greatest indignity was the removal of their uniforms. The airmen were stripped of belts, boots, tunic or battledress, and trousers. They were x-rayed, and subjected to 'embarrassing' body searches.[70] Possessions were confiscated, including Bruce Lumsden's New Testament.[71] While this was later returned, uniforms, which were coveted items, usually were not. In their stead, the prisoners received an assortment of mismatched clothing. Loss of uniform and rank badges was a significant emotional and psychological blow.[72] They represented air force pride. They reinforced air force and martial identity, and nationality. Moreover, air force uniforms declared to all that their wearers were members of what they considered the superior service, and conferred a sense of empowerment, allure, and social privilege because of that membership.[73] Uniforms also implied, as some scholars have argued, that servicemen had achieved military manhood and, in particular, signified an important aspect of an airman's masculinity—sexual

---

[67] NAA B503 POW Trust fund application R528: Hughes, 417192, 2 April 1973.
[68] Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'The Complete Tour', Lumsden, letter 5 March 1987.
[69] Baines FA: Baines, 'Shock 1942', p. 17.
[70] Baines FA: Baines, wartime log book, p. 9.
[71] Borsht Archive: Borsht, 'A Life Well Lived', p. 19; Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'The Complete Tour', Lumsden, letter 5 March 1987.
[72] Downes, Holloway, and Randles, 'Introduction', in Downes, Holloway, and Randles, (eds), *Feeling Things*, pp. 1–2.
[73] Mahoney, 'Trenchard's Doctrine', p. 169; Francis, *The Flyer*, p. 23; Alexander records: Pat Martin, interview 27 September 2016; AAWFA: Hutchinson 0540, 17 June, 2003; Alexander records: Arnel, interview 2 March 2017; AAWFA: Jennings 1704, 19 March 2004.

attraction to women.[74] 'It wasn't so much the fact of being a pilot or a navigator or anything else, you know', recalled Doug Hutchinson. 'It was just the uniform' that 'got girls mostly'.[75] Despite the humorous take on it, Calton Younger's pictorial depiction of preparations for 'a date tonight', reinforce the airman's pride in his uniform as well as its important contribution to his own sexual allure. In his cartoon, Younger denotes the airman cleaning his shoes, pressing trousers, putting on clean shirt, glamourizing hair, and 'jumping on the old cap' (no airman wore a perfectly blocked cap). Preparations finished, he was 'OK for the date'.[76] For Baines, forsaking his uniform indicated the start of Dulag Luft's humiliating 'demoralisation process'.[77]

Most operational airmen had been warned that the Germans would see them as valuable sources of intelligence. As such, they had been given clear instructions on 'how best to serve our, and our country's, interests'.[78] Aircrew were required to familiarise themselves with *Air Publication 1548*. First issued in 1936, it was into its third edition by April 1944.[79] It emphasised that, even if captured, airmen were still members of the air force and, as such, were

---

[74] Becker, 'Art, Material Life, and Disaster: Civilian and Military Prisoners of War,' in Saunders (ed.), *Matters of Conflict*, p. 27; Arkin and Dobrofsky, 'Military Socialization and Masculinity', pp. 154 and 156; Francis, *The Flyer*, p. 23; Mahoney, 'Trenchard's Doctrine', pp. 168–169; Wells, *Courage and Air Warfare*, p. 118; Francis, *The Flyer*, p. 23; Garton, 'War and Masculinity in Twentieth century Australia', p. 86.
[75] AAWFA: Hutchinson 0540, 17 June, 2003.
[76] Younger, *Get a Load of this*, [p. 12].
[77] Baines FA: Baines, 'Shock 1942', p. 17.
[78] AWM PR90/035: Ferres, 'A POW in Germany'.
[79] Each edition had slightly different titles and different content. *Air Publication 1548: Instructions and Guide to all Officers and Airmen of the Royal Air Force regarding Precautions to be taken in the event of falling into the hands of an Enemy*, [no publication details], March 1936; *Air Publication 1548: Instructions and Guide to All Officers and Airmen of the Royal Air Force regarding Precautions to be taken in the Event of Falling into the Hands of an Enemy*, [no publication details], 2nd Edition, June 1941; *Air Publication 1548: The Responsibilities of a Prisoner of War*, [no publication details], 3rd Edition, April 1944. [Hereafter *Air Publication 1548* and, if applicable, date of publication.]

obliged to adhere to the *Air Force Act*. It clearly placed on all ranks an obligation of 'duty not to give … any information' in order to protect air force security.[80] Accordingly, it outlined their responsibilities if captured, including how to respond during interrogation. Many had also viewed the 1940 training film, *Enemy Interrogation of Prisoners*, which detailed the tricks the enemy might deploy to gain intelligence; indicated how the newly captured should conduct themselves; revealed the consequences of disobeying RAF orders and procedure when in enemy hands; and stressed that they were still duty bound to follow RAF protocol. It also reinforced the onus of air force discipline and continuing service.[81] In addition, the rumour mill worked overtime and many 'heard' that they might be threatened, beaten, or tortured to extract vital military 'gen'. Accordingly, as their recollections indicate, the airmen had a firm impression of what they might experience at Dulag Luft.

Once in the interrogation room, prisoners found polite, seemingly friendly and courteous German examiners who, even as they attempted to build a rapport with the airmen, cajoled with cigarettes and bonhomie. Interrogators tried to unsettle the airmen, showing them dossiers of press clippings, photographs, maps, squadron histories, and comprehensive lists of squadron personnel. The airmen were aware of their entitlements and protections under the Geneva Convention, particularly the requirement to provide only name, rank and service number. Beyond that, they were to give 'no further information whatsoever'.[82] Accordingly, they tried to resist

[80] Arnel archive: Harvey, 'Over, Down and Out', p. 8.
[81] *Enemy Interrogation of Prisoners*, 1940, produced by Gee Films Ltd, directed by Aveling Ginever.
[82] *Air Publication 1548*, 2nd Edition, June 1941 and 3rd Edition, April 1944.

German trickery. Rex Austin was unfailingly polite to his interrogators, recalling that he had uttered apologetically, 'I'm sorry sir, I'm not permitted to say'.[83] When the soft touch and displays of intelligence already gathered failed to overcome the airmen's commitment to reticence, the demeanour of Dulag Luft's personnel changed. Lorraine 'Laurie' Simpson's interrogator 'quite often became coldly stern and raving later on'.[84] Some questioners played to the airmen's emotions. They lied to Douglas McLeod to weaken his defence, telling him that 'three members of my crew had been killed'.[85] Justin O'Byrne, like many others, refused to fill in bogus Red Cross forms. He was threatened emotionally. They warned 'that unless I completed it my next-of-kin would not be advised of the fact that I was still alive'.[86]

In some cases, more violent techniques were deployed, and the men underwent as many as four or five separate sessions. Cy Borsht's interrogator hit him on the back of the head, lightly at first and then increasingly harder. Finally, in the face of Borsht's continued resistance to questioning, he 'played the Jew card', threatening to hand the Jewish airman over to the *Gestapo*.[87] Some men were denied medical treatment, neglected, or tortured until they responded. Charles Shields was just one of many who recorded poor conduct at Dulag Luft: 'Not so good, no treatment for damaged leg, extra heat for interrogation'.[88]

---

[83] AAWFA: Austin 0382, 5 June 2003.
[84] AWM 54 779/3/126 part 1: POW statement, Simpson, 'Description of Stalag Luft III, Marlag und Milag Nord and Dulag Luft', 31 July 1945.
[85] AWM 54 779/3/129: 11 PDRC post-liberation debrief, Douglas McLeod.
[86] O'Byrne FA: O'Byrne, 'Nine o'clock above!'
[87] Borsht Archive: Borsht, 'A Life Well Lived', p. 20; Alexander records: Borsht, interview 28 January 2016. Quote: Veitch, *Heroes of the Skies*, p. 55.
[88] AWM 54 779/3/129: 11 PDRC post-liberation debrief, Shields.

Prisoners drew on their inner strengths and sense of duty to actively resist divulging sensitive details and to mitigate the worst of the debilitating effects of sensory deprivation, emotional and psychological pressure, and bodily harm. They also exerted personal agency by drawing on morale-raising techniques. Justin O'Byrne ignored the emotional threats and 'evaded every leading question' to gain the upper hand.[89] When silence failed, Doug Hutchinson's interrogator aggravated his foot wound.[90] Despite pain and discomfort, Hutchinson continued to resist. He 'tried to be smarter all the time'.[91] Cy Borsht also managed to act smarter during physical and psychological abuse. It 'was just simply a matter of repeating what you've already told him', he recalled, until, at the end of 'a harrowing four days' he was released to the transit camp.[92] Rather than 'make any conscious effort' to psychologically 'remove myself from that space', Rex Austin confronted his situation by focusing his anger on the 'mongrel fleas' attacking him, and refused to be humiliated by both solitary confinement and the insanitary conditions of his cell.[93] Norman 'Bill' Amos played with a piece of string to amuse himself and keep alert.[94] Leslie 'Les' Harvey carried out mental and physical exercises.[95] Richard Winn composed rhyming poetry in his head. He also carried out some self-serving sabotage. Rather than put up with the 'unbearably hot' room, he disconnected one of the heater's electrical wires with his 'dog tag', now returned to him, and manipulated his fountain pen

[89] O'Byrne FA: O'Byrne, 'Nine o'clock above!'
[90] Alexander records: Robert Douglas Hutchinson, interview 19 December 2016.
[91] AAWFA: Hutchinson 0540, 17 June, 2003.
[92] Veitch, *Heroes of the Skies*, p. 55; 'A Life Well Lived', p. 20; Alexander records: Borsht, interview 28 January 2016.
[93] AAWFA: Austin 0382, 5 June 2003.
[94] Roe (ed.), *The Bill Amos Story*, p. 45.
[95] Arnel archive: Harvey, 'Over, Down and Out', p. 12.

barrel to turn the heater on and off.[96] In physically alleviating the worst effects of the heat torture by rubbing his handkerchief on the early morning condensation in his cell, and later urinating into it to 'just wet the lips', Kenneth Gaulton also waged a psychological defence against his circumstances. 'That was the way I beat the system in my mind.'[97]

Not all airmen resisted, however. Many revealed more than air force protocol allowed. Cy Borsht recalled that one of his crew members divulged much that was 'not very secret or special' while he was being wined and dined by his cross-examiners.[98] In some cases, slips may have been unintentional. Rather than just the 'name and rank' required of him by *Air Publication 1548*, Hedley Crump believed he was obliged to give 'only those details as required by the Geneva Convention i.e. Name, Rank, Nationality, Address, Next-of-Kin'.[99] In other instances, in the face of emotional pressure, it was a considered decision made after weighing potential consequences. While Bruce Lumsden had viewed the training film *Enemy Interrogation of Prisoners*, its script ill-prepared him for the shock, anxiety and emotional fug of capture and interrogation. He turned to his religious background. 'I sought comfort and strength in prayer and in softly singing a hymn.' Even with the comfort of faith, Lumsden 'found the process' of interrogation and solitary confinement 'horribly demeaning … powerless even to protest'. He was so demoralised that, when his interrogator told him that withholding his address and other details would result in a lengthy delay in advising the British

[96] Winn, *A Fighter Pilot's Diary*, p. 44.
[97] AAWFA: Gaulton 1276, 3 February, 2004.
[98] Borsht Archive: Borsht, 'A Life Well Lived', p. 20.
[99] AWM 54 779/3/129: 11 PDRC post-liberation debrief, Crump.

authorities of his capture, 'my most urgent concern was that my mother, widowed earlier that year, and my two sisters 12,000 miles away, should be spared the distress of a long waiting to know whether I was alive or dead'. Deciding that his family's needs 'outweighed all other considerations', Lumsden succumbed to emotional pressure and his inherent sense of compassion to reveal his Australian address and other minor details.[100]

Lumsden was not the only airman to be swayed by affective concerns. Torres Ferres understood the requirements of *Air Publication 1548*. However, when taken to the wreckage of his Lancaster and faced with the bodies of two dead aircrew, he put aside security concerns and identified them. 'I preferred to know that their families would hear of their fate much sooner than if I had refused to identify them.' Ferres was fully aware of the consequences of his altruistic 'deliberate disobedience'. 'I realised that associating myself with the aircraft', which still retained its squadron identification markings, 'would probably present some difficulties, at future interrogations, concerning my Pathfinder Force duties'.[101]

Those who placed compassion above duty may have breached protocol, but they gained a measure of agency by making that choice. Yet, for many years, Lumsden saw only the failure to fulfil his duty and 'felt I had compromised myself and yielded ground'. Acceptance of what was in essence an empathetic action came decades later in a composure based on deep reflection and rationalisation. 'If the war [was] lost because I gave the

[100] Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'The Complete Tour', Lumsden, letter 5 March 1987.
[101] AWM PR90/035: Ferres, 'A POW in Germany'.

Germans my address in Australia, it would be just too bad.'[102] Other airmen also made late-life rationalisations. As captain of his aircraft, Geoffrey Coombes felt a continuing responsibility for his crew's welfare. He wanted to know if they had survived. Accordingly, he agreed to confirm the names of his crew members. As far as he was concerned, his revelation 'didn't make any bloody difference to the war'.[103]

After interrogation, the POWs were taken to Dulag Luft's transit camp. The horrors of final combat, the shock and shame of captivity, and any lingering effects of ill-treatment and 'such depravity' at the hands of German intelligence officers, were put aside by many in the face of like-mindedness, shared experience, conviviality, 'wizard' food provided courtesy of the Red Cross, and an energetic social life which included sport, films, concerts, and a steady stream of new arrivals.[104] Their need for their 'own kind'—their own emotional community—was intense.[105] The 'amazing relief to be amongst one's own people, could not stop talking, it was such a relief', Ronald Baines recalled. Despite the solace of friends, at no point could the airmen totally relax into captivity. As Baines noted, 'we were prisoners and the Germans did not let you forget that fact'.[106] Even so, by taking control as much as possible to resist sophisticated interrogation techniques, and by maintaining morale and self-discipline in challenging, painful, and often emotionally

---

[102] Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'The Complete Tour', Lumsden, letter 5 March 1987.
[103] AWM S00551 KMSA: Coombes, Geoffrey Bernard, 23 March 1989.
[104] Arnel archive: Train, 'A Barbed-Wire World', 20–26 May 1942, pp. 8–9. 'wizard' food: Archer FA: Archer, 1942 Diary, 28 July–2 August 1942. 'such depravity': Baines FA: Baines, 'Shock 1942', p. 18.
[105] Baines, 'An Aussie in Stalag Luft 111', p. 15.
[106] Baines FA: Baines, '1939 Experiences'.

distressing circumstances, the airmen had demonstrated a clear agency and emotional strength.

Kriegies—men of war

From Dulag Luft's transit camp, the Australian airmen were transferred to permanent prisoner of war camps. There, they had to adjust to incarceration for an indefinite period. Those who required medical attention received it promptly and efficiently in camp lazarets (i.e. compound hospitals, also known as the *revier* or sick quarters). Mervyn Bradford who had suffered from scabies for over three months was given a punishing regime of scalding baths, painful scrubbing, and yellow sulphur ointment plastered all over.[107] Keith Carmody received special rations and Vitamin B injections.[108] Doug Hutchinson was treated for the abscess on his foot.[109]

Still suffering the after-effects of injury, capture, and interrogation, the newcomers were 'warmly welcomed' into the camp community after an initial period of vetting to ensure they were not 'stool pigeons'—Germans pretending to be allied personnel to gain intelligence.[110] They were objects of curiosity and interest and were recognised as morale raisers. As well as an opportunity to reunite with friends from home, training, or squadrons, fresh faces were a source of 'gen', gossip and news. Many heard that squadron or training friends had died. Harry Train seemed to take it with equanimity;

---

[107] SLSA SRG 869 Series 16: item 2, 30 November 1989.
[108] Barker, *Keith Carmody*, p. 52.
[109] AWM 54 779/3/129: 11 PDRC post-liberation debrief, Hutchinson; NAA A9300 Hutchinson, Douglas Frank, 403591: war crimes questionnaire.
[110] 'warmly welcomed': AWM PR90/035: Ferres, 'A POW in Germany'; 'stool pigeons': Carson, 'Brisbane's Ken Carson: Prisoner of the Axis. Part Nine. Induction and Orientation, Stalag Luft 3 Style', p. 23.

details of deaths reinforced his good fortune in surviving.[111] Geoffrey Coombes' squadron friends were pleased to see him as they thought he had died.[112] Alec Arnel took strength from the presence of 'old cobbers' and a shared predicament. He saw that he was 'just one of many who found themselves in the same situation'.[113] More than that, they made 'my initiation' to life in captivity 'much easier'.[114]

The airmen may have been out of the war but their safety was not assured. The war crimes sample reveals that forty-seven airmen (41.96 per cent) were exposed 'to danger of gunfire, bombing' and 'other hazards of war' during confinement in camps. Others recorded physical and verbal threats to their personal safety. This appeared to be worse in German, rather than Italian, camps. 'If an Italian tried to be ruthless you laughed at him … A German, had we tried, would have produced a gun and you would know he wasn't joking', recalled Jock Bryce.[115] Bill Fordyce visually depicted the difference in prevailing moods between Italian and German camps in his wartime log book. The prisoner of the Italians was bright and happy; the captive of the Germans was cowed and despondent.[116] Former non-commissioned officers, like Alan Righetti who had experienced harsh conditions at PG 57, Gruppignano where the commandant condoned and initiated maltreatment, however, perhaps had a different perspective than

[111] Arnel archive: Train, 'A Barbed-Wire World', 11 September 1942, p. 26.
[112] AWM S00551 KMSA: Coombes, Geoffrey Bernard, 23 March 1989.
[113] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 27 November 2014.
[114] Arnel archive: Arnel, letter to Margery Gray, undated, [Stawell postmark 31 August 1944].
[115] Bryce FA: 'Jock Bryce's POW Diary 1942–1945', p. 86.
[116] Fordyce FA: Fordyce, wartime log book, Italian and German vocabulary lists, unpaginated prelims.

officers such as Bryce and Fordyce.[117] The result of these pervasive threats in Stalag Luft III was, as Bryce recalled, a prevailing undercurrent of that 'German influence, fear'.[118] The anxiety of being shot was always with the airmen; 29 October 1943, for example, became known as 'Chattergun Friday'.[119] Indeed, the cohort witnessed a number of shooting incidents in camp. Geoff Cornish and Eric Stephenson, who assisted the medical officer in Belaria Compound's lazaret, treated three victims.[120] Some of the Australian airmen were shot at.[121] Some prisoners (not of the cohort) were seriously wounded and died.[122] The situation was so grim that Stalag Luft III's senior British officers frequently complained to Protecting Powers' visitors about orders 'which are endangering the life of entirely innocent prisoners' by allowing sentries to fire at those caught outside their barracks at night.[123]

*****

Capture excluded airmen from battle. The stark reality that they were *hors de combat* struck to the core of their identity as members of the air force. When

---

[117] AAWFA: Righetti 0984, 16 September 2003. For conditions and examples of mistreatment at PG 57, refer Monteath, *P.O.W.*, pp. 115–116; Kittel, 'Hymns and hints: A prisoner of war's notebook in Italy', p. 6; Absalom, '"Another crack at Jerry"?', p. 24.

[118] Bryce FA: 'Jock Bryce's POW Diary 1942–1945', p. 86. Ron Mackenzie also wrote of the fear that was always at the back of the prisoner's mind. Mackenzie, *An Ordinary War 1940–1945*, p. ix.

[119] O'Byrne FA: O'Byrne, '*Mercury* Radio Roundsman'; NAUK WO 208/3283: SLIII Camp History, Part I East (Officers') Compound, pp. 7, 10–11.

[120] Stephenson, 'Experiences of a Prisoner of War', p. 31.

[121] NAUK WO 208/3283: SLIII Camp History, Part I East (Officers') Compound, p. 10; AWM PR90/035: Ferres, 'A POW in Germany'; Carson, 'Brisbane's Ken Carson: Prisoner of the Axis. Part Eleven. The Daily Grind and Ken's Night on the Hooch', p. 17; AAWFA: Fordyce 0523, 19 June 2003.

[122] NAUK WO 224/63A: Red Cross and Protecting Powers reports, 22–24 February 1944, Complaints, p. 7. Deaths included Albert Joyce, 6 June 1943 and John Kiddell 1 July 1943. Train also recorded deaths from shooting on 26 September 1942 and 1 July 1943 (Kiddell's death), pp. 29 and 42.

[123]NAUK WO 224/63A: Red Cross and Protecting Powers reports, 22–24 February 1944, Complaints, p. 7.

those who were supposed to help them, such as Miss Ida Marks, Secretary of the London Committee of the Australian Red Cross, implied that they were 'useless airmen', it was an emotional and psychological blow.[124] That involuntary disconnection from their service rationale and the contemporary perception that they were something less than fighting men was summed up for some by the term 'wingless'.[125] It was essential that they throw off any residual sense of humiliation and depression and reclaim their 'wings'.

Morale for the serviceman encompasses a sense of duty, military resilience and motivation to continue fighting, confidence in ultimate victory, comradeship, and firm leadership.[126] It was traditionally high in RAF and RAAF squadrons and, despite captivity, most airmen prisoners continued to maintain a keen enthusiasm and mental positivity. 'I think that in any prison camp I've been in morale was high always. They never gave up', recalled Bill Fordyce.[127] Confidence in Allied victory sustained belief in ultimate release and homecoming. 'Four months nearer victory', wrote Tony Gordon to his Aunt Mag. 'Everyone here very confident.'[128] As Laurie Simpson reported, 'We were kept together by our senior officers and the maxim that "unity in strength" certainly applies to PsOW'.[129] Agency and sense of control are also

---

[124] Kerr, *Shot Down*, pp. 96–97.
[125] Roberts, *Wingless: A Biographical Index of Australian Airmen Detained in Wartime*; Thompson, *Captives to Freedom*, p. 156.
[126] Stafford-Clark, 'Morale and Flying Experience', p. 15; Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, pp. 140–141; Campion, *The Good Fight*, p. 65; Wells, *Courage and Air Warfare*, pp. 138–143; 154–155.
[127] AAWFA: Fordyce 0523, 19 June 2003.
[128] Gordon FA: Gordon, letter to Aunt Mag, [undated: c. April 1942].
[129] AWM 54 779/3/126 part 1: POW statement, Simpson, 'Events and Organisations at Stalag Luft III', 31 July 1945.

important for morale. So, too, is a sense of humour, a fundamental psychological defence which lay within each man's personal resources.[130]

Airmen were particularly adept at finding the funny side of any situation. 'Pilot Officer Percy Prune', an awkward and hapless character who featured in RAF and RAAF training manuals representing what *not* to do, for example, was a much loved and laughed-at caricatured airman.[131] Many soon discovered they could gain strength and attain cohesion by drawing on their well-schooled senses of humour to poke fun at their plight. 'Life here is like a camping holiday', Digby Young told a friend. 'After years of practice at doing nothing, I am getting a chance to put it into full use.'[132] Before transferring to Stalag Luft III, airmen, such as *Hubert Hunnicutt* at Stalag VIII-B, Lamsdorf (now Łambinowice, Poland) whose hands were 'first tied, then chained, and finally handcuffed' in reprisal for British shackling of German prisoners after the August 1942 Dieppe raid, 'made light' of their circumstances 'in the atmosphere of camaraderie'.[135] As Calton Younger, a skilled cartoonist, noted, 'behind barbed wire in Germany, where despondency was the enemy, there was always something incongruous,

---

[130] Deflecting through humour is a common trait among servicemen. Stephen Garton also notes 'humorous displacement' through drawings (visual anecdotes). Garton, *Cost of War*, pp. 31–32. See also, Stephenson, 'Experiences of a Prisoner of War', p. 34; Steinberg, 'Emotions and History in Eastern Europe', in Matt and Stearns, (eds), *Doing Emotions History*, p. 91; Ursano and Rundell, 'The Prisoner of War', in Jones, Sparacino, Wilcox, Rothberg, and Stokes, *War Psychiatry*, p. 436; Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, pp. 90–91; Horn, Karen, '"Stalag Happy": South African Prisoners of War during World War Two (1939–1945) and their Experiences and Use of Humour', p. 537–552.

[131] Gunderson, 'Pilot Officer Prune, Royal Air Force: "Dutiful but Dumb"', pp. 23–29.

[132] 'Prisoner of War. Frankston Footballer-Pilot', *Standard* (Frankston, VIC), 21 March 1941, p. 1.

[135] The so-called 'shackling crisis': MacKenzie, 'The Shackling Crisis: A Case-Study in the Dynamics of Prisoner-of-War Diplomacy in the Second World War', pp. 78–98; Monteath, 'Australian POW in German Captivity in the Second World War', p. 424. Quote: DVA MX045167-01: appeal against determination, 19 August 1985.

something to provoke laughter'.[136] How else could you cope with potatoes mixed into porridge to make it go round, if not by laughing at it?[137] 'A meeting's called—a flap is imminent / And all the Great Brains gather to the fray: … Our quantity of spuds exceeds demand / Yet calls for porridge far outweigh supplies; … "The answer's easy for a well-trained brain; / Supply, Demand, are both now equalised, / Just mix the spuds and the porridge, with some grain".'

Their ability to laugh at themselves deflected the emotion of their new status as 'wingless' airmen and helped overcome any lingering shame. It put them in a more positive frame of mind and increased confidence in their innate resilience and ability to manage captivity. Their humour unerringly highlighted the dissonance between reality and expectation. Many likened Stalag Luft III to a 'holiday camp'.[138] Some claimed they were on 'vacation'.[139] Mock travel posters sarcastically depicting the delights of the 'super-duper salubrious sanitarium [sic]' abound in wartime log books.[140] The sanitary arrangements were far from salubrious and, commenting on the proximity of the fifty-hole latrine above a 'huge pit' with no partitions, Rex Austin wryly recalled that, 'you had to be a bit careful that it was your own bum that you were wiping'.[141] Despite their collective sarcasm, Stalag Luft III was, for Jack Morschel at least, a welcome sight. In comparison to his

---

[136] Younger, *Get a Load of this*, [p. 4].
[137] Dunn, *Poems of Norman Maxwell Dunn*, 'The Kitchen Kings', pp. 12–13.
[138] 'Prison Like Holiday Camp', *Daily News* (Perth), 22 March 1943, p. 6.
[139] NLA FERG/4550: *P.O.W.*, No. 24, 15 January 1944, unattributed letter, 10 June 1943, p. 11.
[140] AWM PR03211: Kingsford-Smith, Peter, Kingsford-Smith, wartime log book, pp. 37, 54–55; Simpson RC: Schrock, wartime log book, p. 1; Fordyce FA: Fordyce, wartime log book, unpaginated section. Quote: Borsht Archive: Borsht, wartime log book, p. 5.
[141] AAWFA: Austin 0382, 5 June 2003. See also Mackenzie, *An Ordinary War 1940–1945*, p. x.

lengthy transfer from France to Germany, confinement in numerous camps en route, dysentery, alternate marching and crowded rail transport, and two months or so on 'extremely meagre' rations he had endured before, 'arriving at Sagan was like entering the promised land'.[142] Those transferring from Buchenwald felt the same. Eric Johnston told his family that Stalag Luft III 'was a hell of a lot better' than the concentration camp.[143]

The airmen turned to their wartime log books to reframe their ignominious exits from battle into amusingly self-deprecating visual anecdotes. Their comic drawings appropriated icons from air force and popular culture. In one image, James McCleery parodied himself plummeting to the ground declaring, 'Germany here I come!' In another, he took on the guise of a disconsolate Percy Prune wearing prison garb of patched uniform and wooden clogs.[144] Prune was a particularly apt *doppelgänger* in the circumstances and McCleery was only one of many airmen to identify with Prune's humorously salutary escapades.[145] Popular cartoon character, 'Donald Duck', also proved an appropriate alter ego. He had recently been 'drafted' into the American army, appearing in a number of propaganda films including November 1942's *Sky Trooper* in which he desperately wanted to fly. After a series of misadventures he had his chance as part of a parachute troop. During a fight, he managed to fall out of an aeroplane. The comedic icon with military connections had become a downed airman. Although he

[142] Morschel, *A Lancaster's Participation in Normandy Invasion 1944*, pp. 58–60. Quotes: p. 75.
[143] Alexander records: Evelyn Johnston, interview 18 October 2016.
[144] AWM PR88/160: McCleery, wartime log book, unpaginated particulars page and p. 1.
[145] Gunderson, 'Pilot Officer Prune, Royal Air Force: "Dutiful but Dumb"', p. 23; AWM PR88/160: McCleery, wartime log book, p. 85; Baines FA: Baines, wartime log book, p. 99.

did not become a prisoner of war, British, Canadian, American, and Australian airmen alike related to Donald angrily bemoaning the ironic outcome of his (their) great desire for 'wings'—i.e. aircrew flying badges—and many images of the irate duck appeared in wartime log books. Lest anyone think the men were simply copying American prisoner Emmet Cook's rendition of Walt Disney's creation, some versions of what could be referred to as 'Downed Donald' bore the artist's prisoner of war number and aircrew insignia.[146] (John Dack parodied 'Downed Donald's' lamentation in the title of his memoir.[147]) A continuing healthy ability to mock their circumstances and a wry outlook on life did more than relieve stress. They were important strategies for negotiating captivity. Through humour the airmen of Stalag Luft III demonstrated resilience and agency in adapting to captivity and effectively managing their own negative responses to it.

'[M]aintaining military bearing' was a significant coping mechanism for prisoners of war.[148] Even as they laughed at themselves as failed, fallen airmen, the cohort, like the hyper-masculine members of the *Afrika Korps* studied by Matthias Reiss, demonstrated considerable agency by actively asserting their strong, professional service identity.[149] Those lacking uniforms

---

[146] Alexander, '"I Wanted Wings": Donald Duck, Prisoner of War'; The US Militaria Forum, 'Stalag Luft III "I Wanted Wings"'; Beltrone, *A Wartime log book,* pp. 60–61; AWM PR88/160: McCleery, wartime log book, p. 58; AWM PR03211: Kingsford-Smith, wartime log book, p. 25; AWM PR00506: Morschel, wartime log book, unpaginated; Borsht Archive: Borsht, wartime log book, p. 3; Johnston FA: Johnston, wartime log book, p. 1; Baines FA: Baines, wartime log book, p. 93; Simpson RC: Schrock, wartime log book, p. 11; Dack, *So you Wanted Wings, Hey!*, p. i.

[147] Dack, *So you Wanted Wings, Hey!*. Dack's version of the 'Downed Donald' image (with airman rather than duck) is included in the cover illustration montage and features on the title page.

[148] Ursano and Rundell, 'The Prisoner of War', in Jones, Sparacino, Wilcox, Rothberg, and Stokes, *War Psychiatry*, p. 435.

[149] Reiss, 'The Importance of Being Men', p. 25.

through damage or confiscation attempted to replace them. Miscellaneous and not necessarily well-fitting army or air force jackets, trousers, and shirts, were issued on arrival. They were not good enough for some. Tony Gordon asked his aunt to send '[s]hirts and collars service and khaki … Uniforms two old blue (airmen's issue ie without patch pockets)' and John Osborne wrote to Cairo for his 'uniform and coat'.[150] Those who were eligible applied to the Irwin Airchute Company for membership of the Caterpillar Club which celebrated successful bale-outs, or the Goldfish Club, an exclusive association of airmen who were saved from drowning by lifejacket or dinghy. They claimed their caterpillar and goldfish emblems as badges of honour.[151] Many reinforced their identity as successful operational airmen. Some drew or made models of aircraft, representing their continuing affinity with their tools of trade. Perhaps hoping to soften the blow of their own downings, fighter pilots told loved ones they had scored an enemy 'kill' during their last action.[152] Some pasted into their wartime log books news clippings of allied operations. Others in the later stages of the war culled from German newspapers images of allied airmen labelled *Terrorflieger*, *Luftgangster*, and *Terrorbomber*. A particular favourite, captioned '*Der Mordverein*', was a photograph of two American airmen, one of whom had been allowed to fly over Germany with 'Murder Inc.' emblazoned on his jacket.[153]

---

[150] Gordon FA: Gordon, letter to Aunt Mag, [undated: c. April 1942]; NAM JOC: John Osborne, letter to family, 20 October 1942.
[151] *The Examiner*, (Launceston), 13 October 1943, p. 4; Fry FA: Charles Fry, letter to Beryl Smith, 20 May 1942; Fordyce FA: Fordyce, wartime log book, loosely inserted. In some cases it is not obvious whether the airmen applied for their badges during imprisonment or afterwards. Donald Fraser applied almost as soon as he returned to Britain after liberation. Fraser FA: Goldfish Club, letter to Donald Fraser, 28 May 1945.
[152] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letter to Noela Hake, 15 April 1942.
[153] As captioned. *Der Mord Verein*: 'the murder club'. Borsht Archive: Borsht, wartime log book, p. 55; Fordyce FA: Fordyce, wartime log book, pp. 100–101.

On one hand these images represented 'emotional memories of collective victimisation' for the airmen who had endured civilian or military ill-treatment or unrest after capture.[154] On the other, they indicated military jobs well done. While some airmen were initially bemused by the derisory terms deployed by the German press, they soon put away their uncomfortable memories, ignored the intended insults, and even—in some cases—welcomed their membership of 'the murder club'.[155] Looking far from clean-cut when he was captured, Richard Winn recalled speculating that the Germans might use his photograph to depict 'a typical terror bomber' and seemed disappointed when 'nothing happened about that'.[156] As Cy Borsht later recalled, it was 'a great feeling' being dubbed a member of the 'Murder Inc.' fraternity.[157] Ken Carson and his roommates proudly appropriated the name, 'Luft Gangsters'.[158] The cohort's humorous depictions of ill-starred parachutists, crashed pilots, and downed-duck-airman, along with the sober identification with '*Der Mord Verein*', demonstrated that they still considered themselves operational airmen. They had not accepted their captors' taunt that the war was over for them. Deeply religious Bruce Lumsden, however, did not welcome the designation, nor membership of the murder club. 'I remember feeling justly offended when, as a POW, I came to know that the

[154] Steinberg, 'Emotions and History in Eastern Europe', in Matt and Stearns, (eds), *Doing Emotions History*, p. 79.
[155] Borsht Archive: Borsht, wartime log book, p. 68; AWM PR03211: Kingsford-Smith, wartime log book, pp. 46–47; Fordyce FA: Fordyce, wartime log book, pp. 100–101; Todd FA: Ken Todd, wartime log book, unpaginated section.
[156] AAWFA: Winn 1508, 4 March 2004.
[157] Alexander records: Borsht, interview 28 January 2016.
[158] Carson, 'Brisbane's Ken Carson: Prisoner of the Axis. Part Eleven. The Daily Grind and Ken's Night on the Hooch', p. 16. Ken and his roommates wrote their names and addresses on the back of a group photograph, captioning it '109.7 [ie hut 109, room 7] Luft Gangsters'.

common German term for allied aircrew was "terreur-fliegers". I saw this as base propaganda.'[159]

Most may have willingly accepted as tributes to their military prowess terms such as 'terror flyers', 'air gangsters', 'terror bombers', but none were keen to be known as *Kriegsgefangener*—war prisoner—because of the negative and shameful connotations surrounding the word 'prisoner'. Like many others in different services and theatres, captured airmen found abhorrent the sense of emasculation, powerlessness, and passivity emanating from their forced removal from operations.[160] Accordingly, they spurned the phrase, 'prisoner of war'.

In a canny example of collective composure, air force captives adopted the easier-to-pronounce abbreviation of 'kriegie'.[161] Derived from the first syllable—the German word for 'war'—it indicated that they were still men of war. By seizing linguistic power and changing '*Kriegsgefangener*' into 'kriegie', airmen drew on a long service tradition of using language to distance themselves from circumstances which engendered difficult emotions, such as death in service.[162] The result was that they effectively detached themselves from the sense of disgrace implied by the word 'prisoner'. The more robust 'kriegie' reflected the airmen's fighting spirit and

---

[159] Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'The Complete Tour', Lumsden, letter 23 September 1986.
[160] See for example the cohorts examined by Ariotti, Becker, Beaumont, and Reiss: Ariotti, *Captive Anzacs,* p. 28; Becker, 'Art, Material Life, and Disaster,' in Saunders (ed.), *Matters of Conflict*, p. 28; p. 88; Beaumont, Joan, *Gull Force*, p. 2; Reiss, 'The Importance of Being Men', pp. 23–47.
[161] AWM PR05675: Grey-Smith, diary, 26 January 1942; Burgess RC: Robert Mills, wartime log book, p. 31; Geoffrey Breadon, letter to parents, quoted in 'Tasmanian Writes from Nazi Camp Stalagluft 3', *Mercury* (Hobart), 23 May 1944, p. 6.
[162] Partridge, *A Dictionary of RAF Slang*, pp. 25, 10, 25, and 52; Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, pp. 231–232.

revealed that they continued to see themselves as active servicemen. They remained men of war. Their ensuing self-confidence and elevated morale enabled them to confidently negotiate captivity as individuals and collectively as an air force group.

The neologism became second nature to the airmen and their families. Alec Arnel used it in his first letter to his sweetheart, Margery Gray.[163] It even took on a linguistic life of its own and became the basis for new words and phrases such as 'kriegiedom', (the state of captivity), 'kriegie life' (life in camp), and 'kriegieland' (the Reich's prison network).[164] It assumed a firm place in many post-war prisoner accounts and interviews.[165] Despite this, 'kriegie' did not enter popular culture. While Paul Brickhill and Conrad Norton used the word in their *Escape to Danger* which was published in 1946, Brickhill did not use it in *The Great Escape* which appeared five years later.[166] As Brickhill's biographer, Stephen Dando-Collins notes, such was the influence of the latter on popular culture, 'kriegie' disappeared from the 'escape lexicon'.[167] It was so unfamiliar to some members of later generations that it was incorrectly transcribed as 'treegies' in Rex Austin's Australians at

---

[163] Arnel archive: Arnel, letter to Margery Gray, undated, [Stawell postmark 31 August 1944].
[164] 'Kriegiedom': AWM PR88/160: McCleery, wartime log book, p. 19; William Trickett, undated letter to family, *Australian Women's Weekly*, 5 August 1944, p. 14; Arnel archive: Arnel, letter to Margery Gray, [undated c. Christmas 1944]. 'kriegie life': Reg Kierath, letter to his mother, 29 June 1943. 'kriegieland': Sweanor, *It's All Pensionable Time*, p. 131.
[165] O'Byrne FA: O'Byrne, '*Mercury* Radio Roundsman'; 'Brickhill and Norton, *Escape to Danger*, p. 108; Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'The Complete Tour', Lumsden, letter 8 April 1988; Wickham, *We Wore Blue*, p. 178; Kerr, *Shot Down*, p. 129; NLA JMFC: Justin O'Byrne, 31 October 1986; AAWFA: Gaulton 1276, 3 February, 2004; Alexander records: Arnel, interview 29 January 2015; Alexander records: Borsht, interview 28 January 2016; AAWFA: Austin 0382, 5 June 2003.
[166] Brickhill and Norton, *Escape to Danger*; Brickhill, *The Great Escape*.
[167] Dando-Collins, *The Hero Maker*, p. 203.

War Film Archive interview and Richard Winn felt he had to define it for his interviewer.[168]

RAF Station Sagan

Captured airmen did not passively accept the rigid security regime of their captors. Demonstrating collective agency, they ameliorated its effects by creating a culture of air force discipline.[169] The kriegies' system of modified self-rule was condoned by Stalag Luft III's commandant.[170]

The administrative system developed by the British Permanent Staff at Dulag Luft at Frankfurt and Stalag Luft I, Barth featured strong leadership. It provided a model for every other camp and Stalag Luft III in particular had effective leaders overall and in each of its compounds.[171] Following RAF tradition, the senior airman for all commissioned prisoners was automatically the Senior British Officer. Personal qualities rather than rank determined the Man of Confidence, who was elected by the non-commissioned officers. The senior British officers (in office compounds) and Man of Confidence (in the NCO compound) liaised with the *Luftwaffe* administration to represent the interests of prisoners and actively engaged in a constant 'battle of wits', as Justin O'Byrne recalled.[172] They also ensured a degree of military control within their ranks. Inspiring senior men included the morale-minded Wing

---

[168] AAWFA: Austin 0382, 5 June 2003; AAWFA: Winn 1508, 4 March 2004.
[169] AWM 54 779/3/129: 11 PDRC post-liberation debriefs, Baines and Nightingale; AAWFA: Righetti 0984, 16 September 2003.
[170] Walton and Eberhardt, *From Commandant to Captive*, p. 62.
[171] Meale, 'Leadership of Australian POWs in the Second World War', PhD thesis; MacKenzie, *The Colditz Myth*, pp. 136–137; MacKenzie, *An Ordinary War 1940–1945*, p. 53.
[172] MacKenzie, *The Colditz Myth*, pp. 133–134; Monteath, *P.O.W.*, p. 143. Quote: O'Byrne FA: O'Byrne, '*Mercury* Radio Roundsman'.

Commander Harry 'Wings' Day; the quietly powerful yet utterly charming Man of Confidence, James 'Dixie' Deans; and Roger Bushell, leader of the North Compound's escape committee.[173] Australians were incorporated into the prisoners' administration at many levels, including Group Captain Douglas Wilson, the Australian ranking officer who relieved as Senior British Officer during October–November 1943 and took the post permanently from May 1944 until January 1945.

Airmen had generally experienced a high degree of discipline and protocol throughout their air force careers.[174] Strong discipline in captivity accordingly became a way for the airmen to 'pull together as a unit' to effectively manage captivity and assuage the negative effects of long-term confinement.[175] Moreover, there was much security in adhering to the familiar aspects of their former service lives.[176] Stalag Luft III 'was organised as far as possible on RAF station lines'.[177] Camp and compound command structures were implemented. Accommodation blocks were run like squadrons, with their own commanding officers known as 'block heads', who

---

[173] Smith, *Wings Day*, p. 75; Mackenzie, *An Ordinary War 1940–1945*, p. 53; AWM 54 779/3/129: 11 PDRC post-liberation debrief, Wallace Betts; Meale, 'Leadership of Australian POWs in the Second World War', PhD thesis; Levine, *Captivity, Flight and Survival in World War II*, p. 84; NLA Justin O'Byrne, 'Reminiscential conversations', 29 August 1983–28 July 1984, Tape 51.

[174] Both the RAF and its aircrew valued both ground and flying discipline. Symonds and Williams, *Air Publication 3139: Psychological Disorders in Flying Personnel of the Royal Air Force investigated during the War 1939–1945*, 1947, pp. 57–58, 67. Ken Carson referred to service and camp discipline a number times during his post-liberation letters (Carson FA). NAA A12372, R/36186/P2, Arnel, Alexander Francis; Borsht Archive: Borsht, 'A Life Well Lived', p. 10; Alexander records: Arnel, interview 2 March 2017; AAWFA: Gaulton 1276, 3 February, 2004.

[175] Herington, *Air Power Over Europe, 1944–1945*, p. 484. Quote: AAWFA: Cornish 1388, 2 July 2004.

[176] Walter A. Lunden, 'Captivity Psychoses Among Prisoners of War', p. 722.

[177] AAWFA: Righetti 0984, 16 September 2003; NAUK AIR 40/269: Stalag Luft III reports and nominal roll; AAWFA: Austin 0382, 5 June 2003. Quote: AWM 54 779/3/129: 11 PDRC post-liberation debrief, Baines.

oversaw duty rosters. 'Prisoner committees' coordinated non-administrative departments such as entertainment (run by Howard Larkin), education, sports, and leisure pursuits. As at any training station, men were encouraged to participate; it was all part of maintaining mental and physical fitness and building group morale.[178] The airmen were also expected to work in escape-related departments.[179] Strong discipline particularly underpinned escape security.[180] 'We didn't even talk about it amongst ourselves', noted Alec Arnel.[181] Ken Carson had no idea the entrance to North Compound's tunnel 'Harry' was in the hut next to his.[182] When newcomers were told to ignore strange happenings related to escape work, they barely batted an eyelid.[183]

Ronald Baines insisted Stalag Luft III's hierarchy 'did their best under the circumstances, [the] camp ran without friction and provided the best for the community'.[184] David McVie considered they were 'well organised and did excellent work'.[185] Roy Nightingale concurred, stating that they also 'maintained a high degree of morale and discipline' which engendered a vital *esprit de corps*.[186] The 'very good' discipline of what was, in effect, 'RAF Station Sagan', was essential for the airmen prisoners' physical and psychological well-being, as well as their survival.[187] At least one man,

---

[178] NAUK AIR 40/269: Stalag Luft III reports and nominal roll.
[179] Brickhill and Norton, *Escape to Danger*, pp. 236–237.
[180] NAUK AIR 40/285: 'X' report; Harrison RC: Warrant Officer Ross Thomas Breheny, 404957, 145 Squadron RAF, [2008].
[181] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 23 June 2016.
[182] Carson, 'Brisbane's Ken Carson: Prisoner of the Axis. Part Nine. Induction and Orientation, Stalag Luft 3 Style', p. 24.
[183] NAUK WO 208/3283: SLIII Camp History, Part I East (Officers') Compound, p. 16, Part III North (Officers') Compound, p. 8; Arnel archive: Harvey, 'Over, Down and Out', p. 17.
[184] AWM 54 779/3/129: 11 PDRC post-liberation debrief, Baines.
[185] AWM 54 779/3/129: 11 PDRC post-liberation debrief, McVie.
[186] AWM 54 779/3/129: 11 PDRC post-liberation debrief, Nightingale.
[187] Alexander records: Anne O'Byrne, interview 26 May 2016; AAWFA: Hutchinson 0540, 17 June, 2003; Comber FA: Comber letter to Win and George Dye, undated (after Easter 1943). Quote: NAUK AIR 40/269: Stalag Luft III reports and nominal roll.

however, feared those who did not adhere to RAF discipline in camp might be subject to court martial back in Britain.[188]

*****

In her study of a large cohort of British prisoners of war, most of whom were soldiers, Clare Makepeace argues that they developed a specific 'Kriegie identity' 'out of the unique aspects of their experience'.[189] While the airmen cohort demonstrated a similar 'Kriegie identity' to that noted by Makepeace, it was not, for them, an identity based on being a prisoner of war. Identifications with Donald Duck, Percy Prune, and *Der Mord Verein*, and their self-styled appellation of 'kriegie', complemented their air force identity or were variations of it. They remained serving airmen—men of war—not prisoners of war.

The cohort's resistance in the face of physical, psychological, and emotional pressure and ill-treatment was a considerable victory. Their recollection of acting smart during interrogation and ready adaptation to wartime imprisonment refutes any long-held cultural perception that all prisoners of war remained passive, ashamed, and emasculated.[190] They may have been 'wingless' but as John Herington notes retrospectively, 'they remained combatants even as prisoners'.[191] Maintaining their stance as active air men was a matter of pride for those airmen who would not accept that the war was over simply because they had been taken out of aerial operations. By

[188] AAWFA: Austin 0382, 5 June 2003.
[189] Makepeace, *Captives of War*, p. 79.
[190] Beaumont, Joan, *Gull Force*, p. 2; Twomey, 'Emaciation or Emasculation: Photographic Images, White Masculinity and Captivity by the Japanese in World War Two', pp. 299–300.
[191] Herington, *Air Power Over Europe, 1944–1945*, p. 485.

successfully adapting to indefinite incarceration by drawing on their personal resources, innate resilience, and air force training the airmen fostered a strong collective solidarity which afforded them the support they needed to wage war behind barbed wire. Their concerted efforts to manage captivity by embarking on a programme of active resistance and escape is the focus of chapter three.

Chapter Two: Images

Capture was an ignominious moment. As well as signalling the end of an airman's aerial career, it brought great shame. Many airmen prisoners recorded the beginning of captivity with humour, including the 'usual greeting', which soon became a 'standing joke'.

Image 15: 'For you the war is over', R. Anderson and D. Westmacott, *Handle with Care*, p. 5.

Image 16: 'My! Wont Mother be Proud!!' [Sic] 16 January 1944, by Bill Fordyce, in his wartime log book, p. 52. Fordyce Family Archive.

Despite their humiliation, the airmen appreciated the irony of their situation and jokingly identified with a hapless Donald Duck who, in a wartime cartoon, also lost his 'wings'. Their images also expressed their emotions: they were disconsolate, grief-stricken, and angry.

Image 17: 'I Wanted Wings', by Cy Borsht, in his wartime log book, p. 3. Borsht Archive.

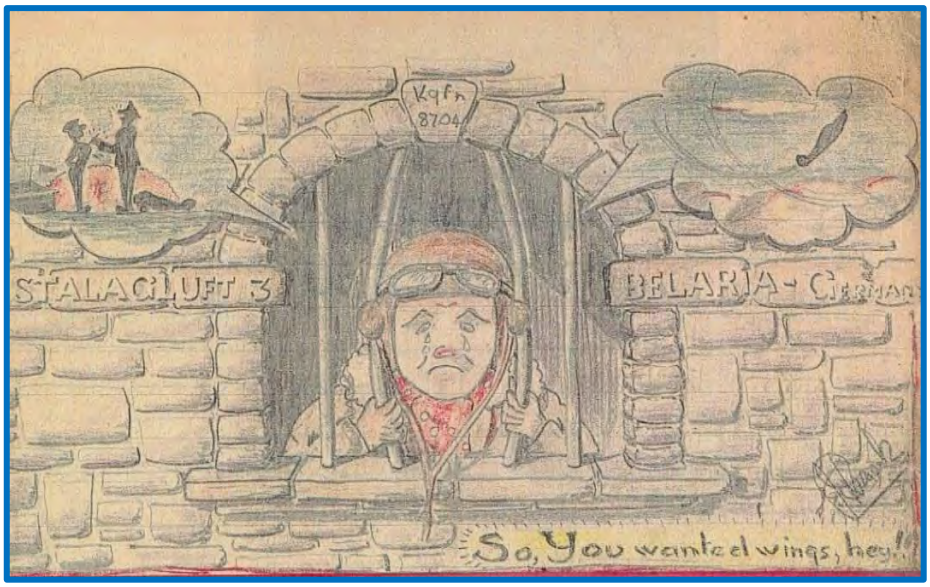


Image 18: 'So, You wanted wings, hey!!', by John Dack, in his wartime log book, reproduced in his memoir, *So, You Wanted Wings, Hey!*, p. i.

Image 19: 'I Wanted Wings!!!', by Ronald Baines, in his wartime log book, p. 93. Baines Family Archive.

Dulag Luft's cells were small and spartan. To help break the airmen's resolve against divulging information during interrogation, the Germans turned the heating up or off, depending on the season.

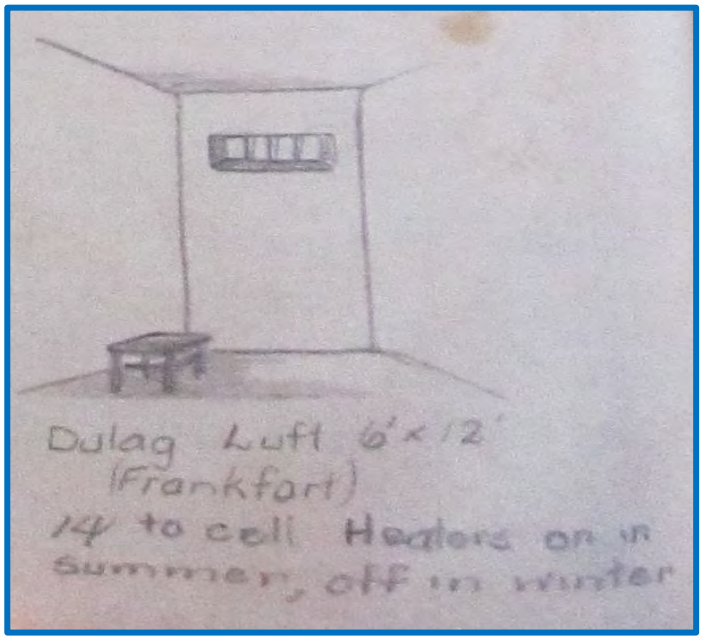


Image 20: Dulag Luft cell, by Ken Todd, in his wartime log book, p. 2. Todd Family Archive.

Poking fun at their less-than-desirable living conditions, many visual anecdotes depicted the Australian airmen on vacation in the Stalag Luft III holiday camp.

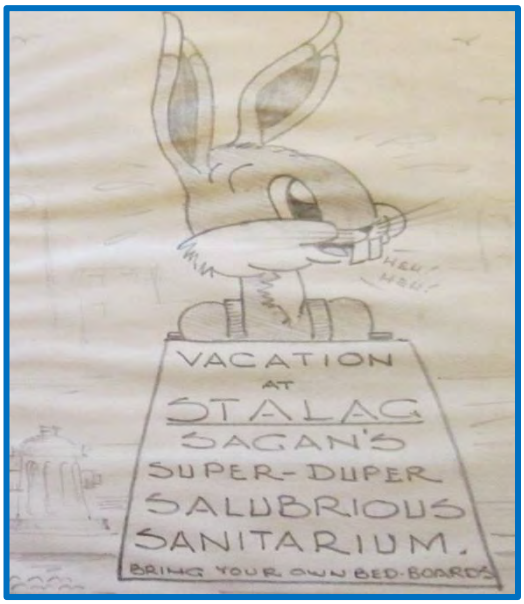
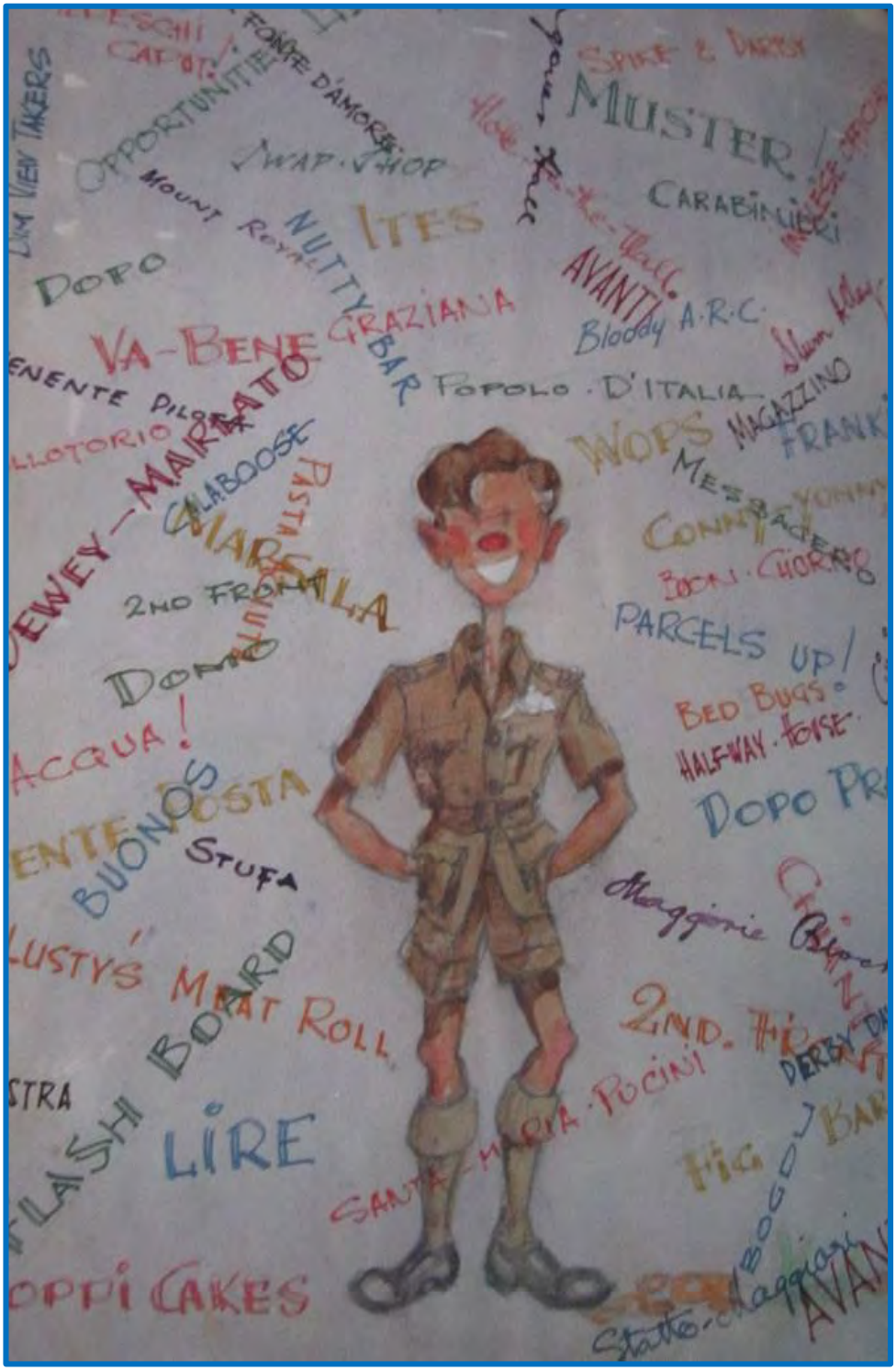


Image 21: 'Vacation at Stalag Sagan's Super-Duper Salubrious Sanitarium. Bring your own Bed Boards', by Cy Borsht, in his wartime log book, p. 5. Borsht Archive.

Bill Fordyce depicted the difference between captivity under the Italians and Germans. Although not always easy, life in Italian POWs camps had its lighter moments and Bill showed himself as fit, well, and happy. German captivity was much more of a trial. Taking on the guise of a cowed and despondent Pilot Officer Prune, Bill appeared particularly depressed with his lot. Each image of kriegie Bill is surrounded by POW vocabulary, indicating the language of 'kriegiedom' that had to be mastered, as well as captivity itself.



Images 22–23: Italian and German captivity, by Bill Fordyce, in his wartime log book, [unpaginated]. Fordyce Family Archive.

Detaching themselves from the sense of disgrace implied by the word ‘prisoner’ the airmen dubbed themselves ‘kriegies’, men of war. Many were also happy to reappropriate German insults such as ‘terror-flieger’ or ‘luft-gangster’ as badges of honour. These, along with apparent membership of ‘Murder Inc.’, paid tribute to their martial qualities.

Image 24: ‘‘Kommen Sie Mit! [Come with me!] Terror Flieger! Murder Inc. Luftgangster! Baby-Butcher!, by Cy Borsht, in his wartime log book, p. 68. Borsht Archive.

Image 25: ‘Cutting from a Reich paper of a “typical” “terror-flieger” or “luft-gangster”’, Cy Borsht’s wartime log book, p. 55. Borsht Archive.

Humour was an important coping mechanism for those in captivity and Albert Comber and Bill Fordyce were able to make light of their situation through their visual anecdotes.

Image 26: 'Appel Outside! Another "Mild" Day at Sagan!!', February 1944, by Albert Comber, in Bill Fordyce's wartime log book, p. 67. Fordyce Family Archive.

Image 27: 'The snow for the first four days and the lack of it on the second four made even Marlag Nord seem comfortable', Tarmstedt Ost, 12 February 1945, by Bill Fordyce, in his wartime log book, pp. 118–119. Fordyce Family Archive.

Chapter Three: Disruptive Agency[1]

Resistance was a significant feature of captivity. Rather than giving in to what James Catanach termed 'the futility of existence', many of the cohort, like Catanach, demonstrated personal and collective agency by embarking on programmes of disruptive agency. These featured small defiances to maintain self-respect; active resistance; theft; and the grand gestures of major escape plans, escape-related work, and escape.[2] This chapter analyses active resistance, the development of escape-mindedness, and the duty to escape. It focuses on the complexities underlying the prisoners' rationales for participating in escape and escape-related work. It also considers post-war narratives of near-universal escape-mindedness. This chapter argues that resistance, escape, and escape-related work were important factors in ameliorating the strains of captivity. They were also expressions of martial identity—the active *air man*, on duty, in the barbed-wire battleground.

Active resistance

Security in permanent Italian camps was rigorous, inflexible and threatening. Moreover, escape was difficult. Any challenge to Italian authority was hazardous and risked punishment. That did not, however, preclude acts of resistance. Instead of engaging in overtly active disruption and ingenious escape attempts, airmen in Italian camps aimed for smaller, achievable victories. When Jock Bryce pointed out to his captors that he had not had any

[1] Some of the text in this chapter appears in Alexander, '"For you the war is (not) over": Active Disruption in the Barbed Wire Battleground'.
[2] SOR JCC: 2013.CAT050, James Catanach, letter to William Alan Catanach, 28 March 1943.

food for eight hours, he realised that, '[u]nknowingly I was fulfilling the first duty of all prisoners, which is to complain'.[3] Disrespect was another easy triumph over the enemy. Many of the Allies shared a disregard of the Italians.[4] Jack Donald recalled that the 'Italian generally was very emotional; they were upset very easily'.[5] Drawing on racial stereotypes, the Australians dubbed their captors 'Wops', 'Ities' and 'Dagoes'. They treated the enemy with contempt, and insults abound in their recollections. They made fun of the Italians' elaborate uniforms, and noted their unmilitary demeanour and 'petty officiousness'.[6] By far 'our strongest weapon', claimed Bryce 'was ridicule' which the 'Italian cannot bear'.[7] The Australians in Italian camps did not just use words and laughter to irritate their captors. Alan Righetti chanced Italian excitability and threats of shooting with small insubordinations such as trading with civilians.[8] Jack Donald and his friends suffered the consequences of their active resistance. 'If we played up a little bit … or did things we shouldn't have done, they'd cut off magazines, they'd cut off walks.'[9]

Lest, in the disorientation of capture, they had forgotten their continuing service obligations, all new arrivals in Stalag Luft III's officer compounds

---

[3] Bryce FA: 'Jock Bryce's POW Diary 1942–1945', p. 37.
[4] AWM 54 779/3/126 part 1: POW statement, Edwards, 'Conditions in Italian Pow Camps and en route to Germany', 31 July 1945; Moore, 'British Perceptions of Italian Prisoners of War, 1940–7', in Moore, and Hately-Broad, (eds), *Prisoners of War, Prisoners of Peace*, p. 26; Seumas Spark, 'Australian Prisoners of War of Italy in World War II', in Beaumont, Grant, and Pegram (eds), *Beyond Surrender*, p. 139; Johnson, 'Resisting Captivity', PhD thesis, pp. 60, 72, 74.
[5] AWM S00952 KMSA: Donald, Jack, 4 July 1990.
[6] AWM PR03099: Paul Brickhill, letter to Del Fox, 28 January 1943; Arnel archive: Arnel, letter to Elsie Drake, 7 July 1943; AWM 54 779/3/126 part 1: POW statement, Edwards, 'Conditions in Italian Pow Camps and en route to Germany', 31 July 1945; Bryce FA: 'Jock Bryce's POW Diary 1942–1945', pp. 57, 96, and 37; Netherway FA: Netherway, 'The Line', wartime log book, p. 2. Quote: Herington, *Air Power Over Europe, 1944–1945*, p. 474.
[7] Bryce FA: 'Jock Bryce's POW Diary 1942–1945', p. 36.
[8] AAWFA: Righetti 0984, 16 September 2003.
[9] AWM S00952 KMSA: Donald, Jack, 4 July 1990.

were reminded of them by the Senior British Officer. Those first words, as Bruce Lumsden remembered, were 'clearly intended to galvanise us out of any apathy and meek resignation to our fate'. Reappropriating the oft-repeated German refrain, the Group Captain announced 'as though giving an order' that, '[f]or you … the war is not over' and instilled in them that 'it was our duty … to make the enemy's task of imprisoning us as difficult and demanding on their resources as we could'. Lumsden and others soon 'learned some of the ways by which this could be done'.[10] As Alec Arnel recalled, they collectively demonstrated to the Germans that, 'you have us here, but we're not going to let you walk all over us'.[11] Accordingly, the airmen 'used whatever means we had'.[12]

Kriegie defiances included 'the fierce joy of goon-baiting', where they either individually or in concert provoked the German prison staff.[13] The editors of North Compound's gossipy *Scangriff* undermined German superiority: 'we always used to put a lot of garbage in it so they never knew quite what was true', recollected Bill Fordyce who illustrated the newssheet.[14] They deliberately broke rules such as Rudolph Leu who risked playing cards out of hours.[15] One man was 'non-cooperative and aggressive'.[16] The airmen bribed guards and stole tools and supplies both to make life easier and to feed into the escape organisation, recalled Roy Nightingale.[17] Many misbehaved

[10] Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'The Complete Tour', Lumsden, letter 8 April 1988. Original emphasis.
[11] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 2 March 2017.
[12] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 2 March 2017.
[13] Lark, *A Lark on the Wing*, p. 75.
[14] AAWFA: Fordyce 0523, 19 June 2003.
[15] NAA A13950 POW identification card: Rudolph Leu, 404178.
[16] DVA MX035229-02: letter to Deputy Commissioner, June 1984.
[17] AWM 54 779/3/129: 11 PDRC post-liberation debrief, Nightingale.

during *Appell*—roll call—frustrating attempts to count their numbers. Smoking on parade, Ron Mackenzie recorded, was particularly annoying for the Germans as it was *unsoldatlich*—unsoldierly behaviour.[18] Disorderly behaviour, however, was contingent. Huie Bowden recalled sedate roll calls in East Compound during the bitter winter of 1944–45 where the 'great thing is to get off appell [sic] quickly'.[19]

Some constructed, maintained, and stole parts for radios; others distributed transcripts from BBC news broadcasts to boost morale. A more formal scheme of anti-German propaganda was also implemented. Towards the end of the war, Douglas Wilson devised a major defence strategy in North Compound. When German capitulation seemed likely, an ex-paratrooper instructed Ronald Baines and his fellows on 'how to disarm—break necks' and carry out 'other forms of unarmed combat'.[20] By ensuring his men were trained in 'individual and collective protection' in the face of prospective civilian violence, Wilson prepared the prisoners to overpower their captors, take control of the camp, and make a mass escape to Allied lines.[21] Similar schemes were set up in East and Belaria compounds.[22]

When given little notice in January 1945 to evacuate Stalag Luft III, the men made time by 'holding up proceedings as long as we could'. They destroyed much and left 'the camp in a terrific shambles', recalled Ken Carson. They also set one block on fire.[23] While Matthew Johnson notes that

---

[18] Mackenzie, *An Ordinary War 1940–1945*, p. 56.
[19] Bowden FA: 'Diary of Huie Bowden July 1944–May 1945', 19 November 1944, p. 32.
[20] Baines FA: Baines, 'Shot Down', p. 12.
[21] NAUK AIR 40/269: Stalag Luft III reports and nominal roll.
[22] NAUK WO 208/3283: SLIII Camp History, Part I East (Officers') Compound, p. 41, Part III North (Officers') Compound, p. 32, Part V Belaria (Officers') Compound, p. 16.
[23] Carson FA: Ken Carson, letter to mother and sister, 10 May 1945 (first letter).

New Zealand kriegies generally were among the majority who exerted little agency during the forced march because they were still under the control of guards, many Australians continued to demonstrate active resistance.[24] 'We were a "bolshy" crowd and made our own slow pace, hoping the British army would catch us up', asserted Carson.[25] 'We made the going very slow & we were very resistant', wrote Roy Nightingale.[26]

While collective actions express and reinforce group identity—in this case active *air men* on continued operations behind barbed wire—the airmen's disruptive acts, as in Italy, had consequences. Roll call took longer; they were made to stand on parade for hours in inclement weather or long into the night. They were put in the 'cooler'—the camp's holding cells—confined to barracks, or given some other punishment. Red Cross parcels or mail were withheld. Some airmen were beaten. At one camp, *Sean Hanrahan* 'was hit by a German Rifle butt on the spine and was completely paralysed for two days'. On two occasions, he was 'interrogated by Gestapo … and during one of them was threatened with death'.[27] Threats, wounds, and collective reprisals did little to dent the ardour of their resistance, however. Rather than *unsoldatlich* behaviour, it reflected their martial masculinity, commitment to service, and air force pride. It was something they revelled in. 'Never during the whole of the War did I stop sticking my neck out', *Hanrahan* declared forty years later.[28] As Justin O'Byrne recounted, their active resistance was

[24] Johnson, 'Resisting Captivity', PhD thesis, p. 226.
[25] Carson FA: Ken Carson, letters to mother and sister, 10 May 1945 (first letter) and 24 May 1945 (first letter).
[26] Nightingale FA: Nightingale, 'Wartime Records of Robert Roy Nightingale' [Part I], p. 122.
[27] DVA NCX065122-02: personal statement, 17 January 1980.
[28] DVA NCX065122-02: personal statement, 17 January 1980.

all part of showing that 'there was a fight in the British as much as ever there was'.[29] Resistance also reinforced the airmen's continuing agency, lifted morale, and strengthened group cohesion.

Duty to escape

Escape was a major expression of the airmen's disruptive agency. The duty to escape did not exist in the Great War. Until 1917, there was little official advice or support for potential escapers. Reflecting this absence, escape was not the prevailing response to captivity for the majority of Great War prisoners, including Australians.[30] It was, however, encouraged in the lead up to the Second World War. Planning for eventual conflict, the RAF issued in March 1936 *Air Publication 1548* which provided guidance on what could be divulged to the enemy on capture, intelligence the enemy would try to extract and the techniques they might deploy in doing so, and a list of 'don'ts'.[31] While it did not impose a duty to escape, it urged an escape awareness. The RAF did not update *Air Publication 1548* at the outbreak of the Second World War. However, given advice that '[o]pportunities for escape will present themselves', and the exhortation to '[k]eep your eyes and ears open for any information which you think may be of value should you succeed in escaping', some of the earliest captive airmen inferred an onus to escape.[32] In this they were encouraged by MI9. Established on 23 December 1939 as a department of the British War Office, one of MI9's aims was to develop

[29] NLA JMFC: Justin O'Byrne, 31 October 1986.
[30] MacKenzie, 'The Ethics of Escape', pp. 1–2; Pegram, 'Bold Bids for Freedom', in Beaumont, Grant, and Pegram (eds), *Beyond Surrender*, p. 21; Ariotti, *Captive Anzacs*, p. 59; Pegram, *Surviving the Great War*, pp. 107–128.
[31] *Air Publication 1548*, March 1936.
[32] *Air Publication 1548*, March 1936, front cover, p. 4.

‘escape-mindedness’, a perpetual vigilance to every opportunity to avoid capture or flee from enemy hands.[33] MI9 trained escapers and evaders, provided equipment, and established evasion lines in occupied Europe. Staff, including Alfred ‘Johnny’ Evans and a hand-picked team of Great War escapers, gave lectures. Later, the RAF Intelligence School ran courses for station intelligence officers, who in turn trained operational airmen.[34]

The duty to escape was formalised in the June 1941 edition of *Air Publication 1548*. The rationale for escape was also defined: escape attempts ‘have a very appreciable nuisance value’.[35] The duty was rescinded in the April 1944 revised and retitled *Air Publication 1548: The Responsibilities of a Prisoner of War* but, as in the original booklet, an implied duty was urged by encouraging an alertness to escape.[36] The revision was a response to heightened security within Germany because of the ‘threat’ posed by Allied prisoners of war. These fears culminated in early 1944. With the so-called ‘Bullet Decree’ of 4 March, escaped prisoners (with the exception of British and Americans) were to be handed over to the German security services (*Sicherheitsdient*) rather than returned to their camps. It also allowed for the execution of non-British and non-American escapers. In mid-September 1944, the Germans spelled out the ramifications of escape in a circular addressed ‘To all Prisoners of War!’ which declared that ‘escape from prison

[33] Foot and Langley, *MI 9*, pp. 34–35. Quote: p. 53.
[34] Foot and Langley, *MI 9*, 15, pp. 51–70; Elliott, ‘Maps (and more) for the Chaps—Escape Aids and Training’, pp. 24–25, 27–29, 32–33; Pitchfork, ‘The Organisation of Escape and Evasion’, pp. 8–23; MacKenzie, ‘The Ethics of Escape’, pp. 2, 14.
[35] *Air Publication 1548*, 2nd Edition, June 1941.
[36] *Air Publication 1548: The Responsibilities of a Prisoner of War*, 3rd Edition, April 1944.

camps is no longer a sport!' Absconders captured in newly designated 'death zones' would be 'immediately shot on sight'.[37]

MI9's historians deemed Stalag Luft III an escape-minded camp.[38] Some of the cohort's accounts reinforce it. Ken Todd told his family how he and his companions attempted to escape from the Belaria compound three times. According to his son, Peter, Todd knew it was stupid to attempt it, but he considered it his duty to try.[39] Material culture recorded that escape-mindedness and duty to escape. As well as in Albert Comber's immediate post-war artistic record of escape work in Italian camps and Stalag Luft III, escape-mindedness was a running thread through wartime log books. Humorous images reflected wishful thinking. Words encapsulated the instinctive drive to flee confinement. Both enshrined the duty to escape in 'kriegie lore'. James McCleery and Cy Borsht had similar drawings of a guard patrolling above a diligent tunneller.[40] Emphasising the pipedream aspect of a successful escape in his variation of the theme, Eric Johnston drew two tunnellers about to break out just inside the barbed wire, directly underneath three guards. Reinforcing the hopelessness of escape for a man debilitated after two months in Buchenwald, Johnston's log book also includes a turban-topped airman scaling a magic rope.[41] Making fun of their pre-capture intelligence briefings, McCleery drew a group of aircrew listening to a boffin declaring 'Escape! It's a piece of cake!!' Underneath, an airman hopefully

---

[37] Vance, *Objects of Concern*; p. 160; Wylie, *Barbed Wire Diplomacy*, pp. 230–231; Monteath, 'Behind the Colditz Myth', in Beaumont, Grant, and Pegram (eds), *Beyond Surrender*, p. 128. Quotes from poster.
[38] Foot and Langley, *MI 9*, p. 108; Anderson and Westmacott, *Handle with Care*, p. 40.
[39] Alexander records: Peter Todd, interview 13 October 2015.
[40] AWM PR88/160: McCleery, p. 3; Borsht Archive: Borsht, wartime log book, p. 37. Borsht's image is captioned '<u>Escape!</u>'. (Original emphasis.)
[41] Johnston FA: Johnston, wartime log book, pp. 9, 29.

looked over the warning line while a ferocious guard dog and handler waited to attack if he stepped across.[42] The humour of these visual anecdotes took the sting out of unfulfilled dreams but also rendered images and words safe from German censorship.[43] Because of secrecy constraints, escape work was not often recorded. Some, like George Archer, however, included details of failed efforts in after-the-fact diary entries and letters home. Censors did not obliterate those accounts because they were interpreted as highlighting German success in foiling attempts.[44]

The duty to escape was articulated in a poem entitled 'Escape', attributed to multiple escaper Edward Gordon Brettell (known as Gordon). Modelled on Rudyard Kipling's 'If', ('If you can quit the compound undetected, and clear your tracks nor leave the smallest trace … the next time you attempt it—you'll get home'), it was written on the 'cooler' wall, and featured in a number of wartime log books. 'High Flight' by John Gillespie Magee, which summed up the joy of flight despite the corollary of danger and potential death, had become the pilot's anthem. Brettell's reflective poem was a de facto kriegies' anthem in its encapsulation of the instinctive drive and duty to flee confinement:

If you can swallow sudden sour frustration

And gaze unmoved on failure's ugly shape,

Remembering as further inspiration

[42] AWM PR88/160: McCleery, wartime log book, p. 23.
[43] Visual anecdotes of escape also appear in Anderson and Westmacott, *Handle with Care*, 1946, pp. 9, 33, 41.
[44] George Archer FA: Archer, 1942 Diary, 21 and 24 August 1942; NLA FERG/4550: *P.O.W.*, No. 29, 15 June 1944, unattributed letter, 30 January 1944, p. 2.

It was and is your duty to escape.[45]

*****

Determining whether duty was a specific impetus for action is complex. In the case of prisoners of war, there are few contemporary sources where escapers analysed their motivations. Harry Train was one who recorded wartime motivation. It is not a specific rationale for his escape work, but it sheds light on a service culture which incorporated escape into its concept of duty.

Captured airmen were expected at war's end to fully account for their actions immediately before they were taken into enemy custody, including why they had abandoned aircraft and operational duty, and whether or not they had attempted to evade capture, or escape if taken by the enemy. Commanding Officers had the power to convene courts of inquiry to determine that capture had been unavoidable and not, as the previous conflict's War Office had feared, that the servicemen preferred safe imprisonment to the uncertainties of combat.[46] Some Commanding Officers did not wait until the end of war. Less than two months after Louis Koch and his fellow crew members abandoned their aircraft without being ordered to do so, a court of inquiry was established to investigate the circumstances. (Koch, who had been wounded before he baled out, and his fellow crew members were exonerated: the committee deemed that their decisions to bale 'constituted a grave error of judgement, but in view of their inexperience

[45] Brettell participated in the Great Escape and was shot in the ensuing reprisals.
[46] *The King's Regulations*, p. 507; Pegram, 'Bold Bids for Freedom', in Beaumont, Grant, and Pegram (eds), *Beyond Surrender*, p. 21.

[Koch had only carried out five or six sorties beforehand] not a culpable one…'.)[47] Pre-empting such scrutiny, Harry Train started his diary in Germany's Dulag Luft transit camp because 'some "Bush Lawyer" said we would all be subject to a court of inquiry when we returned to England to explain how we had become prisoners of war'. While Train admitted he did not give much credence to the threat, he decided to record the details of his last operation and all that occurred afterwards, 'whilst they were still fresh in my mind'.[48] As the war progressed, given the numbers of downed aircrew, the RAF accepted the good sense of not calling on captured airmen to explain themselves.[49] The threat of inquiry may have lapsed, but airmen were still required on their return to Britain to provide details of the circumstances of capture as well as whether or not they had escaped. At least twenty-four members of the cohort explained their escape attempts during post-liberation debrief sessions and at least twenty provided details during MI9 debriefs (there are some overlaps). Given the threat (or belief) of post-war censure, and recognising that the majority of examples cited in this chapter were recorded after liberation, with most drawn from late-life accounts, any explanations of disruptive efforts must be treated with caution. They should be read as justifications of action rather than pure statements of motivation, particularly when composed in the context of air force duty.

While there was a clear formal duty to escape between June 1941 and April 1944 and an implied duty at other times, it seems, as Jock Bryce records,

[47] NAA A9300 Koch L.G.: 'Court of Inquiry assembled at RAF Station Lissett', 15 August 1943.
[48] Arnel archive: Train, 'A Barbed-Wire World', 13 June 1942, p. 3.
[49] McKernan, *This War Never Ends*, pp. 135–136.

that few airmen captives 'were interested in "the duty of an officer to escape"'.[50] Reflecting a complexity of the impulse to escape where duty was only one among many reasons, and not necessarily the most important, Justin O'Byrne presented a number of motives including duty, self-esteem, to get out of a tedious environment and 'all the other sorts of debilitating influences that existed there', the challenge, and being a hindrance to the Germans who had to 'smarten up their method of surveillance' to cope with them.[51] Bruce Lumsden was captured after the duty to escape was rescinded but he doubted whether duty, King, or country were ever real motives for escape attempts. Rather, he recognised the human desire for freedom, that 'innate urge [which] impels the captive to look for an opportunity, and to calculate the chances'. He wrote that, even if 'the opportunity never comes, or the chance is never taken, it aids morale to play the game'.[52]

That morale-lifting hope of making it home, as well as the opportunity to flee what Lionel Jeffries considered the 'soul destroying prison camp environment', proved in hindsight a strong impetus for some.[53] Frederick Seamer had a long devotion to escape before he helped form Centre Compound's escape committee, (and then went on to head it in Stalag Luft VI, Heydekrug after the non-commissioned officers left Stalag Luft III in mid-1943). While not explaining his own drive to escape, Seamer recognised that some made 'desperate bids for freedom as an escape from the monotony

[50] Bryce FA: 'Jock Bryce's POW Diary 1942–1945', p. 40.
[51] NLA JMFC: Justin O'Byrne, 31 October 1986; NLA Justin O'Byrne, 'Reminiscential conversations', 29 August 1983–28 July 1984, Tape 50.
[52] Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'The Complete Tour', letter 7 December 1987.
[53] Jeffries, 'The Great Escape Caused Maximum Disruption'.

and boredom of camp life'.[54] Multiple-escaper Alex Kerr recorded that he was drawn by the adventure combined with potential freedom. He felt 'triumph and excitement' when he and his companions had to live on their wits while on the run. 'It was an exhilarating feeling knowing you were winning a dangerous cat and mouse game' with the threat of disaster if you lost. 'The adrenaline was coursing through your veins almost continuously.'[55] Paul Royle, who when captured on 17 May 1940 became one of the cohort's earliest prisoners of war, was one who denied duty or tying up German resources as justification for his dedicated escape work and repeated escape attempts, including the Great Escape.[56] Rather, he indicated an underlying rationale of self-interest for himself and others.[57] 'We only thought of ourselves getting out.'[58]

Emotions underpinned some escape bids. Jock Bryce recognised that for some the 'misery of confinement and homesickness for one's friends are incentives as strong as any'.[59] Some, like Great Escaper Albert Hake, missed their loved ones so much they wanted only to return to them.[60] Many felt ashamed that they had been captured, such as James Catanach who, like Hake, was killed in the post-Great Escape reprisals. 'My arrival in enemy territory was far from glorious', he confessed. 'I force landed as a result of fuel shortage caused by a sequence of misfortunes, mostly due to my own

---

[54] AWM 54 779/3/126 part 1: POW statement, Top Secret report narrated by W/O F. Seamer, Chief of Escape Committee, undated c. June 1945.
[55] Kerr, *Shot Down*, pp. 195, 102, 149. Quotes: p. 195.
[56] SLWA: Royle, 19 March 2014.
[57] IWMSA Royle: 26605, 2 December 2012.
[58] SLWA: Royle, 19 March 2014.
[59] Bryce FA: 'Jock Bryce's POW Diary 1942–1945', p. 40.
[60] Home and how much he missed it and his wife Noela were running threads through Hake's letters. In his last two to Noela before the Great Escape he indicated his hopes for an imminent return. Preen FA: Albert Hake, letters to Noela Hake, 1 March and 20 March 1944.

foolishness … recollections of it all gets me down a bit.'[61] Keeping busy, as well as their continuing service obligations as members of the air force, including the duty of escape, helped mitigate their barely admitted deep humiliation. It was, among other things, for 'your own self-esteem to try and escape', recalled Justin O'Byrne.[62] Sometimes there were no real motivations. The wartime editions of *Air Publication 1548* fostered opportunistic approaches to escape and men took their chances. Doug Hutchinson's Belaria friends hid in barrels waiting to be loaded onto a brewery truck: 'the blokes decided, here's an opportunity'.[63] On another occasion, Kenneth Gaulton noticed an open gate with guards nowhere in sight. 'I walked straight out.'[64] For some, the taste of freedom, no matter how brief, was too much to resist. '[T]hree others and I went out for a few hours and got caught; too bad, eh, pet? But, gee, it was good to be free again.'[65]

'X' organisation

Stalag Luft III's escape or 'X' organisation, as the airmen dubbed it at the time, was the formal mechanism through which escape attempts could be made. It oversaw escape work and mobilised camp resources towards authorised escape schemes. It was, asserted Justin O'Byrne, 'a masterpiece of coordination'.[66] It was based on that established in Stalag Luft I, Barth by

---

[61] SOR JCC: 2013.CAT050, James Catanach, letter to William Alan Catanach, 28 March 1943.
[62] NLA Justin O'Byrne, 'Reminiscential conversations', 29 August 1983–28 July 1984, Tape 50.
[63] AAWFA: Hutchinson 0540, 17 June, 2003.
[64] AAWFA: Gaulton 1276, 3 February, 2004.
[65] NLA FERG/4550: *P.O.W.*, No. 29, 15 June 1944, unattributed letter, 30 January 1944, p. 2.
[66] '"X" organisation': Brickhill and Norton, *Escape to Danger*, p. 6. O'Byrne FA: O'Byrne, '*Mercury* Radio Roundsman'.

Senior British Officer and dedicated escaper, Wing Commander Harry 'Wings' Day. According to his biographer and fellow prisoner at Stalag Luft III, Sydney Dowse, Day's commitment to escape derived from his professional honour and pride as a soldier and air force officer.[67] Escape would enable him to 'return to the fight'.[68] Day stamped his personal philosophy over the escape organisation and led by example.[69] From the beginning, it reinforced air force pride, service, and unity. Designating 'escaping' as Barth's 'operational function', Day stressed that escape was an essential aspect of air force duty.[70] When Day and other members of Barth's escape committee were transferred to the newly opened Stalag Luft III, they set up the organisation anew. When he and a large group of officers transferred to Oflag XXI-B, Schubin (now Szubin, Poland) in October 1942, Day appointed Roger Bushell as head of Stalag Luft III's escape committee.

Bushell, as 'Big X', dominated the escape organisation during Day's absence and even after his return. While Day's organisation emanated from his service idealism, as Katie Meale argues in her study of leadership in captivity, Bushell's motives as reported by his confrères were selfish, and reflected a personal desire to escape at all costs. He was 'obsessed with escape'. Moreover, he was not a true 'team player', demonstrating a track record throughout his years of captivity of putting self-interest first.[71] Bushell's biographer, Guy Walters, posits that Bushell was also motivated by

---

[67] Smith, *Wings Day*, p. 62. 'Sydney Smith' was the *nom de plume* of former Stalag Luft III prisoner, Sydney Dowse. Dando-Collins, *The Hero Maker*, p. 352.
[68] Smith, *Wings Day*, pp. 195–196.
[69] Meale, 'Leadership of Australian POWs in the Second World War', PhD thesis, pp. 166–167.
[70] Smith, *Wings Day*, pp. 81–82, 97, 133, 169.
[71] Meale, 'Leadership of Australian POWs in the Second World War', PhD thesis, pp. 116–119.

a sense of 'being fated to do something great'.[72] As such, Bushell redesigned and expanded Day's organisation to realise his ambitions and exercised total control over it. Bushell gave the orders and made the final decisions. He forbade all but authorised attempts. Four Australians who ignored the rules were given 'a good talking to … and now as punishment we have to dig rubbish tips'. They were forbidden another attempt and 'promised it won't happen again'.[73] Accordingly, when North Compound opened in March 1943, the 'X' organisation became an important feature of life, with the construction of three tunnels the focus of its escape effort.[74] While Bushell countenanced no unauthorised plans for tunnel escapes, he approved some other schemes because they would divert attention away from his grand plan.[75] The other compounds had their own versions of the 'X' organisation. All Senior British Officers supported them and MI9 covertly assisted their efforts.

About a quarter of the cohort demonstrated their escape-mindedness. 'It is a generally accepted fact', wrote Jock Bryce, 'that the time to escape is immediately after capture'.[76] Many jumped from trains or trucks in transit, only to be recaptured. Italian captivity presented few opportunities to escape.[77] Even so, some men tried. Albert Comber worked on tunnels at PG 78, Sulmona while other Australians also dug tunnels, disposed of soil, and played games to distract the guards.[78] For many, the first real chance to escape

---

[72] Walters, *The Real Great Escape*, p. 29.
[73] NLA FERG/4550: *P.O.W.*, No. 29, 15 June 1944, unattributed letter, 30 January 1944, p. 2.
[74] NLA JMFC: Justin O'Byrne, 31 October 1986.
[75] Meale, 'Leadership of Australian POWs in the Second World War', PhD thesis, pp. 134–136, 141.
[76] Bryce FA: 'Jock Bryce's POW Diary 1942–1945', p. 39.
[77] Gilbert, *POW*, p. 75.
[78] AWM ART34781.008, AH Comber, 'Working in the tunnel, Sulmona', 1945; AWM ART34781.009, AH Comber, 'Disposing of the earth from the tunnel, Sulmona', 1945;

came when Italy signed the armistice with the Allies.[79] After moving to PG 19, Bologna, Comber was one who tried to take advantage of the post-Armistice disarray. '[Twelve] of us—all Australian officers broke out of this camp not knowing we were surrounded, were machine-gunned and forced back into captivity.'[80] Comber, Bill Fordyce, Rudolph Leu and others tried to escape during the long transit in crowded cattle trucks to German camps and were foiled in the attempt.[81] Many, including airmen, escaped to Switzerland and France. Others, such as Humphrey Jowett who evaded for six months, were recaptured.[82] In Stalag Luft III, Australians participated in every aspect of 'X' work. Many dug tunnels. Other escape-related work included writing coded letters to MI9, parcel diversion, look-out (stooge, duty pilot), soil dispersal (penguins), diversionary tasks, equipment manufacture or acquisition, forgery, and photography. Some even considered keeping fit to prepare for long-distance walking in the event of a successful break-out as escape work. The forced march also provided opportunities. Ronald Pender slipped from a 'marching column of POWs' and met up with the British Army a week later.[83] Adrian Condon also escaped from 'a column and remained hidden in woods' for a few days until he made contact with British forces.[84]

Almost everyone, at some time

AWM ART34781.010, AH Comber, 'Some played deck quoits while the tunnel progressed in the shadow in the corner', 1945.

[79] Kittel, 'Hymns and hints: A prisoner of war's notebook in Italy', pp. 4–12.

[80] AWM: A.H. Comber, artist, letter 16 December 1990.

[81] AWM: A.H. Comber, artist, letter 16 December 1990; AWM 54 81/4/135: MI9 reports, Leu, Fordyce, and Albert Edwards; AWM 54 779/3/126 part 1: POW statement, Edwards, 'Conditions in Italian Pow Camps and en route to Germany', 31 July 1945.

[82] AWM 54 81/4/135: MI9 report, Jowett.

[83] AWM 54 779/3/129: 11 PDRC post-liberation debrief, Pender.

[84] AWM 54 779/3/129: 11 PDRC post-liberation debrief, Adrian Condon.

Involvement in the 'X' organisation was recorded, after the war, as an officially endorsed, valuable aspect of the camp community.[85] It was remembered by former POWs, some scholars, and popular historians, as a viable way to contribute to the war effort despite captivity, particularly as a way to divert German manpower and resources.[86] Every aspect of camp life except for the care of the sick 'was subordinated to it', according to Aiden Crawley who drew on his own experiences in Stalag Luft III to compile the definitive account of escape methods used by RAF, Commonwealth, and Dominion airmen in Germany.[87] Stalag Luft III's official 'X' report, written in 1950, asserts that the escape committee controlled 'practically 100 per cent' of the escapes within Stalag Luft III.[88] According to Australian prisoner of war, Terence Officer, 'almost everyone, at some time' attempted to escape.[89]

Each new arrival was informed that 'if they wished to help in the Escape Organisation they were to give their name to the Escape Representative of their barrack'. Volunteers were 'warned that, while their preference for one kind of work would be allowed whenever possible, they would be expected to accept direction to any work for which they were considered suitable, and

[85] NAUK WO 208/3283: SLIII Camp History, Part III North (Officers') Compound, p. 11.
[86] NLA JMFC: Justin O'Byrne, 31 October 1986; Alexander records: Cath McNamara, interview 18 July 2016; Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'The Complete Tour', Lumsden, letter 11 July 1986; [Crawley], *Escape from Germany*, pp. 9, 30–31; Vance, 'The War Behind the Wire', p. 676; Walters, *The Real Great Escape*, pp. 164, 301.
[87] [Crawley], *Escape from Germany*, p. 32. See also NAUK WO 208/3283: SLIII Camp History, Part II Centre (NCO's) Compound, p. 17; Brickhill, *The Great Escape*, p. 49.
[88] NAUK AIR 40/285: 'X' report, p. 25.
[89] AWM 54 779/3/129: 11 PDRC post-liberation debrief, Officer.

were physically fit'. No prisoner, however, was instructed to undertake any task which would endanger his life.[90]

Drawing on his experiences of escape from a number of camps, Harry 'Wings' Day, assessed that 5 per cent of the prisoners were 'dedicated escapers' who willingly accepted any risk, 'fanatics who thought, dreamed and talked of nothing else'. He considered that 20 per cent of the prison population were 'hard-working escapers' who kept up a consistent escape effort, even as they contributed to camp life generally. The majority, in his opinion, would only escape if the opportunity was presented to them. They however, were happy to join the 'X' organisation and help those who were eager to escape. Only a small minority did not attempt to escape in any circumstance, or participate in the escape organisation. Day called those exceptions to Officer's 'almost everyone' the 'non-escaping fraternity'.[91]

Accounts regarding the numbers of non-participants vary. Terence Officer's assertion of 'almost everyone', implies only a handful of exceptions. So too does George Harsh, an American serving in the Royal Canadian Air Force who was, for a time, the North Compound security officer and member of the 'X' organisation's executive committee. He recalled that only a minority had to be coaxed into escape support work.[92] As Aiden Crawley noted, about two-thirds of North Compound registered—one-third did not.[93]

---

[90] NAUK WO 208/3283: SLIII Camp History, Part III North (Officers') Compound, p. 9.
[91] Smith, *Wings Day*, pp. 81–82.
[92] Harsh, *Lonesome Road*, p. 196.
[93] [Crawley], *Escape from Germany*, p. 252.

While new arrivals were presented with the option of participating in 'X', abstainers did not enjoy the full support of the camp community. Regardless of actual numbers, memory of the attitude of Stalag Luft III's dedicated escapers towards the '"not interested" class' (i.e. those not interested in escaping or escape work) or the 'non-escaping fraternity', is inconsistent.[94] While Crawley appeared sensitive to non-escapers—'[N]o one could blame those who decided escape was not worthwhile'—it was a qualified sympathy. 'Provided they stuck to their guns and held their point of view with tolerance, they were often the most valuable members of the community.'[95] Day's position appears contradictory. According to his biographer, Day assessed these men as 'realistic and well-balanced types whose moral resistance to captivity was above the average'.[96] His use of 'fraternity' suggests that they had not been exiled from the air force and camp 'family' and could provide useful assistance to the 'X' organisation. While at Barth, for example, he had recruited those from the 'non-escaping fraternity' to send coded messages in letters.[97] (Australians Charlton Bastian, Francis 'Frank' Graeme-Evans, Allan McSweyn, and Philip Roberts, all wrote code letters to MI9.[98]) Contradicting Day's biographer, George Harsh records that Day was not well-disposed towards those who did not share his enthusiasm for escape work. As Harsh tells it, Day charged him with the responsibility of ensuring that the camp gave the 'Huns a bad time'. 'If any bastard—or group of bastards—gets in your way or hampers your work, I want to know about

[94] NAUK WO 208/3283: SLIII Camp History, Part III North (Officers') Compound, p. 11.
[95] [Crawley], *Escape from Germany*, p. 30.
[96] Smith, *Wings Day*, pp. 81–82.
[97] Smith, *Wings Day*, p. 83.
[98] NAUK WO 208/3283: SLIII Camp History, Part I East (Officers') Compound, pp. 67–69.

it. I'll have 'em court-martialled to the last man once the war is over! This is a military operation, and I expect it to be carried out as such.'[99] Others in recollection vilified those who did not participate in the 'X' organisation. Dedicated escaper Indian-born Bertram 'Jimmy' James, who made ten attempts, had no time for those who were not interested in the escape effort. He referred to them as the 'irreconcilables'. Rather than being embraced in Day's fraternity, those men were, in effect, excluded from camp life and left to their own company; they were even encouraged to room together.[100]

Even allowing for Harsh's post-war hyperbole, ambivalent acceptance, or outright rejection by their fellows, the onus or implication of duty, and the autocratic demands of Bushell's 'X' organisation, these recollections indicate there was little free choice to escape. Indeed, as historian Jonathan Vance notes, it was 'fairly clear to those who contemplated complaining about the power of the escape organisation that they were unlikely to get a sympathetic hearing'.[101] Yet, despite duty, unsympathetic attitudes towards the 'non-escaping fraternity', and autocratic coercion, some airmen did not attempt to escape, thus undermining Officer's 'almost everyone' declaration. While some in Centre Compound, like Frederick Seamer, were keen to escape and formed an 'X' organisation known as 'Tally Ho' which mirrored that in other compounds and later flourished in Stalag Luft VI, Heydekrug, only a few non-commissioned officers were 'deeply interested' in escape.[102] Indeed, contrary

---

[99] Harsh, *Lonesome Road*, pp. 195–196.
[100] James, *Moonless Night*, pp. 83–84.
[101] NAUK WO 208/3283: SLIII Camp History, Part III North (Officers') Compound, p. 11; Vance, 'The War Behind the Wire', p. 689.
[102] Meale, 'Leadership of Australian POWs in the Second World War', PhD thesis, p. 200; AWM 54 779/3/126 part 1: POW statement, Top Secret report narrated by W/O F. Seamer, Chief of Escape Committee, undated c. June 1945; Foot and Langley, *MI 9*, p. 253. Quote: NAUK WO 208/3283: SLIII Camp History, Part II Centre (NCO's) Compound, p. 17.

to any official directives regarding duty of escape or implied duty, the majority of NCOs did not feel they were 'duty bound' to make the effort.[103]

Australian evidence also contradicts a composure of near-universal escape-mindedness.[104] After liberation, airmen prisoners of war were questioned about their experiences at 106 Personnel Reception Centre, (106 PRC) Cosford (members of the RAF) and 11 Personnel Despatch and Receiving Centre, (11 PDFC) Brighton (RAAF). The post-liberation debriefs asked if they were, 'at any times in the hands of the enemy as a POW. If so, state circumstances and details of any subsequent escape or release'. Not all of the Australian debriefs are extant but, in the 295 debriefs consulted for this thesis (representing 85.5 per cent of the cohort's post-war survivors), only 28 per cent of the cohort reported escape-related work. Significant omissions include Albert Comber, Justin O'Byrne, Patrick 'Les' Dixon, Hugh Lambie, Rudolph Leu, and Allan Ellis who all declared escape attempts in other testimony. Of particular note as a non-discloser is Bill Fordyce who was still in the tunnel when the Great Escape was discovered by the Germans. Perhaps they, and others who were silent about their involvement in escape work, had interpreted escape in its narrowest form: i.e. 'escape to freedom'. Had airmen been queried regarding the full range of escape-related work, the degree of escape-mindedness among the Australians, perhaps, would be more evident. Yet, even looking at all of the available evidence for the entire cohort—i.e. post-liberation debriefs, camp histories, MI9 escape and evasion forms, POW statements held by the Australian War Memorial, oral history accounts,

[103] NAUK WO 208/3283: SLIII Camp History, Part II Centre (NCO's) Compound, pp. 17–18.
[104] AWM 54 779/3/129: 11 PDRC post-liberation debrief, Officer.

prisoner memoir or biography, and family recollection—only about a quarter of the cohort recorded escape attempts or escape-related work.

The non-escaping fraternity

Approximately 10 per cent of the cohort specifically stated in their post-liberation debriefs and MI9 reports that they had made no escapes. This, along with the majority who did not declare any involvement in escape work is perhaps surprising, given, as Harry Train indicated, the men anticipated post-captivity scrutiny of their escape-mindedness. Yet many of the non-disclosers and 'no escapes' would have been genuine non-escapers: 21 per cent of the cohort had been captured after the Great Escape and 5.44 per cent after the mid-September 'immediately shot on sight' decree. Some could not escape or participate in escape work. Suggesting a valid basis for non-participation, and further contradicting post-captivity accounts of near-universal escape-mindedness, the majority of reasons related to changed circumstances, pragmatism, and physical and psychological fitness.

After the duty of escape was rescinded in April 1944, prisoners in Stalag Luft III and elsewhere were advised of the fact via coded message.[105] Many of the longer-term prisoners heeded the new instructions. Leaving aside his opportunistic gate walk-out, Kenneth Gaulton believed language skills were vital for a successful exit, 'so I decided to learn to speak German. Every opportunity I had I practised'. Before he mastered the language, however, Stalag Luft III's non-commissioned officers were moved to Stalag Luft VI,

[105] NAUK WO 208/3283: SLIII Camp History, Part I East (Officers') Compound, p. 41.

Heydekrug. 'Then the Great Escape took place.' One of those killed in the post-escape reprisals was his wife's cousin. Gaulton heard that prisoners had been told not to escape during the Allied advance, so he gave up any thought of escape: 'I decided to take my mother's advice, and study'.[106]

Some of the newly-captured considered they had already fulfilled their operational duty. For Alec Arnel, a Spitfire pilot who had been downed on 29 June 1944, there was 'no point at that stage in being heroic. I'd had enough of the war anyway, I'd had over four years of front line service at that time—[and] I was tired, awfully tired, of the war. So there was some self-interest in that I wasn't going to do anything dramatic unless the opportunity came'. Arnel was not alone. 'I found that it was pretty well the attitude of the people I spoke to, in the camp at that time: there's not much point us doing anything at the moment.'[107] It seems that, for the operationally exhausted, captivity was their equivalent of 'tour expired'.

Pragmatism was a factor for some of the non-escapers. After realistically assessing the hazards of escape, Ron Mackenzie concluded that the odds were against him.[108] Like Kenneth Gaulton, Richard Winn recognised that his lack of any foreign language skills would be problematic.[109] Leonard 'Len' Netherway, who had helped dispose of tunnel soil, declined to go in the draw for a Great Escape 'ticket'. As well as feeling too much of a responsibility towards his wife, Mavis, he was mindful of the limited chances of success.[110] As 1944 advanced, Arnel's weary reluctance to

---

[106] AAWFA: Gaulton 1276, 3 February, 2004.
[107] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 12 November 2015.
[108] Mackenzie, *An Ordinary War 1940–1945*, pp. 43, 49.
[109] AAWFA: Winn 1508, 4 March 2004.
[110] Alexander records: Mike Netherway, interview 28 September 2016.

escape firmed into a survival instinct. 'I'm going to survive and keep trying to survive', he recalled. Indeed, '[n]ot too many stuck their head out at that stage because we weren't going to help win the war'.[111]

Some men were not physically capable, including those who were temporarily or permanently physically debilitated during operations, bale-outs, aircraft crashes, or the unhealthy conditions they were exposed to on the run or during captivity. Nor were those who were medically repatriated likely to have been involved in escape work. None of the Australian airmen who had been incarcerated in Buchenwald were fit enough for an escape attempt from either Stalag Luft III or during the forced march.

Some men were psychologically unable to participate in escape work or to make an attempt. Some were crippled by claustrophobia. Earlier bad experiences on the run, perhaps, deterred others. Of the ten men who detailed in their MI9 reports in-transit dashes and camp break-outs before arriving in Stalag Luft III, none tried again. Les Dixon was one who had a particularly hard time. He was hospitalised for three months after his nine days abroad.[112] Some men, however, attempted to escape despite physical and psychological debility. Demonstrating personal agency, courage, and commitment to escape, tunnel collapses did not discourage claustrophobic Albert Comber or *Sean Hanrahan* who 'was buried on two occasions by falls in escape tunnels in pure sand and was extremely lucky to be rescued'.[113] Guy-Grey Smith hoped to use one of the tunnels he worked on in Oflag VI-B, an army camp

---

[111] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 2 March 2017.
[112] AWM 54 81/4/135: MI9 report, Patrick Dixon.
[113] AWM: A.H. Comber, artist, letter 16 December 1990; Alexander records: Cath McNamara, interview 18 July 2016. Quote: DVA NCX065122-02: personal statement, 17 January 1980.

at Warburg, despite being laid up after his crash with a broken jaw and leg that had healed two centimetres shorter.[114] Justin O'Byrne developed Dupuytren's contracture at Warburg—a condition where the fingers are permanently contracted into a flexed position—but continued to dig.[115] Accepting the inevitability of capture, Alex Kerr 'was resigned to remaining a prisoner unless I could escape'. As such, serious wounds did not impede his multiple attempts, including a failed mass breakout from Stalag III-E, an army camp at Kirchhain.[116]

Many non-escapers made valuable contributions to the 'X' organisation and communal life. Reeling from his 'unreasonable fear of tunnels mixed with the shame I felt because I always tried to avoid the actual tunnel digging when involved in attempts to escape', *Robin Sumner* opted 'for an open air job such as "stooging" … [and] manufacturing air pumping gear and other tasks for which I was better suited'.[117] While Harold 'Pete' Bjelke-Petersen had made a number of attempts to escape, he put his physiotherapy and massage training at the disposal of other escapers and those prisoners suffering from pain; he was later commended for his 'valuable work'.[118] Richard Winn helped others who were better qualified to escape.[119] Ron Mackenzie carried out acts of

---

[114] Gaynor, *Guy Grey-Smith*, p. 13; AWM PR05675: Guy Grey-Smith, diary, 29 May and 5 June 1942.
[115] NLA Justin O'Byrne, 'Reminiscential conversations', 29 August 1983–28 July 1984, Tape 50.
[116] Kerr, *Shot Down*, pp. 143–144.
[117] DVA NMX272113-01: letter to Deputy Commissioner, Department of Veterans' Affairs, 21 November 1996.
[118] Harrison RC: Recording by Warrant Officer Ross Thomas Breheny; NAUK AIR 40/269: Stalag Luft III reports and nominal roll, Section 45: Recommendations. For physiotherapy qualifications, refer 'Sydney Airman is Prisoner', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 October 1940, p. 10.
[119] AAWFA: Winn 1508, 4 March 2004.

sabotage.[120] Because of his physical limitations ensuing from a shot-up left foot (with a large piece missing), opportunistic attempts such as the would-be barrel exit would have been difficult for Doug Hutchinson. He, however, contributed to communal life by assisting his fellow prisoners. 'If you were asked to do something, you'd do it in any way that you could. As a matter of fact, you'd go looking for something to help somebody.'[121]

Composing escape narratives

In positioning escape as a duty, *Air Publication 1548* provided a framework for officially endorsed escape which directly related to the airmen's status as active servicemen. It also allowed former kriegies to compose accounts justifying escape as a moral right and duty.[122] While Justin O'Byrne, who was captured in August 1941, recognised personal desire to regain his freedom along with other reasons to escape, he stated that his 'first duty was to escape, to try to rejoin his lines'.[123] Lionel Jeffries, who was captured two years later, also cited the service obligation in a post-war account: 'we were duty bound to escape if we could'.[124] *Air Publication 1548* also allowed the airmen to place the most positive 'spin' on participation in the 'famous Great Escape', from 'the greatest prison-camp escape of them all'.[125] Some framed the Great Escape as a worthwhile endeavour based on the highest motives. Reinforcing that they remained active participants in the war, many highlighted the

---

[120] Mackenzie, *An Ordinary War 1940–1945*, pp. 43, 49.
[121] AAWFA: Hutchinson 0540, 17 June, 2003.
[122] Moral right: Herington, *Air Power Over Europe, 1944–1945*, p. 485.
[123] NLA Justin O'Byrne, 'Reminiscential conversations', 29 August 1983–28 July 1984, Tape 50.
[124] Jeffries, 'The Great Escape Caused Maximum Disruption'.
[125] 'famous Great Escape': NLA JMFC: Justin O'Byrne, 31 October 1986. 'the greatest prison-camp escape of them all': Brickhill, *The Great Escape*, p. 11.

'nuisance value' of escape.[126] They, like Justin O'Byrne, believed they were tying up German manpower and matériel.[127] Bill Fordyce, who was caught in the tunnel, considered the breakout 'successful, even if it was so tragic' because of the 'massive amount of disruption' it caused. 'There were tens of thousands of German troops whose sole job was to look for those that escaped.'[128] 'Why the target of 200 escapees instead of a dribble of two or three every now and again which would attract less attention?' Answering his own question, Jeffries, one of the Great Escape 'stooges' who logged German movements in and around the huts, stated, '[t]his was our war contribution, to create maximum disruption to Germany in its then failing condition'.[129] O'Byrne, assessed the Great Escape as 'a classic of perseverance, of ingenuity, of bravery and everything combined'.[130] To otherwise couch the deaths of the fifty killed in the post-Escape reprisals would diminish them. It would make a mockery of the camp's 'deep mourning'.[131] It would also risk highlighting real or vicarious personal or collective culpability in the escapers' deaths. As Jonathan Vance asserts, because of decades of lionisation of the participants, there are very few latter day criticisms of either the escape organisation or its main proponents, particularly Roger Bushell.[132] Indeed, most of Stalag Luft III's prisoners forgot or ignored Bushell's escape

---

[126] *Air Publication 1548*, 2nd Edition, June 1941.
[127] NLA JMFC: Justin O'Byrne, 31 October 1986.
[128] Edlington, 'The Great Escape Recalled: 60 years on, survivors tell of famous breakout', p. 15.
[129] Jeffries, 'The Great Escape Caused Maximum Disruption'.
[130] NLA Justin O'Byrne, 'Reminiscential conversations', 29 August 1983–28 July 1984, Tape 50.
[131] Quote: NLA Justin O'Byrne, 'Reminiscential conversations', 29 August 1983–28 July 1984, Tape 50.
[132] Vance, 'The War Behind the Wire', p. 690; Meale, 'Leadership of Australian POWs in the Second World War', PhD thesis, pp. 143–144; AAWFA: Cornish 1388, 2 July 2004; Walters, *The Real Great Escape*, pp. 301: 303.

autocracy; some acclaimed him a hero.[133] O'Byrne's assessment of Big 'X' is typical: 'he was an inspiration for morale building and determination, a very great man'.[134] There were some dissenters. Len Netherway, according to his son, thought Bushell was 'mad. Crazy'.[135] In Kenneth Gaulton's opinion (he was not at Stalag Luft III at the time of the Great Escape) Bushell was 'an example of what an officer in the services should not be. He was an arrogant self-centred man'.[136]

*****

Terence Officer's assertion of 'almost everyone, at some time' was an early formulation of Stalag Luft III's composure of near-universal escape-mindedness and participation in the escape organisation. It was reinforced by George Harsh and Harry 'Wings' Day's biographer. The narrative of near-universal escape-mindedness became entrenched in popular culture by Paul Brickhill's *The Great Escape* (which is still in print) as well as through films like *The Wooden Horse* and *The Great Escape*. Memoirs by escapers, a proliferation of popular accounts about the March 1944 mass escape, and frequent repeats of *The Great Escape* film keep it there. Australian evidence, however, contests this composure. Post-liberation and MI9 debriefs, along with other records reveal that only about a quarter of the cohort declared involvement in escape or escape-related work, and 10 per cent specifically

[133] Meale, 'Leadership of Australian POWs in the Second World War', PhD thesis, p. 145.
[134] NLA Justin O'Byrne, 'Reminiscential conversations', 29 August 1983–28 July 1984, Tape 51.
[135] Alexander records: Mike Netherway, interview 28 September 2016.
[136] AAWFA: Gaulton 1276, 3 February, 2004.

stated that they carried out no such activity, despite an air force duty or implied duty, to participate.

Despite this contradiction, Stalag Luft III's 'almost everyone' narrative, which had no place for physical debility, mental disturbance, or the '"not interested" class', was an important mechanism for making sense of wartime confinement. It enabled kriegies to collectively look back on their actions within captivity with pride. The great variety of disruptive acts shored up their essential masculinity and martial identity as on-duty *air men* in the barbed-wire battleground. This, in retrospect, was validated by von Lindeiner, Stalag Luft III's former commandant, who acknowledged that the British—including Australians—'were the most defensive [prisoners] against the Germans'.[137] The Great Escape, however, failed to achieve its aim of creating great havoc.[138] The 'grand gesture' had little effect on the allied war effort.[139] Yet the glee with which former airmen such as Justin O'Byrne later told stories 'of prisoners under a big handicap but often coming out on top' highlights their perceived success in winning the 'battle of wits'.[140]

The 'X' organisation has an important place in the narrative of near-universal escape-mindedness. It provided a viable, endorsed scheme which enabled airmen to manage their captivity and to contribute to the air force community of RAF Station Sagan. Disruptive acts also helped relieve boredom, increased morale and self-esteem, provided a sense of adventure,

---

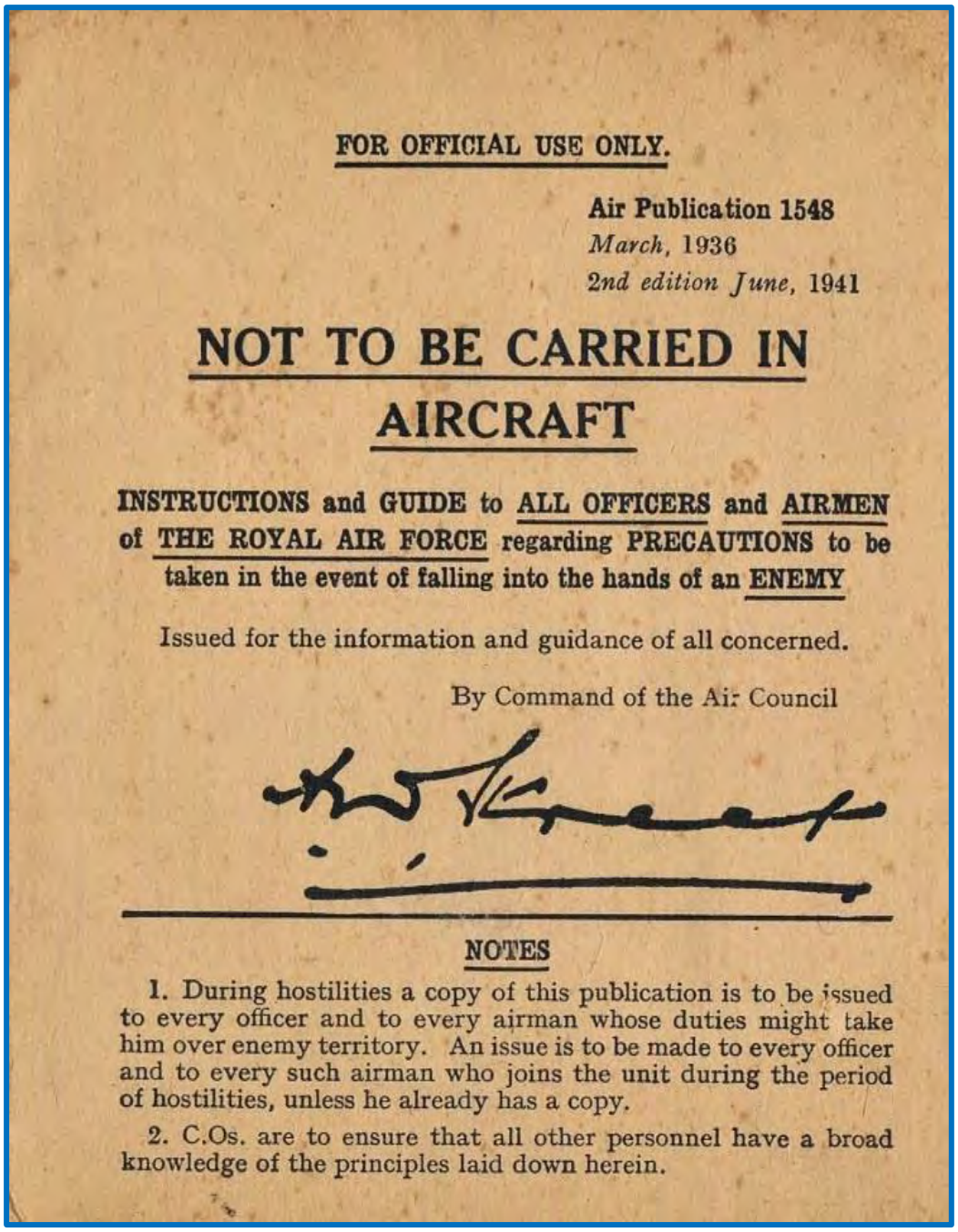
[137] Walton and Eberhardt, *From Commandant to Captive*, p. 63.
[138] Walters, 'Five Myths of the Great Escape', *History Extra*; Walters, *The Real Great Escape*, pp. 301–303.
[139] Walzer, 'Prisoners of War: Does the Fight Continue after the Battle?', p. 785. Quote: Walters, *The Real Great Escape*, p. 303.
[140] O'Byrne FA: O'Byrne, '*Mercury* Radio Roundsman'. Refer also Lark, *A Lark on the Wing*, p. 75; AAWFA: Fordyce 0523, 19 June 2003.

and ensured continuing purpose through contributing to the war effort. As such, the airmen's defiant acts helped ameliorate the strains of captivity within RAF Station Sagan. There was another significant benefit. As Aiden Crawley put it, their sense of commitment was 'the best tonic a prison camp could have … men took part in a common effort and once again got the feeling of serving a community'.[141] The strong relationships with fellow prisoners which underpinned the martial and emotional community of RAF Station Sagan is the focus of chapter four.

[141] [Crawley], *Escape from Germany*, p. 32.

Chapter Three: Images

The three editions of *Air Publication 1548* provided downed airmen with details of what the air force expected of them in enemy territory. Only the June 1941 edition imposed a duty to escape. The other editions implied a duty by encouraging escape awareness.



FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY.

Air Publication 1548
March, 1936
2nd edition June, 1941

NOT TO BE CARRIED IN AIRCRAFT

INSTRUCTIONS and GUIDE to ALL OFFICERS and AIRMEN of THE ROYAL AIR FORCE regarding PRECAUTIONS to be taken in the event of falling into the hands of an ENEMY

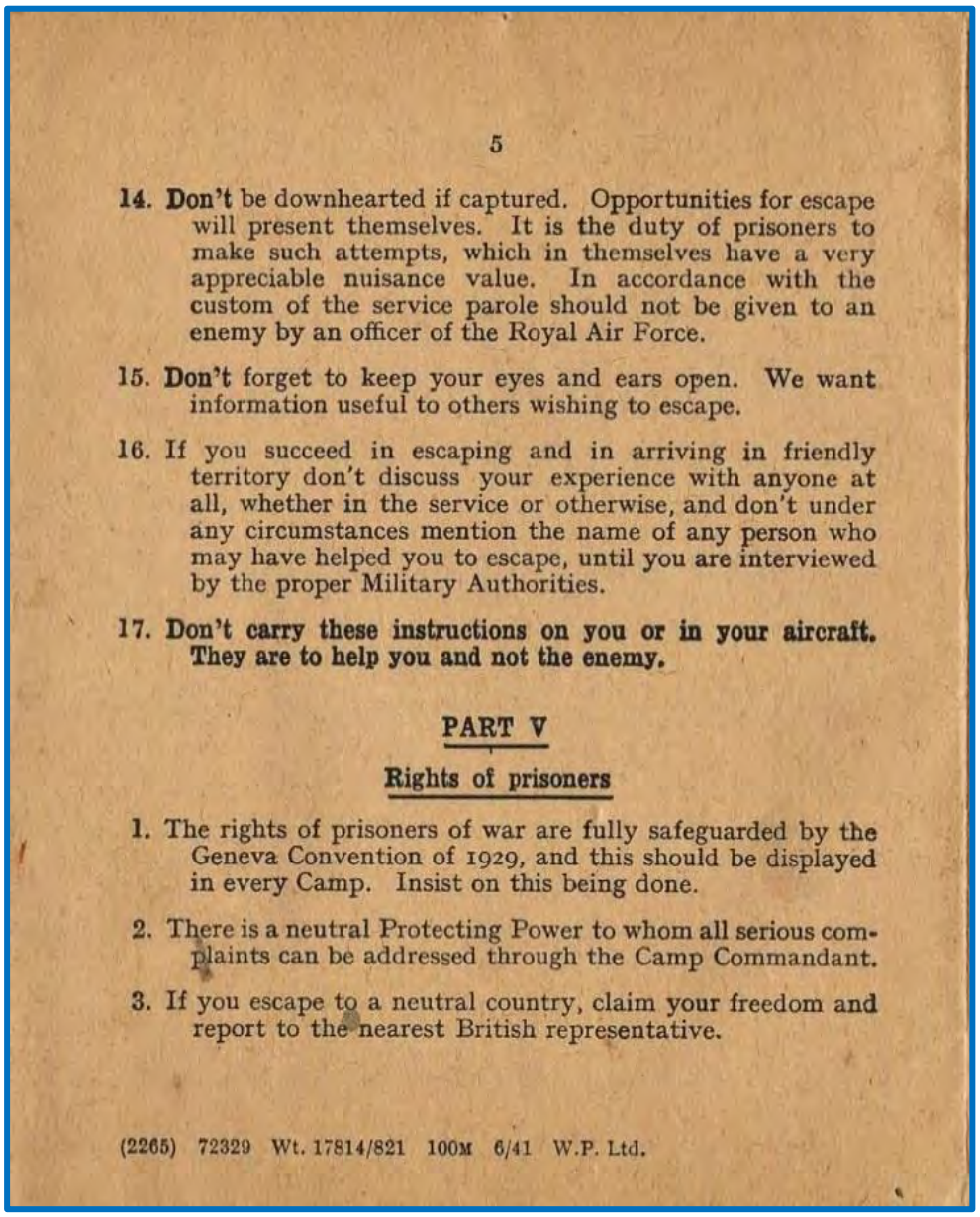
Issued for the information and guidance of all concerned.

By Command of the Air Council

NOTES

1. During hostilities a copy of this publication is to be issued to every officer and to every airman whose duties might take him over enemy territory. An issue is to be made to every officer and to every such airman who joins the unit during the period of hostilities, unless he already has a copy.

2. C.Os. are to ensure that all other personnel have a broad knowledge of the principles laid down herein.



5

14. **Don't** be downhearted if captured. Opportunities for escape will present themselves. It is the duty of prisoners to make such attempts, which in themselves have a very appreciable nuisance value. In accordance with the custom of the service parole should not be given to an enemy by an officer of the Royal Air Force.

15. **Don't** forget to keep your eyes and ears open. We want information useful to others wishing to escape.

16. If you succeed in escaping and in arriving in friendly territory don't discuss your experience with anyone at all, whether in the service or otherwise, and don't under any circumstances mention the name of any person who may have helped you to escape, until you are interviewed by the proper Military Authorities.

17. **Don't carry these instructions on you or in your aircraft. They are to help you and not the enemy.**

PART V

Rights of prisoners

1. The rights of prisoners of war are fully safeguarded by the Geneva Convention of 1929, and this should be displayed in every Camp. Insist on this being done.

2. There is a neutral Protecting Power to whom all serious complaints can be addressed through the Camp Commandant.

3. If you escape to a neutral country, claim your freedom and report to the nearest British representative.

(2265) 72329 Wt. 17814/821 100M 6/41 W.P. Ltd.

Image 28: *Air Publication 1548: Instructions and Guide to All Officers and Airmen of the Royal Air Force regarding Precautions to be taken in the Event of Falling into the Hands of an Enemy*, [no publication details], 2nd Edition, June 1941.

Regardless of any actual or implied duty, many of the Australian airmen were wryly aware of the unlikelihood of a successful escape, as indicated by these visual anecdotes by Cy Borsht and Eric Johnston who were both captured in the latter stages of the war.

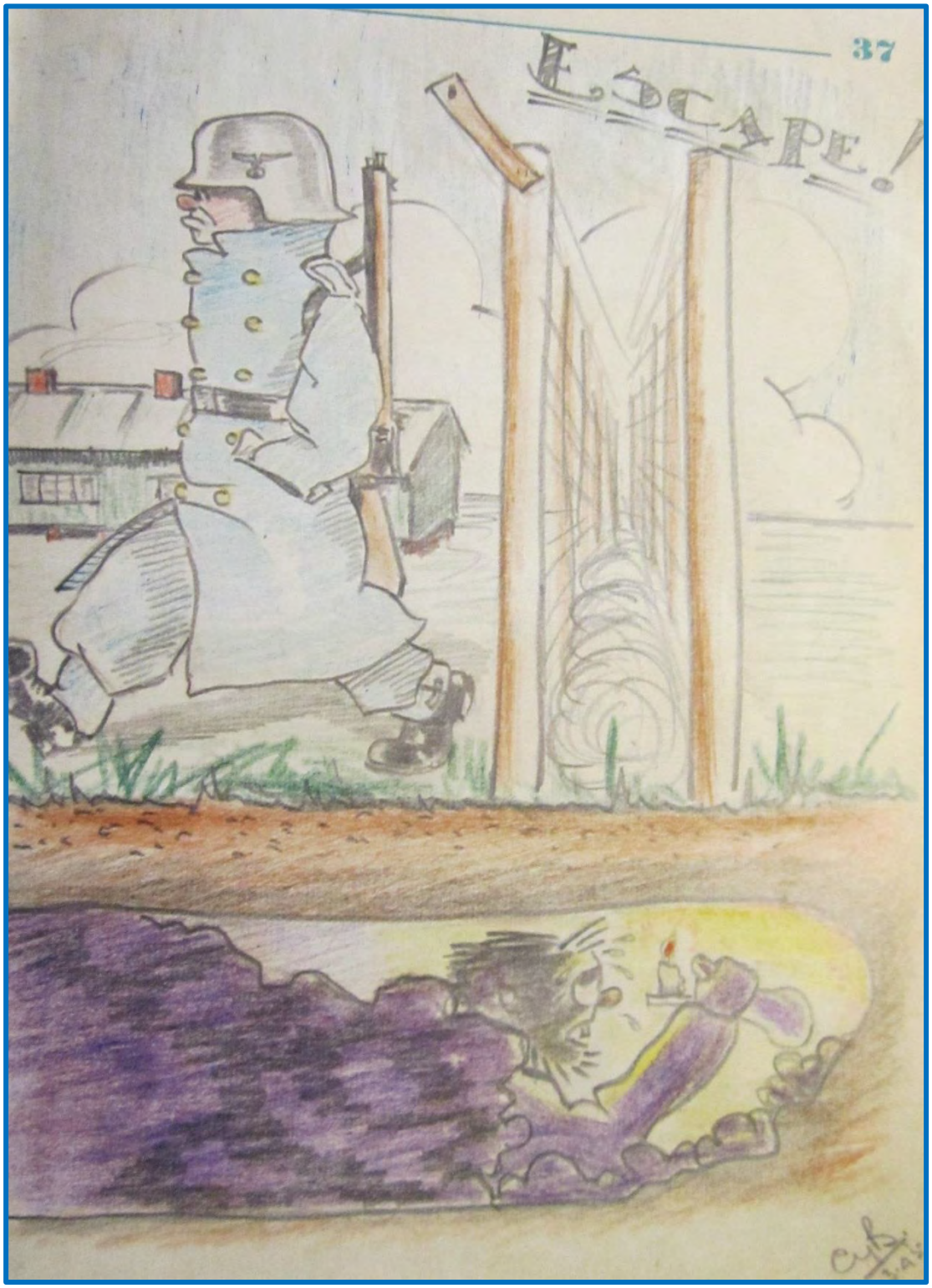


Image 29: ‘Escape!’, 1 March 1945, by Cy Borsht, in his wartime log book, p. 37. Borsht Archive.

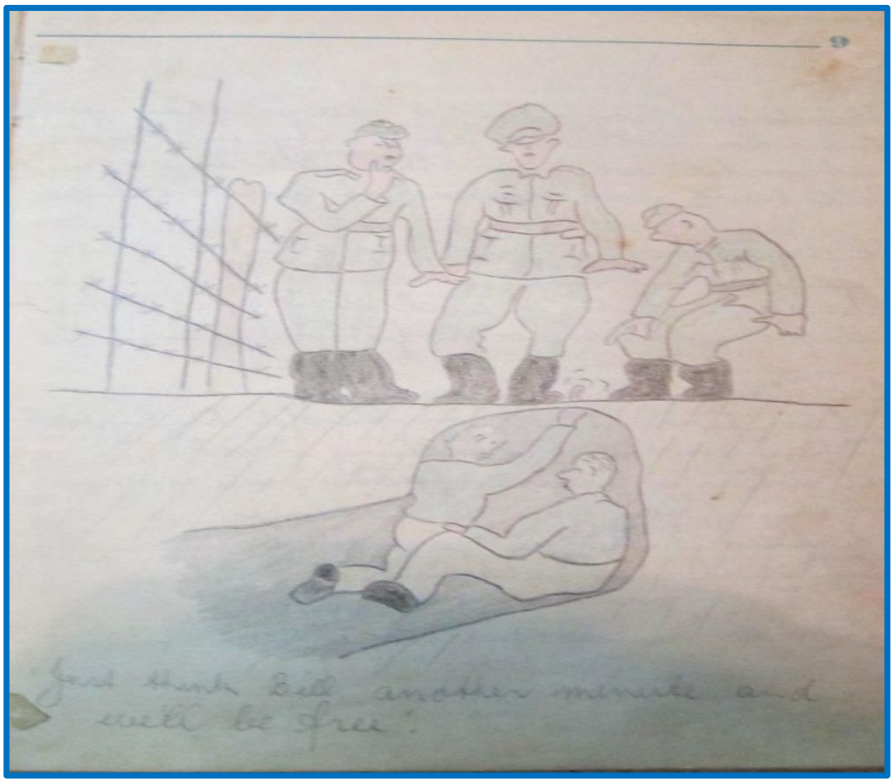


Image 30: 'Just think Bill another minute and we'll be free', by Eric Johnston, in his wartime log book, p. 9. Johnston Family Archive.

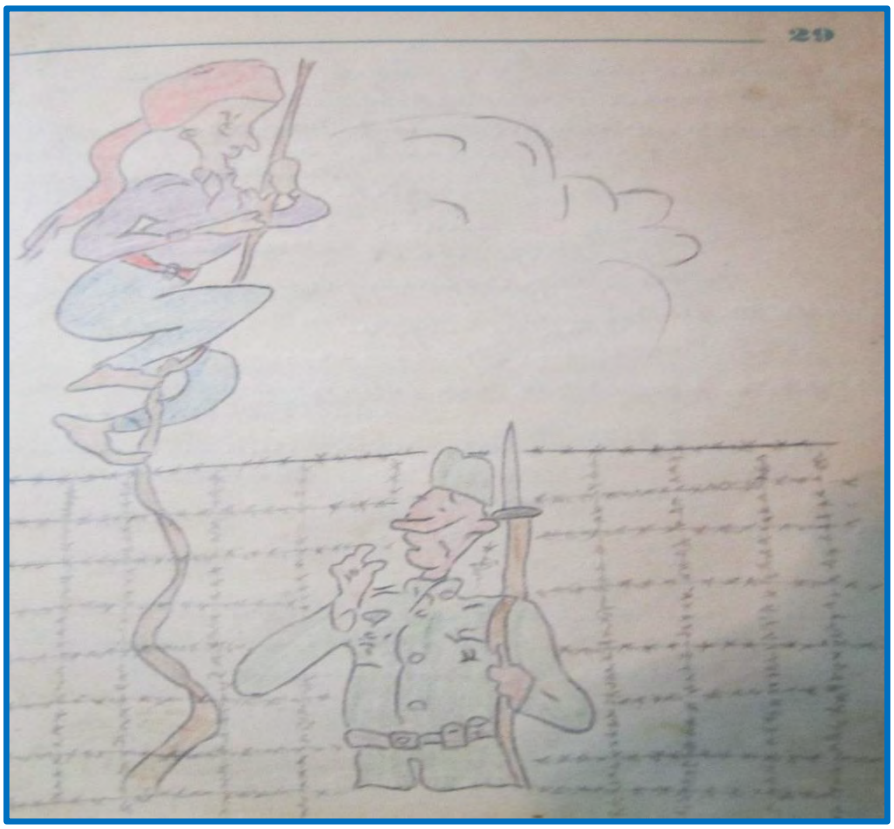
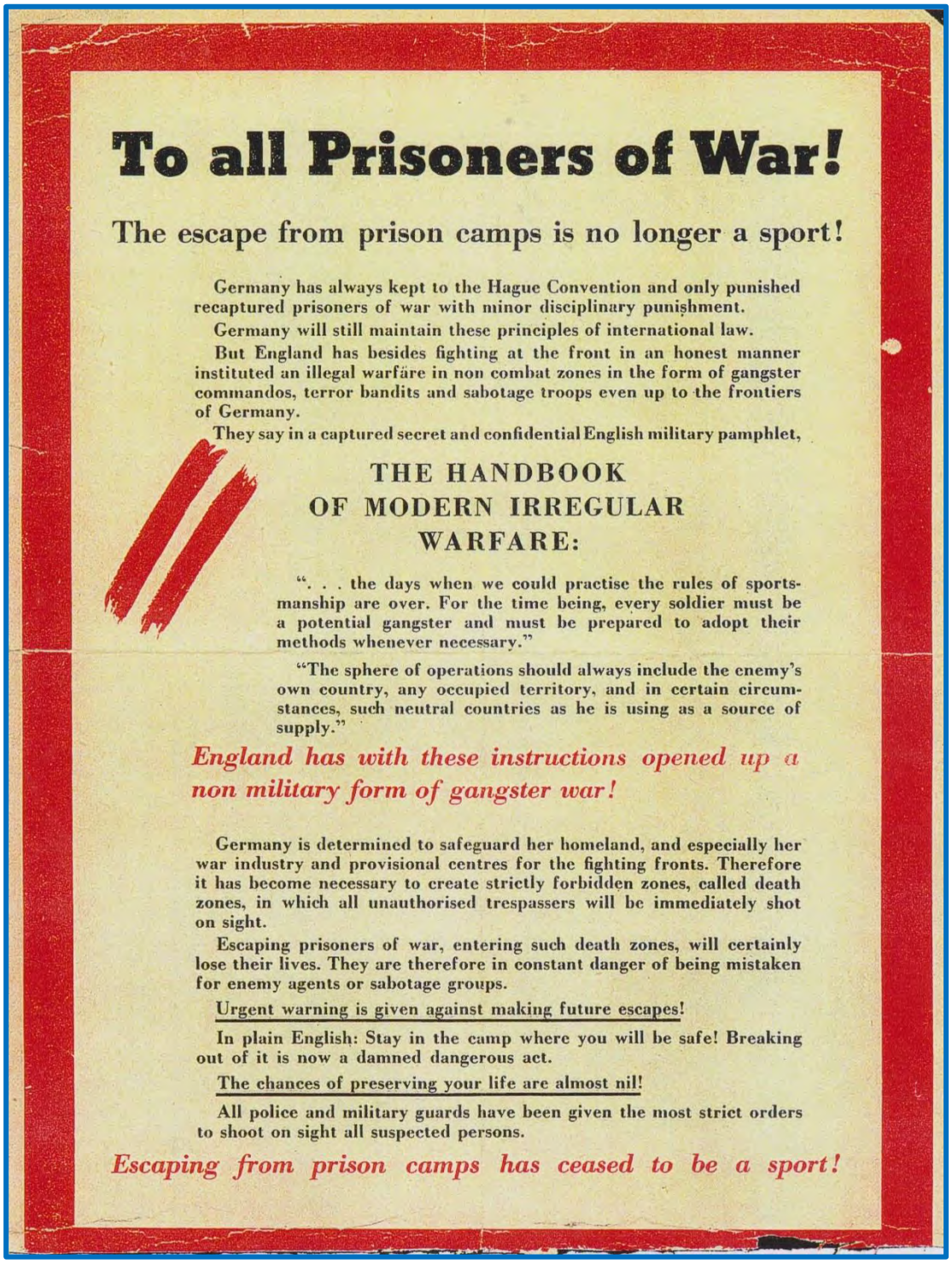


Image 31: Climbing the magic escape rope, by Eric Johnston, in his wartime log book, p. 29. Johnston Family Archive.

Following the Great Escape, the duty to escape was rescinded. While the RAF continued to encourage escape awareness, the Germans made it clear that prisoners entering 'death zones' could be killed.



To all Prisoners of War!

The escape from prison camps is no longer a sport!

Germany has always kept to the Hague Convention and only punished recaptured prisoners of war with minor disciplinary punishment.

Germany will still maintain these principles of international law.

But England has besides fighting at the front in an honest manner instituted an illegal warfäre in non combat zones in the form of gangster commandos, terror bandits and sabotage troops even up to the frontiers of Germany.

They say in a captured secret and confidential English military pamphlet,

THE HANDBOOK OF MODERN IRREGULAR WARFARE:

". . . the days when we could practise the rules of sportsmanship are over. For the time being, every soldier must be a potential gangster and must be prepared to adopt their methods whenever necessary."

"The sphere of operations should always include the enemy's own country, any occupied territory, and in certain circumstances, such neutral countries as he is using as a source of supply."

England has with these instructions opened up a non military form of gangster war!

Germany is determined to safeguard her homeland, and especially her war industry and provisional centres for the fighting fronts. Therefore it has become necessary to create strictly forbidden zones, called death zones, in which all unauthorised trespassers will be immediately shot on sight.

Escaping prisoners of war, entering such death zones, will certainly lose their lives. They are therefore in constant danger of being mistaken for enemy agents or sabotage groups.

Urgent warning is given against making future escapes!

In plain English: Stay in the camp where you will be safe! Breaking out of it is now a damned dangerous act.

The chances of preserving your life are almost nil!

All police and military guards have been given the most strict orders to shoot on sight all suspected persons.

Escaping from prison camps has ceased to be a sport!

Image 32: 'To all prisoners of war. The escape from prison camps is no longer a sport!' Many of the Australian airmen kept copies of this poster, including Tony Gordon. Gordon Family Archive.

Chapter Four: Fraternity and Domesticity

Martial and affective lives overlap. Captured airmen became as close as any blood kin as they formed family-like groups, created (to some extent) homey rooms, and mastered the domestic arts in their barbed-wire community. Their ties of comradeship were all. 'Fate can never rob me, / Of the friendship of my friends', wrote Max Dunn.[1] This chapter explores the natural consequences of the airmen's fraternal harmony—active domesticity. It discusses how kriegie domesticity bound the airmen to their camp family, even as it brought them emotionally closer to their real families back home. Emotionally sustaining fraternal relationships and kriegie domesticity, this chapter argues, enabled some members of the cohort to ameliorate the strains of incarceration and effectively negotiate captivity. That domesticity, however, was seemingly at odds with the airmen's masculine, martial imperative to prosecute the war behind barbed wire. Harmony did not always come easily. Personality clashes brought discord. Homosexuality (real or imagined) challenged masculinity. Self-interest jeopardised communal and altruistic behaviour. Accordingly, this chapter also considers threats to the men's close-knit ties.

Fraternal bonds

Anthropologists and ethnographers use the term 'fictive kinship' to categorise relationships and social ties that are not based on blood or marriage. 'Fictive kin' has since been adopted by historians.[2] Airmen, particularly pilots, have

[1] Dunn, *Poems of Norman Maxwell Dunn*, 'To My Friends', p. 10.
[2] Winter, 'Forms of Kinship and Remembrance in the Aftermath of the Great War', in Winter and Sivan, (eds), *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 40–1, 47–54; Ariotti,

long embraced the concept of fictive kin. From the earliest days of flight and warfare, they claimed de facto membership of an international 'brotherhood of the air', or 'brotherhood of airmen'.[3] As they attempt to create strong bonds, military services tend to 'adopt the family ideal as a model of emotional ties'.[4] The 'brotherhood of airmen' was carefully cultivated by Air Marshal Sir Hugh Trenchard as 'Air Force spirit' in RAF ethos, training, and on squadrons.[5] It represents (on a smaller scale) Ronald Suny's 'affective tie' of nationhood and fraternity, where feelings of pride, belonging, love, and a common cause bind.[6] Culturally, family is recognised as the heart of domestic life and emotional stability.[7] In his proposals to establish a peacetime RAF, Trenchard spoke of squadrons as 'homes'.[8] As such, Trenchard's emotional interpretation—establishing the sense of family and security within air force ethos and life—was embraced by many airmen and also permeated through to the men of the RAAF.[9] On an intimate level, the airmen's squadrons and crew equated to family—an emotionally sustaining 'family of brothers'.[10]

Captive Anzacs, p. 108; Makepeace, 'For "ALL Who were Captured"? The Evolution of National Ex-prisoner of War Associations in Britain after the Second World War', p. 254.

[3] Alexander, 'Australian Knights of the Air and their Little Touches of Chivalry', p. 5; *The Times*, 6 June 1913, p. 7; *The Telegraph* (Brisbane), 15 March 1928, p. 9.

[4] Kivimäki and Tepora, 'War of Hearts', p. 286.

[5] Mahoney, 'Trenchard's Doctrine', pp. 152, 153, 155–162.

[6] Suny, 'Thinking about Feelings', in Steinberg and Sobol (eds), *Interpreting Emotions in Russia and Eastern Europe*, pp. 109, 111.

[7] Stearns, 'In Private: The Individual and the Domestic Community', in Davidson and Damousi, (eds), *A Cultural History of the Emotions. Volume 6. In the Modern and Post-Modern Age*, p. 130

[8] Mahoney, 'Trenchard's Doctrine', p. 154.

[9] Mackenzie, *An Ordinary War 1940–1945*, p. 43; AAWFA: Righetti 0984, 16 September 2003; Coulthard-Clark, *The Third Brother*, p. 64; Alexander, *Australia's Few and the Battle of Britain*, pp. 36, 284.

[10] 'family of brothers': Kivimäki and Tepora, 'War of Hearts', p. 286. Frances Houghton notes the 'core theme' of 'martial "brotherhood"' running through veteran memoirs, including those of former airmen. Houghton, *The Veterans' Tale*, pp. 170–171. For an example of a non-prisoner pilot who considered that his squadron equated to family, refer Alexander, *Clive Caldwell Air Ace*, p. 84. For military bonds, see Arkin and Dobrofsky, 'Military Socialization and Masculinity', p. 152.

They, along with RAF Station Sagan, operated, as medievalist Barbara Rosenwein suggests, as an 'emotional community', expressing a range of affective bonds, via a variety of emotional outlets.[11]

Air force fraternity and solidarity underpinned every aspect of life in the emotional and martial community of RAF Station Sagan. Frederick Seamer, the Australian representative in Centre Compound and later in Stalag Luft VI, Heydekrug, met all arrivals in his compound and, according to Alex Kerr, 'tried to make them at home straight away'.[12] Seamer introduced Kerr and other newcomers to their fellow Australians who generally helped with their welfare and supplied them with necessities, often donated by the longer-term prisoners or purchased from the profits of Foodacco, 'the barbed wire department store', a points-based trading mart for food, cigarettes, and other luxury items.[13] The Australians in Belaria Compound formed the Boomerang Club.[14] As well as looking after the sporting, educational, and social activities of Belaria's resident Australians, club members provided new arrivals with a cheery reception and advice on how to negotiate captivity.[15] With winter approaching, Raymond Perry and the other former Buchenwald inmates also experienced the generosity of their kriegie brothers who gave them extra clothing.[16]

---

[11] Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*, p. 2; Rosenwein, 'Worrying About Emotions in History', pp. 842–843, 845.
[12] AAWFA: Kerr 1489, 3 March 2004.
[13] 'Scangriff', (Winston, ed.), *Spotlight on Stalag Luft III*, pp. 29, 35; AWM 54 779/3/126 part 1: POW statement, Top Secret report narrated by W/O F. Seamer, Chief of Escape Committee, undated c. June 1945.
[14] Cousens (ed.), *The Log*, p. 68.
[15] NLA FERG/4550: *P.O.W.*, No. 27, 15 April 1944, unattributed letter, 9 November 1943, p. 1.
[16] Burgess RC: Raymond Perry, 'War Diary', undated, p. 49.

Some airmen clung to existing relationships with crew members imprisoned with them or reestablished bonds with comrades from training schools. Others looked out for those who hailed from their old school or home town. When Peter Armytage arrived, so the story goes, he yelled out, '[i]s there any other bastard here from Melbourne?', and Rupert Steele replied.[17] Many new kriegies, however, accepted the reality that they were isolated indefinitely from the close companionship of existing squadron and civilian friendships. Accordingly, they turned to their fellow prisoners for emotionally sustaining comradeship.[18] Forging new connections was relatively easy, as Reginald Spear found. 'The spirit here of friendliness is excellent, and the chaps help each other magnificently.'[19] New boys soon discovered the benefits of mixing with old hands who had adapted to kriegie life and, as a consequence, were well-organised. 'I am settled down with some very nice lads who are quite ingenious old-timers', one new boy told his parents.[20] Another was 'lucky to be with old prisoners who know all the angles'.[21]

Those who could not slot into former friendship groups because of overcrowding, existing alliances, or because friends were in other compounds, were directed to spare bunks by the senior British officers or Man of Confidence. Others were invited to join a room because the long-term members were 'looking for somebody who would fit in'.[22] Such randomness

---

[17] 'A thoroughbred in every sense', *The Age* (Melbourne), 19 June 2010.
[18] AAWFA: Cornish 1388, 2 July 2004.
[19] Reginald Spear, 'Letter from R.A.A.F. Prisoner of War', *Horsham Times*, 3 March 1944, p. 2.
[20] NLA FERG/4550: *P.O.W.*, No. 16, 15 May 1943, unattributed letter, 10 December 1942, p. 14.
[21] NLA FERG/4550: *P.O.W.*, No. 16, 15 May 1943, unattributed letter, 26 January 1943, p. 14.
[22] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 23 June 2016.

was similar to the peculiarly informal, haphazard method of forming crews—known as 'crewing up'—that occurred on bomber squadrons. Generally speaking, pilots, navigators and aircrew congregated in a large room, hall, or hangar, and were then 'left to it'. A pilot might approach a navigator, a wireless operator might start chatting with a bomb aimer. There were no rules, and more often than not it worked. The banding together of roommates proved in many instances just as successful in commingling dissimilar personalities to form a cohesive unit—another emotional community—in what could be termed a 'room crew'.[23]

Room crews and other close friends in camp were recognised as a surrogate family.[24] 'We are a growing family', Douglas Wilson, North Compound's acting Senior British Officer, stated in October 1943.[25] Despite the formation of fraternal bonds and strong friendships, however, some, like Roy Nightingale who had lost close companions on operations, held back emotionally believing it was not wise to form new relationships.[26] That lack of emotional involvement, however, did not usually impede the effectiveness of camp-based camaraderie and fictive kinship.

The close comradeships of room crews—variously called a 'mess' or 'combine'—ensured conviviality and solidarity against the Germans. In the confines of their room, the airmen gossiped, confided fears, and discussed

---

[23] For crewing up, refer Stafford-Clark, 'Morale and Flying Experience', p. 10 and Wells, *Courage and Air Warfare*, p. 119.
[24] NAM JOC: John Osborne, letter to family, 11 July 1943; NLA FERG/4550: *P.O.W.*, No. 8, 15 September 1942, unattributed letter, 29 April 1942, p. 5; Alexander records: Arnel, interview 29 October 2015.
[25] NAUK WO 224/63A: Red Cross and Protecting Powers reports, 25–26 October 1943.
[26] Nightingale FA: Nightingale, 'Wartime Records of Robert Roy Nightingale' [Prologue], [unpaginated].

plans for the future; they exchanged the most personal of secrets. Their fraternal bonds also determined how well a man managed what Jock Bryce termed, the 'struggle for existence'.[27] He joined a room of fellow prisoners newly arrived from Italian camps. Their common experience was 'helpful in that we preserved a unity of purpose'.[28] Graham Berry's and Richard Winn's friends made life easier by supporting each other to withstand the trials.[29] Some, like Justin O'Byrne, Timbury 'Tim' Mayo, Guy Grey-Smith, and Keith Carmody established firm friendships which proved influential in captivity.[30] Many bonds lasted a lifetime.

Despite their obviously strong connections, most former prisoners rarely mentioned their friends by name in their memoirs and late-life interviews. Jennifer Walsh, who worked with her father, Charles Lark, on his memoir was constantly frustrated because he spoke of 'we', rather than 'I'. The memoir was his, but Lark told of the collective experience.[31] So, too, did Earle Nelson and Ken Todd.[32] They were not alone. In the series of interviews conducted for this thesis, Alec Arnel generally used 'I' when offering an opinion or speaking about his present emotions, but when recalling captivity repeatedly used 'we'. Wartime imprisonment was 'not about me', he explained, emphatically stating that, '"I" wasn't just "me", "I" was "us"'. For Arnel, and others, there was no sense that captivity was an individual experience because 'it was happening to all of us. We were all in this

[27] Bryce FA: 'Jock Bryce's POW Diary 1942–1945', p. 143.
[28] Bryce FA: 'Jock Bryce's POW Diary 1942–1945', p. 143.
[29] Alexander records: Berry, interview 7 June 2016; AAWFA: Winn 1508, 4 March 2004.
[30] Mayo FA: Tim Mayo, letter to parents, 30 May 1942; Alexander records: Anne O'Byrne, interview 26 May 2016; Gaynor, *Guy Grey-Smith*, p. 18; Barker, *Keith Carmody*, p. 54.
[31] Alexander records: Jennifer Walsh, interview 29 April 2017.
[32] Nelson, *If Winter Comes*; Todd FA: Ken Todd, wartime log book, pp. 8–9.

together'.[33] Once established, the affective bonds of 'we' alleviated the inherent strains of captivity. Bolstering those bonds, as Rex Austin, indicated, was the fraternal love and trust shared by squadron colleagues, friends and aerial colleagues whose lives and operational success depended on each other's professional skill and expertise.[34] That mutual trust, the 'complete sense of purpose and absolutely one hundred percent loyalty to the death', Geoff Cornish explained, 'binds you, takes away selfishness and brings co-operation with other people'. Not only did their fraternal love underpin their successful aerial operations, but the 'great friendships' sustained them both physically and emotionally throughout captivity.[35]

Australian fraternity within captivity was not necessarily based on a shared national identity. While 351 Australian airmen passed through the gates of Stalag Luft III before the January 1945 evacuation, there were never that many Australians in the camp at the same time. Nor were they in the same compound. In September 1942, only forty Australian officers and fifty non-commissioned officers were among the 2,507 allied airmen spread between two compounds.[36] In July 1943, after the non-commissioned officers were sent to Stalag VI, Heydekrug, the British contingent of 663 included only fifty-three Australian officers and three NCO orderlies.[37] Australian groupings in other German and Italian camps were similarly small. The cohorts' friends were just as likely to be British, Canadian, Polish, American,

[33] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 12 November 2015.
[34] AAWFA: Austin 0382, 5 June 2003.
[35] AAWFA: Cornish 1388, 2 July 2004.
[36] NAUK WO 224/63A: Red Cross and Protecting Powers reports, 13 September 1942.
[37] NAUK WO 224/63A: Red Cross and Protecting Powers reports, 26 July 1943.

or some other nationality.[38] As Cy Borsht recalled, as well as himself and Australians Bruce Lumsden and John Dack, his room crew included 'New Zealand, there was South Africa, there was United States Air Force. I mean, that's as disparate a group as you can get'.[39] Australian identity however, did underpin some strong friendships.[40] Arthur Tebbutt decorated fellow crew member Alan Scanlan's 21st birthday cake 'with a small map of "Aussie"'.[41] Most of the Australians in Centre Compound bunked together.[42] Warwick Poulton in East Compound sought out his fellow Australians, and spent 'half his time' in John Osborne's room.[43] Harry Train and his friends considered Block 64, East Compound to be a 'fairly good Australian centre'.[44] Some designated their rooms 'Anzac Cove' or 'Australia House'.[45] Reg Kierath particularly appreciated national and school connections with his new roommates. 'I have now moved into a room with two other Australians and one Englishman; with reference to the former I went to Shore with John Williams, knew him in the [Middle East] and also came across him in Durban on one occasion. … The other bloke was at Scots, Ian McIntosh … It is

---

[38] For references to friends from other nationalities, see Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'The Complete Tour', Lumsden, letters 9 September 1987 and [no date] December 1989; Gordon FA: Gordon, 'Photographs from the Collection of James Anthony (Tony) Gordon', Photograph 2, Hut 109; Alexander records: Mike Netherway, interview 28 September 2016.

[39] Alexander records: Borsht, interview 28 January 2016. For examples of successful blending of different nationalities on squadrons, see Reg Kierath, letter to his mother, 20 April 1943; AAWFA: Hutchinson 0540, 17 June, 2003; Alexander, *Australia's Few and the Battle of Britain*, p. 51; NLA FERG/4550: *P.O.W.* No. 16, 15 May 1943, unattributed letter, 28 April 1943, p. 10.

[40] NLA FERG/4550: *P.O.W.*, No. 31, 15 August 1944, unattributed letter, 28 March 1944, p. 8.

[41] NLA FERG/4550: *P.O.W.*, No. 16, 15 May 1943, [Alan Scanlan] unattributed letter, 29 October 1942, p. 14.

[42] Younger, *No Flight From the Cage*, p. 66.

[43] NAM JOC: John Osborne, letter to family, 31 March 1943.

[44] Arnel archive: Train, 'A Barbed-Wire World', 15 April 1943, pp. 40–41.

[45] For Anzac Cove, see Preen FA: Albert Hake, letter to Noela Hake, 28 February 1944; for Australia House, see Wickham, *We Wore Blue*, pp. 174–175.

certainly a great improvement to live with a couple of chaps that I have something in common with.'[46]

Historian Stephen Garton notes that comradeship became a 'dominant motif in the prisoner narrative', especially in accounts by and about prisoners of the Japanese.[47] Military comradeship, under the guise of iconic and idealised mateship, is often presented as something uniquely Australian which represents a conscious or unconscious positioning within the Anzac legend and is central to an Australian understanding of captivity.[48] But did the intense intimacy shared by the cohort and their friends equate to the emotionally charged camaraderie that Australians have long dubbed 'mateship'?[49] Newspaper references suggest that 'mateship' had widespread currency during the 1920s and 1930's, yet the cohort rarely, if at all, contemporaneously used the term.[50] If they did, it was usually when referring to their roommates.[51] A contemporary exception was John Dack who drew a tender picture in his wartime log book of 'Me Ole Mate', Cy Borsht, to commemorate their '1st 1/3rd yearly anniversary' since both had been shot down and captured during the same raid.[52] Responding with a portrait of Dack and a warm comment on their friendship, Borsht signed it, 'Yer Ole Mate'.[53]

---

[46] Kierath FA: Reg Kierath, letter to Ada Kierath, 19 September 1943.
[47] Garton, *The Cost of War*, p. 220.
[48] Beaumont, 'Officers and Men: Rank and Survival on the Thai–Burma Railway', in Beaumont, Grant, and Pegram (eds), *Beyond Surrender*, pp. 174–175; Beaumont, Grant and Pegram, 'Remembering and Rethinking Captivity' in Beaumont, Grant, and Pegram (eds), *Beyond Surrender*, p. 1; Dyrenfurth, *Mateship*, p. 101.
[49] Dyrenfurth, *Mateship*, pp. 6–7.
[50] A survey of their wartime letters reveal that neither George Archer, Alec Arnel, Albert Comber, Charles Fry, Tony Gordon, Albert Hake, Doug Hutchinson, Reg Kierath, John Osborne, nor Colin Phelps used the word 'mateship'.
[51] Archer FA: Archer, 1942 Diary, 14 August 1942; Archer FA: Archer, letters to parents, 27 September 1942 and 18 July 1944; Arnel archive: Arnel, letter to Margery Gray, 11 November 1944; Preen FA: Albert Hake, letter to Noela Hake, 31 December 1942.
[52] Dack, *So you Wanted Wings, Hey!*, p. 110.
[53] Dack, *So you Wanted Wings, Hey!*, p. 111.

'Mate' also appears sparingly in the cohort's late-life written and oral recollections.[54] 'Mateship' has only latterly been ascribed to the cohort's bonds, such as by historians or the former prisoners' children.[55] It seems that, for the Australian airmen, 'mateship' did not adequately describe the bonds of the 'brotherhood of airmen'.

Our kriegie home

Kriegies enjoyed considerable cohesion in RAF Station Sagan. Their intense emotional bonds of fraternity were enacted domestically by the room crew in 'our kriegie home', as Tim Mayo described it in a watercolour sketch of 'the room I shared with … fellow POWs'.[56] 'Home', to the kriegies, had many meanings. On a broader level, it was the 'home country' which servicemen defended.[57] On an intimate, level, 'home' was a place of origin, the seat of loving and supportive family relationships, and a destination.[58] As cultural historian Joanna Bourke notes of servicemen in the First World War, 'home remained the touchstone for all [their] actions'.[59] The corollary is that 'home', and the nostalgic response it evokes, was also the touchstone of their

---

[54] Alexander records: Borsht, interview 28 January 2016; Alexander records: Berry, interview 7 June 2016; AAWFA: Righetti 0984, 16 September 2003; AAWFA: Falkiner 0661, 17 March 2004; AAWFA: Cornish 1388, 2 July 2004; Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'The Complete Tour', Lumsden, letter 31 May 1989; Lark, *A Lark on the Wing*, pp. 76, 80; DVA MX076290-01: Appeal to War Pensions Appeal Tribunal, 11 May 1971; Statement accompanying DVA Claim for Medical Treatment and Pension, 4 October 1982.
[55] Monteath, *P.O.W.*, p. 205. For second generation references, see Alexander records: Jennifer Long, interview 28 January 2016; Alexander records: John Carson, interview 28 January 2016; Alexander records: Mike Netherway, interview 28 September 201; Alexander records: Drew Gordon, interview 19 July 2016.
[56] Quote: Mayo FA: Mayo, watercolour sketches, 'Our Kriegie Home Looking In', November 1943 and 'Our Kriegie Home Looking Out', 10 January 1944.
[57] MHRC CPA: Wing Commander Francis Powley, letter to Colin Phelps' father, 29 January 1944.
[58] These aspects of 'home' are important themes in the correspondence of Colin Phelps, George Archer and Justin O'Byrne.
[59] Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, p. 23.

emotions. As Michael Roper indicates, nostalgia is a powerful emotion which is both past- and future-looking.[60] Home-centred nostalgia was the focus of the airmen's pre-war memories even as it underpinned their post-captivity dreams. Cy Borsht revealed this in a drawing of his Brisbane home which he captioned, 'kriegie's nostalgia'.[61]

POWs were emotionally with their families in their 'real homes' and 'real lives' outside combat and captivity.[62] 'Would that I were here', Tim Mayo wrote above a sketch of his home sent to his mother.[63] The cohort maintained those nostalgic connections through correspondence with family members. They exemplified it in the domestic artworks and artefacts created in camp. The image of 'home' was fixed in their minds and memories by photographs of sweethearts and wives, family members, family celebrations, and the family residence. In addition, 'home' was a focus for anticipation as kriegies spoke of, drew, and designed houses of their dreams. Like Max Dunn they looked 'forward / to a future full of cheer … ours—our very own' where the 'halls ring forth our laughter'.[64] They 'dreamed of our return, / And we built our simple castles in the air'.[65]

The airmen emulated mothers, sisters, and wives to create their own domestic environment. As Annette Becker and Michael Roper note, prisoners of war and servicemen were 'mentally uprooted' from their civil and service

---

[60] Roper, 'Nostalgia as an emotional experience in the Great War', p. 442.
[61] Borsht Archive: Borsht, wartime log book, drawing, 'Kriegie's Nostalgia', 22 February 1945, p. 110. See also Mayo FA: Mayo, 'Lakeside cottage, Toronto', January 1943, inspired by pre-war memories of his home at Coal Point (near Lake Macquarie, NSW).
[62] Makepeace, '"A Pseudo-soldier's Cross"', PhD thesis, p. 20; Roper, *The Secret Battle*, p. 6.
[63] NAA A705 166/5/818, Currie: Grace Mayo, letter to Isabel Currie, 29 September 1942.
[64] Dunn, *Poems of Norman Maxwell Dunn*, 'Making Plans', p. 21.
[65] Dunn, *Poems of Norman Maxwell Dunn*, 'Let's Go Back', 19 September 1945, p. 23.

ties. By ostensibly embracing typically feminine tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and mending, airmen were able to maintain their emotional links to home.[66]

Kriegie domesticity had both practical and emotional dimensions. Demonstrating agency and an ability to successfully adapt, the airmen created homelike rooms. In doing so, they ameliorated their sense of alienation from former home lives and the camaraderie of squadron messes by creating a 'home away from home'. One of the first things they did when arriving in camp was to 'conserve floor space' by precisely managing the layout of their rooms.[67] The privacy of bunks was not breached and seats were allocated at tables, just as they were perhaps at their own family dining tables.[68] This rigid spatial organisation was not just because of the room size. It reflected their sense of air force discipline as well as a desire to restore calm after the disruption of their relatively ordered operational lives and, on a practical level, the regular disruption of German room searches. The kriegies decorated their rooms with photographs, maps, artworks, books, and musical instruments. Their decor reflected and, at the same time, reminded them of their pre-war homes. Kriegie domesticity, then, recognised that their camp home and home-before-the-war were interconnected.[69]

---

[66] Quote: Becker, 'Art, Material Life, and Disaster,' in Saunders (ed.), *Matters of Conflict*, pp. 26–28; Roper, 'Maternal Relations: Moral Manliness and Emotional Survival in Letters Home during the First World War', in Dudink, Hagemann, and Tosh (eds), *Masculinities in Politics and War*, p. 296.
[67] Burgess RC: Robert Mills, wartime log book, p. 14.
[68] Dack, *So you Wanted Wings, Hey!*, p. 85; NLA Justin O'Byrne, 'Reminiscential conversations', 29 August 1983–28 July 1984, Tape 51.
[69] Roper, *The Secret Battle*, p. 6; Rachamimov, 'Camp Domesticity: Shifting Gender Boundaries in WWI Internment Camps', in Carr and Mytum, *Cultural Heritage and Prisoners of War*, pp. 295 and 298.

Food is more than a basic need. It is essential to emotional and physical well-being.[70] Kriegie rooms were the scenes of family-like food-based conviviality. Scarce chocolate, biscuits, and other 'delectable items' from food parcels were saved to share with old friends, new arrivals, chaplains, and ranking officers.[71] Such was the importance of conviviality that, when hospitality was abused and guests took too much from the proffered plate, hosts hid their horror at the breach of kriegie teatime etiquette, and said nothing.[72] For the airmen captives, food represented agency, engendered creativity, consolidated their camp-based sense of home and fraternity, and linked them to their real home, loved ones, and family-centred rituals.[73] They embraced household management techniques, just like their mothers, sisters, or wives. They managed rations, planned recipes, cooked for their fellows, and, in times of fuel shortages, 'donate[d] a bed board to supplement the briquettes' for the oven.[74] While each room had a 'stube fuhrer'—room leader—quartermasters and cooks occupied 'the two most important positions' in domestic hierarchies.[75] They stood in the stead of mothers and wives as they carefully prepared food for their camp family. Others also took their turns to cater for every-day meals as well as the pleasant occasions of social civility and nostalgic rituals of family life such as afternoon tea,

---

[70] Roper, 'Nostalgia as an emotional experience in the Great War', p. 429; Roper, *The Secret Battle*, p. xi; Duffett, 'A Taste of Army Life: Food, Identity and the Rankers of the First', pp. 252, 254; Dusselier, 'Does Food Make Place? Food Protests in Japanese American Concentration Camps', pp. 138, 139.
[71] Wickham, *We Wore Blue*, p. 198.
[72] Wickham, *We Wore Blue*, pp. 180–181; Lark, *A Lark on the Wing*, p. 77; Harrison RC: Warrant Officer Ross Thomas Breheny, 404957, 145 Squadron RAF, [2008].
[73] For agency and creativity refer Dusselier, 'Does Food Make Place?', pp. 139, 146. For ritual, see Rosenthal and Marshall, 'Generational Transmission of Family Ritual', p. 677.
[74] Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'The Complete Tour', Lumsden, letter 10 June 1988.
[75] 'Stube fuhrer': Todd FA: Ken Todd, wartime log book, p. 11; Dack, *So you Wanted Wings, Hey!*, p. 83. Quote: Dack, p. 83.

birthday parties, and Christmas celebrations. They made birthday and Christmas cakes, decorated Christmas menus, and strung up decorations. When Bruce Lumsden finished blending the mixture for his room's Christmas pudding, each man honoured the age old tradition of stirring and making a wish.[76] John Dack recalled of his only Christmas in captivity that '[n]ot one of us could possibly forget the emotions of that particular Christmas Day'.[77]

The airmen did nothing to hide their home-making expertise in letters home. They used it as conversational gambits with their womenfolk and offered it as demonstration that they could apply what they had learned in the family home to their own home behind barbed wire. Domestic references in letters also assured loved ones that they were safe, coping well, making the most of their circumstances, and actively managing their time. Tony Gordon asked his Aunt Mag to send knitting needles, a 'housewife'—a small case for needles and thread—and a ball of wool.[78] One man reported that he had 'manufactured a blanket out of old socks, scarves, jumpers, etc'. It was easy enough to fashion the 'crochet needle from a toothbrush handle', he wrote. Using it 'was a bit hard for a while, but the fingers adjusted themselves to it'.[79] To ensure a fair distribution of labour and tasks, the kriegies drew up rosters and allocated duties. They made their beds, swept the floor, and washed the meal dishes. They scrubbed and cleaned lockers, peeled potatoes, mended clothes, and did the laundry. 'I have settled into doing my share of

[76] Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'The Complete Tour', Lumsden, letter 5 November 1988.
[77] Dack, *So you Wanted Wings, Hey!*, p. 100.
[78] Gordon FA: Gordon, letter to Aunt Mag, 31 May 1942.
[79] NLA FERG/4550: *P.O.W.*, No. 19, 16 August 1943, unattributed letter, 30 May 1943, p. 10.

the chores', wrote Alec Arnel. 'I do the washing and cleaning up in my turn.'[80] Others boasted of their culinary prowess.[81] Reg Kierath proudly announced to his mother that he 'even made a cake the other day'.[82] 'After many weeks of saving, I made the Mess Christmas cake last week', George Archer told his family. '14 lbs—From appearances its [sic] excellent.'[83] Justin O'Byrne made jam and confided his magic ingredient—'orange drink crystals for sugar'—to 'Mother, Father and Family'.[84] In sharing recipes and menus of which they were obviously proud—many recorded them in their wartime log books and saved special occasion menus—the airmen sought parental approbation for their achievements. Some also looked to their future. 'The old cooking game is still going strong, and I've got some really hot recipes now. I'll give you both a treat when I come home', Alexander Smith wrote to his parents, making it clear that he *would* be returning to them.[85]

Kriegie ingenuity

The kriegies' assiduous domesticity seems at odds with their energetically maintained identity of active servicemen behind barbed wire. Yet, while prisoners of war were, to an extent, located in an ambiguous state between military and civilian lives, they did not occupy an entirely liminal dimension.

---

[80] Arnel archive: Arnel, letter to Margery Gray, undated, [Stawell postmark 31 August 1944].
[81] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letter to Noela Hake, 30 June 1942'; William Trickett, letter to his sister, *Australian Women's Weekly*, 31 March 1945, p. 15; Hutchinson FA: Doug Hutchinson, letter to Lola Hutchinson, 18 August 1943; Arnel archive: Arnel, letter to Margery Gray, 11 November 1944. For visual anecdotes relating to culinary ingenuity, refer 'Scangriff', (Winston, ed.), *Spotlight on Stalag Luft III*, pp. 30, 38, and 36 which features the remains of a dissected cat.
[82] Reg Kierath, letter to his mother, 5 July 1943.
[83] Archer FA: Archer, letter to his mother, 17 December 1944.
[84] O'Byrne FA: Justin O'Byrne, letter to family, 29 October 1943.
[85] NLA FERG/4550: *P.O.W.*, No. 13, 15 February 1943, [Alexander Smith], unattributed letter, 16 June 1942, p. 11.

Nor were they emasculated. By establishing RAF Station Sagan, the prisoners asserted their military prowess and air force identity, as well as their essential martial masculinity. For the Australians, it also linked them to their manly military forebears and brothers of Anzac: kriegie domestic competency was an extension of air force discipline.[86] All airmen were expected to maintain their billets on training stations, and, while officers enjoyed the services of orderlies, non-commissioned officers had to tidy up after themselves; they sewed on their own buttons and took care of minor repairs.[87] As their uniforms were a 'mark of national belonging', denoting that the airmen were in service to their country and people, it was a matter of pride to sew on wings, rank insignia, and overseas service chevrons. In doing so, as Annette Becker points out, the kriegies—men of war—were not passive or entirely powerless. They continued to fight 'symbolically, and [remained] part of [their] nation's struggle against the enemy'.[88]

Despite this, some airmen were unsettled by the gendered aspect of their kriegie domesticity. They feared it did not entirely reflect their masculine selves or identity as active servicemen, or that their loved ones would fail to see it as part of their martial identity. Accordingly, they undermined their competency by making fun of it. Alexander Smith, who planned a post-war culinary treat for his family, joked that he was 'afraid you might suffer from indigestion after one of my meals'.[89] As well as writing out a recipe for an

[86] Garton, 'War and Masculinity in Twentieth century Australia', p. 86.
[87] Reg Kierath, letters to his mother, 3 April 1941 and Preen FA: Albert Hake, letter to Noela Hake, 10 September 1941; Alexander, *Australia's Few and the Battle of Britain*, p. 45.
[88] Becker, 'Art, Material Life, and Disaster,' in Saunders (ed.), *Matters of Conflict*, p. 27.
[89] NLA FERG/4550: *P.O.W.*, No. 13, 15 February 1943, [Alexander Smith], unattributed letter, 16 June 1942, p. 11.

iced cake, Reg Kierath humorously included a significant instruction in the method: 'hope for the best'.[90] Ken Todd ironically depicted his new domestic situation by including an RAAF recruitment poster ('Adventure in the Skies. Join the RAAF') in a drawing of a kriegie (perhaps himself) washing plates.[91] Seemingly poking fun at the Geneva Convention article which provided that officers were not obliged to work, a series of drawings in Torres Ferres' wartime log book captioned, 'Oh no, we never had to work', includes examples of a kriegie performing what could be seen as traditionally women's housework: making the bed, sweeping the floor, and carrying water jugs and packages.[92] The anonymous artist's apparent recognition of the value of women's work, however, is secondary to his emphasis on the kriegie's essential manliness: the man making the bed and sweeping the floor is bare-chested.[93]

Despite the benefits of their competent domesticity, the kriegies recognised that, as a consequence of it, their captivity straddled two gendered worlds: the civilian domestic front and the martial world of RAF Station Sagan. Yet the kriegies were ultimately comfortable with this duality. It reflected a sensible, pragmatic and determined approach to managing their environment which was not at odds with their martial identity. Symbolically, in drawing on domestic skills, they indicated that they were maintaining an active, operational stance. Through kriegie ingenuity, they reinforced the prevailing perception of resourcefulness, as promoted by the Anzac legend.

[90] Reg Kierath, letter to his mother, 5 July 1943.
[91] Todd FA: Ken Todd, wartime log book, p. 16, 'Stooge', pencil drawing.
[92] AWM PR90/035: Ferres, wartime log book, p. 67. (Artist's signature unclear.)
[93] AWM PR90/035: Ferres, wartime log book, p. 67. (Artist's signature unclear.).

They also emotionally connected to home and their female role models. In poking fun at their own efforts in personal narratives they revealed their high spirits and signalled that captivity was not getting them down. Perhaps most importantly, however, they declared that, no matter how competent they were in the camp kitchens, they would not usurp the traditional female role of family cook when they returned home. Their homemaking skills were for the duration only as they looked towards a traditionally masculine future. John Osborne was adamant that he would hang up his apron at the end of the war. '[I]t's quite a job housekeeping for this family and I have no further desire to manage house.'[94]

Homemaking and housekeeping may be perceived as feminine tasks but the home handyman was a purely masculine role. Next to the cook and quartermaster, the most esteemed person on the domestic front was the 'tin basher', literally someone who could bash tin into something useful. But more than just a home handyman who could repair everyday utensils, the tin basher exemplified kriegie agency, ingenuity, creativity, and masculinity by fashioning items out of tin cans or other metal objects.[95] For the Australian airmen, the ingenious tin basher with his 'bush craft' harked back to the Anzac legend's martial archetype, the colonial bushman, who typified the 'prominent masculine ideal' of their grandfathers' generation.[96] Those kriegie craftsmen played a central role in Stalag Luft III's physical comfort. Torres

[94] NAM JOC: John Osborne, letter to family, 11 July 1943.
[95] Doyle, 'Necessity, the Mother of Invention', in Carr and Mytum, *Cultural Heritage and Prisoners of War*, pp. 277, 283.
[96] Dyrenfurth, *Mateship*, p. 101; Karageorgos, 'The Bushman at War: Gendered Medical Responses to Combat Breakdown in South Africa, 1899–1902'. First quote, p. 22, second quote, p. 18.

Ferres 'engaged in lots of tin-bashing' for his room.[97] Aubrey Mace was 'very ingenious at making utensils from empty food cans, using the silver paper from cigarette papers as a solder', and Rod Ferry rigged up a 'bush bucket-shower'.[98] Others built chip heaters and stoves. The force draft cooker, known as a 'blower' or 'stufa', considered by battleground archaeologist and historian Peter Doyle to be 'the epitome of POW ingenuity' and an 'icon of captivity', was particularly useful, Ken Todd wrote, when 'fuel is almost non existent' [sic].[99] As had prisoners of war in earlier conflicts, the airmen produced 'trench art' from materials at hand—particularly dried milk powder tins.[100] Those items of material culture included kitchen and table utensils, mugs and plates, biscuit grinders, and jugs. Some became so skilled that tin bashing evolved from the purely utilitarian. Doug Hutchinson and his friends in Belaria Compound 'make all our own cooking utensils and are becoming quite craftsmen at the job'.[101] Illustrations of percolators, tea pots, and coffee pots in prisoner drawings and Belaria's record of captivity indicate that aesthetic form became as important as function in kriegie manufacture.[102]

Tin bashers were also important in the camp's social life. George Archer sketched 'Simo's Masterpiece', a brewing distillery made by Laurie Simpson.[103] The theatre chippies' creations 'passed beyond expectation,

---

[97] AWM PR90/035: Ferres, 'A POW in Germany'.
[98] Lark, *A Lark on the Wing*, p. 75; NLA FERG/4550: *P.O.W.*, No. 16, 15 May 1943, unattributed letter, 28 April 1943, p. 10.
[99] 'icon': Doyle, 'Necessity, the Mother of Invention', in Carr and Mytum, *Cultural Heritage and Prisoners of War*, p. 286. 'fuel': Todd FA: Ken Todd, wartime log book, p. 46.
[100] Nicholas Saunders is generally credited with coining the term. Saunders, *Trench Art*, pp. 9, 29–33, 41–42; Doyle, 'Necessity, the Mother of Invention', in Carr and Mytum, *Cultural Heritage and Prisoners of War*, p. 276.
[101] Hutchinson FA: Doug Hutchinson, letter to Lola Hutchinson, 18 August 1943.
[102] Cousens, (ed), *The Log*, p. 193; Mayo FA: Mayo, watercolour sketch, 'Well! Well! Foo's Eating Again, 1943; AWM PR04233: Docking, wartime log book, p. 57.
[103] Archer FA: Archer, wartime log book, p. 24.

being really good'. Their designs were accurate 'to the last degree in realism even to the production of Jacobean furniture, old masters, lounges, telephones, wirelesses', recorded Ken Todd.[104] Centre Compound's Peter Stubbs' tin bashing skills were particularly valuable. At both Stalag Luft I, Barth and Stalag Luft III he built and maintained a radio. One of Stalag Luft III's doctors asked him and his handy friend, John Bristow who owned a wireless shop in London, to build a lamp which could be used for operations. The medico's next request was 'for a more ambitious instrument—a pneumathorax [sic] machine', which was used to collapse tuberculosis patients' lungs.[105]

Kriegie domesticity and ingenuity underpinned escape work. Some needle-workers were obliged to surrender their needles to Albert Hake, George Russell, and their fellow compass makers.[106] Skills developed to maintain uniforms were deployed in the escape organisation's tailoring department which fabricated German uniforms and civilian clothes for escapers. (Frederick Seamer supervised Centre Compound's tailors.[107]) Some of the tin bashers constructed tunnel ventilation lines out of food cans. Others, including Tony Gordon, built lamps, portable heating stoves, and torches for tunnels, and fashioned uniform badges for the tailors.[108] One room's stove

[104] Todd FA: Ken Todd, wartime log book, p. 25.
[105] Stubbs, 'Low-level Attack', in Walley (ed), *Silk and Barbed Wire*, pp. 5–9, 13–14.
[106] NAUK WO 208/3283: SLIII Camp History, Part I East (Officers') Compound, pp. 26, 33; Alexander, 'Australian compass makers and more'.
[107] NAUK WO 208/3283: SLIII Camp History, Part II Centre (NCO's) Compound, pp. 16, 20.
[108] NAUK WO 208/3283: SLIII Camp History, Part I East (Officers') Compound, p. 34.

was even commandeered by the escape organisation to hide the entrance to Great Escape tunnel, 'Harry'.[109]

Carpenters were particularly busy. Those in East Compound constructed the wooden horse out of Red Cross packaging.[110] John 'Jock' McKechnie, who helped 'make the vaulting horse' bore 'scars on his hands' because of the 'crude tools' he had to use.[111] North Compound's carpentry crew, headed by John Williams and including Reg Kierath and Malcolm 'Mac' Jones, appropriated bed boards to shore up escape tunnels.[112] They made tunnel trolleys 'out of bed boards and cut out by table knives'.[113] After Williams' and Kierath's deaths, a new crew built triple-decker bunks out of the existing double-deckers to accommodate an influx of arrivals.

Altruism was a significant aspect of kriegie fraternity and domesticity. The camp handymen turned their talents towards the common good. As well as providing carpentry services for the escape organisation, Kierath altruistically made 'all kinds of useful things for anyone who asked him'.[114] He and others constructed 'household' furniture, theatre seating and sets from Red Cross packing cases. Some altruistic acts had an intimate dimension. Rex Austin's 21st birthday was an occasion to remember. In a time of almost desperate rationing in January 1945, 'the blokes had saved up their semolina

---

[109] O'Byrne FA: O'Byrne, '*Mercury* Radio Roundsman'; AWM ART34781.012: Comber, drawing 'It looked harmless enough until—Stalag Luft III, Sagan, Germany', 1945.
[110] Laplander, *The True Story of the Wooden Horse*, p. 82.
[111] Gordon FA: Dunstan, Roberts, '19 Diggers "relive" years in German prison camp', *Melbourne Herald*, 3 October 1951, unpaginated clipping.
[112] Fordyce FA: Fordyce, wartime log book, p. 140; NAUK WO 208/3283: SLIII Camp History, Part III North (Officers') Compound, pp. 9, 25, 31; AWM ART34781.019: Comber, drawing, 'Flight Lieutenants (Mac) Jones and (Rusty) Kierath, RAAF at work, Stalag Luft III, Germany, 1945.
[113] O'Byrne FA: O'Byrne, '*Mercury* Radio Roundsman'.
[114] Kierath FA: Wing Commander H.M.A. Day, letter to Ada Kierath, 6 July 1945.

and everything' to make his cake. They also fashioned the key from precious cardboard and silver paper salvaged from cigarette packets.[115] Unexpected food gifts could dispel depression. Alex Kerr's 21st birthday in Stalag III-E, Kirchhain, was nought but a bleak and dispiriting occasion until he received a 'truly rare morsel', an egg extracted from one of the guards by the camp's most successful trader. 'I will never forget the generosity of someone who hardly knew me but considered that the significance of the occasion demanded a gesture of compassion.'[116]

Threats to fraternal harmony

There may have been a certain amount of light-hearted joking about some of the 'prettier' young men who played female roles in the theatre, and '[y]ou will be home or homo this year', but the majority of the airmen of Stalag Luft III appeared to be firmly heterosexual, and revealed a keen appreciation of women.[117] Reinforcing their interest in women, some letters included 'sex talk', and wartime log books are full of suggestive illustrations and photographs of women, as well as dreams for post-war heterosexual relationships. Some include lewd jokes. George Archer devoted two pages to erotic poetry.[118]

---

[115] AAWFA: Austin 0382, 5 June 2003. Alan Scanlan's 21st was also formally marked by his kriegie companions as he was congratulated on parade by the 'Camp Leader'. NLA FERG/4550: *P.O.W.*, No. 16, 15 May 1943, [Alan Scanlan], unattributed letter, 29 October 1942, p. 14.
[116] Kerr, *Shot Down*, p. 98.
[117] 'Prettier' young men: Archer FA: Archer, letters to family, 25 November and 21 December 1942; female roles: Alexander records: Arnel, interview 23 June 2016; 'home or homo': Burgess RC: Robert Mills, wartime log book, p. 10, purporting to be an extract from kriegie mail.
[118] Archer FA: Archer, wartime log book, pp. 148–149.

Despite this appearance of overt heterosexuality, same-sex relationships occurred in prisoner of war camps. Indeed, Matthias Reiss suggests they were more common than other historians have described.[119] Recollections such as Eric Stephenson's 'Homosexuality is not essential' confirm that there were homosexual POWs.[120] Yet, said Justin O'Byrne, 'strangely, never ever did I see an airman in a situation where you could suspect that he was a homosexual'.[121] Tolerance of difference was a mainstay of camp life but homosexuality threatened group harmony. It was 'completely taboo'.[122] As Younger recollected, 'there could have been no divergence of opinion about any erotic exhibitionism'.[123] Yet, there was: the airmen's responses to homosexuality—particularly Justin O'Byrne's—were contradictory. Even as they denied the existence of homosexuals, they conceded their presence in camp.

The RAF was reluctant to equate physical strength with courage. Aesthetic types could be just as strong, fearless, valorous, and effective airmen as those with athletic physiques.[124] Even decorated fighter pilots who died in battle could be homosexual.[125] Even so, homosexuality, for some, posed a threat to the air force's perceived physical and psychological elitism and masculinity, as well as their own status as *air men*. Reflecting a general belief in Australian and British society, and in POW camps, that

---

[119] Reiss, *Controlling Sex in Captivity*, p. 8.
[120] Stephenson, 'Experiences of a Prisoner of War', p. 31.
[121] NLA Justin O'Byrne, 'Reminiscential conversations', 29 August 1983–28 July 1984, Tape 51.
[122] IWMSA Bracken: 11337, 4 May 1990; Younger, *No Flight From the Cage*, p. 116; IWMSA Younger: 23329, [no day] November 2002. Quote: IWMSA Bernard: 26561, June 2004 [no date].
[123] Younger, *No Flight From the Cage*, p. 116.
[124] Francis, *The Flyer*, p. 129.
[125] Bourne, *Fighting Proud*, p. 104.

homosexuality was a disease, illness, or physical deficiency, Doug Hutchinson was adamant that aircrew were 'mentally strong, because they'd had a fairly good education, and they were the cream of the country, you might say'. As he saw it, that mental fitness precluded them from being homosexual.[126] Attesting to a shared belief that homosexuality did not equate to virility, Justin O'Byrne and his fellow kriegies 'used to talk about them and say they were poofters'.[127] Reflecting the lingering stigma of homosexuality as well as perhaps a measure of homophobia when speaking in late-life interviews about same-sex relationships in captivity, some members of the cohort mirrored the press and literature of their formative years by highlighting homosexual stereotypes. Acknowledging that it was 'hearsay', Kenneth Gaulton declared that there was 'a lot of homosexuality amongst the French', who were 'morally defunct'. He also talked of 'two British sailors'.[128] Justin O'Byrne referred to 'two young people, and both of them were Fleet Air Arm pilots', members of the Royal Navy's air service.[129]

In substantiating their claims that homosexuality in camp did not exist, Ron Mackenzie and Bill Fordyce pointed out the conditions which precluded it, such as lack of food, privacy, or opportunity.[130] Some, like Justin O'Byrne,

---

[126] AAWFA: Hutchinson 0540, 17 June, 2003; AAWFA: Gaulton 1276, 3 February, 2004. General belief: Wotherspoon, *'City of the Plain'*, p. 26, 103; Costello, *Love Sex & War*, pp. 158–159, 162. See 'A Judge's Way', *Gippsland Times*, 3 September 1936, p. 7 ('Gross indecency' was code for homosexuality); 'Can Science cure the Sex-Invert?', *Smith's Weekly* (Sydney), 2 April 1938, p. 13; Duggan (ed.), *Padre in Colditz*, pp. 103, 165; Bourne, *Fighting Proud*, p. 61.

[127] NLA Justin O'Byrne, 'Reminiscential conversations', 29 August 1983–28 July 1984, Tape 51.

[128] AAWFA: Gaulton 1276, 3 February, 2004. Refer Costello, *Love Sex & War*, pp. 156–158 for alleged tolerance of homosexuality in the navy.

[129] NLA Justin O'Byrne, 'Reminiscential conversations', 29 August 1983–28 July 1984, Tape 51.

[130] Mackenzie, *An Ordinary War 1940–1945*, p. 63; AAWFA: Fordyce 0523, 19 June 2003.

conceded that, if homosexuality did occur, they had never come across it, or witnessed it, or had only heard suggestions, or speculation about it.[131] Richard Winn acknowledged gossip about the sexuality of female leads in theatre productions but asserted that 'there was no evidence of any homosexuality for all the time I was a POW—2 years, 4 months'.[132] Indeed, he 'never heard or noticed anything to do with homosexuality'.[133] They, however, may have been naïve and not privy to the cues used by those seeking homosexual interaction.[134] Moreover, codes of silence may have been at play.[135]

Richard Osborn was quite frank in recalling that, during his brief tenure in the Belaria compound before he was medically repatriated, one of the huts 'was known as the "buggery block"—a bit crude, but that explained exactly the status of its occupants who quite freely chose their own quarters to satisfy their own preferred lifestyle'.[136] Despite Osborn's vivid recollection, fellow Belaria inmate, Doug Hutchinson, was vociferous in his repeated denial of same-sex behaviour in the air force and in captivity. 'No, no. I never knew of any. Never knew of any at all.'[137] He believed there were no homosexuals in the air force because 'they were very careful in their selection of people ... you had to be just one hundred percent before they let you into an air crew, with the result that the blokes that were prisoners, they were young people

---

[131] NLA Justin O'Byrne, 'Reminiscential conversations', 29 August 1983–28 July 1984, Tape 51; AAWFA: Gaulton 1276, 3 February, 2004; Kerr, *Shot Down*, p. 139; Younger, *No Flight From the Cage*, p. 116; Alexander records: Arnel, interview 23 June 2016. For general denials of prison camp homosexuality, refer Gilbert, *POW*, p. 118.
[132] Winn, *A Fighter Pilot's Diary*, p. 58.
[133] AAWFA: Winn 1508, 4 March 2004.
[134] Smaal, *Sex, Soldiers and the South Pacific, 1939–45*, pp. 39–40, 48, 64. 'Mata Hari', an Australian soldier at Stalag 383, Hohenfels, notes how successful he and other camp men coped with the lack of privacy. Pairman, 'In Which we Serve', p. 38.
[135] Smaal, *Sex, Soldiers and the South Pacific, 1939–45*, p. 70.
[136] Osborn, *Circuits and Bumps*, p. 254.
[137] AAWFA: Hutchinson 0540, 17 June, 2003.

who were very fit, or they had been very fit'.[138] Contradicting his recollections of the Fleet Air Arm boys (although perhaps naval fliers did not count as 'airmen') Justin O'Byrne also believed the air force screened out homosexuals.[139] So too did Richard Winn. '[A]ir force selected so there won't be homosexuals in it.'[140] There is no evidence to support their assertions. Moreover, their own contradictory recollections refute them. Australian military services, including the RAAF, had no formal policy on homosexuality before the Second World War.[141] Questions regarding sexual orientation were not asked by recruiters or medical officers. Homosexuals were, like other young men—including members of the cohort—attracted to the air force because of its image of glamour, excitement and adventure.[142] Certainly, as Yorick Smaal reveals, many fit homosexuals joined the RAAF.[143]

None of the contemporary and late-life personal narratives, medical testimony, and oral history recordings consulted for this thesis name homosexual members of the cohort; none of the authors of these private or public accounts identify themselves as homosexuals. Only one medical report referred to sexuality when a psychologist recorded his patient's 'basic bisexual characteristics'.[144] Perhaps none of the cohort was homosexual, or

---

[138] AAWFA: Hutchinson 0540, 17 June, 2003.
[139] NLA Justin O'Byrne, 'Reminiscential conversations', 29 August 1983–28 July 1984, Tape 51.
[140] AAWFA: Winn 1508, 4 March 2004.
[141] Riseman, Robinson, Willett, *Serving in Silence?*, p. 13.
[142] Recruiters and medical officers: Wotherspoon, 'Comrades-in-arms' in Damousi and Lake (eds), *Gender and War*, p. 190. Attracted to glamour: Bourne, *Fighting Proud*, p. 85. For individual examples of homosexual airmen in the RAAF and RAF, refer: Bourne, *Fighting Proud*, chapters 11–14, pp. 85–112; Bongiorno, *The Sex Lives of Australians*, p. 215; Francis, *The Flyer*, pp. 101: 130, 185.
[143] Smaal, *Sex, Soldiers and the South Pacific, 1939–45*, pp. 30, 57, 76, 91, 95.
[144] DVA QMX034497-02: psychologist report, 12 December 1950.

perhaps they simply did not disclose their preference in a climate where ignorance, fear, and criminality of same-sex behaviour was socially and culturally legitimised for most of the twentieth century.[145] Certainly, for some, homosexuality precipitated homophobic fear and shame. Afraid he would be branded a homosexual, Kenneth Gaulton 'never felt so embarrassed in my life' when, after a concert party, he accompanied to the urinal 'a good looking fellow … dressed up as a girl'.[146] Some, according to Canadian Kingsley Brown, were afraid of the effects of an all-male environment on their 'normal libido'. Consequently, medical officer Edward Monteuis spent much time assuaging concerns that 'they were queer, or becoming queer' by assuring them that, if they were, 'they would have known about it beforehand'.[147] Others, such as Calton Younger, were mortified when they experienced homoerotic responses. After a 'night on the turps' at Stalag Luft VI, Heydekrug, Younger kissed one of the 'barmaids', a fellow prisoner in drag. Although enjoying 'the almost forgotten taste of lipstick', he was 'afraid that some unsuspected proclivities had been awakened in me'. It was 'a long time before I forgot my shame', as well as the potential affront to his masculinity.[148]

Contravention of their rigid moral code resulted in friction.[149] Justin O'Byrne recounted a confrontation between a 'young fellow, a fine young bloke, an Australian' who 'was appalled' by 'two of these Fleet Air Arm

---

[145] Wotherspoon, *'City of the Plain'*, pp. 39, 41, 52, 79; Bongiorno, *The Sex Lives of Australians*, p. 114; 'Homosexual menace in Australia, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 June 1958, p. 5.
[146] AAWFA: Gaulton 1276, 3 February, 2004.
[147] Brown, *Bonds of Wire*, p. 130. For examples of fear of homosexuality in other camps, refer Gilbert, *POW*, p. 117 and Bourne, *Fighting Proud*, p. 62.
[148] Younger, *No Flight From the Cage*, p. 116.
[149] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 23 June 2016.

fellows, who used to get up in their bunk and pull a curtain, pull a blanket, drape a blanket' across. The 'fine young bloke' was so upset about it that he felt he should 'speak to them strongly and try and stop them from this practice, or just show how opposed to it he was'. The Fleet Air Arm boys, however, 'stood up to him'. The group reaction was memorable. According to O'Byrne, it 'was almost like a tribal conflict'.[150]

Despite threats to masculinity, air force elitism, their moral code, and group cohesion—as well as overt homophobia—some former prisoners pragmatically or disinterestedly tolerated same-sex behaviour. In early January 1943, rumour had it that there were 'a pair of lovers' in Alex Kerr's hut. 'Nothing could be proved, and having neither the interest nor the inclination to investigate myself, I accepted the more or less circumstantial evidence offered by the scandalmongers.'[151] Rather than condemn or condone their 'preferred lifestyle', Richard Osborn focused on the 'welcome … distraction from the boredom of normal camp life' of some homosexuals' theatrical pursuits.[152] In the interests of harmony, Ron Mackenzie recalled, 'people with obvious homosexual tendencies' were generally 'treated with courtesy and a sort of baffled sympathy'.[153] Tolerant heterosexual airmen, however, appear to have been in the minority.

*****

[150] NLA Justin O'Byrne, 'Reminiscential conversations', 29 August 1983–28 July 1984, Tape 51.
[151] Kerr, *Shot Down*, 2015, p. 139.
[152] Osborn, *Circuits and Bumps*, p. 254.
[153] Mackenzie, *An Ordinary War 1940–1945*, p. 63.

Personality conflict was often a basis for disruption of communal life. As Laurie Simpson reported in an official debrief shortly after liberation, the 'small courtesies of everyday life, so easily forgotten, were practised and it was the little things such as these which helped us to remain fairly normal and on good terms with each other through the long waiting days'.[154] But camp relationships were not always congenial. Usually, the kriegies recognised their own prickliness. 'You'd realise the moment you'd been stupid and irritable', Alec Arnel recalled.[155] While they generally pulled themselves together, restraint was not always exercised. In close living conditions, as Alex Kerr reflected, there was 'plenty to argue about, especially if people haven't got anything to do and time is on their hands'.[156] There were 'little niggles', irritations and arguments over nothing at all or 'mercenary little things'.[157] Sometimes, the tensions became almost unbearable in crowded rooms with no privacy. Loud-mouthed and domineering characters grated. So too did those who thought themselves 'superior to the colonials' or the morose types who kept to themselves.[158] 'People who were moody and solemn were unendurable', recalled Jock Bryce.[159]

Reflecting the situation in many rooms, Jock Bryce and Bill Fordyce had a mutual and long-standing 'vague dislike' which they successfully

---

[154] AWM 54 779/3/126 part 1: POW statement, Simpson, 'Events and Organisations at Stalag Luft III', 31 July 1945.
[155] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 27 November 2014.
[156] AAWFA: Kerr 1489, 3 March 2004.
[157] 'Niggles' from Alexander records: Arnel, interview 23 June 2016. 'Mercenary little things' from NLA FERG/4550: *P.O.W.*, No. 8, 15 September 1942, unattributed letter, 29 April 1942, p. 5. For general tensions, refer also Bear, 'Room Interior–Sagan', 1944, in Larkins and Howard, *Great Australian Book of Nostalgia*, p. 229; AAWFA: Austin 0382, 5 June 2003; Bryce FA: 'Jock Bryce's POW Diary 1942–1945', p. 174.
[158] AAWFA: Winn 1508, 4 March 2004.
[159] Bryce FA: 'Jock Bryce's POW Diary 1942–1945', p. 155.

managed for some time. Theirs, generally speaking, was a 'fairly even-tempered room' where humour and the common experience of Italian camps were significant factors in its stability. In the early summer of 1944, however, the mild dislike 'magnified rapidly into something stronger'. After a period of considerable tension, Bryce 'lost all control, for the only time during all my months as a prisoner, and resorted to violence, a breach of taste practically unknown in any prison camp I was in'. The two did not speak again and the atmosphere 'was strained and nervous' until Fordyce moved to another room. 'Thereafter the little community was peaceful.'[160]

Recalling their fractious relationships decades later, roommates tended to readily excuse the 'squeaky wheels' and even their own conduct. The differences experienced by the 'brothers-in-captivity' in their interminable, forced intimacy were, as Ron Mackenzie recalled, 'probably not much more marked than those that plague brothers-by-birth'.[161] As John Dack remembered, they were 'one of us' and had to be tolerated.[162] Accordingly, despite their tensions, there was usually much give and take. 'We now batch [number censored] per room', John Osborne told his family. 'Three chaps are from home, two NZ and the balance GB. Combination is as peaceful as one could expect under such confined conditions.'[163] But, while 'getting on with people is important', it was not always possible in close confinement.[164]

In extremis

[160] Bryce FA: 'Jock Bryce's POW Diary 1942–1945', p. 155.
[161] Mackenzie, *An Ordinary War 1940–1945*, p. 43.
[162] Dack, *So you Wanted Wings, Hey!*, p. 91
[163] NAM JOC: John Osborne, letter to family, 11 July 1943.
[164] Alexander records: Borsht, interview 28 January 2016.

When the co-operative fellow-feeling and the trust underpinning it broke down, there was little of the sense of family or even the 'brotherhood of airmen'. As discussed in chapter three, those who did not participate in the 'X' organisation were treated ambivalently at best, or, at worst, virtually ostracised. Stealing from the Germans was condoned and encouraged under the auspices of 'X', but stealing from fellow kriegies was not tolerated.[165] Such was their sensitivity over rations that, when 'the odd case of stealing' occurred, cordiality and courtesy disappeared.[166] In some rooms, thieves were shunned.[167] Some were punished severely or even brutally. Alex Kerr recalled that in one camp 'a couple of chaps had a hatchet ready to cut a fellow's hand off because he was caught stealing some bread and that was very far-fetched, but usually it would amount to beating a chap up'.[168]

Theft was common during perhaps the cohort's most difficult period of captivity, the evacuation westward from German prisoner of war camps as the Red Army advanced from the east. The Germans did not provide rations and, when their own supplies—carried in backpacks or on hastily constructed sleds—ran out, many endured extreme hunger. 'During that forced march', Ronald Baines recorded, 'I knew what it was like to be physically exhausted and practically down to begging food; bitterly cold, morale zero'.[169] Some traded with civilians as they passed through farms and villages. Some stole. '[T]wo or three men would go to the front door and make a fuss and half a dozen would go around the back and burgle the house. … we did it very

[165] AAWFA: Austin 0382, 5 June 2003.
[166] AAWFA: Kerr 1489, 3 March 2004.
[167] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 27 November 2014.
[168] AAWFA: Kerr 1489, 3 March 2004.
[169] Baines FA: Baines, wartime log book, 8 February 1945, p. 22.

successfully', recalled Bill Fordyce.[170] Ken Carson willingly admitted to his mother and sister that 'all kriegies are expert thieves and we stole when and where we could in fact we were a most unscrupulous crowd'.[171] While theft reflected badly on individuals it was a natural expression of the human condition during severe adversity, springing, as Justin O'Byrne recognised, from the 'innate thing in every human being to survive'.[172] However, it seems theft was perhaps not always necessary. John Lietke, for instance, was 'surprised at the decent treatment meted out to us by German civilians (especially women) who all seemed sympathetic and willing to give a little food and invariably a drink to the POWs'.[173] Others also observed the generosity of German civilians—including when they had first been shot down—and noted the ample opportunities to barter, while Fordyce himself recorded that 'trading flourishes' on the march.[174] It seems Fordyce's and Carson's responses reveal that, for some, there was more than just the survival instinct at play. In explaining their behaviour, they betrayed an element of pride in their ingenuity and ability to live off the land, even at the expense of civilians suffering privation in the dying days of Germany's war. Paradoxically, the pride Carson and Fordyce exhibited in their thieving skills arose from their competent domestic fraternity: they were extensions of the kriegie ingenuity which had made life so much easier for so many.

---

[170] AAWFA: Fordyce 0523, 19 June 2003.
[171] Carson FA: Ken Carson, letter to mother and sister, 10 May 1945 (third letter).
[172] Justin O'Byrne, quoted by Anne O'Byrne, Alexander records: Anne O'Byrne, interview 26 May 2016.
[173] AWM 54 779/3/129: 11 PDRC post-liberation debrief, Lietke.
[174] Fordyce FA: Fordyce, wartime log book, p. 132.

As well as stealing from civilians on the forced march, some, as Matthew Johnson notes, 'were willing to undermine their fellow prisoners to survive'.[175] Collective altruism suffered because of such individualism. Yet, while the *act* of stealing from POWs was not tolerated, there was, in some cases, a compassionate understanding of *how* men *in extremis* could break fundamental social tenets. In 1941, deprivation in Oflag X-C, Lübeck touched the kriegies' sense of human dignity. 'The loss of weight, sickness and fear of starvation made a terrible effect on us all', recalled Justin O'Byrne. 'It was my first experience of the survival instinct becoming dominant to all others and to see fine officers of the Black Watch, Coldstream Guards and other fine regiments waiting to share the discarded peelings and black portions of potatoes was a new "low" in the graph of my experiences.'[176] For 'something to look forward to', O'Byrne's friend, Les Dixon, had been saving a potato for his birthday. Every time he came across a bigger one he swapped it and ate the smaller one. Just before his birthday, when Dixon's anticipation was greatest, another prisoner stole the potato and devoured it. 'It was the unforgiveable thing for anyone to steal anything else from a fellow prisoner', recalled O'Byrne. 'The ferocity that Les used on showing his anger at having lost his potato! He got [the thief] down, and we had to physically drag him away from his throat, because of his anger in this man doing such a dastardly thing.' Without condoning either the theft or Dixon's response, O'Byrne compassionately tried to explain how two reasonable men could breach the normal societal boundaries. 'It gives an idea of the relativity of values … of

[175] Johnson, 'Resisting Captivity', PhD thesis, p. 43.
[176] O'Byrne FA: O'Byrne, 'Nine o'clock above!'

life itself, how it's a primitive and basic thing to have food when you're hungry; your stomach needs food.'[177] O'Byrne's uncensorious comments suggest that he was fully aware of how men could be pushed to the edge of their humanity not just because of what he had witnessed, but because he, too, had been close to it.

While the survival instinct provoked a bitter and violent response *in extremis*, it did not expunge altruism. Indeed, altruistic fraternity came to the fore during the forced march. Alec Arnel was grateful for the strong bonds of his roommates. When his strength failed on the march and he could no longer easily carry his shoulder pack, Hugh Lambie told him to throw it onto the makeshift sled constructed to cart Arnel's roommates' supplies. Arnel had earlier rejected the offer, believing he could fare well enough trekking by himself with his hastily fashioned pack. 'It was a bit of a come down', Arnel admitted, when faced with true altruistic friendship.[178] *Rodney Patton's* life was saved by his friends. Near to collapse, fellow crew members and friends, Eric Johnston and Keith Mills, who like *Patton* had survived Buchenwald concentration camp, stood on either side and forced him to walk.[179] Mirroring that act, and the tender administrations of those caring for comrades near death in Japanese prison camps, Tony Gordon carried and hand-fed a friend *in extremis*.[180] Those particularly challenging periods, where survival depended on effective fraternal bonds, reinforced the intense collective

[177] NLA Justin O'Byrne, 'Reminiscential conversations', 29 August 1983–28 July 1984. For the collective response to the psychological aspect of food, and the extremes people would go to when hungry, refer to 'Scangriff', (Winston, ed.), *Spotlight on Stalag Luft III*, p. 19.
[178] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 27 November 2014 and additional comments 29 October 2015.
[179] Alexander records: Evelyn and Colin Johnston, interview 18 October 2016.
[180] Alexander records: Drew Gordon, interview 19 July 2016.

experience where 'captivity is not about me'. Never was it more clear that, for many, '"I" wasn't just "me", "I" was "us"'.[181]

*****

Matthew Johnson argues that the New Zealand kriegie experience 'emphasises individualism'.[182] Clare Makepeace concludes that British servicemen developed no sense of community in captivity; they clung too much to the divisions of rank (and perhaps service) and did not successfully unite against their enemy. Individuals were too selfish.[183] The cohort's personal narratives largely contest these findings. The affective and service bonds of the 'brotherhood of airmen' were strong. Despite the threat of homosexuality and, at best, only qualified tolerance of same-sex relationships, and ambivalent treatment of the 'non-escaping fraternity', the Australian airmen successfully kindled fraternal bonds and generally enjoyed cohesion in captivity. Their firm ties underpinned the communal operations against the enemy in RAF Station Sagan. When physical survival was at risk, however, civility and discipline disintegrated, thus indicating that, for some, not all responses to captivity arose from a need to actively manage, mitigate, moderate, or even clear-headedly navigate captivity. Indeed, some reactions to the most challenging circumstances were visceral or calculatedly selfish, arising from the darkest side of human nature. But Gordon's, Lambie's, Mills' and Johnston's actions, and others like them, also emanated from the human condition. That the instinct to help the less fortunate among them or those in

[181] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 12 November 2015.
[182] Johnson, 'Resisting Captivity', PhD thesis, p. 260.
[183] Makepeace, '"A Pseudo-soldier's Cross"', PhD thesis, pp. 124, 146.

desperate circumstances still existed during their harshest ordeals despite self-interest and the drive for self-preservation, is testament to the affective bonds forged in captivity. Those outside the community of RAF Station Sagan, such as German civilians encountered on the forced march, however, were a different matter.

While fraternity was an important factor in mitigating and ameliorating the strains of captivity, some men needed more to sustain them. Chapter five explores how some drew on faith or a sense of the spiritual to help manage the negative aspects of wartime confinement.

Chapter Four: Images

The close-knit fraternity of the Australians was somewhat based on Australian identity but largely derived from the strong ties of the 'brotherhood of airmen'. Proud of their air force identity, they always dressed as well as they could for formal (often propaganda) photos. George Archer sent this one of the Australians in Oflag XXI-B, Schubin home to the Department of Air, who sent copies to the families of the men identified in it.

Aubrey Mace's wife, Maida, then forwarded a copy to the Prisoner of War Relatives' Association, which published it in their monthly magazine. The photograph was incorrectly attributed as 'Australian airmen in Stalag Luft 3'.

Image 33: Australians in Oflag XXI-B, Schubin, 9 January 1943. Archer Family Archive.

Australian airmen in Stalag Luft 3. Reading from left to right: K. Poulton (N.S.W.), Lark (N.S.W.), Burbury (Tasmania), McSweyne (N.S.W.), Dirker (N.S.W.), Maconchie (N.S.W.), Walker (Q.), Pearce (V.), Archer (N.S.W.), Gould (N.S.W.), Mace (Q.), Miller (Q.), Andrea (V.), Hall (N.S.W.), McKecknie (V.), McLeod (S.A.), Terry (N.S.W.), Silverthorne-O'Byrne (Q.), Smith (N.S.W.), Newland, Osborne (N.S.W.), Edwards. Photo kindly sent by Mrs. A. W. Mace, Thuraggie, St. George, Q.

Image 34: 'Australian airmen in Stalag Luft 3', *P.O.W.*, No. 17, 15 June 1943, p. 5.

Home-centred nostalgia was the focus of pre-captivity memories. It was at the heart of the airmen's need to remain connected to their loved ones. Many drew or painted images of their homes and mounted photos of family and friends in their wartime log books.

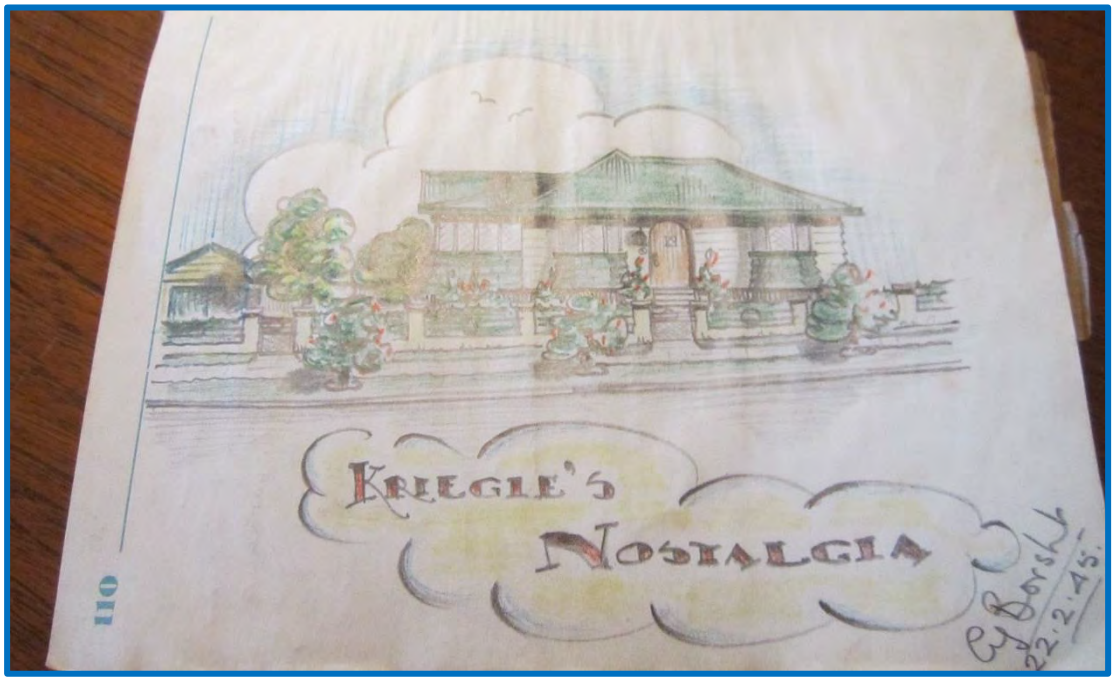


Image 35: 'Kriegie's Nostalgia', 22 February 1945, by Cy Borsht, in his wartime log book, p. 110. Borsht Archive.

Image 36: Family and friends. Photographs mounted by George Archer in his wartime log book. Archer Family Archive.

Soon after arriving at Stalag Luft III, Tim Mayo commenced architectural studies. Nostalgia for home served a useful purpose. As well as recreating the setting of his family home, he toyed with designs for his future dream home. He also drafted floor plans for kriegie friends.

Image 37: Mayo family home. Mayo Family Archive.

Image 38: 'Lakeside cottage', January 1943, watercolour by Tim Mayo. Mayo Family Archive.

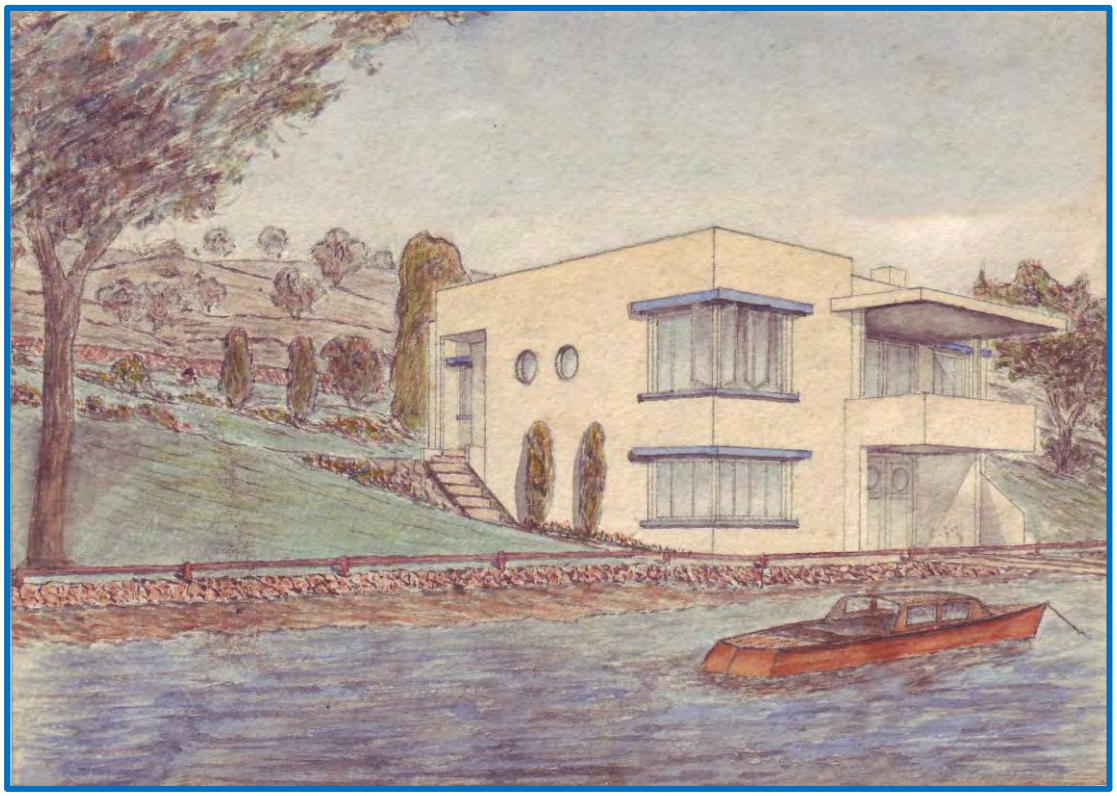


Image 39: 'Idea for Waterfront Home', February 1944, watercolour by Tim Mayo. Mayo Family Archive.

On Lake Macquarie . . .

One room cabin grew with family

On the edge of one of Australia's most beautiful lakes, Architect Mayo built this house in three stages. Once his holiday cabin it has graduated now as the family's permanent home.

One of the loveliest homes on the waterfront of Coal Point, Lake Macquarie (NSW) is a house which, starting out as virtually a one-room cabin, "grew up with the family."

Now the permanent home of architect T. A. Mayo, his wife and their four young children, it has a unity hardly to be expected from a house built in three stages, years apart. But its growth was not haphazard. A great deal of thought went into the final additions and remodelling which began about eight years ago. Mr Mayo's plan was to alter and enlarge, making a contemporary home without taking away from the original character. At the same time view and prevailing winds had to be taken into account.

Vertical cypress pine, painted soft pink, was used for the walls of the new structure. The roof has green asbestos slates — an old-new idea — and the oak shingles on the original roof were transferred to the laundry-workshop, a small building apart from the house.

Open space beneath the house was enclosed with hinged glass-panelled doors for a boatshed, with a concrete apron spanning the few feet to water's edge. *(Continued on page 88)*

Image 40: Post-war reality. Tim Mayo's family home. *Australian House and Garden*, December 1960. Mayo Family Archive.

The kriegies' strong sense of home stimulated them to, as best they could, create homey domestic settings. Space in overcrowded rooms was at a premium so interiors were highly managed. Kriegies constructed shelves and surfaces which were used as additional storage space. Images 41–43 reveal the spartan neatness characteristic of many rooms. As indicated in image 43, to maximise living areas, each man was allocated a place at the communal table. These three images also depict useful items fabricated by the 'tin bashers' such as coffee pots, jugs, and saucepans.

Demonstrating the degree to which the kriegies were able to manage their living space, as well as practical kriegie ingenuity, artist Tim Mayo, noted of image 41: 'The room I shared with five fellow POWs at North Compound, set out in manner considered the most satisfactory for winter conditions. Door removed from panel by stove to position shown & thus entrance screened by lockers. Addition to stove (with oven) made from Klim (powdered milk) tins'. Internal space may have been managed to as much as possible ensure comfort. However, as image 42 indicates, the men could never forget they were prisoners: the pine forest seen through the open windows created a natural barrier to the outside world.

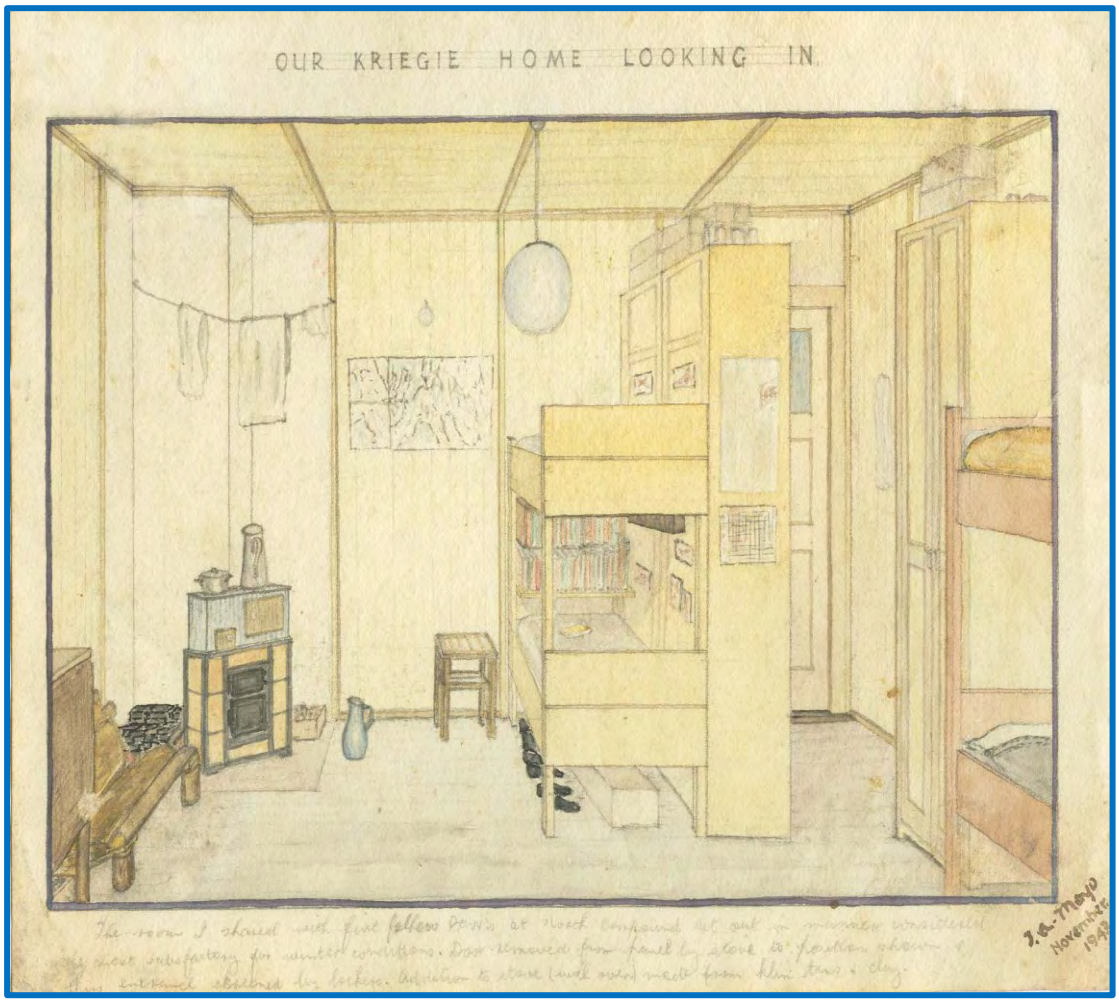


Image 41: 'Our kriegie room looking in', November 1943, by Tim Mayo. Mayo Family Archive.

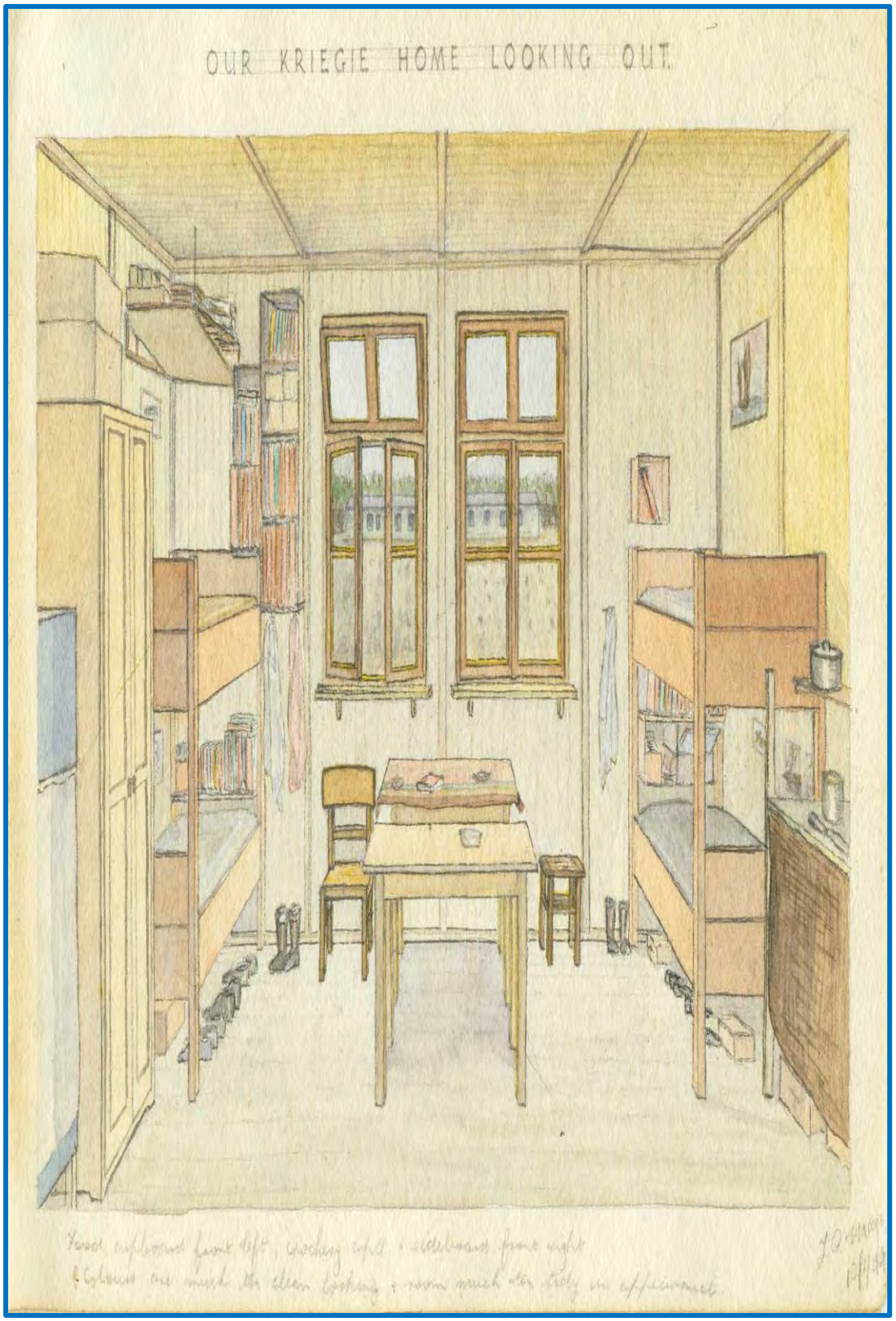


Image 42: 'Our kriegie room looking out', 10 January 1944, by Tim Mayo. Mayo Family Archive. .

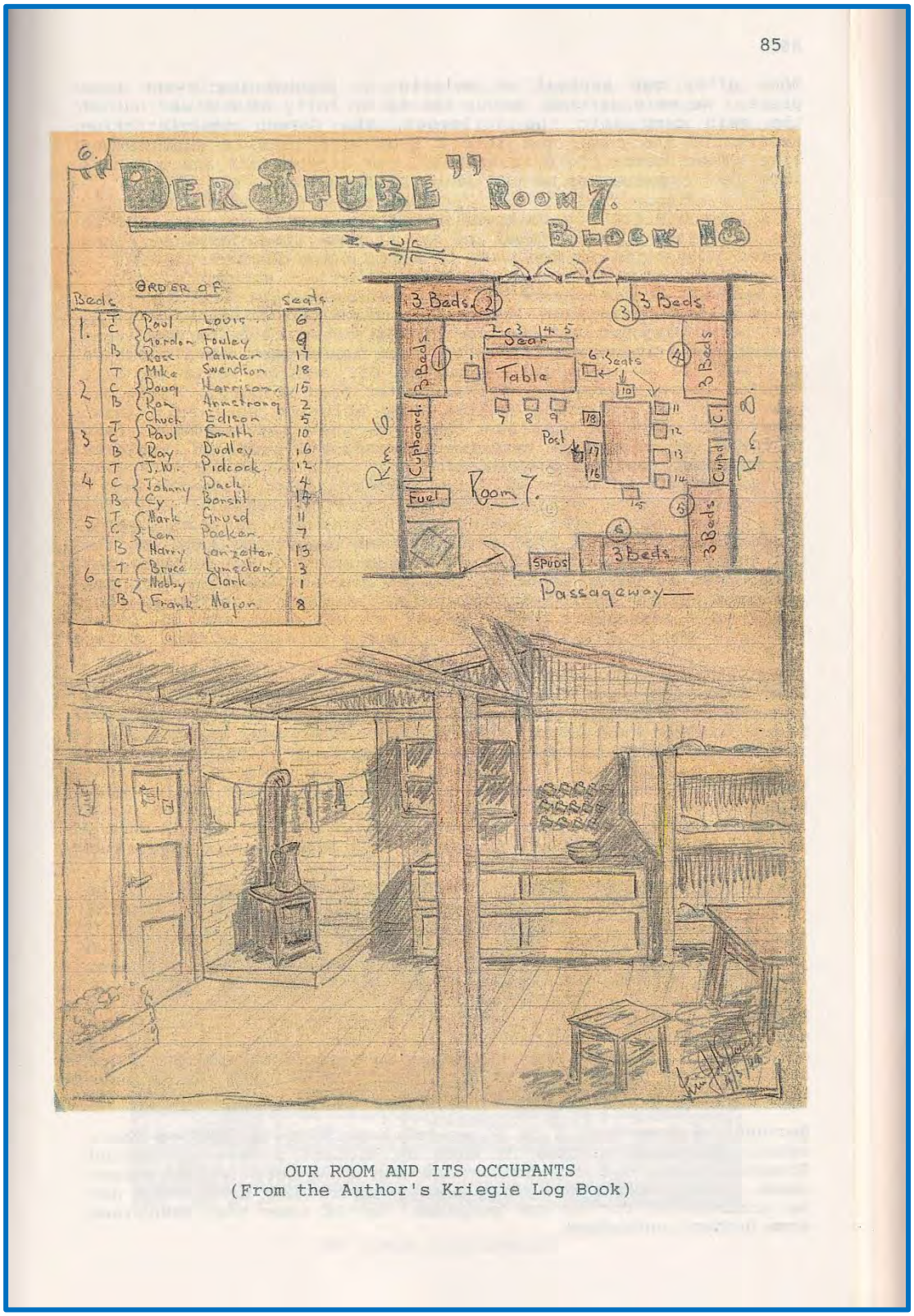


Image 43: 'Our Room and its Occupants' ("Der Stube", Room 7, Block 18), John Dack, 4 March 1945, from his wartime log book, reproduced in his memoir, *So, You Wanted Wings, Hey!* p. 85.

Airmen were well schooled in the domestic arts which complemented their military service, including sewing and cleaning. Despite the importance of domestic work, they were well aware of the irony of the perceived threat to their masculine service identity. Note, for instance, the mock recruitment poster behind the kitchen 'stooge' in Image 45, 'Adventure in the Skies. Join the RAAF'.

Image 44: **'**Sewing Day', 1941. Photo of Albert Hake, in his friend Dick Wheeler's album, Dick Wheeler Archive.

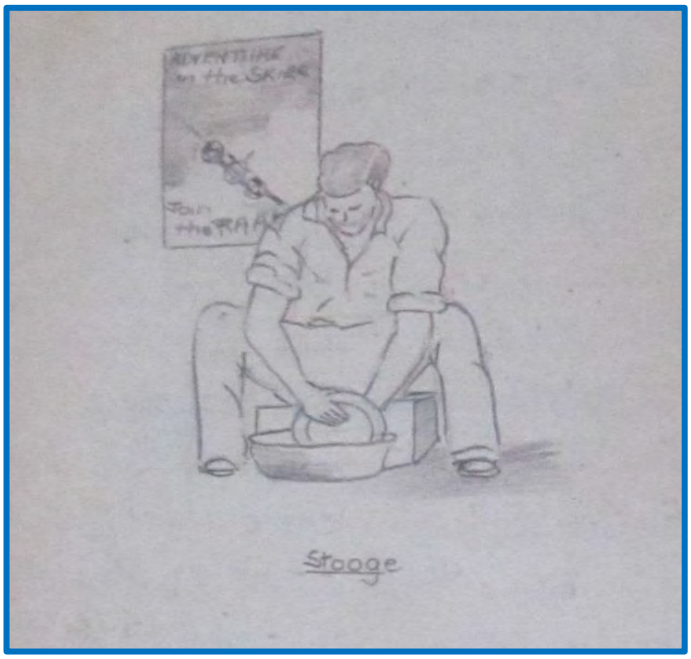


Image 45: 'Stooge', by Ken Todd, in his wartime log book, p. 16. Todd Family Archive.

Some room crews had dedicated cooks. In others, each man took his turn. It seems Len Netherway's culinary efforts were not always successful. Note how Netherway continues to wear his 'wings', even as he takes his turn at 'stooging'. He may be on kitchen duty, but he is still very much an airman.

Image 46: 'Bloody Stuff's Cold!', 5 August 1994, by Bill Fordyce, in Len's Netherway's wartime log book, p. 25. Netherway Family Archive.

In Cy Borsht's humorous take on washing day, his subject may be performing a stereotypically feminine household duty, but his brawny chest and violent agitation of the washing stick/paddle emphasise his masculinity.

Image 47: 'Dhoby Reel!', by Cy Borsht, in his wartime log book, p. 13. Borsht Archive.

In these collages in which he incorporates photographs of himself, Bill Fordyce clearly reveals the tension between the masculine service in which he enlisted, as depicted by the mock RAAF recruitment poster—'Join the RAAF. It's a Man's Job'—and the feminine task at which he finds himself. While Len Netherway wears his unform and 'wings' in the kitchen, laundry drudge Fordyce slumps in his patched pants and scruffy jumper, and displays no military badges.

Image 48: 'Join the R.A.A.F. It's a Man's Job', ink, watercolour and photograph collage by Bill Fordyce, in his wartime log book, p. 127. Fordyce Family Archive.

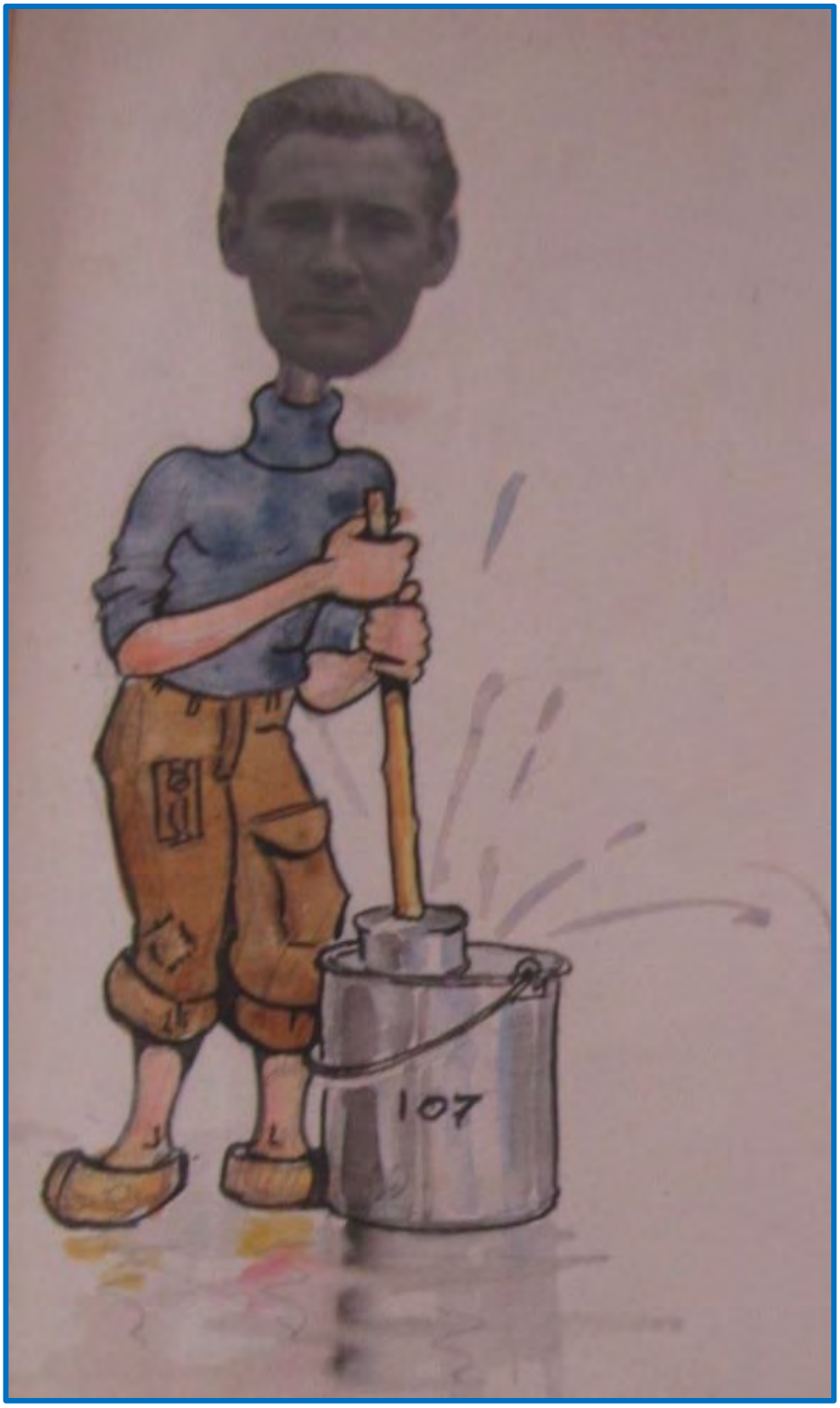


Image 49: Doing Room 107's Washing, ink, watercolour and photograph collage by Bill Fordyce, in his wartime log book, p. 129. Fordyce Family Archive.

Those of a practical bent had esteemed places in the kriegie hierarchy. They contributed to camp comfort and conviviality. Carpenters made important adjustments to room layouts. They also constructed theatre sets and items of furniture. Some, handymen, like Tim Mayo, demonstrated considerable kriegie ingenuity by building stoves.

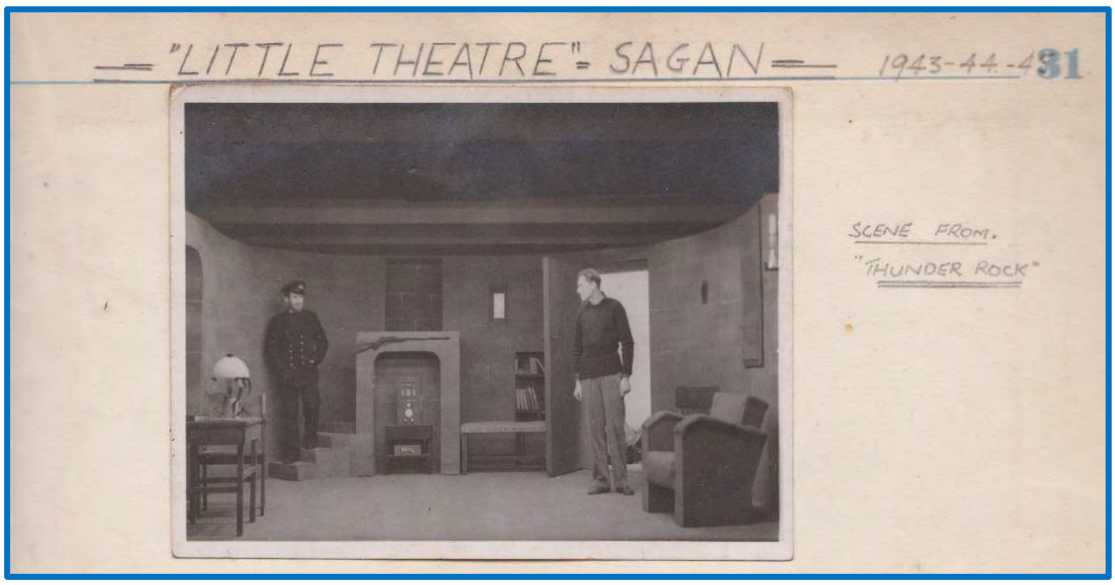


Image 50: 'Scene from "Thunder Rock"', Sagan's 'Little Theatre', in George Archer's wartime log book, p. 31. Archer Family Archive.

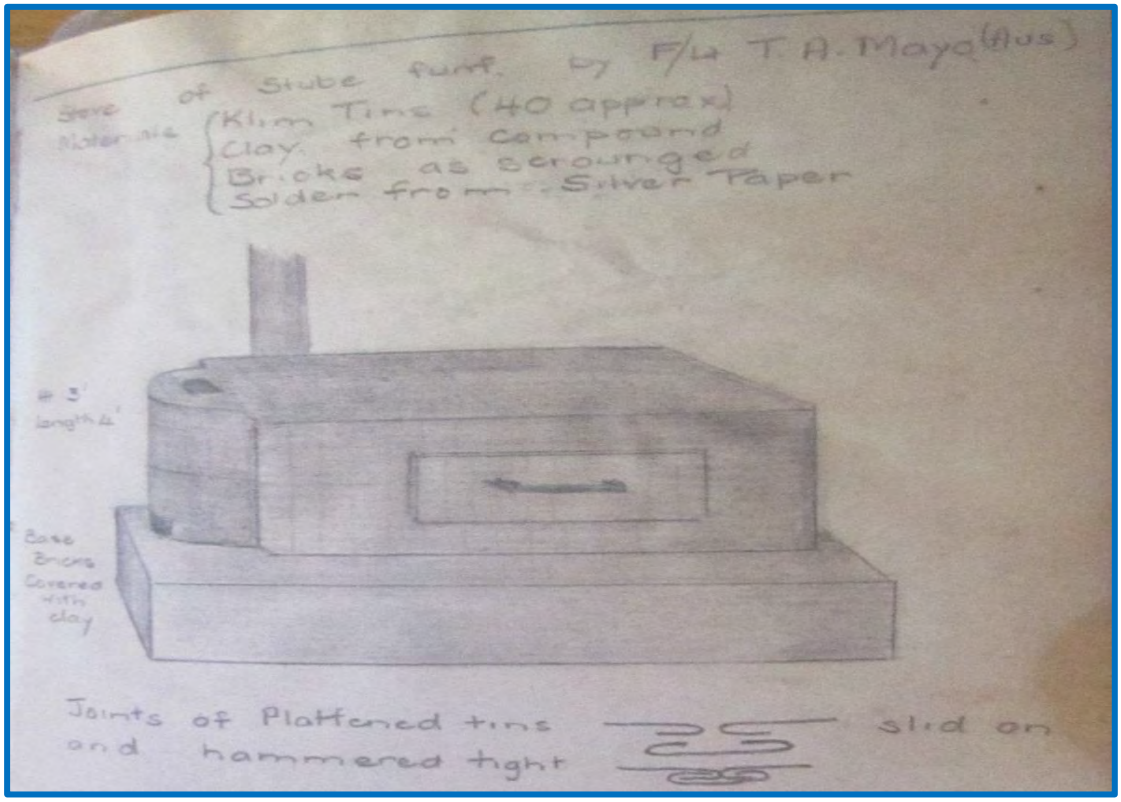


Image 51: Room 5's stove. Constructed by Tim Mayo from Klim tins, clay, bricks, and solder made from silver paper, in Ken Todd's wartime log book, p. 47. Todd Family Archive.

The ‘brew führer’ was a revered position in camp life. With a fractionating column made from Klim, Ovaltine, and cheese tins joined together with solder derived from cigarette box tinfoil, Laurie Simpson’s ‘masterpiece’ fuelled many a kriegie ‘bash’.

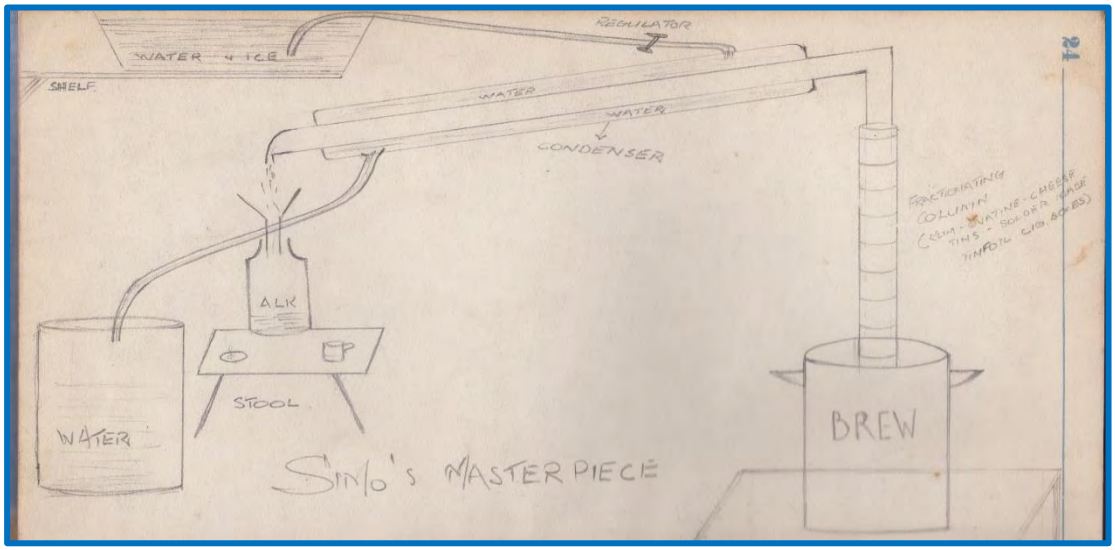


Image 52: ‘Simo’s Masterpiece’, an alcohol distillery, by George Archer, in his wartime log book, p. 24.

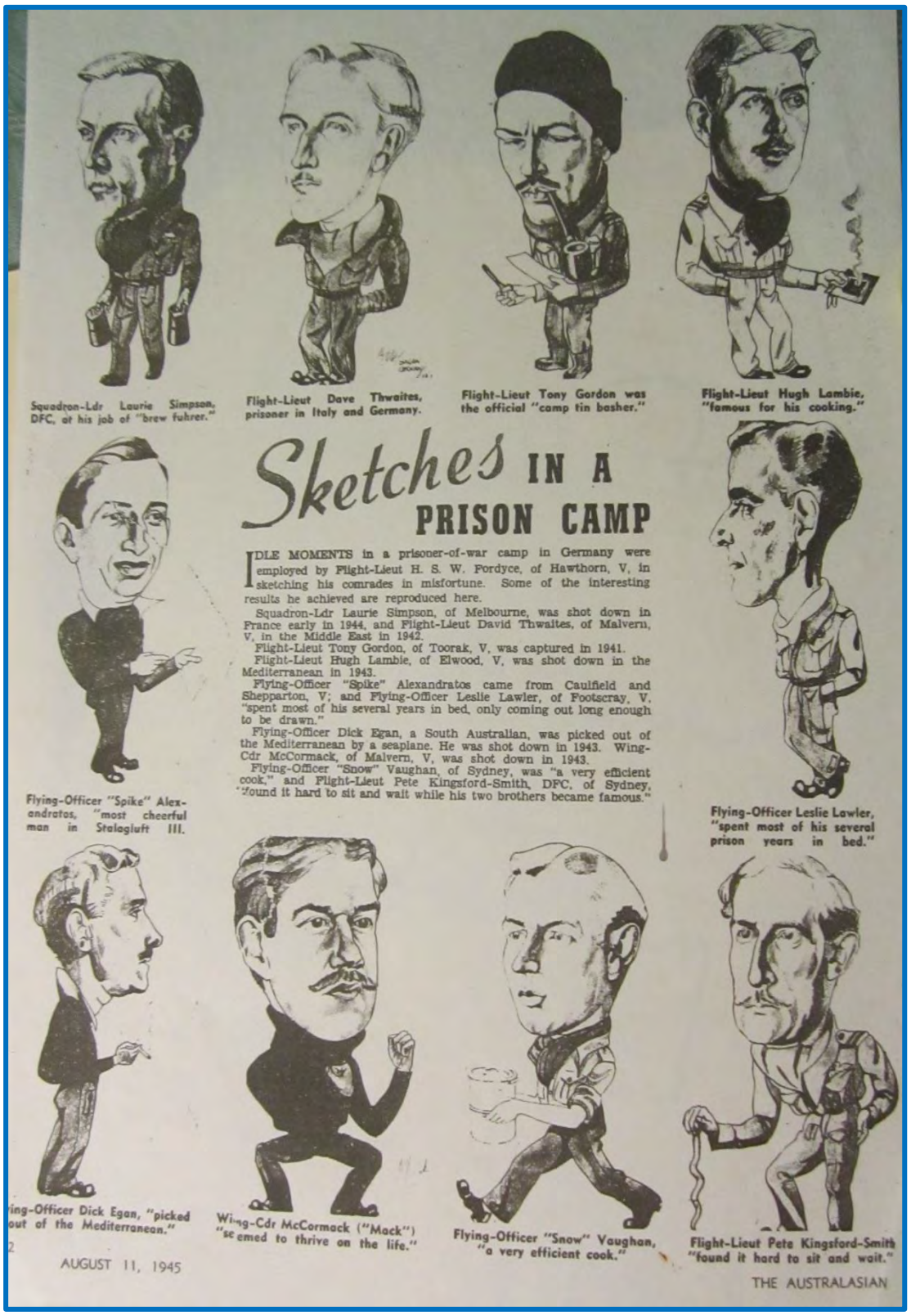
Image 53: Photograph of Bill Fordyce’s drawing of ‘brew führer’ Laurie Simpson, retrospectively tipped into Fordyce’s wartime log book, p. 4. Fordyce Family Archive.

Tony Gordon was a 'tin basher', another essential prison camp position. His skills contributed to both the camp's domestic front and the escape organisation. Using metallic bits and pieces, including the ubiquitous Klim tin, Gordon fabricated a tube for Bill Fordyce in which he carried his artworks, including portraits of Gordon and Simpson, during the forced march. In a loving gesture of goodwill, Fordyce later gifted a copy of Gordon's portrait, as well as the tube, to Gordon's son. Fordyce's portraits of his Stalag Luft III friends were later published by *The Australasian*.

Image 54: Bill Fordyce's drawing of Tony Gordon, the 'tin basher'. Gordon Family Archive.

Image 55: Metal tube constructed by Tony Gordon from food tins to protect Bill Fordyce's prison-camp artwork. Gordon Family Archive. Tim Mayo fashioned something similar in which to carry his artworks.

Bill Fordyce's record of his fellow Australians of Stalag Luft III, indicating, in some cases, their roles in camp life.



Squadron-Ldr Laurie Simpson, DFC, at his job of "brew fuhrer."

Flight-Lieut Dave Thwaites, prisoner in Italy and Germany.

Flight-Lieut Tony Gordon was the official "camp tin basher."

Flight-Lieut Hugh Lambie, "famous for his cooking."

Flying-Officer "Spike" Alexandratos, "most cheerful man in Stalagluft III.

Flying-Officer Leslie Lawler, "spent most of his several prison years in bed."

ing-Officer Dick Egan, "picked out of the Mediterranean."

Wing-Cdr McCormack ("Mack") "seemed to thrive on the life."

Flying-Officer "Snow" Vaughan, "a very efficient cook."

Flight-Lieut Pete Kingsford-Smith "found it hard to sit and wait."

Sketches IN A PRISON CAMP

IDLE MOMENTS in a prisoner-of-war camp in Germany were employed by Flight-Lieut H. S. W. Fordyce, of Hawthorn, V, in sketching his comrades in misfortune. Some of the interesting results he achieved are reproduced here.

Squadron-Ldr Laurie Simpson, of Melbourne, was shot down in France early in 1944, and Flight-Lieut David Thwaites, of Malvern, V, in the Middle East in 1942.

Flight-Lieut Tony Gordon, of Toorak, V, was captured in 1941.

Flight-Lieut Hugh Lambie, of Elwood, V, was shot down in the Mediterranean in 1943.

Flying-Officer "Spike" Alexandratos came from Caulfield and Shepparton, V; and Flying-Officer Leslie Lawler, of Footscray, V, "spent most of his several years in bed, only coming out long enough to be drawn."

Flying-Officer Dick Egan, a South Australian, was picked out of the Mediterranean by a seaplane. He was shot down in 1943. Wing-Cdr McCormack, of Malvern, V, was shot down in 1943.

Flying-Officer "Snow" Vaughan, of Sydney, was "a very efficient cook," and Flight-Lieut Pete Kingsford-Smith, DFC, of Sydney, "found it hard to sit and wait while his two brothers became famous."

2

AUGUST 11, 1945

THE AUSTRALASIAN

Image 56: 'Sketches in a Prison Camp', by Bill Fordyce, published in *The Australasian*, 11 August 1945, p. 12.

Chapter Five: Faith and Religious Sensibility

Religion is not an emotion. It does, however, have an affective dimension. Indeed, religion, faith, and emotion are inextricably linked.[1] Belief involves feelings, particularly regarding relationships with God. There is a powerful nostalgic element of religious practice which creates strong emotive connections to home, loved ones, and fellow worshippers. Emotions also arise when faith and religious sensibilities are drawn upon to create meaningful narratives. Religion can also shape emotion.[2] Bibles and hymnals precipitate affective responses.[3] Errol Green often showed his children the small bible he carried during captivity.[4] Prayer, such as entreaties for God's assistance or blessings, reveals emotion, as does the performance of religious ritual.[5] This chapter analyses the emotional dimension of faith, and argues that some members of the cohort drew on religious beliefs and practices to manage and make sense of their captivity. It considers the importance of secular endeavours deriving from religious tradition and the prevailing Christian ethos. In particular, it describes how the airmen gained comfort as they mourned the deaths of those killed in the Great Escape by composing those deaths as Christian sacrifices. This chapter also discusses the place of altruism in captive lives. Religion and faith, however, did not always provide the

[1] Corrigan, 'Religion and Emotion', in Matt and Stearns, (eds), *Doing Emotions History*, p. 144.
[2] Watts, 'Emotion and Religion Revisited: A Response to O'Connor and Averill', pp. 175–177.
[3] Corrigan, 'Religion and Emotion', in Matt and Stearns, (eds), *Doing Emotions History*, pp. 146–147.
[4] Alexander records: Helen Green, email 2 June 2018.
[5] Toivo, 'Religion and emotion', p. 297.

answer. Some struggled to find religious consolation during challenging times or lost their faith altogether.

The idea of God

Faith as a coping mechanism for servicemen has attracted some scholarly attention. Alexander Watson argues that belief in God's favour and protection as a focus for either devout or opportunistic intercessory prayer provided considerable strength for many British and German soldiers as they faced the challenges of trench warfare during the Great War.[6] Richard Schweitzer has determined that many British soldiers on the Western Front were 'at least sympathetic to the idea of God'.[7] In examining contemporary diaries and letters of over 1000 men of the First Australian Imperial Force, Daniel Reynaud reveals many cases of significant engagement with God, religion, and religious practice.[8] John Broom draws similar conclusions in his study of British servicemen during the Second World War.[9] Historian Martin Francis and David Stafford-Clark, a former senior medical officer attached to operational Bomber Command squadrons, however, largely conclude that Second World War fliers either had little spiritual sensibility or that religious practice emanated from superstition or magical thinking.[10] In his more detailed analysis of aircrew superstition, S.P. MacKenzie, like Stafford-Clark, treats acts such as praying for protection or intercession, attending worship, and carrying holy medals as superstition believed to improve survival odds,

---

[6] Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, pp. 92–100, 107.
[7] Schweitzer, 'The Cross and the Trenches: Religious Faith and Doubt Among Some British Soldiers on the Western Front', p. 56.
[8] Reynaud, *Anzac Spirituality*.
[9] Broom, 'Faith in the Furnace: British Christians in the Armed Services, 1939–1945', PhD thesis.
[10] Francis, *The Flyer*, p. 124; Stafford-Clark, 'Morale and Flying Experience', p. 16.

rather than as an inherent aspect of devout religious faith.[11] Despite this, some airman-memoirists such as Roger Hall, Geoffrey Wellum, and Australian Dudley Hannaford, reveal relationships with God.[12] Jack Morschel was one of the cohort who was truly grateful that God had spared him, when he uttered 'a prayer of thankfulness' after he baled out.[13] While Broom found a clear 'seam of Christianity' throughout RAF literature, scholars, including Broom, have paid only limited attention to the religious responses of prisoners of war in Europe, either as coping mechanisms or means by which they actively ameliorated the dispiriting effects of captivity.[14] Others surveying life in POW camps collect faith awkwardly along with other themes.[15] Alan Robinson includes a chapter on captured chaplains in his study of clergy at war in which it is possible to perceive the effect of their pastoral work on their fellow captives.[16] Some omitted faith entirely from their studies.[17]

Broom's 'seam of Christianity', is apparent in the wartime writings of Alec Arnel, George Archer, Albert Hake, and Edwin 'Ted' Every. Errol Green's faith is discerned through the letters of his mother, Eva. Jack Morschel refers to his on a number of occasions in his post-war

---

[11] Stafford-Clark, 'Morale and Flying Experience', p. 16; MacKenzie, *Flying Against Fate*, p. 3.
[12] Hall, *Spitfire Pilot*; Wellum, *First Light*; Hannaford, *Mission Incomplete*.
[13] Morschel, *A Lancaster's Participation in Normandy Invasion 1944*, p. 30.
[14] Snape, *God and the British Soldier*, pp. 173–174; Broom, 'Faith in the Furnace', PhD thesis, pp. 49, 75, 82–87, 96, 107–108.
[15] Durand, *Stalag Luft III*, Chapter 11, 'Sustaining Mind and Spirit', pp. 215–240; Gilbert, Chapter 11, 'Medical and Spiritual Matters', pp. 218–233; MacKenzie, *The Colditz Myth* Chapter 5, 'Body and Soul', pp. 154–192. Monteath only considered religion as part of Jewish identity. *P.O.W.*, pp. 191–193.
[16] Robinson, *Chaplains at War*, Chapter 7, pp. 175–197, '"I was in Prison, and Ye Came Unto Me": The Work of Captured Chaplains'. Captured chaplains Douglas Thompson, Godfrey Miller and J. Ellison Platt recorded details of their continuing ministry and pastoral work in prisoner of war camps. (Thompson spent time in Stalag Luft III) Thompson, *Captives to Freedom*; Miller, 'Prisoner of War', pp. 9–16; Duggan (ed.), *Padre in Colditz*.
[17] Gillies, *The Barbed-wire University*, pp. 227–230; Rolf, *Prisoners of the Reich*; Horn, *In Enemy Hands*; Makepeace, *Captives of War*.

recollections.[18] Bruce Lumsden's post-war epistolary memoirs reveal his deep commitment to God.[19] In the personal narratives used for this thesis, thirty of the cohort—8.57 per cent—spoke of or wrote about faith, spirituality, or religious practice.[20] This may be only a small proportion but it is not inconsequential. Those records of intimate relationships with God are private, individual, and very human expressions of emotion and faith. Such stories defy universality and every rare account is akin to literary scholar Samuel Hynes' tales 'of particulars', each revealing the human aspect of war and captivity.[21] Scarcity renders the individual accounts cited in this chapter valuable and significant; they confirm a varied and nuanced approach to spiritual matters within captivity. In analysing the appreciation of the 'idea of God' of those members of the cohort who spoke of it, this chapter addresses an important gap in captivity historiography.

Religious practice and ritual

The 1933 and 1947 censuses reflect that Australia was a predominantly Anglo-Celtic, Christian society.[22] Slightly less than 40 per cent of the population were Anglican, approximately 23 per cent were Catholic, and 28 per cent nominated some other Christian denomination. In 1933, only 0.2 per cent of the surveyed population reported holding no religious beliefs.[23] Christmas and Easter were commonly observed. Church weddings were still

---

[18] Morschel, *A Lancaster's Participation in Normandy Invasion 1944*, pp. 30, 111.
[19] Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'The Complete Tour'; Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'Behind the Scenes: Letters between BC Lumsden & JM Bradbeer, August 1997–August 2000'.
[20] This figure does not include unidentified authors of letters published in newspapers or *P.O.W. the Monthly Newsletter of the Australian Prisoners of War Relatives Association*.
[21] Hynes, *The Soldiers' Tales*, p. xvi.
[22] Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1301.0—Year Book Australia, 2006.
[23] Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1301.0—Year Book Australia, 2006.

popular, and annulments and divorces were difficult to obtain, partly because of strong religious opposition. Christian tenets and moral codes underpinned society; church leaders maintained their important place in guiding public morality; and social welfare policy such as child endowment and unemployment benefits reflected notions of Christian charity. Declaration of religion, however, did not necessarily reflect practise. Adherence to organised religion declined as Britain and Australia moved towards a more secular, humanist society. Many church rituals and feasts were seen as social rather than religious occasions.[24] Rex Austin, who had attended church every morning during his years at a Church of England grammar school, had lost his faith by the time he enlisted.[25] He was not alone.

Rigorous Christianity within Australian society was giving way to what British clergyman and religious commentator John Drewett termed, 'diffused Christianity'.[26] This was essentially Christianity without Christ or theology, a code of behaviour where ethics, humanitarianism, a sense of goodness, and charitable endeavours were valued more than organised religion.[27] Drewett points out that diffused Christianity had infiltrated the fabric of Britain's social and political institutions.[28] It was no different in Australia. Diffused Christianity also permeated the armed services, including the air force.[29]

---

[24] Drewett, 'Diffused Christianity', pp. 83, 86; Thompson, *Religion in Australia*, pp. 86–87; Barrett, *We Were There*, p. 72–73; 'Defence of Organised Religion', *The Advertiser* (Adelaide), 30 March 1938, p. 14; Rev. James G. Murtagh, 'The Story of Australian Nationalism', *Advocate* (Melbourne), 14 November 1945, p. 13.
[25] AAWFA: Austin 0382, 5 June 2003.
[26] Drewett, 'Diffused Christianity', pp. 82–92.
[27] Drewett, 'Diffused Christianity', pp. 82–92; Snape, *God and the British Soldier*, pp. 22–28.
[28] Drewett, 'Diffused Christianity', pp. 85, 87.
[29] Snape, *God and the British Soldier*, pp. 19–58; 139.

Recruits were required on enlistment to declare religious affiliation.[30] This was more than an administrative formality, allowing them to be buried according to the appropriate doctrinal rites if they died. The practice of religion was fully endorsed and encouraged by the RAF and RAAF. It was enshrined in air force law.[31] 'Reverent observance of religion' was considered to be of the 'highest importance' on air force stations.[32]

Religious affiliations, which are available for 341 members of the cohort (97 per cent), indicate a deviation from national census data.[33] 'Church of England' was nominated by 179 airmen (i.e. 52.5 per cent of the cohort) and fifty-six (16.4 per cent) recorded that they were Roman Catholic. More closely reflecting census data, Protestant affiliation—with almost equal numbers identifying as Presbyterian (48) and Methodist (46)—was recorded by 105 airmen (31 per cent). One man was Jewish. None nominated as atheist or agnostic at the beginning of their service. Given census data, service records, and *King's Regulations and Air Council Instructions*, as well as RAAF and RAF culture, it could be inferred that most of the Stalag Luft III cohort had an understanding, or at least a general awareness, of religious tenets. Certainly, airmen knew what was expected of them at church parade. Moreover, those who had been educated at parochial schools would have been well-grounded in catechism and scripture, as would those attending Protestant Sunday schools. So too, would sons of ministers, preachers and missionaries.

---

[30] *The King's Regulations*, p. 332.
[31] *The King's Regulations* clauses 833–842, pp. 332–337. The RAAF had adopted the RAF's *King's Regulations and Air Council Instructions* and former RAAF trainees in RAF squadrons were bound by them.
[32] *The King's Regulations*, pp. 332–333, 336.
[33] Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1301.0—Year Book Australia, 2006. The airmen's service records (NAA A9300 and A9301) and German POW identification cards (NAA A13950) were surveyed for religious affiliation. RAF records are not available to non-family members.

Yet, despite their nominal religious affiliations, the majority of the cohort's personal wartime records reveal that, while they acknowledged the influence of religious belief and practices, they were less intimate with the spiritual basis underpinning them. Some even indicated a more secular world view. Even so, the cohort's cultural influences, religious backgrounds, and air force practice reflect Richard Schweitzer's assertion in relation to Great War servicemen that although atheism was rare, faith (or at least acknowledged religious affiliation), and a certain degree of religious sensibility, were not.[34]

The church in camp

Those in German captivity who sought succour from religion could do so. Some of the cohort turned to prayer or recalled memorised lines of scripture, hymns and psalms. Errol Green gained strength from his favourite verse: 'My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the Rock of my heart and my portion forever'.[35] Formal aspects of religious practice were also available. While Germany did not strictly adhere to all aspects of the Geneva Convention, the Germans generally respected the work of British chaplains, and the Red Cross was satisfied that they conformed to Article 16.[36] There were no air force chaplains in Stalag Luft III and chaplaincy roles were carried out by Army priests and ministers, the majority of whom were members of the British Royal Army Chaplains' Department. Of the 754 Australian Army chaplains serving in the Second World War, thirty-seven were captured; three were in

[34] Schweitzer, 'The Cross and the Trenches', p. 57.
[35] Psalm 73:26 as cited in Alexander records: Helen Green, email 2 June 2018.
[36] *Report of the International Committee of the Red Cross, 1939–1947, Vol. 1. General Activities*, cited in Robinson, *Chaplains at War*, p. 181; NAUK WO 224/63A: Red Cross and Protecting Powers reports, 14 May 1942; 13 August 1942; 13 September 1942; 22 February 1943; 22–23 March 1943; 26 July 1943; 25–26 October 1943; 22–24 February 1944.

German captivity, including Reverend Douglas McConchie, the only Australian chaplain in Stalag Luft III.[37]

According to John Dack, the 'padre', along with the doctor, was one of the two 'most important posts in the camp'.[38] ('Chaplain' was the formal term for ministers of religion; 'padre' was the colloquial term. Both were used by the Australian airmen.) The chaplains catered to the faithful, conducting regular church services which provided comfort, maintained a connection to the shared faith of their loved ones, and enabled them to acknowledge thanks to God for their blessings. Services were performed on Sundays, special religious occasions, Armistice Day and, for the Australians and New Zealanders, Anzac Day. Chaplains conducted funeral rites for prisoners who died in camp as well as the memorial service for the fifty airmen killed in the post-Great Escape reprisals. Chaplains also offered pastoral care and spiritual aid. Reverend Douglas Thompson, a Scottish Methodist army chaplain captured in North Africa, was 'greatly admired'.[39] Working with Reverend Douglas McConchie before the latter's repatriation, he established a 'church in camp' in East Compound, and recalled administering to those who 'carried intolerable burdens' such as grief, despair, and challenges to their faith.[40] Frank Falkenmire was one who sought solace from a padre when his melancholic thoughts turned towards home on Christmas Eve 1944.[41] Some

---

[37] Gladwin, *Captains of the Soul*, pp. 101, 129, 160.
[38] Dack, *So you Wanted Wings, Hey!*, p. 93.
[39] Morschel, *A Lancaster's Participation in Normandy Invasion 1944*, p. 71.
[40] Thompson, *Captives to Freedom*. 'Church in camp' from p. 160, other quotes from p. 162. Jack Morschel recalled Thompson counselling those with psychological problems. Morschel, *A Lancaster's Participation in Normandy Invasion 1944*, p. 71.
[41] Falkenmire, 'Diary Extracts—Stalagluft III', 24 December 1944, in King, *War Gave Us Wings*, p. 116.

chaplains participated in the camp social life and provided quiet support through their presence.

The airmen demonstrated their faith in many ways. They went to church, prayed, enjoyed Christian fellowship, and had personal relationships with God. 'We are very lucky to be able to attend church services', wrote Anglican William Kloster, 'and I was especially grateful today, for this time a year ago I had the narrowest escape I ever want. … I realise I have a great deal for which to thank God'.[42] George Archer, an Anglican who was East Compound's church steward, often mentioned in his letters, diary, and wartime log book his regular worship and friendly relationships with the chaplains.[43] He also devoted many pages in his wartime log book to a series of bible studies.[44] Much of Roy Nightingale's wartime poetry indicated a strong connection with God, as did that of Max Dunn.[45] Alec Arnel, a member of the Churches of Christ who, at thirteen, 'gave my life to Christ' prayed and called upon God's blessings.[46] But Bruce Lumsden, who had been raised in a deeply religious Presbyterian family, included no reference to faith or religious matters in the notebook he compiled during captivity.[47] However, like Alec Arnel, who spoke at great length about his relationship with God,

---

[42] NLA FERG/4550: *P.O.W.*, No. 17, 15 June 1942, unattributed letter [William Kloster], 22 November 1942, p. 5.
[43] Archer FA: Archer, wartime log book, p. 50; Archer FA: Archer, letters to family, 22 December 1942; 18 February 1944; 8 May 1944; Archer FA: Archer, 1942 Diary, 16 August 1942; 30 August 1942; 6 September 1942; 17 August 1942; 22 November 1942.
[44] Archer FA: Archer, wartime log book, pp. 50, 63–70, 51.
[45] Nightingale FA: Nightingale, wartime log book, pp. 48–49, 51; Dunn, *Poems of Norman Maxwell Dunn*.
[46] Alexander records: Arnel, interviews, 7 August 2014 and 2 March 2017; Arnel archive: Arnel, letters to Margery Gray, 2 April 1941; 18 July 1943; 15 May 1944 (first letter); 15 May 1944 (second letter); 6 June 1944; 11 November 1944; [undated c. Christmas 1944]; 24 July 1945; Arnel archive: Arnel, letter to Mrs Gray, 25 July 1945.
[47] Webber, *Years May Pass On*, pp. 174–175; Alexander records: Margaret and Jamie Bradbeer, interview 20 July 2016; Lumsden FA: Lumsden, wartime notebook, unpaginated.

his enduring faith is revealed in his post-war writings and reflection.[48] Lumsden's strong belief and committed religious practice enabled him to effectively manage his captivity, even from the earliest moments. Shortly after capture, while in the local holding cell with his crew, 'I had found an inner support in prayer … committing my case trustingly to a God whom I believed would see me through this ordeal'.[49] His faith rarely wavered from that time and he frequently offered to share its comfort with fellow prisoners.[50] Not all were Christians, or as devout, yet many accepted the solace his faith offered, and the fellow-feeling it evoked.[51]

Writing home about their religious practice assured loved ones that the airmen had not abandoned their faith. Some of the cohort prayed for themselves and their families. They, in turn, took comfort in knowing that their loved ones were praying for them. Errol Green was heartened by the unwavering faith of his mother, Eva. Drawing on the language and imagery of their shared Presbyterianism, Eva included in her letters extracts from hymns and prayers, imbuing them with both a religious and affective dimension.[52] She frequently asked God to 'bless and keep' her son 'always'; recalled to Errol the 23rd psalm; and entreated him to 'keep on Trusting [God]

---

[48] Alexander records: Arnel, interviews, 7 August 2014, 9 October 2014, 27 November 2014, 29 January 2015, 29 October 2015, 23 June 2016, and 2 March 2017. Lumsden spoke to a church group on 'With Christ Behind the Barbed Wire' within months of liberation and, in late life wrote eloquently and reflectively about his wartime relationship with God. *The Age*, 30 March 1946, p. 4; Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'The Complete Tour'; Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'Behind the Scenes'.
[49] Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'The Complete Tour', Lumsden, letter 11 July 1988.
[50] Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'The Complete Tour', Lumsden, letters 10 June 1988, 11 July 1988, 5 November 1988.
[51] Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'The Complete Tour', Lumsden, letter 5 November 1988.
[52] Green FA: Eva Green, letters to Errol Green 9 May, 17 May, 20 May, 31 May, 10 June, 21 June, 28 June, 28 October, 18 November, 9 December 1942. Eva died 3 January 1943. For affective dimension of religious texts, refer Corrigan, 'Religion and Emotion', in Matt and Stearns, (eds), *Doing Emotions History*, p. 153.

and the time will pass'.[53] In her last letter before her sudden death, she asked if he still had his 'little book'—his bible—and assured him that, 'We will pray for you always'.[54] Mildred Williams also signed off her letters with love and prayers for her son, John. In her final letter to him, she requested that 'angels guard thee'.[55] Faith and romantic love were often inseparable in nostalgic recollections. Former Anglican altar boy Albert Hake, who recalled his church wedding in one letter, often requested God's blessings and protection for his wife and revealed in his letters that he prayed for her as well as himself.[56] Anglican Ted Every included in his wartime log book the words of Dorothy Gurney's marriage hymn, 'Oh perfect love, all human thought transcending' (sung at his June 1940 marriage), in which the couple 'kneel in prayer before thy [God's] throne', as well as extracts from a prayer by Reverend Thompson.[57]

Traditional religion was not the only way prisoners exhibited a spiritual sensibility. Guy Grey-Smith believed there was 'something spiritual about flying … You are alone in the sky, and you face your problems alone'.[58] While Grey-Smith acknowledged the transcendence of flight, he also demonstrated a traditional recognition of God, his blessings, and the expectation that he should give thanks in a prayer-like manner: 'God has been so good to me in giving me Helen as a wife. I beg of God that I may always

---

[53] Green FA: Eva Green, letters to Errol Green 31 May 1942, 18 November and undated letter received 14 May 1943.
[54] Green FA: Eva Green, letter to Errol Green 9 December 1942. Eva died on 3 January 1943 of brain haemorrhage.
[55] Williams, *A True Story of the Great Escape*, pp. 4, 6.
[56] Preen FA: photograph, young Albert Hake, altar boy; Albert Hake, letters to Noela Hake, 15 April 1942; 30 June 1942; 24 August 1942; 4 June 1943; 28 July 1943; 25 December 1943.
[57] AWM PRMF0039: Every, wartime log book, pp. 8, 21.
[58] Hetherington, *Australian Painters*, p. 149.

appreciate the love that so dear a woman has borne to me'.[59] Two decades later, Grey-Smith asserted that captivity was the starting point of his reflection on Christianity and spirituality.[60] He read extensively in the camps, including *Memory Hold-the-Door* by religious philosopher and author John Buchan, and *The Screwtape Letters* by Christian convert and lay theologian C.S. Lewis. He copied inspirational passages such as Buchan's '[only] nature gives us that material joy of life', as well as others which emphasised to him a sense of the divine, particularly in art. Through this, Grey-Smith gained a deep appreciation of God-in-nature.[61] Inspired by his wife, Helen, a designer who sent him art books and supplies, Grey-Smith took up drawing and painting during his imprisonment and his spiritual sensibility infused his later artworks.[62]

Even some of the less devout maintained connections to religious traditions. Alex Kerr admitted that he 'had never been much of a churchgoer'. Yet, as he struggled with pain after he had been shot down and wounded, and sure he 'had not very much longer to live', Kerr 'attempted to say the Lord's Prayer'.[63] The letters of Justin O'Byrne, who was raised and schooled as a Catholic, indicate that he only attended mass on special occasions, yet he prayed for the day he and his family would be reunited. He was also a member of the choir rehearsing Handel's *Messiah*.[64] In a late-life interview, Graham Berry, who identified as Methodist, revealed that he believed God had been

[59] AWM PR05675: Grey-Smith, diary, 19 July 1941.
[60] Hetherington, *Australian Painters*, p. 149.
[61] Gaynor, *Guy Grey-Smith*, p. 2.
[62] Gaynor, *Guy Grey-Smith*, pp. 14–15.
[63] Kerr, *Shot Down*, p. 51.
[64] NAA A9300: O'Byrne, Justin Hilary, 408022; O'Byrne FA: Justin O'Byrne, letter to family, 10 January 1943, 6 February 1944.

looking after him during operational service and captivity. While his faith was both a strength and a comfort, he did not always attend church in camp—it was optional—but 'I went several times, even just to sing the hymns'.[65] At least one Australian airman converted during captivity. Although 'reared in the Church of England', an infrequent church goer, and bigoted against Catholics in his youth, *Oliver Henderson's* dramatic conversion to Catholicism may have offered solace as, after the war, he was anxious for his family to accept his new faith. While they did not actively discourage it, however, they failed to understand his radical turnabout. Indeed, his mother thought he must have been 'a bit mad'. By 1950, in the wake of escalating psychological disturbance arising from captivity and lack of genuine familial support, he abandoned his faith.[66]

There were times when prisoners participated in spiritual-based rituals and secular occasions which either derived from or appropriated religious form. Religious and secular interests coincided on 9 August 1942 when the kriegies of East and Centre Compound held a joint prayer service to mirror Britain's National Day of Prayer.[67] According to Calton Younger, the motivation for the occasion was less about prayer and more about a demonstration to the Germans who had been 'inclined to belittle our discipline', that 'we could impose discipline upon ourselves when we chose'. Accordingly, '[s]haven and shining, with boots gleaming and caps at correct angle, with uniforms brushed, and ties set neatly' they proved their high

[65] Alexander records: Berry, interview 7 June 2016.
[66] DVA QMX034497-02: report from medical social worker, 3 November 1950.
[67] A number of national days of prayer were held during the war, reflecting the importance of religion in bolstering public morale. This one was held on 3 September 1942, the anniversary of the beginning of the war.

degree of discipline and air force pride in both personal appearance and perfect marching. Despite the secular rationale, some appreciated the affective and nostalgic dimensions of the event. Younger found the service 'moving'.[68] Alex Kerr recalled it as 'impressive and strongly reminiscent of Anzac Day gatherings in Australia'.[69]

Anzac Day was closely linked to religious ceremony.[70] It had become virtually a 'secular requiem'—a ceremony for the repose of the souls of the dead.[71] Airmen on operational stations remembered the fallen on Anzac Day, as did Stalag Luft III's kriegies. Those ceremonies represented more to Justin O'Byrne than just commemoration and sport, which was often held after the remembrance service. In letters written after the 1942 and 1943 ceremonies, O'Byrne linked his account of Anzac Day with nostalgic thoughts of family. Homesickness was obvious but the juxtaposition suggests he drew comfort from the camaraderie of the communal observances—sport and a 'sing song of all the old songs'—as well as the reminder of the shared faith and religious traditions—the Catholic mass—that bound his family.[72] Anzac Day 1944 in North Compound combined religious form with a secular interpretation. It also provided a means by which the airmen could demonstrate their emotions: grief, defiance, and air force pride. Falling shortly after they heard about the deaths of the fifty killed in the post-Great Escape reprisals, the Australian

---

[68] Younger, *No Flight From the Cage*, p. 74.
[69] Kerr, *Shot Down*, p. 124.
[70] Inglis, (assisted by Brazier), *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape*, pp. 109–110, 240.
[71] Quote: Moses, 'The Nation's Secular Requiem', in Frame, (ed.), *Anzac Day Then & Now*; Gladwin, 'Anzac Day's Religious Custodians', in Frame, (ed.), *Anzac Day Then & Now*, pp. 90–96.
[72] O'Byrne FA: Justin O'Byrne, letters to family, undated [post-25 April 1942] and 27 April 1943. Quote: post-25 April 1942 letter.

airmen gathered for group photographs. Wearing full air force uniform, the photograph declared more than national and service solidarity. Taken on the day of Australia's most significant commemoration of the war dead, it presented a visual record of collective grief—the men had donned black mourning patches on their sleeves. The portrait also signalled group defiance at the murders of fellow airmen who they considered to have been fulfilling their duty to escape. They publicly declared that they were both *air men* and men of emotions.

Christmas is one of the central religious festivals in Christian liturgical calendars. It is firmly entrenched in western Christian-influenced societies and is at the heart of family life. Christmas is, for some, a hybrid religious and social festival where the values of Christian 'tolerance, charity and togetherness' are celebrated as much as (if not more) than the birth of Christ.[73] Social rituals generally brought comfort and much-welcome reinforcement of the strong fraternal bonds of captivity. So too did those associated with Christmas, which, regardless of their degree of faith, reminded the prisoners of home and shared family traditions.[74] Some men saved Christmas-related material culture, emphasising their lingering emotional connection to special services and seasonal conviviality. The airmen sent Christmas cards to loved ones.[75] Bill Fordyce created annual Christmas menus for his friends.[76] James McCleery recorded Christmas recipes, kept his 1944 Christmas menu—'What a bash'—and pasted into his wartime log book an article entitled

[73] Johnes, *Christmas and the British*, pp. 114–115.
[74] Rosenthal and Marshall, 'Generational Transmission of Family Ritual', pp. 669, 672.
[75] Those who sent Christmas cards included Tom Leigh, Charles Fry, Justin O'Byrne, George Archer, and Albert Hake.
[76] Fordyce FA: Fordyce, wartime log book, pp. 77, 79, 81, 83.

'Christmas Thoughts', which included musings on the 'eternal truth of God'.[77] The kriegies revelled in the emotion and festivity of the occasion. Carol services and concert programmes such as Handel's *Messiah* and their own version of King's College, Cambridge's Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols were also popular.[78] Church services held in each compound were well-attended by devout and once-a-year Christians alike. After participating in 'a very nice Carol Service' on Christmas Eve 1942, one group of friends 'drank our "home brew raisin wine", just enough to get pleasantly mellow'. 'Communion on Xmas morning' was followed by 'a good breakfast—porridge, sausages, coffee, toast and marmalade'. A hearty Christmas dinner was followed by a lie down, a supper buffet, some restorative ales and an evening visiting friends in other rooms, and entertaining visitors to theirs.[79] Keith Carmody's experience of his first and only Christmas in captivity offered a means to distract himself from depression after his June 1944 capture. Suffering mood swings which saw him spend much time in his bunk, the forthcoming festivity was a genuine mood lifter. Enthused by the arrival of a Red Cross parcel, Carmody stayed up most of the night making '4 dozen cookies and two cakes'.[80]

---

[77] AWM PR88/160: McCleery, wartime log book, pp. 70–71. The Christmas No. of *O.K. (The Oversea Kid)*, an English language German illustrated weekly, (*O.K.*, 24 December 1944) is on p. 72.
[78] Arnel archive: Arnel, letter to Margery Gray, [undated c. Christmas 1944]; Arnel archive: Train, 'A Barbed-Wire World', 26 November 1942, p. 36; Archer FA: Archer, letter to family, 22 December 1942; Netherway FA: Len Netherway, letter to Robert Netherway, 23 December 1944; Alexander records: Mike Netherway, email 6 July 2015; O'Byrne FA: Justin O'Byrne, letter to family, 6 February 1944; AAWFA: Kerr 1489, 3 March 2004; Falkenmire, 'Diary Extracts—Stalagluft III', 24 December 1943, in King, *War Gave Us Wings*, p. 115.
[79] All quotes: NLA FERG/4550: *P.O.W.*, No. 16, 15 May 1943, unattributed letter, 31 December 1942, p. 14.
[80] Barker, *Keith Carmody*, p. 62.

Even where there is no evidence of men professing religious faith, festive celebrations afforded some an opportunity to reconnect with their religious roots. Indeed, testimony that seasonal services were packed and Christian festivals heartily enjoyed suggests that a significant proportion of the airmen prisoners in Stalag Luft III drew some degree of comfort and meaning from religious practice and tradition, as well as the more secular social rituals deriving from them. But Christian fellowship, conviviality, and comradely emotion also evoked wistful reminders of home, loved ones, and Christmases past. 'On Xmas eve we held special church services and sang again the old carols', Alec Arnel wrote to his sweetheart, Margery. 'Our minds wandered far away and nostalgia caused this Xmas to be the quietest most reflective I have ever known. Midnight found me thinking again of that other time four years ago.'[81]

Kriegie altruism

Altruism can be seen as articulating the Biblical commandment to love one's neighbour as oneself, as well as Christ's entreaty in the Sermon on the Mount to 'do to others what you would have them do to you'.[82] It is not, however, their equivalent. When religious scholar William Scott Green defined altruism as 'intentional action intended ultimately for the welfare of others that entails at least the possibility of either no benefit or loss to the actor', specialists in world religions and philosophical systems rejected it. Those who follow the religious commandments hope for the promise of eternal life

[81] Arnel archive: Arnel, letter to Margery Gray, [undated c. Christmas 1944, Stawell postmark 23 April 1945].
[82] Matthew 22: 35–40; Matthew 7: 12.

in the presence of God. With altruism, however, there is the possibility of no reward. Green's definition, therefore, did not fit any of the specialists' creeds.[83] Even so, there is (and was) a perception that altruism is a 'distinctively religious value', a 'Christian principle', and that Christian Altruism exists.[84]

Mirroring the organisation of a standard RAF station, Stalag Luft III's administrative structures benefited 'the community'.[85] Although established on capitalist principles, Foodacco, the camp trading mart, was an example of economic social welfare.[86] As recorded by Ron Mackenzie, the communal good, to a certain extent, was also recognised by the escape and security organisations.[87] So too were the rules implemented by each room crew and hut to ensure harmonious living arrangements. Altruistic impulses arose from the strong fraternal ties developed within the prisoner of war camp. Stalag Luft III's approach to charity and social welfare also arose from devout religious practice and the diffused Christianity which permeated air force culture as well as British and Australian society. That Australians so readily participated in camp-based altruism is also a reflection of what Janet McCalman considers 'the most powerful and morally significant social ethic' of their generation, 'to serve and live for others'.[88]

---

[83] Wilson, *Does Altruism Exist?*, pp. 82–84.
[84] 'religious value': Wilson, *Does Altruism Exist?*, p. 54; 'Christian principle': 'The Christ-Dynamic', *The Brisbane Courier*, 17 October 1932, p. 8; Christian Altruism: 'Christian Altruism', *The Chronic*le (Adelaide), 22 July 1899, p. 37; 'The World's Greatest Influence', *The Northern Standard* (Darwin), 3 October 1930, p. 2; 'Days of Remembrance', *The Queensland Times* (Ipswich), 27 January 1940, p. 6.
[85] AAWFA: Righetti 0984, 16 September 2003.
[86] Radford, 'The Economic Organisation of a P.O.W. Camp', pp. 189–201. 'The Inside Story of "Foodacco"' in 'Scangriff', (Winston, ed.), *Spotlight on Stalag Luft III*, pp. 29–36.
[87] Mackenzie, *An Ordinary War 1940–1945*, p. 43.
[88] McCalman, *Journeyings*, p. 108.

Social welfare was an intrinsic part of life in Stalag Luft III. After an influx of new prisoners created a strain on medical resources, '[s]omebody [took] up a collection of white shirts for the wounded to sleep in while in hospital'.[89] 'Older inhabitants' shared cigarettes, clothing, and rations with newcomers.[90] All books coming into camp were appropriated by the library. Recipients had first call on them but could not keep them: they were for general circulation.[91] Airmen scrupulously divided rations and Red Cross parcels. Later, those who had been evacuated to Stalag III-A, Luckenwalde shared scarce parcels with 'sick Russians' and men from a nearby camp who were worse off.[92] Deductions from RAF pay went into a communal fund to purchase musical instruments, sports kit, and items from the camp canteen. Some money was diverted to the 'X' organisation to bribe guards. While imprisoned officers received an allowance in *Reichsmark* from the Germans, non-commissioned officer airmen did not. Accordingly, every officer's pay was levied to provide funds for the non-commissioned officers in Centre Compound and other camps, as well as those employed as orderlies in order to, as Tony Gordon put it, 'ameliorate the lot of the NCO's Camps'.[93] Those who had been in Italian camps had also considered the welfare of non-commissioned officers. Albert 'Mort' Edwards reported that at PG 78, Sulmona, the Italians always gave the officers 'preferential treatment'. As the

---

[89] NLA FERG/4550: *P.O.W.*, No. 37, 15 February 1945, unattributed, undated letter, p. 12.
[90] Arthur Tebbutt, letter to family, quoted in 'Life in German Prison Camp', *The Scone Advocate*, 18 September 1942, p. 4.
[91] Osborn, *Circuits and Bumps*, p. 286.
[92] Todd FA: Ken Todd, wartime log book, p. 92; Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'The Complete Tour', Lumsden, letter 10 June 1988; 3 Squadron RAAFA: 'Tom Wood Diary', p. 32; Rae, *Kiwi Spitfire Ace*, p. 129; James, *Moonless Night*, p. 29.
[93] NAUK AIR 40/269: Stalag Luft III reports and nominal roll, Stalag Luft III Communal Fund. Quote: AWM 54 779/3/129: 11 PDRC post-liberation debrief, Gordon.

conditions in the NCO compound were 'very poor indeed', the officers 'helped as best we could by donations to their canteen, gifts of cigarettes etc'.[94] Non-commissioned officers did not just receive charitable largesse, they gave as well. Under the Geneva Convention, NCOs were not obliged to carry out physical labour. Adrian Condon, however, volunteered for the Stalag Luft III work parties to clear the ground before construction began on North Compound. All 'money earned was put in the Camp Welfare Fund'.[95]

Their charity extended beyond barbed wire. Funds were allocated to the wives and relatives of foreign nationals living on the continent. Many of the fifty who were killed in the post-Great Escape reprisals were married; some had paid allotments to their mothers or wives. Recognising that the deceased airmen's next of kin might need financial assistance, the Senior British Officer opened a fund to which North Compound personnel each subscribed an average of £5. Following established air force custom in the wake of a death in service, a 'committee of adjustment' was formed to gather the men's personal effects which were then auctioned off. As Laurie Simpson reported, '[s]ome of the camp leading lights were invited to act as "guest auctioneers"'. Despite the reason for the event, 'the whole thing was carried out … in a very light hearted spirit'. Given the 'charitable nature' of the auction, the 'bidding was generally very high, some prices being fantastic' with many of the men deliberately placing high bids. As a result, 'a substantial sum was acquired

[94] AWM 54 779/3/126 part 1: POW statement, Edwards, 'Conditions in Italian Pow Camps and en route to Germany', 31 July 1945.
[95] AWM 54 779/3/129: 11 PDRC post-liberation debrief, Adrian Condon.

for distribution to the next-of-kin'.[96] Noela Hake, the wife of Albert Hake, received two payments totalling £283. 4. 11d.[97] After the war, as a memorial to '[t]hose who escaped but did not return', profits of £450 from the ex-prisoner produced book, *Spotlight on Stalag Luft III*, were donated to the RAF Benevolent fund.[98]

Not all personal possessions were auctioned and two examples further illustrate the extent of the kriegies' charitable and altruistic impulses. Personal parcels arriving after the men's deaths were considered communal property and divided up 'in accordance with a scheme adopted'. Vivian Kelly, 'one of the few who have suffered a particular dearth of clothes', benefited from the last parcel sent by Reg Kierath's mother. Despite the charitable efforts of his friends in camp who shared what clothing they could spare, Kelly 'was beginning to feel very much in need'. He was touchingly grateful to Ada Kierath: 'I may tell you that the contents were never more welcome because it has been over two years since any clothing parcel had come my way'.[99] Before exiting the escape tunnel, George Wiley had charged Alan Righetti with returning his wristwatch and personal photos to his family in Canada if anything happened to him. After liberation, Righetti displayed 'an intimate chivalry' by taking the long way home via America and Canada to

---

[96] AWM 54 779/3/126 part 1: POW statement, Simpson, 'Events and Organisations at Stalag Luft III', 31 July 1945; NAUK AIR 40/269: Stalag Luft III reports and nominal roll, Stalag Luft III Communal Fund.

[97] Preen FA: W.E. Mann, Area Finance Officer, Department of Air, letters 18 October 1945 and undated (after 18 October 1945), to Noela Hake. This equates, in 2019, to $20,740. Reserve Bank of Australia, Pre-Decimal Inflation Calculator.

[98] 'Scangriff', (Winston, ed.), *Spotlight on Stalag Luft III*; 'Echo of German Horror Camp', *The Falkirk Herald* (Scotland), 8 January 1947, p. 4. This equates, in 2019, to $32,950. Reserve Bank of Australia, Pre-Decimal Inflation Calculator.

[99] Kierath FA: Flight Lieutenant Vivian B. Kelly, POW 113, letter to Ada Kierath, 3 September 1944.

fulfil his promise.[100] 'That was a very hard thing to do', recalled Righetti. Wiley's mother and sister had 'switched off thinking he was safe in prison camp, so relieved to hear that he was safe in prison camp, only then to have the news that he was murdered'.[101]

Composing death

'Ritualised emotional expression' has long been a facet of public grieving.[102] Kate Ariotti notes that enacting traditional Christian funeral rites provided prisoners of the Ottomans with a means of coping with the deaths of their fellows.[103] Stalag Luft III's airmen, many of whom felt 'deep personal loss', also made sense of the deaths of the fifty men who were killed in the Great Escape reprisals.[104] They did so by composing death through faith and religious sensibility. Rather than drawing on a Christian ethos in his poetry, Max Dunn's 'To the Fifty' (written on 10 April 1944, days after the announcement that the escapers had been 'shot in cold-blood') wished 'Such gallant men / As were our comrades … "Happy Landings" without cease / In Warrior's Hall [Valhalla]: / With our comrades'.[105] ('Happy Landings' is a traditional aviation salutation/sign off wishing the traveller a safe arrival.) Christian iconography and religious practice, however, dominated. After the names of the dead were announced, a memorial parade was held in North Compound and, recalled Justin O'Byrne, the men 'went into mourning'. Following established grieving tradition, '[e]very prisoner wore a black

[100] Alexander, 'Australian Knights of the Air and their Little Touches of Chivalry', p. 12.
[101] AAWFA: Righetti 0984, 16 September 2003.
[102] Davidson and Damousi in 'Introduction', Davidson and Damousi, (eds), *A Cultural History of the Emotions. Volume 6. In the Modern and Post-Modern Age*, p. 2.
[103] Ariotti, *Captive Anzacs*, p. 70.
[104] Arnel archive: Harvey, 'Over, Down and Out', p. 23.
[105] Dunn, *Poems of Norman Maxwell Dunn*, 'To the Fifty', p. 20.

diamond of mourning on his sleeve for the remainder of our term in prison', including on Anzac Day ten days later, when photographs were taken of the men wearing their black patches.[106] Others such as Earle Nelson and John Rydings recorded details of the December 1944 memorial service in their wartime log books.[107] Some marked the pages, drawings, photographs, and nominal rolls with a cross, the traditional symbol denoting the dead as well as a 'pre-eminent symbol of the Christian faith'. It represented suffering humanity, sacrifice, and 'the redemption of mankind through the death of Christ'.[108] Accordingly, the airmen's repeated use of the cross in their records suggests more than just grief. It indicates that the airmen had composed the deaths of the fifty as a Christian sacrifice. Clinging to these 'ideals of sacrifice' allowed the men a religious, cultural, and traditional 'formula' to both express and assuage their grief.[109]

Graves and memorials are some of the 'most enduring material symbols of emotion'.[110] They provide a tangible connection between the dead and living, a focus for grief, a trigger for remembrance, and a place of pilgrimage. They allow the grieving to keep faith with the death.[111] Just as many Great War memorials in Britain and Australia had been voluntarily built by families and communities, North Compound's air force family kept faith with their

---

[106] O'Byrne FA: O'Byrne, '*Mercury* Radio Roundsman'. See also Arnel archive: Train, 'A Barbed-Wire World', 6, 15 April 1944, pp. 51–52; Bryce FA: 'Jock Bryce's POW Diary 1942–1945', p. 170. This is in accordance with RAF mourning practice which stipulated black crepe armbands. *The King's Regulations*, p. 63. For mourning ritual, refer Sichel, *History of Men's Costume*, p. 62.
[107] Nelson, *If Winter Comes*, p. 69; Simpson RC: Rydings, wartime log book, p. 45 (artist signature unclear).
[108] Quotes: Metford, *Dictionary of Christian Lore and Legend*, p. 75.
[109] 'ideals of sacrifice' from Garton, *The Cost of War*, p. 72.
[110] Matt, 'Recovering the Invisible', in Matt and Stearns, (eds), *Doing Emotions History*, pp. 50–51.
[111] Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, pp. 172–173.

dead when they erected a memorial to the fifty airmen killed in the post-Great Escape reprisals.[112]

Secular—often classical or national (patriotic)—symbolism is usually blended with Christian imagery and metaphor in military memorials. As Stephen Garton notes, the 'melding of these two representative traditions' creates 'interesting tensions'.[113] Christian iconography and inscriptions predominated in British public war memorials.[114] They ensured that the memorials were 'read' as sacred. Even those that were not obviously religious were 'imbued with sacred meaning'.[115] The prisoners' memorial also reflects a mixture of Christian and secular iconography which enables many readings and meanings. Originally referred to by the prisoners as 'The Vault' (pertaining to its crypt-like purpose of holding the ashes of the dead), the memorial resembles an altar, a pagan and Christian artefact relating to sacrifice—the sacrificial table. In conceiving this design, however, prominent Australian-born architect and theatrical designer Wemyss Wylton Todd seems to have been inspired by the ambiguous iconography of British and Australian war memorials which combined religious and secular sentiments including, most notably, Sir Edwin Lutyen's Stone of Remembrance.[116] Abstract and non-denominational, and designed to 'commemorate those of all faiths and none', the Stone of Remembrance became the centrepiece of the

---

[112] Moriarty, 'Christian Iconography and the First World War', p. 65; AWM 54 779/3/126 part 1: POW statement, Simpson, 'Events and Organisations at Stalag Luft III', 31 July 1945; O'Byrne FA: O'Byrne, '*Mercury* Radio Roundsman'; Brickhill, *The Great Escape*, p. 231; NAUK WO 208/3283: SLIII Camp History, Part III North (Officers') Compound, p. 78.
[113] Garton, *The Cost of War*, p. 35.
[114] Snape, *God and the British Soldier*, p. 42; Moriarty, 'Christian Iconography and the First World War', p. 73.
[115] Moriarty, 'Christian Iconography and the First World War', p. 70.
[116] 'Honours Victims of Hun Murders', *The Sunday Mail* (Brisbane), 14 October 1945, p. 3.

Imperial War Graves Commission's most significant cemeteries.[117] Like Lutyen's iconic design, the prisoners' memorial evokes heroic sacrifice in warfare, as do many significant British and Australian memorials.[118]

The airmen's names are engraved on three granite tablets. (Three is one of the mystical numbers of Christian theology, referring to the Trinity and the three days in which Christ's body lay in the tomb after his crucifixion: a Christian sacrifice.[119]) Underneath is the inscription, 'In memory of the officers who gave their lives. Sagan March 1944'. Reinforcing that Todd and his fellows composed the deaths of the fifty as sacrifices, the names are divided into six columns by crosses which recall Sir Reginald Blomfield's Cross of Sacrifice. Featuring in Imperial War Graves Commission cemeteries, Blomfield's cross, encompassing a battle broadsword, emphasises both the military service and religious backgrounds of the majority of the dead. It signals that their deaths were seen as sacrifices.[120] The 'abstract, chivalric form' of the cross, as Jay Winter terms it—referring to the broadsword's links to medieval knights and their code of chivalry—has deeper resonance for members of an air force which aspired to chivalrous values at heart, if not on operations.[121] Todd's design included an eagle, which was mounted below the inscription. While significant in Christian lore representing in some instances Christ, an eagle with spreading wings is also evocative for airmen, symbolising both the 'brotherhood of airmen' and their

---

[117] Longworth, *The Unending Vigil*, pp. 36–37. Quote: <https://www.cwgc.org/learn/horticulture-and-works/architecture>.
[118] Inglis, 'The Anzac Tradition', pp. 42–43; Moriarty, 'Christian Iconography and the First World War', pp. 72–73.
[119] Metford, *Dictionary of Christian Lore and Legend*, pp. 183, 243.
[120] Longworth, *The Unending Vigil*, p. 36.
[121] Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*, p. 92; Alexander, 'Australian Knights of the Air and their Little Touches of Chivalry', pp. 4–14.

wings insignia.[122] Reinforcing the religious iconography, the memorial was located in the nearby cemetery where other prisoners had been buried in holy ground—in a sacred place of rest.[123] There, fifty urns containing the ashes of the dead were interred in December 1944. In accordance with RAF mourning custom, a service funeral was held. Thirty prisoners along with members of the Swiss Legation attended. The airmen laid wreathes, and the Catholic and Protestant chaplains said prayers and blessed the monument and ashes.[124]

The familiar Christian and air force iconography of the memorial gave the airmen 'an accessible and palliative language' at the time, and after the war.[125] Some recorded details in their wartime log books. Before he returned to Australia, Albert Comber produced for the Australian War Memorial's collection three pen, ink, and wash drawings of the memorial's construction and Sydney 'Syd' Wickham included a copy of one in his memoir.[126] By drawing on traditional religious iconography to mourn their dead; helping to erect a memorial monument to the 'gallant men who gave up their lives'; and placing the dead airmen's deaths within the tradition of Christian sacrifice, the prisoners' memorial became for them a tangible symbol of sacrifice which, like the Great War monuments, provided a focus for grief.[127] It enabled the airmen to actively and emotively make sense of the deaths in

---

[122] Metford, *Dictionary of Christian Lore and Legend*, p. 88.
[123] Moriarty, 'Christian Iconography and the First World War', p. 65.
[124] Cousens (ed.), *The Log*, p. 104; 'Grim Mystery of a Prison Camp', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 April 1945, p. 8.
[125] Moriarty, 'Christian Iconography and the First World War', p. 74.
[126] Wickham, *We Wore Blue*, p. 189; AWM ART34781.22: Comber, drawing 'Monument to the 50 officers who were shot', 1945.
[127] Quote: O'Byrne FA: O'Byrne, '*Mercury* Radio Roundsman'.

conflict, and, in the words of art and design historian Catherine Moriarty, 'helped sanctify the profanity of mass death'.[128]

The airmen also composed meaning from a senseless act: the fifty had died in service, fulfilling their duties as active *air men*, as outlined in *Air Publication 1548*. Accordingly, in recalling brave men of action felled in the course of duty, the survivors—many of whom had participated in the preparations, if not in the actual escape itself—were also, by association, brave men of action fulfilling their own legitimate air force duty. A narrative of Christian sacrifice and air force duty, perhaps, also abrogated any sense of guilt the survivors may have felt in participating in the escape work which had led to the deaths of their comrades.

Challenges to faith

Bruce Lumsden's faith strengthened as he cultivated a spiritual life within captivity. He prayed, joined a prayer group, and treasured a hymnal that a fellow worshipper gave him. His religious practice enabled him to manage the effects of incarceration.[129] Not all men, however, enjoyed a deep, sustaining, comforting faith to support them throughout the trials of combat and captivity. While Alec Arnel continued to outwardly practise the faith of his youth throughout service life and captivity, and drew comfort from it during interrogation, he felt alienated from God.[130] Because he had enlisted in the air force despite his Christian-based pacifism, he believed he was not worthy of God's love and compassion. Arnel's correspondence with his

[128] Moriarty, 'Christian Iconography and the First World War', p. 73.
[129] Alexander records: Jaime Bradbeer, email 9 September 2016.
[130] Alexander records: Arnel, interviews, 9 October 2014 and 29 October 2015.

sweetheart Margery, however, reveals little of this. In writing of a continuing religious practice, it seems he was assuring her of his faith as much as denying to himself the extent of his crisis. It was only in hindsight, as he grappled to regain his relationship with God after the war, that he fully comprehended the magnitude of his spiritual struggle.[131] (Arnel's crisis of faith is discussed further in chapter eleven.)

Alex Kerr more readily accepted his religious doubts. Although he did not regularly attend church services, he still believed in God.[132] As the years of captivity passed, he grew dissatisfied with orthodox Christianity. His tenuous hold on faith grew weaker. He decided to put religion 'on trial for a year or so' before giving up on it totally. Finally, he gave the chaplain 'a chance to defend his faith' to someone who was approaching disbelief. That defence of Christian tenets was 'not very spirited', and, at the conclusion of the interview, Kerr was left only with 'the padre's recommendation to follow whatever creed appealed to me'.[133] After five months as a prisoner of war, Harry Train's faith was tested. Although he still attended church, he 'did not derive much comfort from the service I am afraid'. For some time he had felt 'very much a hypocrite in Church these days. Modern war and the part we play in it is hard to reconcile with the Christian spirit and since leaving Canada [where he trained] I have seen many "trespasses" impossible for me to forget or forgive in my heart'. Unlike Kerr, Train appears not to have sought counsel. Nor does his diary indicate any resurgence of faith.[134] Paul

[131] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 2 March 2017.
[132] Kerr, *Shot Down*, p. 51.
[133] Kerr, *Shot Down*, p. 162.
[134] Arnel archive: Train, 'A Barbed-Wire World', 18, 25 October 1942, pp. 31, 32.

Brickhill's faith waxed and waned over a lifetime. He had attended church as a boy and, while he told the German clerk he was an Anglican when his personal details were recorded on arriving at Stalag Luft III, he had already lost his faith in the wake of terrible events witnessed at war. He moved from atheism to agnosticism during captivity. In later life he embraced a form of non-Christian spirituality when he turned to a higher power during times of financial, marital, and psychological crises.[135]

Eric Johnston faced great challenges. Nominally an Anglican, he was not an overly religious person. Indeed, Johnston's wife Evelyn recalled that he was inclined to lay an each way bet on God's existence.[136] After he was betrayed to the *Gestapo* and thought he would be shot, Johnston, like so many others before and after, prayed that if God released him from his dire circumstance, he would live a good life in return.[137] It seems though, that God offered little solace. Johnston's retelling of the moment at Buchenwald when he was struck by the utter hopelessness of his situation was almost a lament. 'When I got in that shower room, after we'd been stripped … and that guy got to work with those shears. Oh my God … all the other blokes outside all stripped of everything ... what the hell have we got ourselves into here.'[138] Johnston's fellow crew member Keith Mills, an Anglican, 'was praying earnestly' in the concentration camp.[139] After their release, both Johnston and

---

[135] David Langsam, 'After the Crackup', *The Age*, 1 May 1982; Dando-Collins, *The Hero Maker*, pp. 87, 315; Wilcox, 'Paul Brickhill's War of Nerves', *State Library of New South Wales Magazine*, Winter 2012, p. 31.
[136] Alexander records: Evelyn Johnston, interview 18 October 2016.
[137] MacKenzie, *Flying Against Fate*, p. 24; Alexander records: Evelyn Johnston, interview 18 October 2016.
[138] Johnston, in documentary, *Lost Airmen of Buchenwald*, 2011. Directed by Michael Dorsey.
[139] Keith Mills FA: Keith Mills, letter to Phyllis Mills, 22 July 1945; Alexander records: Jan Smith, email 26 March 2018.

Mills recorded in their wartime log books the unattributed poem, 'Meditation', where the author mourned the loss of friends in combat. 'How many more are yet to fall beneath the reeking, smoking pall of war? I hate it.' By including the poem in their log books, Mills and Johnston suggest that they identified with the poet who called out, 'Oh defend and help us, Lord, to speed [war's] end'.[140] It also suggests that they had perhaps called on God to end their suffering at the hands of the *Gestapo*. Johnston lost what little sense of religion he had, and placed his faith in the strong relationship with his fellow crew members. It was this rather than faith in God which sustained him throughout captivity.[141] Perhaps Keith Mills, too, lost his pre-war faith. His son suspects it may have been affected by his wartime experiences. Mills' daughter recalls little if any of her father's religious practice and their mother or a friend always took the children to church.[142]

Others also lost their faith in the face of such terrible circumstances. While the absence of faith for some was only temporary, others, such as Charles Lark who was brought up as a high church Anglican, never regained it.[143] He could not reconcile himself to a God who would allow the devastation of a world conflict. He put his faith in humanity.[144] By the end of the war, Cy Borsht, who had drifted from the Judaism of his childhood, had also 'experienced a complete loss of religion'. According to his daughter, he 'came back an atheist'. As with Johnston, the strong bonds of fraternity

---

[140] Burgess RC: Keith Mills, wartime log book, p. 9; Johnston FA: Johnston, wartime log book, p. 33.
[141] Alexander records: Colin Johnston, email 9 September 2016; Alexander records: Evelyn and Colin Johnston, interview 18 October 2016.
[142] Alexander records: Jan Smith, email 3 October 2019.
[143] Bennett, 'The Value of Faith to Prisoners of War', p. 29; Alexander records: Jennifer Walsh, interview 29 April 2017.
[144] Alexander records: Jennifer Walsh, interview 29 April 2017.

formed within Borsht's room crew, rather than God, supported him throughout captivity.[145]

*****

As Michael Snape and S.P. MacKenzie note, invoking a deity is a common tendency when men fear imminent death and, during the ordeal of their last operation, some airmen played both sides of the fence and uttered a desperate prayer on the off-chance there was a God.[146] Perhaps, for some of the cohort, there was an element of combat expediency in adopting an 'emergency religion'.[147] But men of faith also called on God during battle. A practising Methodist, *Simon McGrath* '[f]aced with death' as he tried to escape a plummeting, burning aircraft recalled the engulfing flames, the slip-stream, and his 'despairing call to God'.[148] They turned to God at other times, too. Psychiatrists found that 'feeling closer to God' was an important coping mechanism for prisoners of war.[149] For some, the rituals of faith, either as overt religious practice or appropriated as part of more secular celebrations, or as an aspect of the diffused Christianity which permeated air force culture and British and Australia society, helped mitigate the challenges of captivity and sustain and maintain morale. Positive religious coping—based on acceptance of God's love and care—correlates with strong mental health and emotional well-being.[150] It seems paradoxical to argue that the faithful

---

[145] Alexander records: Jennifer Long, interview 28 January 2016.
[146] Snape, *God and the British Soldier*, p. 45; MacKenzie, *Flying Against Fate*, p. 3.
[147] Snape, *God and the British Soldier*, p. 58.
[148] DVA NMX280688-01: undated personal statement, received 6 August 1993. Original emphasis.
[149] Ursano and Rundell, 'The Prisoner of War', in Jones, Sparacino, Wilcox, Rothberg, and Stokes, *War Psychiatry*, p. 436.
[150] Scrutton, in 'Religion and Spirituality', Davidson and Damousi, (eds), *A Cultural History of the Emotions. Volume 6. In the Modern and Post-Modern Age*, p. 40.

demonstrated agency given a fundamental tenet of faith is placing one's self in the hands of an omniscient and omnipresent God. However, choosing to accept help also indicates agency. By making the act of faith to believe; placing their trust in God and praying for themselves and others; actively managing their captivity through adherence to comforting religious practice; and making sense of adversity through religious sensibilities, the faithful demonstrated that, in matters of faith, they remained active agents.

Faith consoled and gave strength. So too, did romantic partners—wives, fiancées and sweethearts. The impact of captivity on the cohort's emotional and sexual lives is explored in chapter six.

Chapter Five: Images

Not all of the Australians were religious but those who were gained much from Stalag Luft III's faith community. Some treasured the symbols of their faith, like Bruce Lumsden's hymnal, and Errol Green's bible. Those who were not overly religious or who had left their faith behind, still enjoyed faith-based social occasions or contributed to the lives of the faithful. Although 'never a religious bloke', Doug Hutchinson respected those who were and made his small contribution to their worship: 'I used to go and pick these cornflowers and go and decorate the chapel with the flowers'.[1]

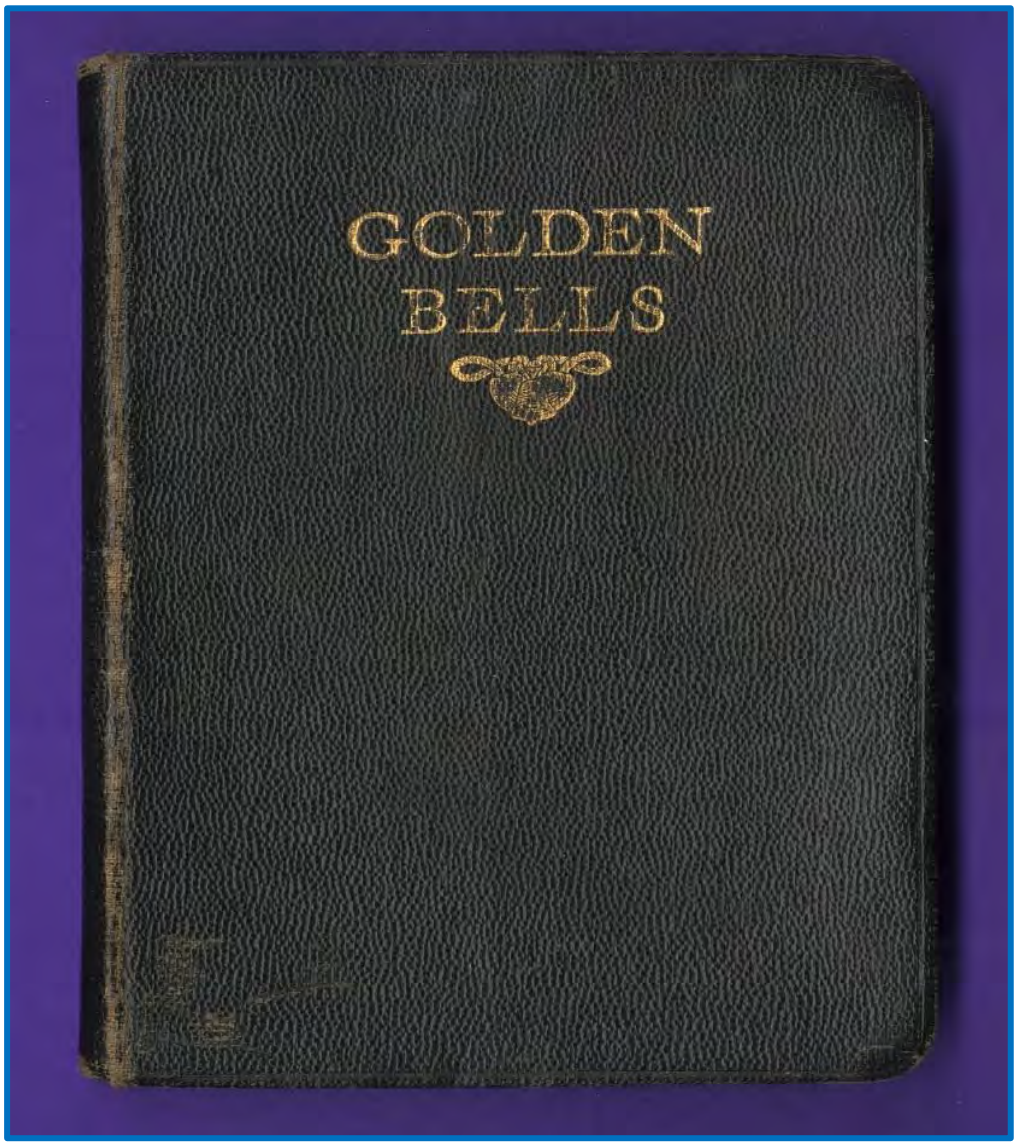


Image 57: Bruce Lumsden's *Golden Bells* hymnal, given to him in captivity and treasured throughout life. Lumsden Family Archive.

[1] AAWFA: Hutchinson 0540, 17 June, 2003

In this watercolour of a local church, painted after a parole walk from the Belaria compound, Tim Mayo presents a carefree, almost idyllic scene, yet the symbol of captivity which dominates many of his paintings—the pine trees—are clearly visible. His son believes Mayo attended church during captivity because 'his mother would have expected it!'.[1] Others gained great comfort from church services.

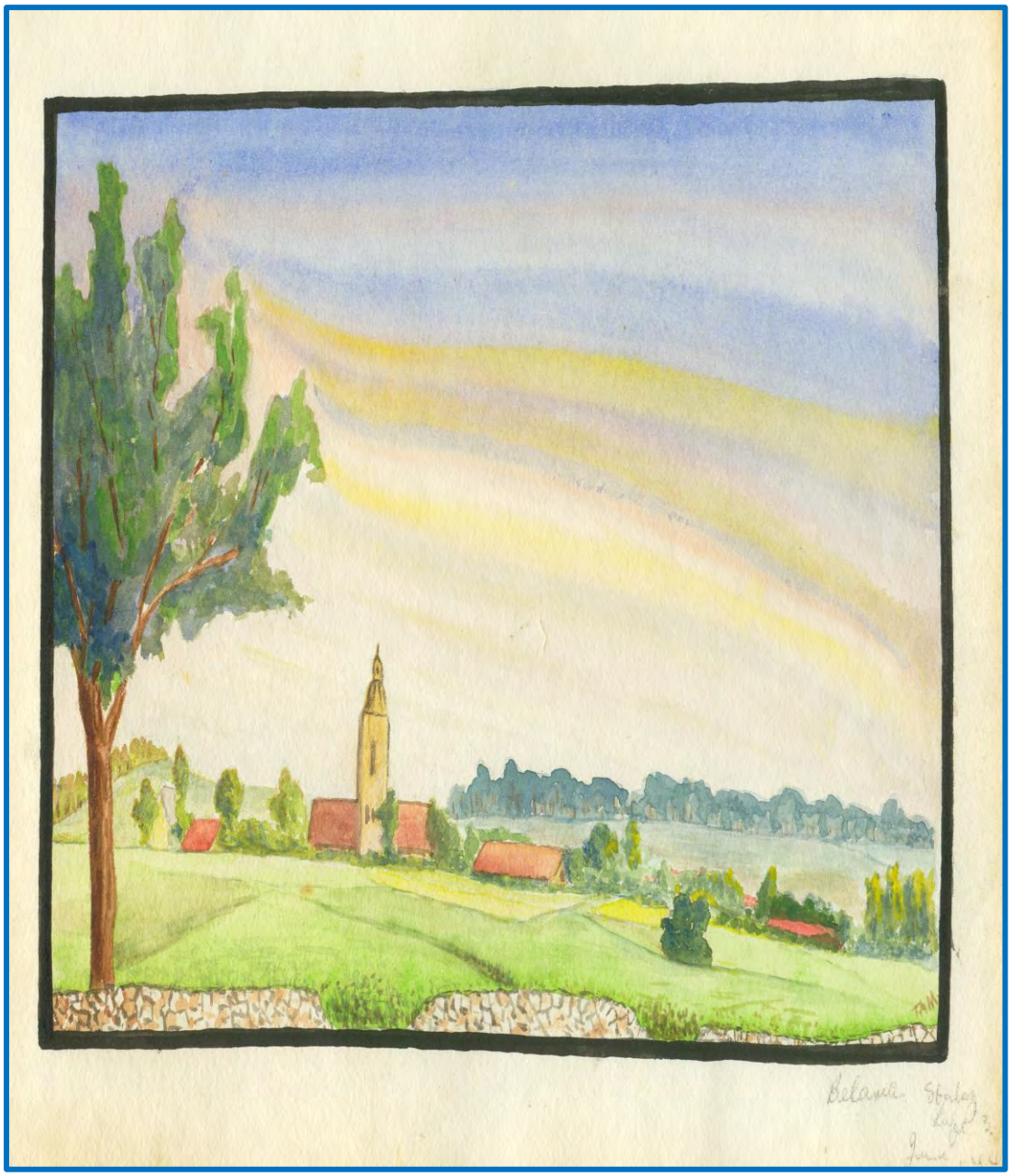
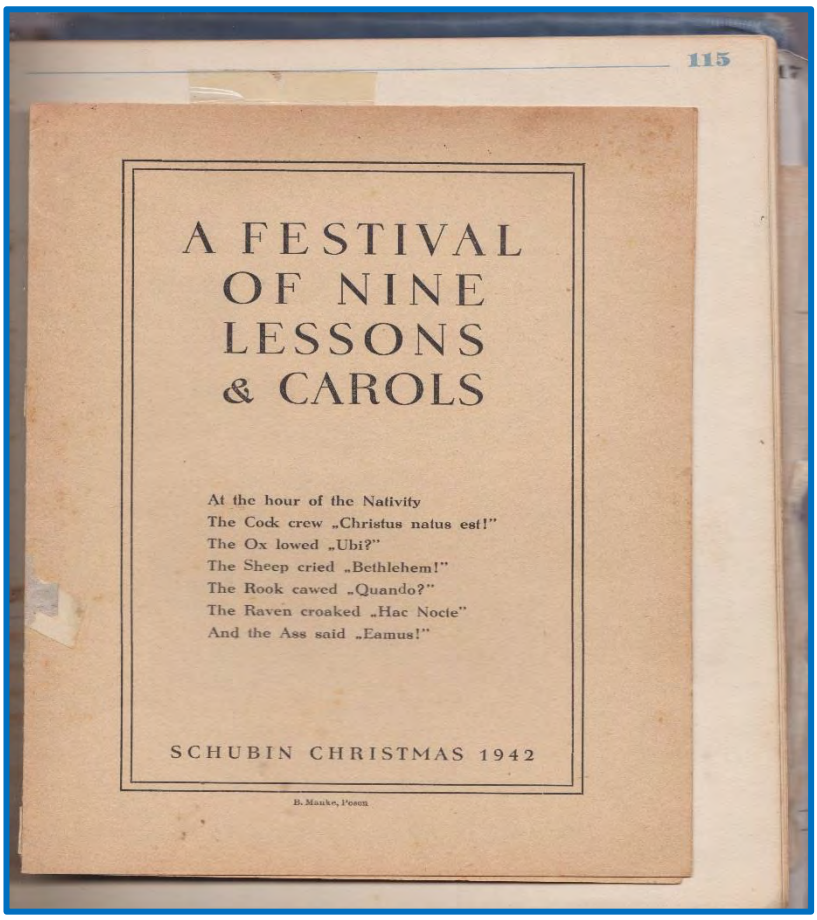


Image 58: 'Belaria, Stalag Luft 3', June 1944, watercolour by Tim Mayo. Mayo Family Archive

[1] Alexander records: Peter Mayo, email 5 May 2020.

The faithful and once-a-year worshippers alike enjoyed special Christmas services, including A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols, based on that held since 1918 at King's College Chapel. Many kept the programmes. Some, like George Archer, mounted them in their wartime log books. A similar event was conducted in Stalag Luft III in 1943.



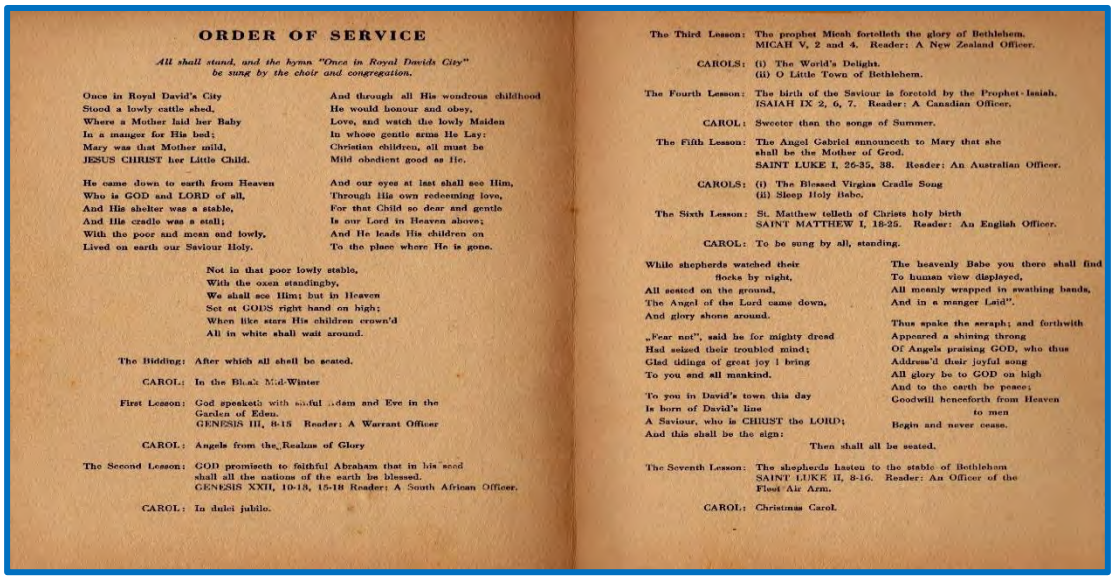
115

A FESTIVAL OF NINE LESSONS & CAROLS

At the hour of the Nativity
The Cock crew „Christus natus est!"
The Ox lowed „Ubi?"
The Sheep cried „Bethlehem!"
The Rook cawed „Quando?"
The Raven croaked „Hac Nocte"
And the Ass said „Eamus!"

SCHUBIN CHRISTMAS 1942

B. Mauke, Posen



ORDER OF SERVICE

All shall stand, and the hymn "Once in Royal David's City" be sung by the choir and congregation.

Once in Royal David's City
Stood a lowly cattle shed,
Where a Mother laid her Baby
In a manger for His bed;
Mary was that Mother mild,
JESUS CHRIST her Little Child.

He came down to earth from Heaven
Who is GOD and LORD of all,
And His shelter was a stable,
And His cradle was a stall;
With the poor and mean and lowly,
Lived on earth our Saviour Holy.

And through all His wondrous childhood
He would honour and obey,
Love, and watch the lowly Maiden
In whose gentle arms He Lay:
Christian children, all must be
Mild obedient good as He.

And our eyes at last shall see Him,
Through His own redeeming love,
For that Child so dear and gentle
Is our Lord in Heaven above;
And He leads His children on
To the place where He is gone.

Not in that poor lowly stable,
With the oxen standinghy,
We shall see Him; but in Heaven
Set at GODS right hand on high;
When like stars His children crown'd
All in white shall wait around.

The Bidding: After which all shall be seated.

CAROL: In the Bleak Mid-Winter

First Lesson: God speaketh with sinful Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.
GENESIS III, 8-15 Reader: A Warrant Officer

CAROL: Angels from the Realms of Glory

The Second Lesson: GOD promiseth to faithful Abraham that in his seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.
GENESIS XXII, 10-18, 15-18 Reader: A South African Officer.

CAROL: In dulci jubilo.

The Third Lesson: The prophet Micah fortelleth the glory of Bethlehem.
MICAH V, 2 and 4. Reader: A New Zealand Officer.

CAROLS: (i) The World's Delight.
(ii) O Little Town of Bethlehem.

The Fourth Lesson: The birth of the Saviour is foretold by the Prophet Isaiah.
ISAIAH IX 2, 6, 7. Reader: A Canadian Officer.

CAROL: Sweeter than the songs of Summer.

The Fifth Lesson: The Angel Gabriel announceth to Mary that she shall be the Mother of God.
SAINT LUKE I, 26-35, 38. Reader: An Australian Officer.

CAROLS: (i) The Blessed Virgins Cradle Song
(ii) Sleep Holy Babe.

The Sixth Lesson: St. Matthew telleth of Christs holy birth
SAINT MATTHEW I, 18-25. Reader: An English Officer.

CAROL: To be sung by all, standing.

While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground,
The Angel of the Lord came down,
And glory shone around.

„Fear not", said he for mighty dread
Had seized their troubled mind;
Glad tidings of great joy I bring
To you and all mankind.

To you in David's town this day
Is born of David's line
A Saviour, who is CHRIST the LORD;
And this shall be the sign:

The heavenly Babe you there shall find
To human view displayed,
All meanly wrapped in swathing bands,
And in a manger Laid".

Thus spake the seraph; and forthwith
Appeared a shining throng
Of Angels praising GOD, who thus
Address'd their joyful song
All glory be to GOD on high
And to the earth be peace;
Goodwill henceforth from Heaven to men
Begin and never cease.

Then shall all be seated.

The Seventh Lesson: The shepherds hasten to the stable of Bethlehem
SAINT LUKE II, 8-16. Reader: An Officer of the Fleet Air Arm.

CAROL: Christmas Carol.

Images 59–60: A Festival of Nine Lessons & Carols (cover and first two pages), mounted in George Archer's wartime log book, p. 115. Archer Family Archive.

The airmen were grief-stricken when they heard that fifty of their fellows had been killed in the post-Great Escape reprisals. They commemorated them in wartime log books as a sign of respect and in recognition of what they considered to be a Christian sacrifice. The Germans gave the airmen permission to erect a memorial to the dead, which was designed by Australian architect, Wemyss Wylton Todd.

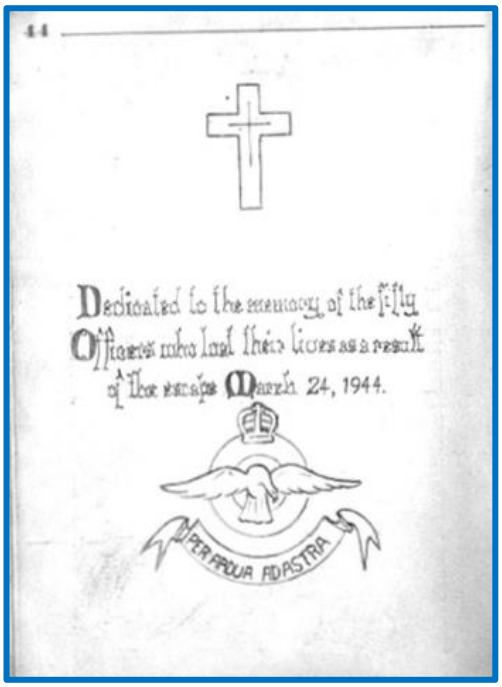


Image 61: ‘Dedicated to the memory of the Fifty Officers’, in John Rydings’ wartime log book, p. 44. Andrew R.B. Simpson research collection.

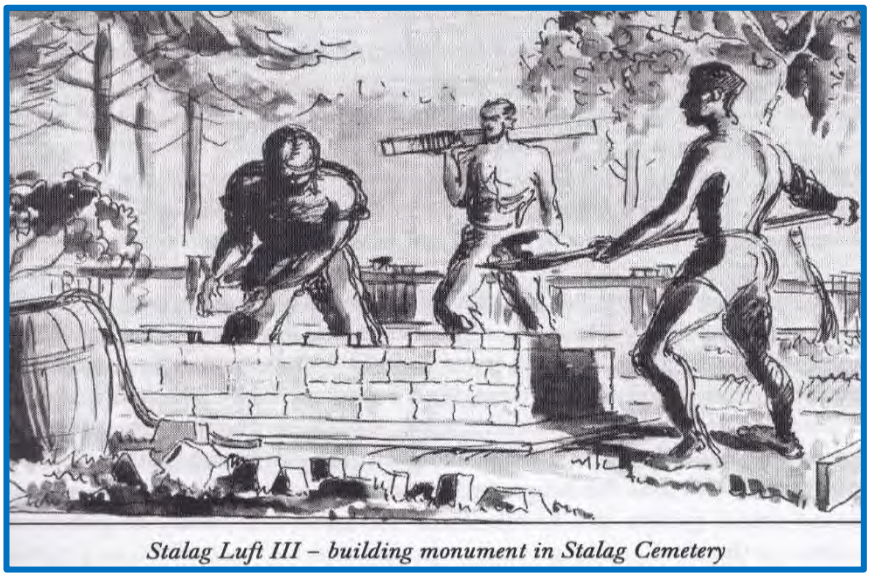


Image 62: ‘The monument in the early stages of construction’, by Albert Comber. Reproduced by Syd Wickham in his memoir, *We Wore Blue*, p, 189.

The prisoners' memorial to the fifty Great Escapers incorporates Christian and air force iconography. The altar-like monument and three crosses on the nominal panels evoke Christian sacrifice. The spread-winged eagle symbolises both the air force and the airmen's 'wings'. (The eagle was later stolen.) Many of the Australian prisoners included images of the monument in their wartime log books or memoirs.

Image 63: Detail from the prisoners' memorial, first nominal panel which includes the names of Australians James Catanach and Albert Hake. This and images 64–65 were forwarded to Noela Hake by the Department of Air's Casualty Section, in March 1947 (via Air Ministry London, who had received them from His Majesty's Air Attache at Warsaw). Preen Family Archive.

Image 64: Prisoners' memorial, c. 1947. Photograph taken after eagle emblem stolen. Preen Family Archive.

Image 65: Close-up of prisoners' memorial, taken before the eagle was stolen. Preen Family Archive.

Image 66: 'Monument to those 50 officers who were shot', by Albert Comber. Reproduced by Syd Wickham in his memoir, *We Wore Blue*, p, 189.

Chapter Six: Romantic and Sexual Strains

Captivity has often been portrayed as an asexual experience.[1] In his study of German prisoners of war in America during the Second World War, Matthias Reiss, however, successfully challenges this assumption.[2] So, too, do the experiences of the Australian airmen of Stalag Luft III. Wartime confinement created an emotional and physical absence which, for many, precluded the possibility of romantic or sexual pleasure with women. While Michael Roper establishes mothers as the primary female presence in the lives of Great War servicemen, many prisoners of war never forgot that they were sexual beings with strong emotional connections to their wives, fiancées, and sweethearts.[3] 'Being without the company of women was certainly a deprivation we all felt', recalled Alec Arnel.[4] 'Company' was not just about an absence of sex. Many men also missed the warmth of loving, supportive relationships. This chapter focuses on the airmen's affective lives in captivity. It highlights the sexual and emotional strains of separation. It considers how some airmen asserted their masculine, sexual, and martial identities by displaying misogynistic attitudes and composing what I have dubbed, a 'fit and well' composure. It argues that, by actively maintaining their place in romantic and marital relationships; imaginatively bringing women into camp; ensuring that

---

[1] Reiss notes this in *Controlling Sex in Captivity*, p. 6. See for example, Vance, 'Sexual Relations' in Vance (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Prisoners of War and Internment.* Millerton: Grey House Publishing, 2006, p. 357.
[2] Reiss, 'The Importance of Being Men', pp. 23–47; Reiss, 'Bronzed Bodies behind barbed Wire: Masculinity and the Treatment of German Prisoners of War in the United States during World War II', pp. 475–504; *Controlling Sex in Captivity*.
[3] Roper, *The Secret Battle*; Roper, 'Maternal Relations: Moral Manliness and Emotional Survival', in Dudink, Hagemann, and Tosh, (eds), *Masculinities in Politics and War*, pp. 295–315. Refer, particularly for romantic interests of airmen, Francis, *The Flyer*, p. 6.
[4] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 2 March 2017.

they were remembered by their loved ones; and exerting their masculine identities, the Australian airmen demonstrated a committed romantic and sexual agency. The results, however, are nuanced. In some cases the airmen effectively mitigated the rigours of captivity. In others, they exacerbated their situation, making confinement harder to bear.

Emotional strains

Captivity strained relationships. Men feared that they would be abandoned, forgotten, or that life would leave them behind. Letters provided an opportunity for the airmen prisoners to actively maintain their place in their pre-service lives, to, as Annette Becker argues, 'perpetuate their sense of belonging'.[5] Albert Hake constantly entreated his wife, Noela, family, and friends, to 'Remember me'.[6] Those with wives, fiancées and sweethearts dreaded that love would not survive separation. Letters mitigated apprehensions by bridging the romantic divide, enabling the airmen to articulate how much they missed their womenfolk.[7] Max Dunn wrote poems of love and yearning to his fiancée, Barbara Paton.[8] Other attached kriegies reinforced the exclusivity of their relationships by peppering missives with pet names, endearments, and frequent iterations of love. While all correspondence to prisoners of war was censored, that knowledge bound lovers together in secret recollection of their most intimate moments. 'Never forget that what I said to you before I had to come over here still stands and I

[5] Becker, 'Art, Material Life, and Disaster,' in Saunders (ed.), *Matters of Conflict*, p. 29.
[6] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letters to Noela Hake, 24 August 1942, 8 September 1942, 29 November 1942, 31 January 1943, 4 June 1943, 29 June 1943. Quote: letter 15 April 1942.
[7] Charles Fry told Beryl Smith how much he missed her on many occasions during their years of separation: Fry FA: Charles Fry, letter to Beryl Smith, 3 February 1942, 6 February 1943, 29 June 1943, 29 November 1943, 30 January 1944, and 20 June [1945].
[8] Dunn, *Poems of Norman Maxwell Dunn*, 'To Barbara', and 'Longing', pp. 9, 17.

will come back to you as soon as ever I can', Eric Johnston wrote to his sweetheart, Evelyn Charles, while still on operations.[9] 'My thoughts are much the same as your own. The answers too', Albert Hake confided to Noela.[10] Even so, it is likely that third party inspection had much to do with the fraternal and platonic tones of some lovers' letters. 'Often I feel that my letters to you', wrote Beryl Smith to Charles Fry, 'are those of a friend rather than of the girl who is to be your wife'.[11]

Not only did letters remind loved ones of enduring love, their shared nostalgia created a pathway to reunion. 'This morning I gathered a large bunch of blue cornflowers from around the compound', wrote Doug Hutchinson to his wife, Lola. 'Somehow, when I see beautiful flowers, I always connect them with you, my dear. … Do you remember how happy you were when picking flowers from our garden … Those days will come again, but till then all I have are the memories.'[12] As Annette Becker notes, letters 'crystallised' their love.[13] In Hutchinson's case they revealed perhaps one of the strongest of the 'happy' emotions: joy. This letter, written shortly after D-Day, sparkles with the 'lightning flash' of sheer, overwhelming elation, the loving passion the Hutchinsons shared, and Doug's assurance that in the wake of the allied invasion they would be together imminently.[14]

While letters ensured that romantic lives continued, Hutchinson, who wrote almost weekly to Lola before captivity, often felt constrained. 'I would

---

[9] Johnston FA: Johnston, letter to Evelyn Charles, [no date, 1944 (first page missing)].
[10] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letter to Noela Hake, 3 March 1943.
[11] Fry FA: Beryl Smith, letter to Charles Fry, 12 December 1944.
[12] Hutchinson FA: Doug Hutchinson, letter to Lola Hutchinson, 12 June 1944.
[13] Becker, 'Art, Material Life, and Disaster,' in Saunders (ed.), *Matters of Conflict*, p. 27.
[14] McMahon, 'Finding Joy in the History of Emotions', in Matt and Stearns, (eds), *Doing Emotions History*, pp. 103–119. Quote: p. 109.

give anything to write a nice long letter to you … There are many things about which I could write pages just as I used to do but they will just have to wait.'[15] Officers were only allowed three 26-lined letter forms and four 7-lined postcards per month. NCOs were given two letter and four postcard forms.[16] Accordingly, the airmen had to ration their correspondents. Charles Fry placed his fiancée and mother on an equal footing. 'I want my very limited supply of letters for you and mother and a few cards for business letters for London.'[17] Fry also expected Beryl and his mother to exchange his letters.[18] Albert Hake strictly rationed his communications with Noela. 'I have so many letters to answer that I can only afford you one a month.'[19] The airmen adopted strategies to make the most of their allocation. Ronald Baines would 'often ask people for their spare forms' so he could write to his wife, Irene, as often as possible.[20] Some saved theirs for a two or three part missive. To coincide with their third wedding anniversary, Hake wrote three letters to Noela over two days.[21] Some co-opted their womenfolk to act as their amanuenses. 'Darling, would you please write to [a former neighbour] and thank her from me', Charles Fry implored Beryl.[22] Some, like Guy Grey-Smith and Baines extended their epistolary conversation in their diaries, as if they were speaking directly to their wives.[23] Others found a less romantic but

[15] Hutchinson FA: Doug Hutchinson, letter to Lola Hutchison, 20 June 1944 (first letter).
[16] Ronald Baines, wartime log book, 1 July 1944 narrative, 'Mail', p. 14. The same allowance applied to soldiers and naval prisoners of war. Makepeace, *Captives of War*, p. 147.
[17] Fry FA: Charles Fry, letter to Beryl Smith, 3 February 1942.
[18] Fry FA: Charles Fry, letter to Beryl Smith, 23 August 1941.
[19] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letter to Noela Hake, 20 February 1943.
[20] Baines FA: Baines, wartime log book, 1 July 1944 narrative, 'Mail', p. 14.
[21] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letters to Noela Hake, 28 February 1944 (first letter) and (second letter), 1 March 1944.
[22] Fry FA: Charles Fry, letter to Beryl Smith, 3 February 1942.
[23] AWM PR05675: Grey-Smith, diary, 26 January 1942 and 26 May 1943; Baines FA: Baines, wartime log book, 24 September 1944, p. 19.

still useful solution. As James Catanach had to write to 'others in England', he asked his father, stepmother Sybil, and former nanny, Winifred Munt (Da), to let him 'include Heather' in his letters to them.[24] Regardless of how his multiple recipients felt about shared salutations and joint letters, Catanach was philosophical as he penned their names: 'Dear Dad Syb. Da and Heather. What a mouthful eh? cant [sic] be helped'.[25] We do not know how Heather reacted to sanitised, communal letters. Lola Hutchinson, however, objected to anodyne communications: 'PS Darling do write me a nice love letter, the ones I've had lately make me feel as though you are my brother or something like it anyway'.[26]

The airmen became more and more dependent on their loved ones by asking them to provide physical comforts like books, newspapers, clothes, cigarettes and chocolates. They also relied on them for emotional solace as they pleaded for more and more letters, photographs, and assurances that they were still loved and needed.[27] Consequently, their masculinity was challenged as they forfeited their place as dominant partner. 'She is going to be a wonderful wife', Ronald Baines wrote of Irene. '[T]he way she handles things, organising etc. Amazed me. I'll be perfectly content to let her look after everything.'[28]

---

[24] SOR JCC: 2013.CAT054, James Catanach, letter to 'Dad, Syb and Da', 27 September 1942. Heather Ebbott was either his girlfriend or a close female friend.
[25] SOR JCC: 2013.CAT054, James Catanach, letter to 'Dad, Syb. Da and Heather', 16 October [1942].
[26] Hutchinson FA: Lola Hutchinson, letter to Doug Hutchinson, 6 February 1944.
[27] Fry FA: Charles Fry, letter to Beryl Smith, 3 March 1942 (fiction and poetry books); Allen Mulligan, letter to his fiancée, Pam, 27 June 1941, in Rollings, *Prisoner of War*, p. 190 (medical comforts parcels). Makepeace notes the dependence of male POWs on their next of kin in relation to mail and comforts in 'Living Beyond the Barbed Wire', pp. 169–170.
[28] Baines FA: Baines, wartime log book, 1 September 1944, p. 18.

Albert Hake was one of the many who struggled to write unless in response to letters received, or questions asked.[29] Indeed, with limited legitimate subject matter, prisoner letters, regardless of the recipient, became almost formulaic or ritualised.[30] Yet emotional life in the 1930s had become increasingly more important and men and women strongly felt the need to express their emotions in public and private.[31] For men with partners, their prime purpose was to reassure wives, fiancées and sweethearts of their enduring affection.[32] Their love letters were vital artefacts of emotional communication. The airmen did their best to ensure bright, happy epistles. 'Enough of my moaning', Hutchinson declared to Lola. 'They should always be cheerful.'[33] Writers did not always succeed.[34] 'Darling I have written you an awful letter today', Guy Grey-Smith confessed. Given he used his diary both as a record of events and as an ongoing imaginary conversation with his wife, Helen, Grey-Smith was able to gain immediate absolution for his infelicity: 'now I have received two lovely letters from you darling just to prove that I am just a silly kriegie—for they are lovely letters darling & I only feel such an ungrateful person'.[35]

---

[29] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letter to Noela Hake, 29 April 1943.
[30] For ritualised and formulaic construction, refer to Lyons, 'Love Letters and Writing Practices: On *Écritures Intimes* in the Nineteenth Century', pp. 233, 235–236; Makepeace, *Captives of War*, pp. 11–13; Wilkinson, 'Diluting Displacement: Letters from Captivity', in Barkhof and Smith (eds), *War and Displacement in the Twentieth Century*, p. 74–75, 77.
[31] Davidson and Damousi in 'Introduction', Davidson and Damousi, (eds), *A Cultural History of the Emotions. Volume 6. In the Modern and Post-Modern Age*, p. 8.
[32] Wilkinson, 'Diluting Displacement', in Barkhof and Smith (eds), *War and Displacement in the Twentieth Century*, p. 74.
[33] Hutchinson FA: Doug Hutchinson, letter to Lola Hutchinson, 18 July 1943. For letters affirming and reassuring, refer: Preen FA: Albert Hake, letters to Noela Hake, letters 11 May 1942, 8 September 1942; Hutchinson FA: Doug Hutchinson, letters to Lola Hutchinson, 18 July 1943, 8 September 1943; Fry FA: Charles Fry, letters to Beryl Smith, 3 February 1942, 9 May 1942, 20 May 1942.
[34] Fry FA: Beryl Smith, letter to Charles Fry, 12 December 1944; AWM PR05675: Grey-Smith, diary, 19 October 1942; 30 June 1943.
[35] AWM PR05675: Grey-Smith, diary, 19 October 1942.

Mail directly influenced the men's sense of emotional well-being. The absence of letters was a particular trial. Some men tried to be philosophical. Others were angry. '[N]o mail, very brassed off.'[36] Others patiently looked forward to their arrival.[37] Albert Hake's forbearance, however, wore thin. 'Still waiting impatiently for your December parcel', he told Noela on 30 May 1943.[38] Hearing from loved ones was a tonic. Helen Grey-Smith's frequent missives reduced Guy's '[g]reat pangs of homesickness' and lifted his spirits.[39] Long before he was captured, Charles Fry found that regular epistolary contact with Beryl 'bucks me up considerably' particularly when he had 'a bit of the blues'.[40] A letter from his sweetheart would be, for Alec Arnel, 'the thing to fight the "blues"'.[41] Writing also cured the blues. 'Marge Darling', wrote Arnel, 'since one of my, nowadays, frequent attacks of the "blues" is threatening it is evidently time to write to you—I cannot imagine a more likely antidote'.[42]

Letters did not always bridge the divide between camp and home. Relationships suffered the effects of separation. Censorship as well as the many months spanning a 'conversation' were constant trials. (Beryl Smith recorded when she received each letter. Charles Fry's 10 August 1941 POW card from Dulag Luft was posted 28 August. She received it on 29 December 1941. A letter she wrote to Charles on 7 July 1943 was acknowledged by him in his letter of 29 November 1943, which she received on 4 March 1944.)

---

[36] Barker, *Keith Carmody*, p. 60.
[37] Kierath FA: Reg Kierath, letter to Ada Kierath, 16 August 1943.
[38] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letter to Noela Hake, 30 May 1943.
[39] AWM PR05675: Grey-Smith, diary, 24 May 1941; 12 June 1943.
[40] Letter to Beryl Smith, 14 April 1939.
[41] Phrase taken from Baines FA: Baines, wartime log book, p. 95; Arnel archive: Arnel, letter to Margery Gray, 15 September 1944.
[42] Quote: Arnel archive: Arnel, letter to Margery Gray, 15 September 1944.

Insecurity and active imaginations provided their own threats to relationships. Albert Hake 'dreamed last night you loved someone else'. He hinted at his fears of infidelity.[43] On the evening of 28 February 1944 he wrote, 'I shall sing my nightly theme song "I wonder whose [sic] kissing her now"'.[44] Despite their commitment to sustaining their union through letters, the Hutchinsons' relationship was haunted by rumour, innuendo, and misunderstandings. Hutchinson's mother alleged that Lola had been unfaithful and it seems Lola accused her husband of the same.[45] 'As to the reference to myself and women, well, if I ever said such a thing, it was just pulling your leg. Believe me, because, never, since I left home, have I taken any woman out.'[46] Over a year passed before they resolved the matter but, regardless of the basis of their complaints, neither Doug nor Lola Hutchinson held grudges; their marriage withstood the emotional challenges of captivity.[47] Partnerships which were unstable before capture—and even before embarkation—perhaps suffered more. Hugh Lambie's, Robert Condon's and Cyril Lynch's pre- and wartime marriages all failed in the immediate post-war years.

Some letters reminded of how little those who had rushed into marriage really knew each other. 'Wrote to Irene yesterday', Ronald Baines recorded, and 'asked why she has never asked me if I wanted anything or my tastes, it's

---

[43] Fears of infidelity were common between separated couples. See Damousi, *Living with the Aftermath*, p. 40.
[44] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letters to Noela Hake, 28 February 1944 (first letter) and (second letter).
[45] Robert Douglas Hutchinson, interview 19 December 2016.
[46] Hutchinson FA: Doug Hutchinson, letter to Lola Hutchinson, 5 November 1943.
[47] Lola referred to the allegations in March 1943. Doug responded on 5 November 1943. She received that letter in the week of 12 March 1944. It seems the matter was then dropped as neither alludes to it again.

strange that she continues to maintain that thoughtless attitude'.[48] Not appreciating the responsibilities of his servicewoman wife, he had earlier mused, 'I don't know why, maybe it is Kriegie mentality, but I often feel her letters are just dashed off, in a few spare moments during a busy day'.[49] While Irene's apparently insensitive notes precipitated a dose of 'Those Kriegie Blues', they were, overall, welcome. After failing for some time at the 'mail stakes', Baines finally received 'nine marvellous letters from my little lass'.[50]

Letters could signal the destruction of relationships. There 'was an issue of mail, and, in my hands I held a letter which, even before I opened it' Calton Younger recalled, 'I knew was the dreaded "Mespot"': his fiancée had broken off their engagement.[51] The equivalent of a 'Dear John' letter, 'mespot' entered the servicemen's lexicon during the Great War when lengthy service in Mesopotamia had had its deleterious effect on relationships.[52] Younger was not alone in receiving a 'mespot'. Other men were equally distraught at the loss of their emotional lifelines. Alec Arnel, while on operational service, received a letter from Margery in which she told him she was considering a proposal of marriage from another man. He was devastated. 'It was an awful sense of the rope's broken and I'm falling.' A pre-war teetotaller, Arnel drank too much and took risks in the air until Margery wrote to say she had declined the offer.[53]

---

[48] Baines FA: Baines, wartime log book, 8 January 1945, p. 22.
[49] Baines FA: Baines, wartime log book, 24 September 1944, p. 19.
[50] Baines FA: Baines, wartime log book, pp. 16–17.
[51] Younger, *No Flight From the Cage*, pp. 116–117.
[52] Makepeace, 'Living Beyond the Barbed Wire', p. 171.
[53] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 12 November 2015; Quote: interview 23 June 2016.

Change was a constant relationship hazard. 'I only hope that you haven't changed', Ronald Baines wrote.[54] 'I can see that you have not lost those characteristics I found so loveable—don't ever change, dear girl', Alec Arnel begged Margery.[55] Mutability in their partners, however, was inevitable. 'You are certainly changing darling. I can follow it through the tone of your letters', Albert Hake noted.[56] The airmen dreaded the consequences: would their womenfolk still love and need them?[57] His fiancée assured Charles Fry that all was well. 'I am just the same Beryl as you have always known.'[58] Baines, who, in the early stages of imprisonment had received few letters from Irene, however, had to convince himself of the stability of their marriage.[59] 'God only knows how we'll get on after all this time … can she remain in love with me—of course I think so—typical male ego.'[60]

Alec Arnel observed that married or attached men had a harder time in captivity because they were cut off from the close female relationships that had sustained them. Doug Hutchinson, however, did not feel that his married state adversely influenced his ability to adapt to captivity. Separation from Lola 'didn't worry me' because 'I wasn't that young. Somebody younger might have [found it difficult]. But not me. I was old enough at that stage'.[61] Albert Hake, however, was concerned. He and Noela wanted a family. While

---

[54] Baines FA: Baines, wartime log book, 24 September 1944, p. 19.
[55] Arnel archive: Arnel, letter to Margery Gray, [undated c. Christmas 1944, Stawell postmark 23 April 1945].
[56] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letter to Noela Hake, 8 September 1942.
[57] Arnel archive: Arnel, letter to Margery Gray, 21 May 1945.
[58] Fry FA: Beryl Smith, letter to Charles Fry, 15 May 1943.
[59] Alexander records: Stuart Baines, interview 9 July 2015.
[60] Baines FA: Baines, wartime log book, 18 November 1944, p. 20.
[61] AAWFA: Hutchinson 0540, 17 June, 2003.

they decided not to start before Hake embarked for overseas, it became his 'constant regret we hadn't organised a family before I left. Selfish I know and contrary to what I expressed but darn it all darling, I'm getting old'.[62] As time passed, Hake's letters suggest his fears that captivity was unmanning him, that he had become estranged from the easy intimacy he and Noela had shared, and that he would not be able to enjoy a healthy sexual relationship when he returned.[63] Hake's sense of emasculation arose from his recognition that as time passed his chances of becoming a father were fading, although he was only 27 years old.[64] Indicating his perception that his union had devolved into a platonic, rather than romantic marriage, he penned 'Cheerio Pal' as his final salutation in nine of the twenty-five extant letters written to Noela between January 1943 and 20 March 1944 (his last letter).[65]

Some fretted about how their womenfolk were coping without them but accepted, albeit reluctantly, that they were unable to provide immediate support and guidance. Albert Hake, however, diligently attempted to maintain his traditional role by setting up an allotment from his pay.[66] Despite encouraging his wife's independence and individuality, and telling her, 'I have confidence in your ability to handle affairs and question nothing', he

---

[62] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letters to Noela Hake, 25 December 1943, 5 January and 20 March 1944. Quote: 25 December 1943.
[63] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letter to Noela Hake, 5 January 1944.
[64] On one occasion he misquotes Shakespeare, *Macbeth* Act 5, Scene 5: 'Tomorrow and tomorrow creeps on this petty pace from day to day'. He leaves unsaid, but implies that passing time in captivity equates to 'dusty death'. Preen FA: Albert Hake, letter to Noela Hake, 15 December 1943.
[65] Preen FA: Hake was shot down on 4 April 1942, and he wrote his first letter as a prisoner of war to Noela on 15 April 1942. 'Cheerio Pal': 28 March, 29 April, 21 May, 30 May, 4 June, 20 December 1943, 3 January, 30 January, 1 March 1944. He also referred to her as 'pal' in three others (30 August 1943, 31 October 1943, 20 March 1944), just as he did to his brother-in-law Ray Preen, [undated, c.] September 1941 and friend David Hickey, 29 November 1942.
[66] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letter to Noela Hake, 10 September 1941.

queried and undermined her decisions.[67] He 'wish[ed] with all my heart I could be near to advise you'.[68] There is no doubt Hake loved his wife and that she provided genuine support during his captivity. To a certain extent, too, Noela accepted her husband's place as the dominant partner; she sought his approval in some matters and acquiesced to his requests.[69] Even so, her growing maturity and independence destabilised Hake's sense of masculinity as the primary decision maker, provider, and planner of their joint future. The tenor of his letters became more tense as he realised he could play no active part in their marital life.[70]

Hake's ineffectualness in his marital affairs runs counter to that manifested as part of his kriegie life. Earlier, he had told Noela of his ingenuity in making '"Heath Robertson" gadgets. My latest being a quick heating coffee percolator'.[71] In the same letter as he had joked about Noela's fidelity, he made a disguised reference to his escape work.[72] The disparity between Hake's dual identities as a failing husband and active airman in RAF Station Sagan's escape organisation created more tension. Ultimately, the epistolary lifeline Noela extended to her husband did not prove sustaining or

---

[67] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letters to Noela Hake, 3 March 1943; 28 March 1943; 29 March 1943, 29 June 1943; 17 November 1943; 27 November 1943. Quote: 30 June 1942.
[68] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letters to Noela Hake, 28 March 1943, 29 June 1943, 27 November 1943. Quote: 17 November 1943.
[69] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letters to Noela Hake 8 September 1942, 2 October 1942.
[70] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letters to Noela Hake, 8 September 1942, 4 June 1943 and 29 June 1943.
[71] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letter to Noela Hake, 31 October 1943. Heath Robinson was an English humourist renowned for his illustrations of ludicrously complicated or ponderous appliances which he 'invented' to carry out simple tasks. The term 'Heath Robinson' entered the British and Australian lexicons as a 'byword for highly impractical mechanical designs'. 'Heath Robinson Dead at 72', *The Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), 15 September 1944, p. 2. In Hake's use of it, as well in others relating to POW manufacturing, there was an underlying pride in their demonstrated kriegie ingenuity. See for example, 'POW Vies with Heath Robinson', *The Daily News* (Perth), 25 October 1943, p. 3.
[72] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letter to Noela Hake, 28 February 1944 (second letter).

lessen the strains he suffered. He participated in the Great Escape, was recaptured, and killed in the post-escape reprisals. This is in stark contrast to the sustaining epistolary exchanges between the Hutchinsons, Charles Fry and Beryl Smith and, generally speaking, between the Baineses and Grey-Smiths.

Imaginatively bringing women into camp

Images were precious. At their most basic level, photographs enabled the recipient to remember what their loved ones looked like. From an emotional perspective, photographs created a direct link to home. Peter Armytage kept a photograph of his girlfriend, Diana Officer, throughout his operational service.[73] They evoked memories, regret, and desire. 'When I gaze upon your photo', wrote Max Dunne, 'I sigh for every wasted year', without his fiancée, Barbara. 'When will I hold you in my arms? / When will you seek my kiss?'[74] Personal photographs, however, were not allowed on aerial operations. In their absence, the airmen craved new tokens of love.[75] 'Darling I lost all your photos and snaps on Crete', Charles Fry informed Beryl Smith. 'Could you send some more if permissible.'[76] Even unattached men asked for photographs of their families and friends so they could maintain familial and social connections. For husbands, fiancés and sweethearts, images helped maintain romantic bonds. Married men such as Ted Every and Ronald Baines mounted photographs of their wives in the photographic sections of their

[73] 'A thoroughbred in every sense', *The Age* (Melbourne), 19 June 2010.
[74] Dunn, *Poems of Norman Maxwell Dunn*, 'Longing', p. 17.
[75] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letter to Noela Hake, 11 May 1942, 2 October 1942, 21 May 1943; Fry FA: Charles Fry, letters to Beryl Smith, 30 October 1941, 3 February 1942, 3 July 1943, 29 September 1943, 29 October 1943; Hutchinson FA: Doug Hutchinson, letter to Lola Hutchinson, 5 March 1944, 27 July 1945.
[76] Fry FA: Charles Fry, letter to Beryl Smith, 10 August 1941.

wartime log books.[77] Others were more creative. An artist in Fry's room reproduced a photograph of Beryl 'in what is known as dry pointing. … darling the likeness is wonderful'.[78] When he received a snap of Noela, Albert Hake 'suddenly remembered I used to be a bit of an artist … so set to work and made a coloured enlargement of you'.[79] Photographs were important means to ameliorate the tensions of emotional separation. 'My Darling Lola', Hutchinson wrote. 'Words fail me concerning the photo. I think it is the best one I have ever had of you. Darling you look absolutely beautiful and I can't keep my eyes off it.'[80] Ronald Baines used one as a cure for 'Those Kriegie Blues' when he glued a picture of a relaxed, smiling, and swim-suited Irene into a thought bubble above a drawing of an obviously depressed Baines sitting slumped on his bunk.[81] Yet, even as they rekindled memories and offered a tangible connection to their womenfolk, photographs exacerbated the physical strains. The image of Irene, perhaps, also reminded Baines of their brief honeymoon before he was captured. Hutchinson's photograph of Lola 'makes me realise what a lot of life I am missing and what a lovely wife I have'.[82] Some men had no photographs, however. Eric Johnston cut a picture of flame-haired actress Maureen O'Hara from a magazine because she resembled his sweetheart. He made the illusion real by telling his friends that the picture was of Evelyn.[83]

---

[77] AWM PRMF0039: Every, wartime log; Baines FA: Baines, wartime log.
[78] Fry FA: Charles Fry, letter to Beryl Smith, 29 April 1944.
[79] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letter to Noela Hake, 24 August 1942.
[80] Hutchinson FA: Doug Hutchinson, letter to Lola Hutchinson, 5 March 1944.
[81] Baines FA: Baines, wartime log book, pencil, watercolour and photograph collage, 'Those Kriegie Blues', p. 95.
[82] Hutchinson FA: Doug Hutchinson, letter to Lola Hutchinson, 5 March 1944.
[83] Alexander records: Evelyn Johnston, interview 18 October 2016.

Even those who had photographs for ready evocation of loved ones still relied on memory and imagination to bring their womenfolk into camp.[84] 'I dreamed about you last night darling', Doug Hutchinson wrote. 'I don't remember the whole dream. All I remember was that we were ever so happy.'[85] 'I've dreamt of you and home for the last three nights so realistically', Albert Hake told Noela, 'that when I awake I can't recognise my surroundings'.[86] Dreams, however, were capricious. They did not come on demand, and could be distressing. 'In dreams I feel your lips on mine, / I see your rounded breast: / And then I wake to guards and wire! / Antithesis of rest', Max Dunn wrote of his fiancée, Barbara.[87]

Some men imaginatively brought their loved ones into their rooms by speaking directly to them in their diaries.[88] 'Irene honey, I love you much more than I thought I ever could love you', Ronald Baines wrote.[89] 'How oft I have thought of you today darling and sent you all my love', Guy Grey-Smith told Helen.[90] '[I]ntense, vivid, long enduring fantasies' helped some Vietnam-era prisoners of war cope with the more severe aspects of confinement.[91] What US Air Force psychiatrists Robert Ursano and James Rundell called 'controlled fantasy', or romantic reveries, were equally

---

[84] AWM PR05675: Grey-Smith, diary, 26 December 1941; Fry FA: Charles Fry, letter to Beryl Smith, 29 April 1944; Alexander records: Arnel, interview 23 June 2016; Baines FA: Baines, wartime log book, 'The Usual Day at Stalag Luft III', p. 60; Preen FA: Albert Hake, letter to Noela Hake, 11 May 1942.
[85] Hutchinson FA: Doug Hutchinson, letter to Lola Hutchinson, 18 July 1943.
[86] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letter to Noela Hake, 31 December 1942.
[87] Dunn, *Poems of Norman Maxwell Dunn*, 'Longing', p. 17.
[88] AWM PR05675: Grey-Smith, diary, 26 January 1942 and 26 May 1943.
[89] Baines FA: Baines, wartime log book, 24 September 1944, p. 19.
[90] AWM PR05675: Grey-Smith, diary, 26 May 1943.
[91] Ursano and Rundell, 'The Prisoner of War', in Jones, Sparacino, Wilcox, Rothberg, and Stokes, *War Psychiatry*, p. 437.

important coping mechanisms for the Australian airmen.[92] 'I dream of the future with Irene and returning to England', recorded Baines.[93] 'I think of you quite a lot while I am here only to find that I love you more than ever, and my one thought is for the time to come when I shall arrive home', Doug Hutchinson wrote.[94] During their ordeal in Buchenwald, Keith Mills 'thought of' his girlfriend 'whenever things looked really black' and Eric Johnston 'lay awake for hours thinking' of Evelyn Charles. Demonstrating how their imaginings sustained them, when they arrived at Stalag Luft III, both men copied into their wartime log books a poem entitled 'Day Dreams', in which 'We dream of wives and sweethearts dear / So far away and yet so near / We dream of them each day & night / And pray for the end of this struggle & fight'.[95]

Significant dates stimulated evocative musings. 'A very happy birthday to you darling', wrote Charles Fry. 'I'm thinking of you always.'[96] Wedding anniversaries elicited poignant romantic memories. 'Today is our fifth wedding anniversary', Doug Hutchinson recalled to Lola. 'I've been thinking of you all day long, and I'll think of you all tonight even when I'm asleep.'[97] They enabled husbands to relive their special days. 'Our third anniversary of our wedding darling', Guy Grey-Smith reminisced with Helen-in-his-diary. 'I lived through once again our ceremony & our send off.'[98] Albert Hake

---

[92] Ursano and Rundell, 'The Prisoner of War', in Jones, Sparacino, Wilcox, Rothberg, and Stokes, *War Psychiatry*, p. 435.
[93] Baines FA: Baines, wartime log book, 15 March 1945, p. 25.
[94] Hutchinson FA: Doug Hutchinson, letter to Lola Hutchinson, 5 February 1944.
[95] Keith Mills FA: Keith Mills, letter to Phyllis Mills, 22 July 1945; Johnston FA: Johnston, letter to Evelyn Charles, 27 May 1945; Johnston FA: Johnston, wartime log book, p. 10; Burgess RC: Keith Mills, wartime log book, p. 3.
[96] Fry FA: Charles Fry, letter to Beryl Smith, 3 March 1942.
[97] Hutchinson FA: Doug Hutchinson, letter to Lola Hutchinson, 25 March 1944.
[98] AWM PR05675: Grey-Smith, diary, 19 October 1942.

remembered his second anniversary and reread all Noela's old letters. For him though, they did not kindle happy memories. '[M]ade myself mournful, etc.'[99] The following year, 'living through that happy day of three years ago' appeared to galvanise him towards participation in the ill-fated mass escape. 'Well damn it all I'll be home for our next anniversary darling.'[100]

Women and home were intertwined for many prisoners of war. Ronald Baines linked dreams of 'my little lass' with 'home, comfort and security'.[101] Len Netherway equated home to his wife, Mavis: '<u>home</u> [underlined twice] (that's a wonderful word) (because it means you Darling)'.[102] Even before capture, Margery Gray represented home for Alec Arnel. 'I like to think of you as being "HOME".'[103] While contemplating, daydreaming about, and remembering loved ones imaginatively brought them into their rooms, some men mentally ranged beyond the prison camp and returned home. 'I've just been thinking', Eric Johnston wrote to his sweetheart before his capture. 'It's eleven o'clock where you are now and I think to myself if Evelyn's on day shift she will be up at Central and if "she" is on night's "she" will probably be just getting out of bed now.'[104] Given how thoughts of Evelyn sustained him at Buchenwald, it is likely Johnston continued to connect himself to her in this way during that ordeal.

---

[99] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letter to Noela Hake, 3 March 1943.
[100] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letter to Noela Hake, 1 March 1944.
[101] Baines FA: Baines, wartime log book, 'The Usual Day at Stalag Luft III', p. 60.
[102] Netherway FA: Len Netherway, letter to Mavis Netherway, 15 June 1945.
[103] Arnel archive: Arnel, letter to Margery Gray, 14 April 1944; Arnel archive: Arnel, letter to Margery Gray, [undated, Stawell postmark 31 August 1944].
[104] Johnston FA: Johnston, letter to Evelyn Charles, 21 February 1944.

Clare Makepeace argues that some prisoners symbolically linked camp to home through synchronicity.[105] Lola and Doug Hutchinson each wrote to the other on their anniversary.[106] That synchronous action brought comfort and reinforced their closeness. So too did proof that their beloveds had been thinking of them on their special days.[107] The belief that they were mentally synchronised across the hemispheres overrode the reality of time zone differences. Penning her letter to Charles Fry on her 27th birthday, Beryl Smith commented: 'It is nice to feel that we are thinking of each other at the same time'.[108] On their wedding anniversary, Guy Grey-Smith remembered Helen and 'felt', at the same time, 'you thinking of me'.[109] Alec Arnel particularly found comfort in synchronicity. 'Each night for just a minute we can stop for our moment', Arnel told Margery before he embarked. 'In our moment we can think of each other and then—together—kneel before Him [God] and ask his blessing.'[110] After capture, Arnel mentally transported himself away from the POW camp to Margery and home in what he called 'dreamy time'.[111] This non-corporeal 'drifting out' of the camp, 'gave me a sense of well-being that provided me with more hope, that someday [going home to her] would be a reality'.[112] As Arnel did not consider himself to be a whole person without Margery, 'dreamy time' enabled him to imaginatively

[105] Makepeace, 'Living Beyond the Barbed Wire', p. 161. Roper also writes of synchronicity. Roper, *The Secret Battle*, pp. 53, 92.
[106] Hutchinson FA: Doug Hutchinson, letter to Lola Hutchinson 25 March 1944; Lola Hutchins, letter to Doug Hutchinson, 25 March 1944.
[107] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letter to Noela Hake, 4 June 1943; Hutchinson FA: Doug Hutchinson, letter to Lola Hutchinson, 5 November 1943.
[108] Fry FA: Beryl Smith, letter Charles Fry, 5 March 1943.
[109] AWM PR05675: Grey-Smith, diary, 19 October 1942.
[110] Arnel archive: Arnel, letter to Margery Gray, 2 April 1941.
[111] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 23 June 2016.
[112] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 23 June 2016. 'Drifting out' from Makepeace, 'Living Beyond the Barbed Wire', p. 165.

reunite with her so 'I should be myself again'.[113] It also linked him to his emotional lifeline.[114] Margery, was, for Arnel, a lodestar steering him homewards, as was Lola for Doug Hutchinson.[115] '[S]oon I am coming back to see you smile again.'[116] Arnel's potentially fatal reaction to Margery's 'mespot' thus represented more than just breaking up with a sweetheart. He had lost his image of home. 'Almost the reason for being.'[117]

Disruption and subversion

'We had a wonderful theatre', Bill Fordyce recalled.[118] It played an immeasurable part in the cultural, creative, and imaginative lives of the airmen captives and it linked them to the normality of their pre-war existence.[119] New shows were highly anticipated, men competed for opening night tickets, and theatre-lovers were not restricted to their own compound's productions. Australians contributed to Stalag Luft III's vibrant theatre. Their vivid contemporary accounts, images, and memories, as well as those of their compatriot audience members, attest to the significance of Stalag Luft III's cultural life. As well as enjoyably filling time for audiences and production crew, shows were a 'tremendous fillip to morale' as they transported audience members from the dull monotony of camp.[120] For many, the theatre relieved

---

[113] Quote: Arnel archive: Arnel, letter to Margery Gray, 22 June 1944.
[114] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 23 June 2016.
[115] Hutchinson FA: Doug Hutchinson, letters to Lola Hutchinson, 18 July 1943 (dreamed of Lola); 9 October 1943 (two years apart); 12 June 1944 (homecoming).
[116] Arnel archive: Arnel, letter to Margery Gray, [undated, Stawell postmark 31 August 1944].
[117] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 23 June 2016.
[118] AAWFA: Fordyce 0523, 19 June 2003.
[119] AAWFA: Fordyce 0523, 19 June 2003; Todd FA: Ken Todd, wartime log book, p. 26; O'Byrne FA: Justin O'Byrne, letter to family, 24 November 1943; Rachamimov, 'Liminality and Transgression', in Pathé and Théofilakis (eds), *Wartime Captivity in the Twentieth Century*, p. 89; Rachamimov, 'Disruptive Comforts of Drag: (Trans)Gender Performances among Prisoners of War in Russia, 1914–1920', pp. 364, 377.
[120] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 27 November 2014.

the tension of their cares; escapism and laughter made life easier to bear. Productions also provided the kriegies with the opportunity to create the illusion that women were once again in their midst. This, however, was potentially disruptive. While Australian airmen of Stalag Luft III enjoyed the theatrical offerings and the capacity to ameliorate the strains of captivity, the illusion faded. Female characters did not offer the emotional connection and feminine sympathy many craved. Moreover, female impersonators stimulated unwelcome physical responses in some airmen. In addition, some scripts, theatrical iconography, and jokes subverted their masculinity, virility, and place in the traditional sexual hierarchy, even as they provided a means to laugh at that subversion.

Rather than mimicking women by consistently portraying burlesque grotesqueries, costumiers and makeup artists ensured those acting female roles looked as realistic as possible.[121] The actors then spent hours perfecting their craft to ensure convincing feminine portrayals which included torch singers, members of chorus lines, murderous spinsters, ingénues, grand tragedians, battle-axes, saints, 'tiny tots', and courtesans.[122] Responses to the feminine illusions were complex. The 'ladies were the most remarkable achievement', Jock Bryce recalled.[123] 'We certainly have some excellent girls

---

[121] Makepeace, '"Pinky Smith Looks Gorgeous!" Female Impersonators and Male Bonding in Prisoner of War Camps for British Servicemen in Europe', in Robb, and Pattinson (eds), *Men, Masculinities and Male Culture in the Second World War*, p. 80.
[122] Torch singers and chorus lines, in *Between Ourselves, A Revue*; murderous spinsters, the Brewster sisters in *Arsenic and Old Lace*; ingénues, 'Gwendoline and Cecily' in *The Importance of Being Ernest* [sic]; grand tragedians, Lady Macbeth; ghosts, Elvira in *Blithe Spirit*'; battle-axes, Lady Bracknell in *The Importance of Being Ernest* [sic]; saints, Joan of Arc; 'tiny tots', in *Music Hall*; and courtesans, the wanton Messalina in *Messalina*.
[123] For ribbing, refer Barris, *The Great Escape*, p. 131. Quote: Bryce FA: 'Jock Bryce's POW Diary 1942–1945', p. 172.

in the shows, it would surprise you', Albert Hake told Noela.[124] Reg Giddey ardently stressed to his family that the 'shows would amaze anyone—and especially the chaps who play the feminine parts, who have to be seen to be believed'.[125] Despite ribbing in the earliest performances until audiences became used to men acting as women, ultimately, reality was suspended for the duration of the performance and the kriegies were once again men interacting with women.[126] Their qualifiers ('remarkable') and riders ('it would surprise you' and 'seen to be believed') however, suggest a tension in their appreciation of the female impersonators' performances. This is further revealed in some men's inconsistent use of quotation marks: 'One of the "girls" from "Dover Road"… was at the races … She looked very attractive'.[127] This was not uncommon, as prisoners grappled with the 'grammatical challenge' of describing the 'actresses'.[128] Historian Yorick Smaal suggests that the use of feminine pronouns and nouns indicates acceptance of the female persona.[129] Some airmen, however, revealed that they were fully aware that the male actors were nothing more than female impersonators skilfully playing a part. '[G]ood imitation women', Keith Carmody recorded.[130] '[T]he "girls" are practising their ballet steps very thoroughly', Reg Kierath informed his mother.[131] While Alec Arnel enthused

---

[124] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letter to Noela Hake, 8 September 1942.
[125] 'Letter from Germany. Flying-Officer Reg. Giddey Writes Home', *Gloucester Advocate* (NSW), 21 January 1944, p. 2.
[126] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 21 February 2018.
[127] NLA FERG/4550: *P.O.W.*, No 12, 15 January 1943, unattributed letter, 9 September 1942, p. 8.
[128] Rachamimov, 'Small Escapes: Gender, Class, and Material Culture in Great War Internment Camps', in Auslander and Zahra, (eds), *The Material Culture of Conflict and Displacement*, p. 182.
[129] Smaal, *Sex, Soldiers and the South Pacific, 1939–45*, p. 21.
[130] Barker, *Keith Carmody*, p. 60.
[131] Kierath FA: Reg Kierath, letter to Ada Kierath, 16 August 1943

that 'The "heroine"' in George Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan* 'was played with spirit and intelligence so that we had our doubts as to the sex of the player', his strong imaginative connection to Margery ensured that he had no doubts that 'our fair Joan was just another inmate'.[132]

Photographs of shows and some kriegie illustrations demonstrate the impersonators' skills.[133] Other visual anecdotes, however, present a different perspective. These parodic images dispel theatrical illusion. They reveal that feminine masquerade did not wholly subdue masculine characteristics. In Bill Fordyce's watercolour of Canadian Gordon King, the hourglass-figured King is in full makeup, wearing sheer scanty underwear (including brassiere with a pert prosthetic and clearly visible nipples), and sits decorously with legs crossed away from the viewer to hide any giveaway bulge. Yet he is unwigged, sports a buzz cut, and his sandaled feet are the same size as those of Fordyce-the-makeup-artist. The tag line, 'My God, it was a terrific struggle, though', reveals that the transformation of King from physically hardened male to a feminine-physiqued faux female was not easy.[134] Calton Younger also presents an admixture of feminine and masculine in his parody of a homely, strong-calved prima donna throwing a tantrum with his caption, 'Any more of this temperament from young Bill and we'll have to get a new

---

[132] Arnel archive: Arnel, letter to Margery Gray, 29 August 1944.

[133] These were usually taken by the Germans for propaganda purposes. Moore and Hately, 'Captive Audience: Camp Entertainment and British Prisoners-of-War in German Captivity, 1939–1945', p. 61; Walton and Eberhardt, *From Interrogation to Liberation*, p. 279. Examples of drawings which highlight the mimetic qualities of actor performance and appearance are those of Messalina created by Arthur Schrock. Refer programme in author's collection and watercolour, 'Well boys, here I Ayam!', in Ken Rees' wartime log. p. 67.

[134] King worked eight-hour shifts on an air pump for the escape tunnel ventilation system. Fordyce FA: Fordyce, wartime log book, p. 59. For King's escape work, refer Barris, *The Great Escape*, pp. 101–102. Despite Fordyce's depiction of a struggle, in a 2011 recollection, King noted that the transformation was 'easy'. Barris, p. 131.

leading lady'.[135] In contrast to the theatre's photographic record, comical visual anecdotes reinforce that the transformation from male to female was illusory: the actors remained men.

Some scripts and characters were subversive. Kenneth Gaulton recalled one which touched on anxieties relating to decreased libido and virility. 'There were two bulls, the old bull and the young bull looking at all these cows. And the young bull says to the old bull, come on, let's run down and fix them. And the old bull says no, lets walk down and we'll fix them all. And this brought the house down.'[136] Fordyce's visual anecdote of *Messalina*'s Fabius declaring 'with you I'd fling myself down anywhere!' asserted male sexual supremacy—until the viewer (and audience of *Messalina* and any other play with a sex scene) realised the biggest joke of all: that the actor desired to lay down with another man.[137] That destabilising joke was also in the traditional 'love drama', as George Archer described the comedic *The Wind and the Rain*, with its 'too many love scenes to suit a Kriege [sic] audience'.[138] All tastes were catered for 'with straight plays predominating', recalled Jock Bryce.[139]A number of productions, however, were not quite 'straight'. Plays such as *Design for Living*, *The Importance of Being Ernest* [sic], and *French without Tears* contained distinctly homosexual themes or

---

[135] Younger, *Get a Load of this*, [p. 42].
[136] AAWFA: Gaulton 1276, 3 February, 2004.
[137] Fordyce FA: Fordyce, wartime log book, p. 5.
[138] Archer FA: Archer, letter to family, 17 December 1944.
[139] 'Bryce FA: 'Jock Bryce's POW Diary 1942–1945', p. 173. North Compound's theatrical agenda included plays by Shakespeare, Noel Coward, John Galsworthy, Joseph Kesselring, George Bernard Shaw, J.B. Priestley, Oscar Wilde, Clark, *Wirebound World*, pp. 18–62. George Archer reveals the wide variety of the 23 productions mounted in East Compound's Little Theatre between June 1943 and January 1945: magic, revue (2), comedy-thriller, thriller (2), comedy (4), drama (2), panto (2), band show (2), Shakespearean tragedy, farce (2), historical, light drama, variety, and love drama. Wartime log book, p. 31.

subtext. *Messalina*, featuring Emperor Claudius' wily courtesan (whose bare breasts were covered only by sheer veiling) and a 'sparkling' court life that was 'Bacchanalian in the extreme', was both 'camp' and heterosexually risqué.[140] Some plays challenged the traditional male/female hierarchy. Emasculated male characters were at the mercy of more powerful females such as murderous Lady Macbeth, the poison-wielding Brewster sisters, and imperious Lady Bracknell.[141] Productions such as *Messalina* and *The Dover Road*, another comedy which commented on fidelity, potentially played to fears that womenfolk at home may cuckold or move on from their absent lovers.

Bill Fordyce's illustrations highlight that female impersonators performed in two spheres: they stalked the stage and mingled with the crowds. A blacked-up, curvaceous, saronged firewalker was a novelty appearance at the Sagan Sportsday Sideshow.[142] Englishman Dominic Page, as Miss Anne from *The Dover Road*, with a 'perfect figure', looked fetching in slacks and 'a very brief sun top', while cutting the ribbon to officially open the Sagan Races on 5 September 1942.[143] A 'lass from the Red Cross selling flags did a remarkable business' from the punters.[144] A 'barmaid' served drinks on at least one occasion and, during one Centre Compound performance, a German

---

[140] Quotes: Arnel archive: Arnel, letter to Margery Gray, 15 September 1944. Details of Messalina's costume from image of Arthur Schrock's programme in author's collection.
[141] From *Macbeth*, *Arsenic and Old Lace*, and *The Importance of Being Ernest* [sic].
[142] Fordyce FA: Fordyce, wartime log book, p. 109.
[143] Quotes: NLA FERG/4550: *P.O.W.*, No 12, 15 January 1943, unattributed letter, 9 September 1942, p. 8; Archer FA: Archer, 1942 Diary, Addendum at beginning of diary, beginning 1 February 1942. For Page as Miss Anne, refer Walton and Eberhardt, *From Interrogation to Liberation*, p. 301.
[144] Archer FA: Archer, 1942 Diary, Addendum at beginning of diary, beginning 1 February 1942.

guest could barely believe that the 'ravishing lady' who joined him at interval was one of the prisoners.[145]

Historian Iris Rachamimov argues that performances by female impersonators created a 'safety valve'. Reality in the abnormal single-sex society was suspended as faux females provided a condoned outlet for sexual tension without challenging its basic order.[146] In Stalag Luft III, however, they threatened the kriegies' masculine identities. While Fordyce recalled that no one was ever tempted by even the most convincing faux female, sirens, vamps, or ingénues sometimes stimulated sexual desire.[147] Indeed, Calton Younger recalled that some enacted their desires and were 'seemingly easy in their consciences'.[148] Some men, however, were mortified by their homoerotic responses.[149] Ron Mackenzie's reaction when a performer 'brushed past me in full stage dress' during rehearsal also suggests a degree of discomfort. 'I turned … to curse, found myself starting to apologise, woke up and cursed probably more vigorously than was strictly warranted.'[150] But, while it challenged their heterosexual masculinity on a number of levels, the theatre offered, for many, uncomplicated 'wonderful entertainment'. They, like Alec Arnel were not 'titillated by it all', or by the impersonators.

---

[145] Barmaid: Fordyce FA: Fordyce, wartime log book, unpaginated photographic section, Comber, watercolour 'Well—here's happiness!—On thirty bob a week!', Sagan 5 February 1944; 'Ravishing lady': Mackenzie, *An Ordinary War 1940–1945*, p. 64.
[146] Rachamimov, 'Disruptive Comforts of Drag', pp. 364, 375. See also Makepeace, '"Pinky Smith Looks Gorgeous!"', in Robb, and Pattinson (eds), *Men, Masculinities and Male Culture in the Second World Wa*r, pp. 80, 82.
[147] AAWFA: Fordyce 0523, 19 June 2003; Alexander records: Arnel, interview 21 February 2018; Makepeace, '"Pinky Smith Looks Gorgeous!"', in Robb, and Pattinson (eds), *Men, Masculinities and Male Culture in the Second World War*, p. 86.
[148] Younger, *No Flight From the Cage*, p. 116.
[149] Younger, *No Flight From the Cage*, p. 116; AAWFA: Gaulton 1276, 3 February, 2004.
[150] Mackenzie, *An Ordinary War 1940–1945*, p. 64.

Performances ended at curtain fall and 'I didn't go to bed dreaming about them'.[151]

Fit and well

Some images of women had nothing to do with love. They reinforced that airmen were sexual beings. Indeed, indicating misogynistic tendencies, some saw women purely as objects of desire—the means by which they could satisfy sexual urges, assert masculinity, and recall pre-captivity virility. Some even equated conquests over women with military prowess.[152] Sexually objectified depictions of women were everywhere. Some included erotic poetry, lewd jokes, and risqué visual anecdotes in their wartime log books.[153] The walls of Bill Fordyce's fantasy illustration of Hut 119's Christmas 1943 bar (complete with sozzled POW and kegged kriegie brew), are decorated with one poster of a smiling WAAF declaring 'My dear! He's *twice* the man on Worthington' (a famous English brewed beer from the Midlands). Another depicts two red-cheeked blondes (one looking as glazed-eyed as the sozzled POW) with the legend 'Guinness makes loose women tight'.[154] Fordyce also painted a drunk-and-passed-out serviceman in the streets of Cairo dreaming

---

[151] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 23 June 2016.
[152] Archer FA: Archer, 1942 Diary, 25 November 1942.
[153] Erotic poetry: 'Enchantment', attributed to Byron, Archer FA: Archer, wartime log book, pp. 148–151 ('…Her snow white throat, where passion sits/ Her rounded breasts & snowy hips/ her polished abdomen, her loins,/ Where each round thigh its sister joins—/ All these he saw, but fixed his eyes/ On one small charm, between her thighs … '). Lewd jokes: Fordyce FA: Fordyce, wartime log book, p. 98; Johnston FA: Johnston, wartime log book, p. 5. 'An Englishman was dancing with an American girl', wrote Eric Johnston, 'and she was wearing a low V-necked dress. "Is that V for Victory", he asked. "Yes" she replied "but these bundles are not for Britain".'
[154] Gordon FA: Bill Fordyce, watercolour '119's Bar, Xmas 1943, Luft 3, Sagan', 28 March 1944 in unknown wartime log book, p. 59.

of a bare-breasted woman.[155] Glamour-girl posters adorned some rooms.[156] The memory of marital love was brushed aside as one artist sketched for Ronald Baines a sexy, scantily clad 'popsie' with a come-hither glance and slipped-down shoulder strap who suggestively lifts a sheet on a rumpled bed.[157] A long-legged blonde sitting in a Red Cross box entitled 'Red Cross Comforts' graces James McCleery's wartime log book.[158] The American Red Cross' 1944 Christmas parcel even enclosed '1 lge envelope containing two pin up pictures'.[159] In the absence of pin-ups (which were banned at one stage), photographs of girls were discussed in some quarters 'with brutal frankness', as indicated by the scrum surrounding one chap pulling out 'a photo of my sister', in warrant officers Robert Anderson's and David Westmacott's *Handle with Care* a collection of humorous sketches commenting on the lives of airmen non-commissioned officers in stalags Luft III and VI.[160]

While objectifying women, sexualised images served other purposes. As suggested in a cartoon by Calton Younger of a kriegie looking through barbed wire at a defiantly ugly, bucked-tooth woman, some feared that, in their all-male world they would fail to recognise beauty. 'Gee, I'd forgotten

---

[155] Fordyce FA: Fordyce, wartime log book, p. 11.
[156] *Royal Air Force News*, 19 March 2004 [no page details]. The photograph supplied by Michael Shand reveals photographs of magazine pin-up girls on the walls, as do a cartoon by Calton Younger in *Get a Load of this*, [p. 43] and Bill Fordyce's watercolour '"Scangriff" Artist's Nightmare', wartime log book, p. 41.
[157] Unknown author, drawing, 'Here's your Popsie Ronnie! Good Luck! X–9–44', Baines FA: Baines, wartime log book, unpaginated photographic section.
[158] M. Hall, watercolour 'Red Cross Comforts', 5 September 1944. See also McCleery, coloured drawing, 'A Kriegie's Dream' where at the centre of McCleery's dream bubble is the back view of a naked woman, standing in the sea. AWM PR88/160: McCleery, wartime log book, pp. 59, 29.
[159] Burgess RC: Robert Mills, wartime log book, p. 19.
[160] Anderson and Westmacott, *Handle with Care*, p. 28.

women were so beautiful.'[161] Such a reaction was not impossible: Bill Fordyce noted they 'hadn't seen a woman for so many years. We hardly knew what they looked like'.[162] Pin-ups, then, assured some that they could indeed appreciate feminine beauty. They also contributed to masculine group cohesion and reinforced that, despite the exclusively homosocial environment, the airmen were still attracted to women and had not 'turned' homosexual.[163]

A drawing by 'Bish' of a naked Prune-as-Adam in the Garden of Eden, bashfully protecting his genitals from the lasciviously appraising gaze of an equally naked Eve, served another purpose.[164] Despite the humorous rendition, the sketch insinuates that the once-glamorous and sexually alluring airmen had been emasculated by captivity. To counter this, some men attempted to aggressively assert their virility by big-noting sexual success. One married Australian, who was apparently 'a bit of a lad', was particularly disliked because of his frequent references to his carnal adventures.[165] Indeed, the 'sort of person who was like that wasn't popular at all'.[166] Those who spoke of their exploits were disruptive, recalled Alec Arnel, who 'saw to some extent what happened in some of the other rooms'. To avoid any discomfiture, sex 'was almost a taboo subject. We didn't talk about it'.[167] Dirty jokes were

[161] Younger, *Get a Load of this*, [p. 44].
[162] AAWFA: Fordyce 0523, 19 June 2003.
[163] Bongiorno, 'Two world wars and the remaking of Australian Sexuality', in Crotty and Larsson (eds), *Anzac Leg*acies, p. 93.
[164] Fordyce FA: Bethell, 'A Glimpse of Stalag Luft III (North Compound)', 'Prune's First Boob', by 'Bish', (captioned by Bethell, 'Stalag Luft III is not Der Garten von Eden"!').
[165] Simpson, *'OPS' Victory at all Costs*, p. 351. Quote: Simpson, son of Laurie Simpson, who shared this man's room. Alexander records: Andrew R.B. Simpson, email 21 March 2016.
[166] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 23 June 2016.
[167] Alexander records: Arnel, interviews, 23 June 2016 and 2 March 2017.

also off limits in Arnel's and other rooms.[168] There were no such restrictions for some men, however. Ronald Baines recorded that, after the shutters were closed, they generally sat around reading 'or talking—usually about sex or food'.[169] The '[m]ain topic' in George Archer's room on 25 November 1942 was 'lack sex & women plus past air exploits'. Less than a fortnight later, food & sex—boy what a combination'.[170] As disturbing as they were for some, sex talk and conquest boasts provided an outlet for sexual tension for some, and were condoned. As historian Frank Bongiorno notes, they were aspects of 'a "digger" culture that can be seen as a more demotic … version of Australian military manhood'.[171] They also confirmed past sexual agency and suggested anticipated future marital (or extra-marital) potency.

As they abhorred the sense of emasculation emanating from their forced removal from aerial operations, the airmen actively asserted their masculinity and military mien by adhering to air force discipline, maintaining a clear service identity, carrying out disruptive acts, and by presenting a masculine body image to their close and extended families. In doing so, as Annette Becker argues, they 'forged a new demonstration of virility'.[172] Matthias Reiss notes similar actions in his cohort of German soldiers imprisoned in the United States.[173] The Australian airmen did this by promoting a narrative of wellness which I have dubbed a 'fit and well' composure. They told their loved ones

---

[168] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 23 June 2016; AAWFA: Fordyce 0523, 19 June 2003.
[169] Baines FA: Baines, wartime log book, 'The Usual Day at Stalag Luft III', p. 60.
[170] Archer FA: Archer, 1942 Diary, 25 November and 7 December 1942.
[171] Bongiorno, 'Two world wars and the remaking of Australian Sexuality', in Crotty and Larsson (eds), *Anzac Legacies*, p. 85.
[172] Becker, Annette, 'Introduction, Part II, Languages of Captivity: Bodies and Minds Behind the Barbed Wire', in Pathé and Théofilakis (eds), *Wartime Captivity in the Twentieth Century*, p. 82.
[173] Reiss, 'The Importance of Being Men', pp. 24–25.

that they had emerged from combat, crash, or bale-out with few or only minor wounds. If they could not claim total recovery, they minimised the seriousness of their condition. 'We were shot down, and I was wounded in a number of places, but after three weeks in hospital I am now on the mend and will soon be quite fit', Doug Hutchinson assured Lola. Hutchinson, however, had taken shrapnel in his elbow, legs, and body, and had sustained severe wounds to his foot. Despite Lola's frequent requests for details he failed to describe their full extent.[174] Some of those previously interned in Buchenwald declared they were in 'the best of health' and 'well and fit', yet post-liberation medical reports indicate that most were seriously underweight, and that some conditions had been exacerbated by dysentery.[175] Attached and unattached alike stressed their physical robustness by demonstrating that they were strong and healthy. They wrote cheery letters testifying to their health. On no less than eight occasions, George Archer told his family that he was either 'very fit' or 'well and fit'.[176] Variations of 'fit and well' were oft-repeated refrains, even from the (not quite) walking wounded such as John Vivash who had two broken ankles.[177] Reg Kierath declared he was of a healthy weight.[178]

---

[174] Hutchinson FA: Doug Hutchinson, letter to Lola Hutchinson, 8 August 1943; AWM 54 779/3/129: 11 PDRC post-liberation debrief, Hutchinson.

[175] First quote, *Hubert Atkinson,* 'Personal' column which published extracts from prisoner of war letters sent to families. *Mercury* (Mackay, QLD). Date omitted to protect identity. Second quote, *Arnold Hibbert*, telegram, 30 May 1945.

[176] 'Very fit': Archer FA: Archer, letters to family, 19 August 1942, 12 August 1943, 7 September 1943. 'Well and fit': Archer FA: Archer, letters to family, 5 September 1942, 22 December 1942, 17 January 1943, 29 April 1943, 11 July 1943.

[177] 'Am quite fit and well': AWM PR03099: Paul Brickhill, letter to Del Fox, 27 November 1943; 'very fit and well': Fry FA: Charles Fry, letter to Beryl Smith, 24 September 1944; 'fit and well': Reg Kierath, letter to mother, 28 February 1944; 'quite fit': O'Byrne FA: Justin O'Byrne, letter to family, 25 May 1942; 'Perfectly well and happy': Gordon FA: Gordon, letter to Aunt Mag, [undated: c. April 1942]; NAA A705 166/35/8 Righetti: 'quite fit and well', Righetti, Alan Righetti, letter to 'dearest home-folks', 7 February 1943; NAA: A705, 166/42/92 Vivash: 'I am O.K.', John Vivash, letter to mother, 13 December 1944; 'Cheerful and Well', *Mudgee Guardian and North-Western Representative* (NSW), 28 July 1941, p. 2.

[178] Kierath FA: Reg Kierath, letter to Ada Kierath, 16 August 1943.

The airmen boasted of their sporting achievements. 'Every evening we go for a run around the compound to keep the old system in trim', Alec Arnel wrote to Margery.[179]

The Germans allowed some photography, or took photographs themselves for propaganda purposes.[180] The Australian airmen reinforced their fit and well composure by sending home photographs of smiling, bare-chested men, hale-looking groups, and sports' days. They wore uniforms in group photos. In analysing photographic images of repatriated prisoners of Japan, Christina Twomey argues that the emaciated bodies 'undermine the hegemonic masculinity of the virile male warrior' and invoke the 'suffering body of Christ'.[181] However, by depicting their fitness in letters—including references to escape attempts—and providing visual evidence of it, the airmen prisoners of Stalag Luft III revealed to their families that they had not been cowed or broken by captivity. They were not victims. To their romantic partners, their fit and well composure reinforced the sexual glamour of uniformed servicemen and martial masculinity.

While many non-officer army prisoners of war had the opportunity to see or spend time with women while on work parties, glimpses of females were rare in officers' camps.[182] They were not, however, unknown.[183] Stalag Luft III housed the *Luftwaffe*'s central mail censoring facility which employed about 200 female censors, and the airmen prisoners of the Belaria

---

[179] Arnel archive: Arnel, letter to Margery Gray, 18 August 1944.
[180] Vance, *Objects of Concern*, p. 139.
[181] Twomey, 'Emaciation or Emasculation: Photographic Images, White Masculinity and Captivity by the Japanese in World War Two', p. 296.
[182] Makepeace, *Captives of War*, p. 7; Vance, 'Sexual Relations' in Vance (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Prisoners of War and Internment*, p. 357.
[183] AWM PR05675: Grey-Smith, diary, 17 July 1943.

compound regularly saw women travelling to and from work. Their presence was a mixed blessing.[184] As Doug Hutchinson recalled, when the women cycled or walked along the road about ten yards from Belaria's fence, the prisoners would line up to watch. They had 'a competition to see who could [mentally] undress the girl and make her fall off her bike'. For the men, 'it was a great game'. The women, however, 'got embarrassed with the blokes staring at them. And they got some idea of what they were thinking'.[185] Hutchinson excluded himself from the group harassment of the female staff, so perhaps his strong ties to his wife left him immune to the sexual allure of the female censors, but he was not invulnerable to inflamed desire. Lola Hutchinson's letters indicate that she and Doug had enjoyed an active and satisfying intimacy and, on one occasion, she graphically reminded him of it.[186] Hutchinson was aroused but neither in response to Lola's stimulating image, nor in regard to the harassment anecdote, did he indicate what he or other men did to satisfy desire.[187] Ronald Baines asked a future reader of his wartime log book to imagine the 'horrible physical reactions to barbed wire—guards—orders—restrictions, the mental oppressions—no natural outlets for healthy normal human beings', in a world of 'dreary monotony'.[188] He, like Hutchinson, suggested no alternative release for men such as himself who missed the sexual and romantic company of women.

The question arises: how did members of the cohort actively manage their desire? An evidentiary challenge ensues: like Baines and Hutchinson,

---

[184] See Kingsley Brown's account of *Vorlarger* Fanny in *Bonds of Wire*, p. 123.
[185] AAWFA: Hutchinson 0540, 17 June, 2003.
[186] Hutchinson FA: Lola Hutchinson, letter to Doug Hutchinson, 1 January 1944.
[187] Hutchinson FA: Doug Hutchinson, letter to Lola Hutchinson, 1 May 1944.
[188] Baines FA: Baines, wartime log book, 5 July 1944, p. 15.

the majority were silent on the matter. Reflecting a deep-seated emotional reticence, only one respondent to John Barrett's survey of former Second AIF servicemen raised the subject 'after much hesitation'.[189] Bill Fordyce skirted the issue when his interviewer asked, 'What about solo relief shall we call it?' 'Not that I knew of you know. Maybe.'[190] Ron Mackenzie was less coy in his memoir when he recalled that, '[t]here were many jokes, some of them very funny, about masturbation, and innumerable tales of heterosexuality and homosexuality'.[191] The cohort's silence emanates from the social and religious stigma attached to 'self-abuse'.[192] For some, like Colditz's padre, Ellison Platt, it was intrinsically linked to homosexuality.[193] Censorship of private wartime writings, the fact that diaries were often written with another reader in mind (such as a wife or 'posterity'), and the public nature of memoir and oral history, deterred the majority of the cohort from directly addressing the subject.[194]

There is some evidence, however. Keith Carmody recorded in his diary that he dreamed of a woman he deemed 'some piece of work'. Shortly after, he had 'another distressing dream'.[195] George Archer's wartime diary suggests that some of the men enjoyed sexual horseplay. On one night, a bar of chocolate was the prize for a 'strip tease'. Archer later wrote that one of

---

[189] Barrett, *We Were There*, p. 350.
[190] AAWFA: Fordyce 0523, 19 June 2003.
[191] Mackenzie, *An Ordinary War 1940–1945*, p. 63.
[192] Social stigma: Michael Kirby, Foreword, Bongiorno, *The Sex Lives of Australians*, pp. ix–x. 'Self abuse': Mrs Trigellis Smith, 'The Child and Its Future', *Weekly Times* (Melbourne), 22 August 1936, p. 31; Vischer, *Barbed-Wire Disease*, p. 42; Bongiorno, p. 96. Sin and unnatural, and linked to insanity: Bongiorno, *The Sex Lives of Australians*, pp. 4, 95.
[193] Duggan (ed.), *Padre in Colditz*, 1978, p. 103.
[194] For public nature of letters, refer Lyons, 'Love Letters and Writing Practices', p. 235. Makepeace notes how wartime log books and some diaries were written with external readerships in mind, Makepeace, *Captives of War*, pp. 15–16.
[195] Barker, *Keith Carmody*, p. 66.

his roommates was 'the most sexy chap [I've] met for ages'.[196] Sexual horseplay is part of 'ritualised male bonding in institutional settings', not necessarily relating to homosexuality.[197] Some, however, were uncomfortable when it verged too close to homoerotic 'exhibitionism'.[198] By not denying it and emphasising the humour of their situation, as they so often did, Ron Mackenzie implied that, despite their cramped living conditions, at least some of the cohort accepted and even enjoyed masturbation as they actively solved the natural, though awkward, problem of thwarted desire for absent women. At the most basic level, the need for 'solo relief' reinforced that their libidos were intact and that they remained virile. This, however, was not always the case.

Doug Hutchinson's obvious love and constancy for Lola perhaps explains his lack of interest in other women, yet he attributed it to his advancing years and deteriorating strength (he had recently turned 28 when liberated). 'Physically, I probably wouldn't have been up to it anyhow', he explained, because he was 'in pretty poor condition. When the war was ended, we hadn't been fed properly for a long time, and physically, you're just out of condition'.[199] Most fitness efforts had tailed off in the final months as a consequence of food shortages. Running had been modified to walking around the perimeter.[200] Bill Fordyce also credited the absence of desire to reduced rations. 'I always thought that it was hunger that you never worried

[196] Archer FA: Archer, 1942 Diary, 25 November and 7 December 1942.
[197] Smaal, *Sex, Soldiers and the South Pacific, 1939–45*, p. 95.
[198] Quote: Younger, *No Flight From the Cage*, p. 116.
[199] AAWFA: Fordyce 0523, 19 June 2003; Quote: AAWFA: Hutchinson 0540, 17 June, 2003.
[200] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 23 June 2016.

about that. Truly.'[201] Hunger, however, was not a perennial state, as Fordyce implied. His reply ignored the reality of periodic rather than constant food shortages, such as during the early days of captivity or when the Germans implemented reprisals for attempted escapes or other rule infractions. While those imprisoned in Buchenwald were on a starvation diet, the hungriest time for the majority of the cohort was during the latter months of the war, particularly during and after the forced marches, when many men experienced the full effects of starvation, including nutritional diseases and diminished libido.[202] Ronald Baines, who frequently wrote in his diary about his 'honeypot', mentioned Irene only three times between 1 January and 27 April 1945.[203] 'The perpetual hunger is a strain', he recorded on 4 March 1945. 'Amazing how since we left Sagan, the main topic of conversation is food. … Mail and sex have faded into the background … unless man has a full belly, little else interests him.'[204]

As they had done before, the airmen laughed at their plight, recording in visual anecdotes their hunger-induced lack of interest. Arthur Schrock drew a sleeping kriegie's dreams. Year one was of food. Year two was of a

---

[201] AAWFA: Fordyce 0523, 19 June 2003. For details hunger-related reduced libido, refer Vance, 'Sexual Relations' in Vance (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Prisoners of War and Internment*, p. 357; Reiss, 'The Importance of Being Men', p. 29. For an analysis of the nutritional value of rations in German POW camps, including Stalag Luft III, refer to Tharakan, 'Nutrition in Warfare: a Retrospective Evaluation of Undernourishment in RAF Prisoners of War during World War II', *Medical Humanities*, 36, 2010, pp. 52–56. Dr Eugene C. Jacobs studied the effects of starvation on prisoners of the Japanese and notes the loss of libido and lack of nightly emissions. Jacobs, 'Effects of Starvation on Sex Hormones in the Male', p. 230. Adrian Gilbert quotes a humorously exaggerated account of diminished libido in *POW.* p. 117.

[202] Keith Mills FA: Keith Mills, letter to Phyllis Mills, 22 July 1945. DVA medical records reveal that many were malnourished and had lost weight. Some conditions were exacerbated by dysentery.

[203] Baines FA: Baines, 'A Wartime Log', entries dated 19 February 1945 and 15 March 1945, pp. 23, 25. For 'honeypot', refer Baines FA: Baines, wartime log book, pp. 17 and 20, 17 August and 16 October 1944.

[204] Baines FA: Baines, 'A Wartime Log', entry dated 4 March 1945.

vampish siren. Year three was simply the sleeping prisoner.[205] Bill Fordyce's and Alex Kerr's wartime log books include images of a returned kriegie ignoring the embrace of a shapely, well-dressed consort in favour of a sandwich and food trolley.[206] Once they were liberated, however, the well-fed airmen again became interested in women and made up for lost time. Ronald Baines rushed off on a second honeymoon with Irene. Others married within weeks.

*****

Self-censorship regarding their true physical condition was universal.[207] If airmen captives were afraid of the stigma of 'lack of moral fibre', it may have reflected a concerted effort to declare to air force and family that they were not suffering low morale. It also reflected the cultural importance of happiness—negativity was to be avoided—and indicates their desire to present the image of a positive emotional state: they were cheery and, as such, they were well.[208] More than anything, however, the cohort's fit and well composure successfully promoted to loved ones a 'masculine-soldierly image', as Matthias states in relation to his cohort, replete with 'heterosexual desires'.[209] The theatre provided a 'safety valve' to assuage those desires but, not in all cases. Even as it entertained and provided an opportunity to mentally

[205] Simpson RC: Arthur Schrock, wartime log book, p. 14.
[206] Fordyce FA: Fordyce, wartime log book, p. 21; Kerr archive: Alex Kerr, wartime log book, p. 61.
[207] Ariotti, '"At Present Everything is Making us most Anxious": Families of Australian Prisoners in Turkey', in Beaumont, Grant, and Pegram (eds), *Beyond Surrender*, p. 62; Johnson, 'Resisting Captivity', PhD thesis, p. 198.
[208] Stearns, 'In Private: The Individual and the Domestic Community', in Davidson and Damousi, (eds), *A Cultural History of the Emotions. Volume 6. In the Modern and Post-Modern Age*, pp. 134–135.
[209] Reiss, 'The Importance of Being Men', p. 27.

escape the confines of barbed wire and remind the kriegies of pre-war lives in the company of women, it potentially threatened their masculinity and, for some, challenged their heterosexuality. Captivity, passing time, and increasing senses of emotional and sexual estrangement aggravated the airmen's attempts to maintain their place in their marital and romantic relationships. Letters and photographs of women in many ways moderated the strains of separation, but they also presented challenges. For some, the romantic divide widened and, the airmen could not always throw off the 'kriegie blues' which arose from sexual and romantic estrangement. Chapter seven explores the emotional and psychological implications of the 'blues', and going 'round the bend'.

Chapter Six: Images

Photographs record and evoke emotion. For men like Ronald Baines, they also imaginatively brought loved ones into camp. Recollections of wives, fiancées, and sweethearts could be emotionally uplifting, or they could stimulate depression. In image 68, Baines' wife, Irene, mirrors his own slumped pose. The images, however, are emotionally dissonant: she is happy, he is sad, desperately missing her. He is also lonely despite, as indicated by the glimpse of the guard tower through the window, never being alone.

Image 67: Photographs of Irene Baines, in Ronald Baines' wartime log book. Baines Family Archive.

Image 68: 'Those Kriegie Blues', pencil, watercolour and photograph collage by Ronald Baines in his wartime log book, p. 95. Baines Family Archive.

Female impersonators brought the image of women into camp. They acted on stage and walked among the men during social occasions such as sports days. Although the 'actresses' took great care to look as realistic as possible, artists such as Albert Comber, Bill Fordyce, and Calton Younger made it clear that they were men dressing up as women, and that reality had only been suspended for the duration of the performance.

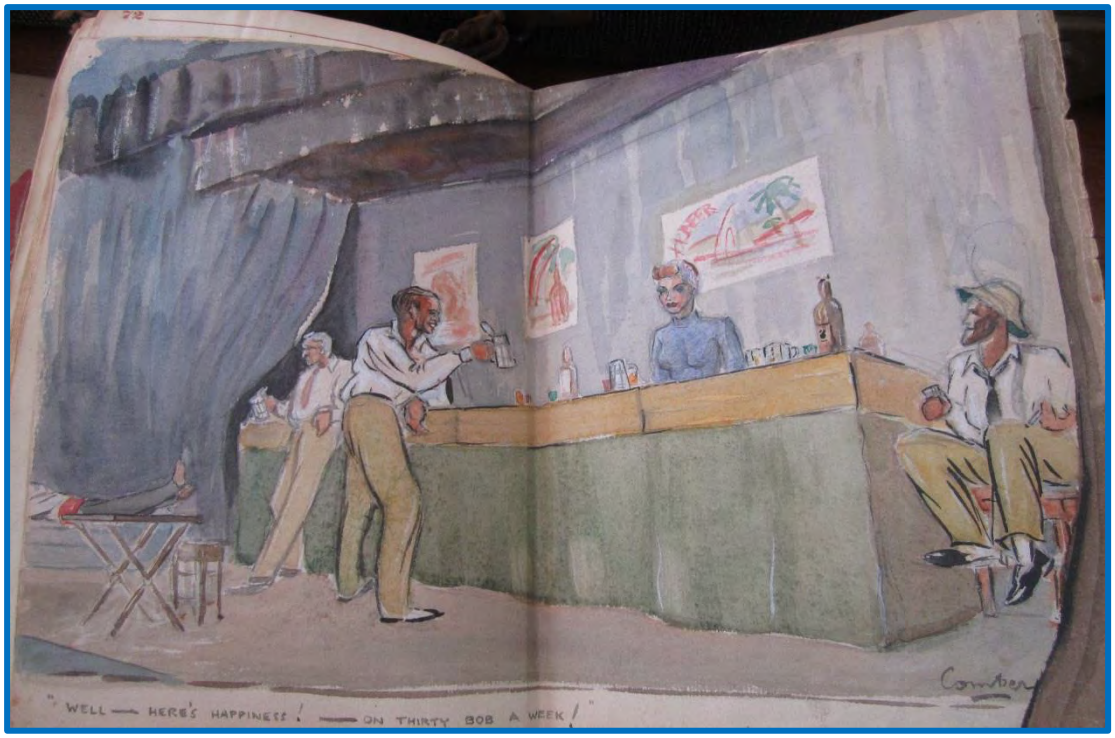


Image 69: 'Well—here's happiness!—On thirty bob a week!', 5 February 1944, by Albert Comber, in Bill Fordyce's wartime log book, p. 72. Fordyce Family Archive.

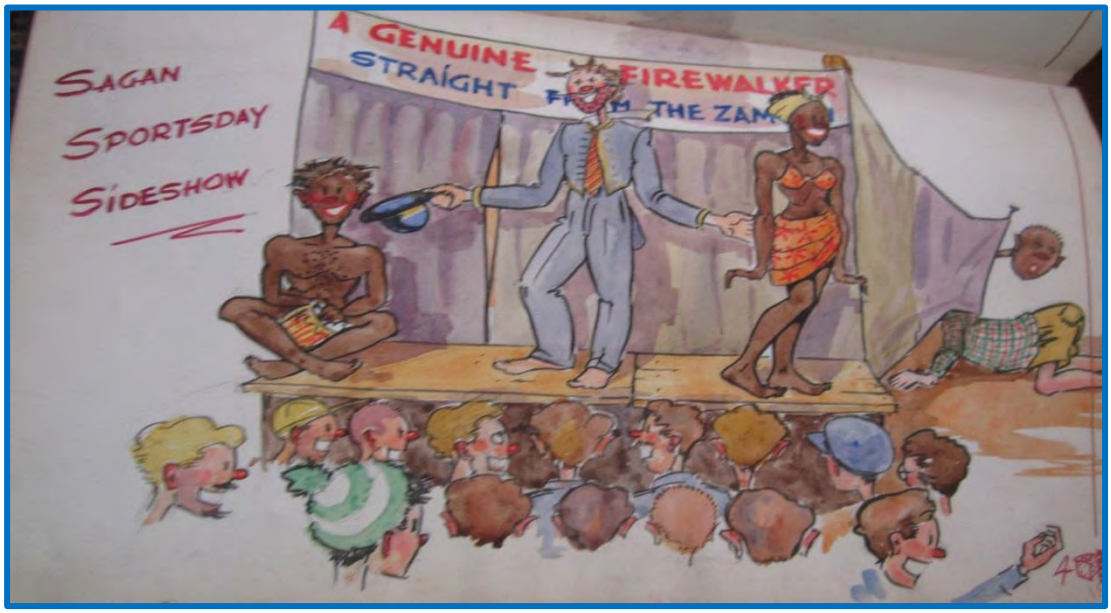


Image 70: 'Sagan Sportsday Sideshow', by Bill Fordyce, in his wartime log book, p. 109. Fordyce Family Archive.

Image 71: 'Yes, It's Gordie King! He'll look all right with a wig, I hope! My God, it was a terrific struggle though', 25 July 1944, by Bill Fordyce, in his wartime log book, p. 59. Fordyce Family Archive.

"Any more of this temperament from young Bill and we'll have to get a new leading lady."

Image 72: 'Any more of this temperament from young Bill and we'll have to get a new leading lady', by Cal Younger, *Get a Load of this*, [p. 42].

The airmen produced a great variety of theatrical productions. One of the most popular, *Messalina*, was a riot of straight and camp humour.

Image 73: 'With you I'd fling myself down anywhere!', 11 September 1944, by Bill Fordyce, in his wartime log book, p. 5. Fordyce Family Archive.

There was nothing romantic about some of the airmen's depictions of women: the female form was a focus of desire and sexual gratification, not love. While amusing, the humour arose from inherent misogynistic tendencies.

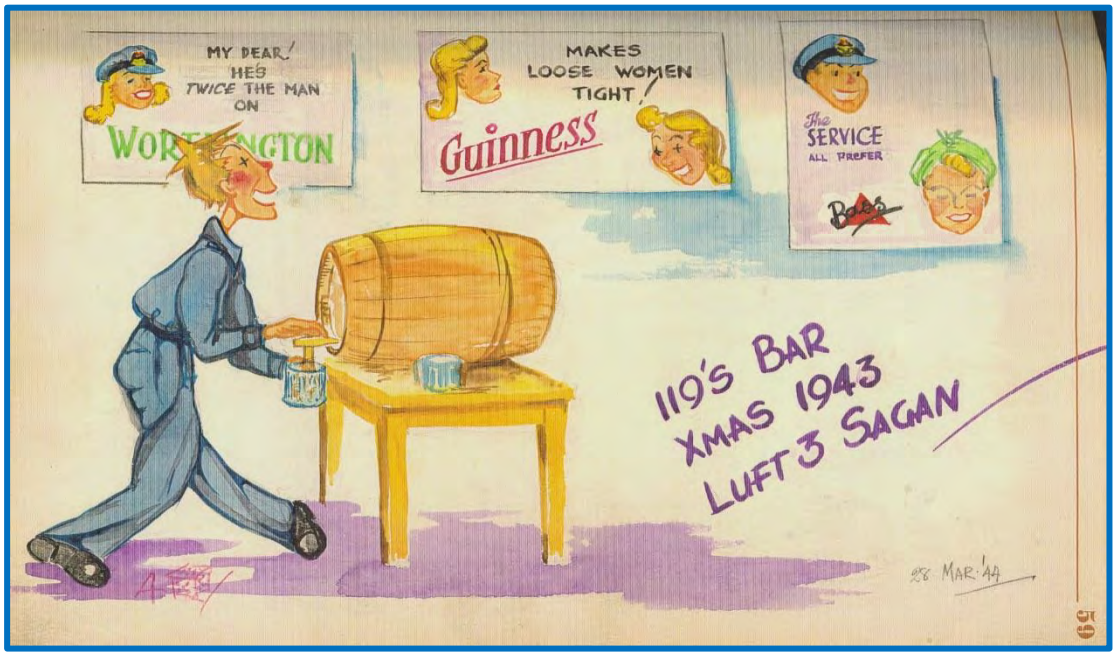


Image 74: '119's Bar Xmas 1943 Luft 3 Sagan', ('Guinness makes loose women tight!'), 28 March 1944, by Bill Fordyce, in his wartime log book, p. 59. Fordyce Family Archive.

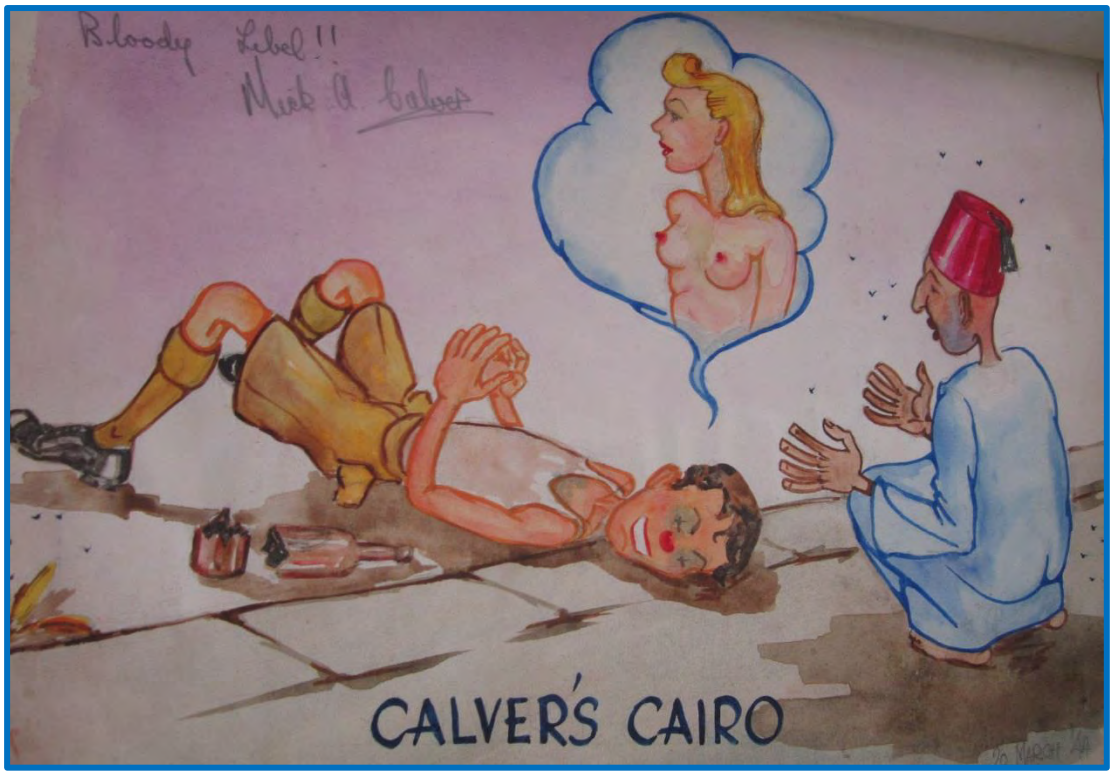


Image 75: 'Calver's Cairo', 20 March 1944, by Bill Fordyce, in his wartime log book, p. 11. Fordyce Family Archive.

Image 76: 'Here's your Popsie Ronnie! Good Luck!', 10 September 1944, unknown artist, in Ronald Baines' wartime log book. Baines Family Archive.

The airmen collectively composed a fit and well narrative. They sent home photographs of fit, healthy-looking men, as well as images of sporting events.

Image 77: Tom Leigh (left) and unidentified friends, Stalag Luft III, East Compound. Bligh Family Archive.

Image 78: Albert Hake (standing, right) and friends. 'Asleep as usual! The other chaps are all New Zealanders, except George [Russell] (kneeling) in front of me. He belongs to Manly Surf Club & shot down on the same "operation" as yours truly. Cheers Albert XXX.' Preen Family Archive.

Image 79: Centre Compound sports day. Kerr Archive.

Maintaining health and fitness was part of the airmen's masculine and martial identities. It also signalled to their loved ones that they were still virile, sexual beings. Extreme hunger, however, affected their sexual desire, yet, as this image indicates, they attempted to laugh it off.

Image 80: 'Re-union!', unknown artist, in Alex Kerr's wartime log book, p. 61. Kerr Archive.

Chapter Seven: Almost Round the Bloody Bend

Prisoners of war were fully aware that captivity affected their states of mind. Jock Bryce, while in the relatively benign PG 35, Padula, recognised a collective 'indefinable abnormality'.[1] Quoting from the chapter of Winston Churchill's memoir entitled 'Durance Vile' which described his imprisonment in 1899, many recorded that wartime internment was 'a melancholy state'.[2] Calton Younger likened his dispiritedness to 'melancholy'.[3] Earle Nelson equated 'those depths of despair' to 'low morale'.[4] Separation from his wife, Irene, stimulated what Ronald Baines called 'Those Kriegie Blues'.[5] Huie Bowden referred to the ''45 Blues' as he entered another year of captivity, and Alec Arnel simply dubbed his despondency, the 'blues'.[6] This chapter examines the cohort's mental health, particularly highlighting the affective dimensions of their psychological states. It explores how the airmen managed threats to their psychological well-being and argues that, as a consequence of their individual and collective agency as both *air men* and men of emotions, as well as their emotional resilience, the majority of the Australian cohort remained 'mentally strong'.[7]

---

[1] Bryce FA: 'Jock Bryce's POW Diary 1942–1945', p. 86.
[2] Churchill's words are drawn from the beginning of Chapter XX, 'In Durance Vile', of his 1939 memoir. ('It is a melancholy state. You are in the power of your enemies. You owe your life to his humanity, and your daily bread to his compassion.') The kriegies misquoted the passage, which they entitled 'The Prisoner of War'. Churchill, *My Early Life*, p. 273. AWM PR88/160: McCleery, wartime log book, pp. 53–54; Baines FA: Baines, wartime log book, page facing title page; Burgess RC: Keith Mills, wartime log book, p. 10; Johnston FA: Johnston, wartime log book, p. 32.
[3] Younger, *No Flight From the Cage*, p. 67.
[4] Nelson, *If Winter Comes*, p. 71.
[5] Baines FA: Baines, wartime log book, pencil, watercolour and photograph collage, 'Those Kriegie Blues', p. 95.
[6] Bowden FA: 'Diary of Huie Bowden July 1944–May 1945', drawing, 'Bod after supper—'45 Blues', 2 January 1945, p. 58; Arnel archive: Arnel, letters to Margery Gray, 15 September and 10 October 1944.
[7] AAWFA: Hutchinson 0540, 17 June, 2003.

Round the bend

That prisoners of war suffered mental disturbance was well-established. Swiss physician and official prison camp visitor, Adolf Vischer, identified a 'neurosis' among Great War captives which he termed 'barbed-wire disease'. The syndrome was exacerbated by the restrictions, rules and regulations of their captors, overcrowding, bland food of little variety, monotony and segregation from women.[8] Such an abnormal existence influenced the 'mental processes' of the prisoner and, as précised by British neurologist Samuel Alexander Kinnier Wilson, is characterised by 'irritability, difficulty in concentrating, restlessness, failure of memory, moodiness, depression, and unpleasant dreams'.[9] Barbed-wire disease was again apparent during the Second World War.

Physical causes such as nutritional deprivation could also affect mental health. So poor was their 'semi-starvation' diets on occasion that many kriegies suffered malnutrition and deprivation-related symptoms, particularly in the latter stages of the war in prison camps, on the forced march, and in the final months before liberation.[10] While not perhaps recognised at the time, poor nutrition and lack of essential vitamins and minerals—especially Vitamin D—can aggravate depression and negative moods.[11] Thiamine (Vitamin B1) deficiency results in neurological symptoms which include poor memory, irritability, sleep disturbance—all of which were considered

[8] Vischer, *Barbed-Wire Disease*.
[9] Vischer, *Barbed-Wire Disease*, introductory essay by Kinnier Wilson, p. 3.
[10] 'semi-starvation': DVA MX167147-01: letter to Deputy Commissioner, Repatriation Department, 24 September 1952; DVA MX161399-01: appeal on determination, 15 February 1977.
[11] Cuomo, Giordano, Goracci, and Fagiolini, 'Depression and Vitamin D Deficiency: Causality, Assessment, and Clinical Practice Implications', pp. 606–614.

symptomatic of confinement 'psychosis'.[12] Morale was high and airmen were buoyant during summer when they could play sport, spend time out-of-doors, or carry out escape work, but spirits fell as winter approached and set in.[13] During the winter of 1943–44, George Matthews, the Senior British Medical Officer, reported that the camp was afflicted by 'a melancholic irritation for which there is no palliative', and, indeed, one man attributed Germany's 'extreme weather conditions' to his 'mental stress'.[14] As winter deepened, Keith Carmody spent more and more time 'in the pit' (his bunk) and, at the end of his sixth month in captivity, pencilled in his wartime log: '**UTTER PITS!!**'. By January 1945, he had diagnosed himself as suffering 'depression'.[15]

The kriegies' rich, ironic humour inspired colloquialisms for their off-kilter mental states and, ultimately, helped to manage them. In their post-war recollections, Richard Winn and Doug Hutchinson spoke of men who had 'gone off their heads'.[21] Geoff Cornish recalled those who were 'a bit stir happy, a bit crazy'.[22] The phrase favoured by members of the cohort was 'round the bend', an old naval term for someone who was eccentric or who had gone mad.[23] 'Round the bend' appeared in the Australians' wartime log book vocabulary lists. They used it in their diaries. It also found a natural

---

[12] Gibbens, 'The Psychology and Psychopathology of the Prisoner-of-War', MD thesis, p. 4; Vischer, *Barbed-Wire Disease*, introductory essay by Kinnier Wilson, p. 3.
[13] For morale-raising aspect of sport, refer Cohen, 'Behind Barbed Wire: Sport and Australian Prisoners of War', p. 64.
[14] 'melancholic irritation': NAUK WO 32/10757: Matthews' report, 17 February 1944. 'mental stress': DVA QMX076796-01: statement in support of a claim for medical treatment and pension, 18 July 1984.
[15] Barker, *Keith Carmody*, pp. 61–62.
[21] AAWFA: Winn 1508, 4 March 2004; AAWFA: Hutchinson 0540, 17 June, 2003.
[22] AAWFA: Cornish 1388, 2 July 2004.
[23] Alexander records: Associate Professor Amanda Laugesen, Director, Australian National Dictionary Centre for details of this phrase's origins, email 24 October 2018.

place in their reminiscences. Given its British origins, 'round the bend' was not used exclusively by the Australians. Clare Makepeace notes that it was used widely throughout German POW camps.[24] Despite broad use, 'round the bend' had no precise or consistent meaning and encompassed a range of prison-camp mental states. For Ken Todd it meant 'mental, flak happy'.[25] Earle Nelson defined it as 'mentally unstable'.[26] Alex Kerr noted the term was used for those who 'talked to themselves', as well as others who had lost their mind, or hope.[27] As indicated by a series of cartoons entitled 'The evolution of a Kriegie' in Kerr's wartime log book, 'round the bend' was a condition that developed over time. Language such as 'forlorn', and 'dejected' revealed the affective dimension of the state.[28]

The preference for colloquialisms to describe their conditions is understandable given the social stigma attached to mental illness.[29] Airmen, perhaps, had an equally compelling reason. The fine line between legitimate flying fatigue and accompanying nervous strain, and the air force's disciplinary designation 'lack of moral fibre'—with its associated stain of cowardice, implication of failure to fulfil service duty, and sense of letting down their fellow crew members—perhaps saw some operational airmen and prisoners of war equating mental disturbances with LMF.[31] In their eyes,

---

[24] *Captives of War*, pp. 154, 160. New Zealanders also used the term. Refer Johnson, 'Resisting Captivity', PhD thesis, p. 212.
[25] Todd FA: Ken Todd, wartime log book, p. 12.
[26] Nelson, *If Winter Comes*, p. 56.
[27] IWMSA: Kerr: 24826, 18 March 2003.
[28] Kerr archive: Kerr, wartime log book, pp. 56–58.
[29] '"Worry Clinics" for Illness of Mind. Stigma that should not exist is still here', *The Sun* (Sydney), 8 November 1936, 13; 'Mental Hospital Reforms', *Argus* (Melbourne), 10 May 1938, 6; 'Mental Disease', *The Daily News* (Perth), 6 November 1941, 6.
[31] Hobbins, '"Living in Hell but Still Smiling": Australian Psychiatric Casualties of War during the Malaya–Singapore Campaign, 1941–42', p. 40; Borsht Archive: Borsht, 'A Life Well Lived', p. 16.

mental imbalance was something to fear.[32] It also ran counter to the perception of the air force's status as a physical and mental elite.[33] The taint of mental illness also threatened their own conception of themselves as martial, masculine *air men*, and their fit and well composure. Not only was mental frailty seen as a feminised condition, the Great War's shell-shocked veterans—those of their fathers' and uncles' generation—were considered the 'antithesis of Anzac masculinity'; they were humiliated, 'failed Anzacs'.[34]

As well as adopting a humorous name, the kriegies treated their state of mind flippantly. They enshrined 'round the bend' in their poetry when they copied into their wartime log books a wryly amusing ten-verse poem entitled, 'There's Always Bloody Something'. 'Now I'm near the bloody end / Almost round the bloody bend / That's the general bloody trend / Bloody, Bloody, Bloody.'[35] Underneath that humour, however, was recognition that the kriegies could actively manage their own psychological health. Calton Younger reframed 'round the bend' into a less fearful, almost desirable 'blissful state, that kriegie nirvana' of mental escape in a series of captioned drawings entitled 'Stages in the life of a P.O.W.' which depict the phases of captivity and how the 'hero' responds to them. As with Kerr's 'The evolution

[32] Alexander records: Borsht, interview 28 January 2016.
[33] Re perception of psychological elite: 'Pilot Officer Gould. Letter From Germany', *Kiama Independent and Shoalhaven Advertiser*, 30 November 1940, p. 3; DVA NMX188716-01: supporting statement, 25 January 1984; AWM S00551 KMSA: Coombes, Geoffrey Bernard, 23 March 1989; Alexander records: Pat Martin, email 11 March 2017.
[34] Feminised condition: Karageorgos, 'The Bushman at War: Gendered Medical Responses to Combat Breakdown in South Africa, 1899–1902', p. 32; Larsson, *Shattered Anzacs*. First quote, p. 160, second quote p. 159.
[35] Johnston FA: Johnston, wartime log book, pp. 42–43; Kerr archive: Alex Kerr, wartime log book, p. 12; AWM PR88/160: McCleery, wartime log book, pp. 44–45.

of a Kriegie', emotionally-laden language predominates.[36] The 'evolution' hero also attempts to manage his mental health through exercise by 'doing innumerable circuits' around the compound.[37]

Moods, anxieties, and mental health

In Charles Lark's view, the effects of segregation from the 'outside world' for an indefinite time, 'surrounded by grim reminders that for some years they cannot live but must merely exist', had an 'inevitable mental effect'. There were 'many hardships, inconveniences and humiliations to be endured', he wrote, which made it difficult for the kriegies to attune themselves to their new life.[38] Despite bright letters to his family, George Archer's diary reveals that even after six weeks of captivity he still had not acclimatised.[39] 'I can't settle down. Hope to shortly.'[40] As they adjusted, the airmen were assailed by a variety of moods, or emotional states of mind. Homesickness was prevalent. 'How homesick I feel for your company', Guy Grey-Smith told Helen-in-his-diary.[41] While they, perhaps, did not admit it at the time, some, like *Barry Bridges*, worried about 'ever seeing the war through', their 'ultimate fate', and that they were 'living on borrowed time'.[42] The result, as Alec Arnel

[36] Younger, *Get a Load of this*, [pp. 30–31]. While this is similar to Alex Kerr's 'The evolution of a Kriegie', Kerr's humorous depiction does not reframe 'round the bend' into a 'blissful state'.
[37] Kerr archive: Kerr, wartime log book, pp. 56–58.
[38] NAA A705, 166/24/597 Lark: 'Special Leave for Returned Prisoners of War', 15 January 1944.
[39] Archer FA: Archer, 1942 Diary, 11 September 1942.
[40] Archer FA: Archer, 1942 Diary, 16 September 1942.
[41] AWM PR05675: Grey-Smith, diary, 26 May 1943.
[42] 'seeing the war through': DVA MX167147-01: statement in support of a claim for medical treatment and pension, 29 June 1975. 'ultimate fate': DVA MX076290-01: appellant's letter, 5 October 1953. 'borrowed time': DVA NMX293081-01: lifestyle questionnaire, 27 April 1994.

recalled, was a constant state of tension.[43] They were 'filled with anxiety'.[44] Provoked by circumstances, they were on occasion 'cheesed off', 'browned off', 'brarned off', 'brassed off', or felt 'very brassed'.[45] Some, had 'had it'.[46] There were moments when Huie Bowden felt 'grim' and had the sense 'of having had the place and most of its inmates'.[47] Ill-treatment such as hours-long roll calls in snow or rain could bring on a 'harshness' of mood in even the most placid-tempered.[48] More often than not, *everything* about captivity impinged on their state of mind: 'There's always bloody something'.[49]

There is some disagreement about when prisoners of war started to succumb to the trials of confinement. While Swiss prison camp observer Vischer found that any one imprisoned for longer than six months could be assailed by strain, British neurologist Kinnier Wilson stated that, after two or three years of captivity, some men 'sank into a settled melancholy which took the place of hope and cheerfulness'.[50] Stalag Luft III's Senior British Officer, Herbert Massey, found that mental strain was particularly apparent in those who had been confined for more than two years.[51] POW medical officer

---

[43] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 29 October 2015.
[44] Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'The Complete Tour', Lumsden, letter 5 March 1987.
[45] 'cheesed off': Younger, *Get a Load of this*, [p. 30]. 'browned off': AWM PR03099: Brickhill, letter to Del Fox, 27 November 1943; Archer FA: Archer, 1942 Diary, 16 September 1942; Arnel archive: Train, 'A Barbed-Wire World', 28 February 1943, p. 37. 'brarned off': AWM PRMF0039: Every, wartime log book, p. 23. 'brassed off': Barker, *Keith Carmody*, p. 60; Bowden FA: 'Diary of Huie Bowden July 1944–May 1945', 20 April 1945, p. 98. 'brassed': Baines FA: Baines, wartime log book, 11 December 1944, p. 21.
[46] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letter to Noela Hake, 28 March 1943; Archer FA: Archer, wartime log book, p. 119.
[47] Bowden FA: 'Diary of Huie Bowden July 1944–May 1945', 16 October 1944, p. 24, 20 April 1945, pp. 97–98.
[48] Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'The Complete Tour, Lumsden, letter 23 March 1989.
[49] Johnston FA: Johnston, wartime log book, pp. 42–43; Kerr archive: Alex Kerr, wartime log book, p. 12; AWM PR88/160: McCleery, wartime log book, pp. 44–45.
[50] Vischer, *Barbed-Wire Disease*, 16, 53. Quote: introductory essay by Kinnier Wilson, p. 9.
[51] NAUK WO 32/10757: Matthews' report, 17 February 1944; To The Secretary, Prisoners of War Department, Swiss Legation, Berlin, From Group Captain H.M. Massey, Senior

Archibald Cochrane determined that it became apparent in the third year of captivity, with the fourth year leaving 'no one unscathed'.[52] Frank Falkenmire pitied 'the old prisoners. Some have been here 4 and 5 years and are looking bad. They'll all be round the bend soon'.[53] In reality, anyone could succumb at any time, particularly those who had experienced battle wounds or bad treatment.[54] Robert Mills, a former Buchenwald internee, had been captive for a little over four months when he was admitted to Stalag Luft III's sick quarters for undernourishment and nervous strain.[55] *Warren Nash*, who was captured in February 1944, 'suffered a lot of nervous strain while POW'.[56] No matter how busy they had kept themselves, they could still fall victim. *Marcus Myatt* was confined to the camp sick quarters with '*Nervöses Leiden*' (nervous condition) a little over two years after his September 1940 capture, and then again with *asthénie* (general fatigue, depressive or feeble state) for almost three weeks in November–December 1944.[57]

Moods had many triggers. Ronald Baines' were often linked to whether or not he had heard from his wife, Irene. They swung from elation at receiving a letter to desolation on mailless days. Albert Hake's 'violently fluctuating temprement [sic]' was, as he told his wife, Noela, 'just a natural reflex of boring circumstances'.[58] Time started to lose meaning for Colin Phelps. It

British Officer, Stalag Luft III, 23 February 1944, Re – or ex-patriation of old prisoners of war Article 72 of the Geneva Convention (Massey's covering letter to Matthews' report).
[52] Cochrane, 'Notes on the Psychology of Prisoners of War', p. 284.
[53] Falkenmire, 'Diary Extracts – Stalagluft III', 22 December 1944, in King, *War Gave Us Wings*, 116.
[54] Wessely, 'Twentieth-century theories on combat motivation and breakdown', p. 272, note 16; Hobbins, '"Living in Hell but Still Smiling": Australian Psychiatric Casualties of War during the Malaya–Singapore Campaign, 1941–42', 60, note 49.
[55] Burgess RC: Robert Mills, wartime log book, p. 20.
[56] DVA XC026892-02: statement by Dr J.M.G., 20 December 1949.
[57] NAA A13950 POW identification card.
[58] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letter to Noela Hake, 21 May 1943.

‘seems to drag in some ways, but in others I find it hard to realize that I’ve been down for over three months’.[59] Huie Bowden and his friend Snowy felt ‘very low today’ in April 1945 as ‘the end of our imprisonment seems a long way off’. In such a situation, ‘we find ourselves unable to maintain high spirits continuously now’.[60] (Ronald Baines experienced similar sensations during that period.[61]) Anniversaries of capture also generated despondency. ‘TWO YEAR KRIEGIE and still here for some time by the look of things’, wrote Baines.[62] Despite yuletide and wedding anniversaries providing opportunities to reconnect with loved ones, spirits often fell at those times: ‘My hope to be with you at Christmas will have to be postponed’, Justin O’Byrne conceded.[63] Guy Grey-Smith’s pangs of homesickness became more acute as his wife’s birthday drew near.[64] He experienced a prolonged low period over the summer of 1943 during which he variously ‘felt very depressed and not so hot in any direction’ as he worried about his health and about Helen.[65] Grief was also a trigger. ‘I hear of my dear brother’s death—Now Keith has gone’, wrote Grey Smith. ‘Words fail me when I try & describe this irrepairable [sic] loss of my favourite brother.’[66] ‘It was a great shock learning of Mrs Rob’s death’, Albert Hake told Noela. ‘She was a great friend and mother to me. Her kindness and understanding sympathy helped

[59] MHRC CPA: Colin Phelps, letter to parents, 7 May 1944.
[60] Bowden FA: ‘Diary of Huie Bowden July 1944–May 1945’, 20 April 1945, p. 98.
[61] Baines FA: Baines, wartime log book, 8 January 1945, p. 22.
[62] Baines FA: Baines, wartime log book, 18 November 1944, p. 20.
[63] O’Byrne FA: Justin O’Byrne, letter to family, 1 November 1942.
[64] AWM PR05675: Grey-Smith, diary, 24 May 1941, 26 May 1943.
[65] AWM PR05675: Grey-Smith, diary, 14 May 1943.
[66] AWM PR05675: Grey-Smith, diary, 24 December 1942.

me through many a physical and mental hurt. I have lost my adopted mother.'[67]

Colin Phelps initially exhibited little interest in his new life. 'There are plenty of things to do, lots of opportunities to study almost any subject. But I'm afraid I haven't been able to settle down to do anything.'[68] Phelps shunned all communal activity and the melancholic tone of his letters improved little over the following months. With the welcome receipt of long-awaited mail almost seven months after capture, however, he immediately cheered up, looked to the future, and started involving himself in camp life. 'Hopes of the war being over by Christmas are very high. We had some new potatoes and a marrow out of our garden for supper tonight and made a really marvellous meal. The 50 lap inter-block relay race was a great success, even if our block did finish a bad last. Weather is still warm and I do a lot of sunbathing.'[69]

As Ronald Baines implied when he described varying moods as '[t]he wavering graph of optimism and depression', emotional states were not fixed.[70] They altered over time. Bill Fordyce's visual anecdote of his deteriorating mental state shows a decline from the smilingly confident high optimism of July 1942—'Yes! Will be home for Xmas'—to the total abject misery of March 1945—'I give up. They can do any damned thing'.[71] Moods could also be communal. 'Everybody feeling a bit depressed lately', Grey-

[67] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letter to Noela Hake, 30 January 1944.
[68] MHRC CPA: Colin Phelps, letter to parents, 7 May 1944.
[69] MHRC CPA: Colin Phelps, letter to parents, 13 August 1944.
[70] Baines FA: Baines, wartime log book, 5 July 1944, p. 15; Bryce FA: 'Jock Bryce's POW Diary 1942–1945', p. 164; Lark, *A Lark on the Wing*, p. 69.
[71] Fordyce FA: Fordyce, wartime log book, title page.

Smith recorded in June 1943.[72] When optimism 'is dashed to the ground', as Doug Hutchinson recalled, particularly when tied to the course of the war, 'there remains a horrid atmosphere of depression'.[73] 'The state of mind of the prisoners at this Camp is, naturally, very bad as a result of the death of the 50 officers who were shot', observed the Protecting Powers' representatives after their 22 May 1944 inspection.[74] As 'the year 1944 came to its close, the prevailing mood [in Belaria] was one of mingled hope and misgiving', Bruce Lumsden remembered.[75]

Fear is a response to an immediate threat. Anxiety, however, is a more generalised state, relating to a perceived or anticipated threat. Both fear and anxiety have clear affective dimensions and were accepted facts of operational flying.[79] Rather than labelling the generalised state 'anxiety', it was designated persistent 'nervous strain'.[80] Such a condition, regardless of label, was also a fact of captivity but, while accepted, it was no less difficult to bear, as Ronald Baines recorded in September 1944. 'I'm sure a lot of the chaps won't be able to stand the strain of another winter here, plus the usual conditions, we are overcrowded & underfed, very little mail comes in, no cigarette or personal parcels, and then the fierce mental strain of studying and

---

[72] AWM PR05675: Grey-Smith, diary, 12 June 1943.
[73] Hutchinson FA: Doug Hutchinson, letter to Lola Hutchinson, 7 October 1944. Similar ups-and-downs were experienced by Huie Bowden and his room as they followed the course of the war, and by Jock Bryce. Bowden FA: 'Diary of Huie Bowden July 1944–May 1945', 15 October 1944, pp. 18–19; Bryce FA: 'Jock Bryce's POW Diary 1942–1945', p. 164.
[74] NAUK WO 224/63A: Red Cross and Protecting Powers reports, visit 22 May 1944, Discipline, p. 5.
[75] Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'The Complete Tour', Lumsden, letter 23 March 1989.
[79] Affective dimensions: Bourke, 'Fear and Anxiety: Writing about Emotion in Modern History', p. 126. [No author], 'The Psychiatry of Wartime Flying', p. 891; Jones, '"LMF"', p. 440.
[80] Jones and Wessely, 'British Prisoners-of-War: From Resilience to Psychological Vulnerability', p. 172; Cochrane, 'Notes on the Psychology of Prisoners of War', pp. 282–284. 'Nervous strain': Burgess RC: Robert Mills, wartime log book, p. 20.

thinking of the war situation, which seems so good, but still so vague & indecisive.'[81]

Despite the Geneva Convention, the captive airmen experienced many threats to their personal security. They never felt entirely safe, Alec Arnel recalled; fear was constant.[82] Justin O'Byrne thought they would starve to death.[83] Albert Comber was afraid he would 'never make it home alive'.[84] Escape work shattered his sense of safety and mental well-being.[85] He found underground work 'terrifying'; he, like others with claustrophobia continually battled the 'panicky feeling that accompanied fears of being entrapped by a cave-in in the confined space'.[86] Some were caught in tunnel collapses, including *Marcus Myatt*. '[T]wo of us had to be dug out' of one, he recalled. While acknowledging 'our very debilitated state … did not apparently cause additional physical injury', *Myatt* revealed the psychological effect of the event (which occurred at Oflag VI-B, Warburg). It 'was a terribly depressing experience as one man had already died of asphyxiation'.[87]

The aftermath of escapes also emotionally and psychologically affected the airmen. In addition to deep grief, the Protecting Powers' observers detected 'a great nervousness in the whole camp' after the March 1944 Great Escape. Both British and American senior officers were concerned 'about the deplorable effect' of the ensuing reprisals on 'the mental state of the

---

[81] Baines FA: Baines, wartime log book, 24 September 1944, p. 19.
[82] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 27 November 2014.
[83] O'Byrne FA: O'Byrne, 'Nine o'clock above!'
[84]AWM: A.H. Comber, artist, letter 16 December 1990.
[85] DVA MX078596-01: smoking questionnaire 19 January 1988.
[86] DVA MX078596-01: report from G.S.S Consultant Psychiatrist to Dr E.A.K., 31 March 1989.
[87] DVA NCPX25587-01: supplementary letter of explanation to injuries, 18 July 1970 [1978].

prisoners'.[88] The prevailing 'insecurity felt by the prisoners of war', lingered.[89] Indeed, the memory of that time stayed with *Julian Macpherson* for many decades, detracting from his mental well-being. 'We were not treated well after that episode.'[90]

For some, the constant undercurrent of fear proved a factor in temporary or long-term mental distress.[91] The 'privations suffered' by the airmen led to a 'mental instability in the camp' which 'continuously occupied' George Matthews and his staff who included Australian doctor Roger Playoust of the Australian Army Medical Corps and medical orderlies Geoff Cornish and Englishman Eric Stephenson.[92]

Constant anxiety had physiological consequences.[101] Indeed, the relationship between gastrointestinal symptoms and anxiety and other nervous conditions has been long established, with both German and British researchers recognising the link.[102] 'Gastric neurosis'—a nervous upset involving the digestive system—was a common term at the time.[103] The

---

[88] NAUK WO 224/63A: Red Cross and Protecting Powers reports, 17–18 April 1944, General impression, p. 7.
[89] NAUK WO 224/63A: Red Cross and Protecting Powers reports, 17 July 1944, General impression, p. 7.
[90] DVA NMX293081-01: lifestyle questionnaire 27 April 1994.
[91] DVA QMX148794-01; DVA MX078596-01; DVA MX247300-01; DVA NMSS04454-01; DVA NMX272113-01.
[92] NAUK WO 32/10757: Matthews' report, 17 February 1944. 'privations suffered': DVA QMX058112-02: medical history sheet, 29 September 1967. Both Cornish and Stephenson became doctors after the war.
[101] Steinberg, 'Emotions and History in Eastern Europe', in Matt and Stearns, (eds), *Doing Emotions History*, p. 74.
[102] Farber and Micon, 'Gastric Neurosis in a Military Service', pp. 343–361; Ackerknecht, 'The History of Psychosomatic Medicine', pp. 17–24; Miller, 'The Mind and Stomach at War: Stress and Abdominal Illness in Britain c.1939–1945'; Werden, 'Is it All in Your Mind? Gastrointestinal Problems, Anxiety and Depression', pp. 113–118; Wang, Guo, and Yang, 'Gastrointestinal problems in modern wars: clinical features and possible mechanisms'.
[103] 'Nerves of the Stomach', in 'Service Bureau: Health' column, *The Sun* (Sydney), 17 January 1937, p. 15; 'This Week's Diary of a Doctor: Friday—Psychological', *The Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), 14 January 1939, p. 4; Farber and Micon, 'Gastric Neurosis in a Military Service', pp. 343–361.

wartime work of Desmond Arnott, an early practitioner of psychiatric medicine, also reveals that some stomach complaints were linked to mental states.[104] Post-liberation boards also clearly understood the connection as the medical staff reported on the presence or absence of 'dyspepsia' and 'nervous sequelae'.[105] While some gastrointestinal upsets such as indigestion and diarrhoea were related to infection, hunger, poor quality food, binge eating in times of Red Cross parcel glut (such as at Christmas time), and 'incorrect diet while a POW in Germany', some manifestations were, in fact, psychosomatic i.e., they were caused or exacerbated by some mental stimulus, such as anxiety.[106]

Red Cross reports indicate that gastrointestinal symptoms during captivity were common.[107] Indeed, Eric Stephenson recalled that, during his tenure as medical assistant in the Belaria lazaret, 'vomiting diarrhoea' was one of the most common ailments.[108] However, only a handful of the cohort's camp medical reports and contemporary evidence, post-liberation medical boards, and post-war personal and medical testimony, reveal these conditions.[109] Only two POW identity cards, for example, list stomach-related

---

[104] Arnott, 'Psychiatric Aspects of Dyspepsia in Soldiers', p. 143; 'Obituary. Desmond Arnott, psychiatrist', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 June 1982, p. 19. Arnott conducted his survey while in charge of Concord Military Hospital from 1942–1946.

[105] MRU medical boards: DVA MX032771-01: 15 October 1945; DVA QMX022543-02: 15 October 1945; DVA QMX082505-01: 17 October 1945.

[106] Diet-related symptoms: Carson FA: Ken Carson, letter to mother and sister, 10 May 1945 (second letter); Dack, *So you Wanted Wings, Hey!*, p. 93; NLA JMFC: Justin O'Byrne, 31 October 1986; Bowden FA: 'Diary of Huie Bowden July 1944–May 1945', 2 January 1945, pp. 57–58; Pether, 'The Returned Prisoner-of-War', *The Lancet*, 5 May 1945, p. 571. Quote: DVA MX008152-01: final medical board, 26 February 1946.

[107] NAUK WO 224/63A: Red Cross and Protecting Powers reports, 24–25 November 1944, General remarks, p. 12.

[108] Stephenson, 'Experiences of a Prisoner of War', p. 32.

[109] A survey of this evidence indicates Twenty-nine references including DVA NMX233512-01: 11 PDRC special medical examination, 9 June 1945; DVA MX074694-01: MRU medical board, 22 August 1945; DVA QMX045104-01: final medical board, 9 October 1945;

illnesses.[110] Harold Bjelke-Petersen's and Clive Hall's POW identity cards record that each spent approximately a week in the sick quarters for, respectively, '*darmkatarrh*' (gastrointestinal catarrh: i.e. vomiting diarrhoea) and *'magenkatarrh'* (gastric catarrh).[111] Some like *Hubert Hunnicutt* did not recognise the significance of their symptoms at the time. He 'had diarrhoea immediately following capture and which continued for some time. I attributed this to drinking contaminated water'. Hindsight, however, provided clarity. 'In the light of my present knowledge', he wrote in 1986, 'I feel it could have been caused or contributed to by the "emotional stress" of capture'.[112] 'Have felt a bit queer in the stomach, after meals, during the last ten days', wrote Huie Bowden. 'Have vomited all my food three times before going to bed. Not sure of cause as onset appears rather sudden and not traceable to any particular food.'[113] Bowden's unexplained illness coincided with German successes in the Netherlands, an engagement he and his fellows had been following closely through *Wehrmacht* reports. Any strong German defence would seriously delay the end of the war, and quash their dreams of 'home by Christmas'. Alec Arnel recalled the communal depression during the Battle of the Bulge.[114] It was an anxious time for many, including Bowden, waiting for final Allied victory when 'now there seems no immediate prospect of the confounded war ever ending'. Compounding that,

---

MX338303-01: final medical board, 15 October 1945; DVA MX17774-01: record of evidence, 22 May 1953; DVA QMX058112-01: record of evidence, 28 November 1960.

[110] NAA A13950 POW identification cards: Harold 'Pete' Bjelke-Petersen, 73021; Clive Mayor Hall, 402002.

[111] NAA A13950 POW identification cards: Harold 'Pete' Bjelke-Petersen, 73021; Clive Mayor Hall, 402002.

[112] DVA MX045167-01: appeal against recognition of condition, [undated c. June 1986].

[113] Bowden FA: 'Diary of Huie Bowden July 1944–May 1945', 10 November 1944, p. 10.

[114] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 9 October 2014.

Bowden, whose family was living in Britain, was also disturbed to hear reports of V1 and V2 attacks.[115] Albert Comber who spoke of continual tension during service and captivity and suffered persistent indigestion was diagnosed with 'anxiety state' in January 1946.[119] While camp records and some of the immediate post-war medical assessments do not link digestive disorder with mental states, given the coincidence of Bowden's symptoms with his worries, the general anxiety many airmen felt regarding their personal security, and widespread concerns that the escape organisation might be discovered, it would be no surprise if the majority of kriegie stomach complaints had been brought on by worry.

Managing moods and mental states

Mail affected moods. Receiving letters could provide 'a perceptible lift in the atmosphere', Huie Bowden noted.[120] For Alec Arnel, a letter would be just the thing to fight the 'blues'. When his first delivery arrived six months after capture, he was elated. 'I had the amazing good fortune of receiving nine letters—and what is more important five of them were from the girl with the laughing eyes. These were my first letters in Kriegiedom.'[121] The mail gods did not always smile but the airmen maintained high hopes. 'Had no news this month but should receive bundle any day', John Osborne told his family.[122] 'So far I have had no mail from Australia and as such am eagerly

[115] Bowden FA: 'Diary of Huie Bowden July 1944–May 1945', 11 November 1944, pp. 28–29.
[119] DVA MX078596-01. Tension: report from G.S.S Consultant Psychiatrist to Dr E.A.K., 31 March 1989; 'anxiety state': diagnosis on admission to RAAF Convalescent Depot, 28 January 1946; persistent indigestion: final medical board, 26 June 1946.
[120] Bowden FA: 'Diary of Huie Bowden July 1944–May 1945', 15 October 1944, p. 20.
[121] Arnel archive: Arnel, letter to Margery Gray, [undated c. Christmas 1944, Stawell postmark 23 April 1945].
[122] NAM JOC: John Osborne, letter to family, 11 July 1943.

looking forward to the day when it arrives', Reg Kierath told his mother.[123] George Archer expected his third clothing parcel 'any time now', and, six weeks later, 'any day now', and 'any day now' a month after that.[124]

While, as Alec Arnel wrote, 'one settles down' to captivity eventually, adjusting to imprisonment was not simply a matter of waiting for time to pass. It required a concerted 'adjustment of mind'.[125] Rather than passively waiting for happy mail deliveries, the airmen adopted a variety of personal and collective strategies to manage their mental health. 'During my training, I was of a cheerful & happy disposition', *Martin Quinlan* attested. 'Later in POW camp in Germany I made strong efforts to maintain that attitude.'[127] Just recording his feelings allowed Huie Bowden to let off steam.[128] DVA case files indicate that smoking helped relieve stress and nervous tension. *Arnold Hibbert* recalled of his time in Buchenwald that cigarettes not only 'seemed to kill the hunger pains' but 'deaden[ed] the feeling of utter hopelessness and despair'.[130] Work of some sort dispelled even the blackest mood. 'Sat down to make some chips out of some toughish wood … Felt better even after hacking off chips for an hour.'[131] Belief in God, the pastoral care of camp chaplains, and participation in the camp's spiritual communities also kept men emotionally strong. So too, did close ties to loved ones, and the airmen's fraternal bonds.

---

[123] Kierath FA: Reg Kierath, letter to Ada Kierath, 16 August 1943.
[124] Archer FA: Archer, letters to family, 26 May, 11 July, and 12 August 1943.
[125] Arnel archive: Arnel, letter to Mrs M. Gray 30 October 1944.
[127] DVA NMX188716-01: supporting statement, 25 January 1984.
[128] Bowden FA: 'Diary of Huie Bowden July 1944–May 1945', 11 November 1944, p. 29.
[130] DVA VMX118518-01: statement relating to smoking, 12 May 1997.
[131] Bowden FA: 'Diary of Huie Bowden July 1944–May 1945', 5 April 1945, p. 90.

The kriegies produced comedic events on stage and off to raise spirits. For his first Christmas in captivity Alex Kerr and his fellows were transported by Stalag III-E, Kirchhain's festive entertainment. '[A]s every item was more or less humorous, even the most morbid of us soon forgot his troubles and worries and entered into the spirit of it with many a laugh and hearty handclap', Kerr recalled.[132] While at Stalag Luft I, Barth, Tony Gordon told his Aunt Mag that they '[h]ad a big inter-compound boxing tournament last week'. 'One of our batmen, who has done some catch as catch can wrestling and I put on a burlesque of all-in wrestling. A great success. Had everyone in fits of laughter.'[133] Humour (and an unknown wit) enabled James McCleery, Alex Kerr, and Eric Johnston to cock a snook at the 'Bloody times', the 'Bloody wire', the 'Bloody sawdust in the bread', the 'Bloody ice rink', the 'Bloody tea', and even the 'bloody mail'.[134] Laughter cheered even during the worst times, such as when those men who had been imprisoned in Italy were crammed into cattle trucks for the journey to Germany after the Italian armistice. Jock Bryce recalled the inspirational 'Yorkshireman who with the aid of two or three others made us almost sick with laughter … we all began to enjoy ourselves and our spirits were soon high. The worst possible catastrophe had befallen us and life held only one thing—the enjoyment of humour'.[135]

---

[132] Kerr, *Shot Down*, p. 84.
[133] Gordon FA: Gordon, letter to Aunt Mag, 20 March 1942.
[134] Unattributed poem, 'There's Always Bloody Something', Johnston FA: Johnston, wartime log book, pp. 42–43; Kerr archive: Alex Kerr, wartime log book, p. 12; AWM PR88/160: McCleery, wartime log book, pp. 44–45.
[135] Bryce FA: 'Jock Bryce's POW Diary 1942–1945', p. 120.

Nostalgia soothed. 'At once the harshness of my mood was softened and the bitterness of my mind sweetened', recalled Bruce Lumsden, 'by the remembrance' of his mother. 'The recollection of all her goodness and love through the years of my life … gave me inexpressible comfort and relief.'[136] Lumsden also looked on the bright side. 'I had no shoes and I murmured. Then I saw a man who had no feet.'[137] Others consciously appreciated the small things of their existence such as good, innovative meals prepared with care.[138] Natural beauty brought joy. 'There is a tame yellowhammer that comes and eats seed we put out by the window', wrote Huie Bowden. 'Sometimes chaffinches come too, an occasional redstart and pied wagtail.'[139]

Speculation regarding release stirred the blood. 'All the blokes in this camp are very optimistic about the war coming to an end in the near future', Reg Kierath enthused to his brother, Bert, 'and most optimistic about the outcome which is not in doubt'.[140] Some recorded sayings in their kriegie vocabulary lists like, 'Home for Christmas'.[141] Others, however, cautiously tempered their optimism with a dose of clear-sighted reality. James McCleery expressed a knowingly wry humour in one of his cartoons: a German censor commenting on one kriegie's hopes for an imminent home-coming scoffed, 'This one says it wont [sic] be long now!'[142] Naturally ebullient Doug Hutchinson acknowledged to his wife, Lola, that, it was '[g]ood to be positive,

---

[136] Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'The Complete Tour', Lumsden, letter, 23 March 1989.
[137] Lumsden FA: Lumsden, wartime notebook, unpaginated.
[138] Bowden FA: 'Diary of Huie Bowden July 1944–May 1945', 15 October 1944, p. 20.
[139] Bowden FA: 'Diary of Huie Bowden July 1944–May 1945', 15 October 1944, p. 5.
[140] Kierath FA: Reg Kierath, letter to Bert Kierath, 7 July 1943. Kierath also expressed similar sentiments to his sister and mother. Letters to Chick Scott, 10 August 1943 and Ada Kierath, 19 September 1943.
[141] Johnston FA: Johnston, wartime log book, p. 19.
[142] AWM PR88/160: McCleery, wartime log book, p. 31.

but need to exercise a little caution … I rather think that most people are too optimistic'.[143]

The airmen learned to control their moods for the sake of collective harmony. Self-discipline when living in such close propinquity was paramount.[144] Some did not allow themselves to become homesick or dispirited. 'No, I never got depressed', Hutchinson claimed. 'No, you learnt to accept things as they are.'[145] Although he was 'impatient, unreasonable', Huie Bowden knew he could 'get over that'.[146] As 1944 drew to a close, the 'main thought of most POWs these days is to keep a level head', Ronald Baines asserted.[147] The effects of this positive attitude were obvious. Alec Arnel's room crew was 'well-balanced even though some of them had been there a pretty long time, like Tony Gordon … He held it in, I think'.[148] Fraternal bonds more than anything, kept the 'kriegie blues' in check. '[L]aughter came as a result of the people we were with, who jollied you out of' low moods, recalled Arnel. 'If I started talking in a depressed way amongst the group, I'd be quickly pulled into line.'[149] Jock Bryce's roommate, Michael Calver, 'a great humourist and the butt of everyone's humour, was a stabilizing factor who spread more good cheer than the rest of us put together'.[150]

---

[143] Hutchinson FA: Doug Hutchinson, letter to Lola Hutchinson, 28 May 1944.
[144] Younger, *No Flight From the Cage*, p. 66.
[145] AAWFA: Hutchinson 0540, 17 June, 2003.
[146] Bowden FA: 'Diary of Huie Bowden July 1944–May 1945', 11 November 1944, p. 29.
[147] Baines FA: Baines, wartime log book, 18 November 1944, p. 20.
[148] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 29 October 2015.
[149] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 29 October 2015.
[150] Bryce FA: 'Jock Bryce's POW Diary 1942–1945', p. 155.

'My 15 months as a POW were in the main boring. As officers we were restricted to a small area and time passes very slowly', *Antony Duffy* stated.[151] Senior British Medical Officer George Matthews and his medical staff considered that monotony was among the 'outstanding factors' which contributed to their charges' psychological instability.[152] As Amanda Laugesen asserts, 'boredom [was] the enemy'.[153] Certainly, for those like Roy Nightingale who had wanted his war to be 'fast and furious', unrelenting ennui was a trial.[154] Their days were 'diluted by long periods of monotony, occasionally boredom, and once or twice by something approaching despair', wrote Jock Bryce.[155] They all seemed 'alike', Harry Train confided to his diary.[156] According to an unattributed poem entitled 'Prison Camp' which Ronald Baines copied into his wartime log book, the days 'stretch[ed] into weeks, the weeks to years', briefly alleviated by dreams, only to face 'hopeless hope' when morning's 'light returns'.[157]

For most, the simplest way to maintain equilibrium was to occupy themselves. Physical and mental occupation deflected bodily and psychological pain. It also gave them a sense of self-worth and purpose. For Paul Royle, it enabled them to survive.[158] 'I think it was very clear that those who focused on some activities, or activity, they were the people who stayed on top', recalled Alec Arnel.[159] It was 'a matter of becoming involved',

---

[151] DVA QMX086167-02: summary of evidence, 5 March 1974.
[152] NAUK WO 32/10757: Matthews' report, 17 February 1944.
[153] Laugesen, *Boredom is the Enemy*.
[154] Nightingale FA: Nightingale, 'Wartime Records of Robert Roy Nightingale' [Prologue], [unpaginated].
[155] Bryce FA: 'Jock Bryce's POW Diary 1942–1945', pp. 143–145.
[156] Arnel archive: Train, 'A Barbed-Wire World', 28 February 1943, p. 37.
[157] Baines FA: Baines, wartime log book, p. 27.
[158] IWMSA Royle: 26605, 2 December 2012.
[159] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 12 November 2015.

reflected Ron Mackenzie.[160] Accordingly, old stagers urged the new arrivals to keep busy and airmen threw themselves into camp life.[161] 'There was always something going on to occupy your mind', Doug Hutchinson recalled.[162] The cohort's wartime personal records, memoirs and late-life interviews demonstrate that they effectively filled their hours of 'enforced leisure'.[163] As a consequence of their active management of monotony, 'morale was fairly high'.[164]

Denied flying duties, Tim Mayo almost immediately accepted that, '[n]ow I will have to find something else to do with my time'.[167] Education, particularly to gain qualifications for their future lives, was popular. As Max Dunn suggested in his February 1942 poem 'Let's Grow Up', 'Prepar[ing] ourselves for future years of work' was a clear 'Duty', which would undermine the enemy's belief in a German-won war as much as any overt or covert act of resistance.[168] As such, Dunn restarted his accounting studies, interrupted by his enlistment, and Mayo decided to study architecture.[169] Many turned to the performing arts such as singing, music, and theatrical pursuits, either acting or participating behind the scenes themselves, or

---

[160] Mackenzie, *An Ordinary War 1940–1945*, p. 61.
[161] Todd FA: Ken Todd, wartime log book, p. 11; Cousens (ed.), *The Log*, p. 68; Stephenson, 'Experiences of a Prisoner of War', p. 29; Winn, *A Fighter Pilot's Diary*, pp. 44, 47; Borsht Archive: Borsht, 'A Life Well Lived', p. 20; Alexander records: Borsht, interview 28 January 2016.
[162] AAWFA: Hutchinson 0540, 17 June, 2003.
[163] Dearlove, 'Enforced Leisure: A Study of the Activities of Officer Prisoners of War', p. 406.
[164] Stephenson, 'Experiences of a Prisoner of War', p. 29
[167] Mayo FA: Tim Mayo, letter to parents, 30 May 1942.
[168] Dunn, *Poems of Norman Maxwell Dunn*, 'Let's Grow Up', pp. 7–8.
[169] 'Cheerful and Well', *Mudgee Guardian and North-Western Representative* (NSW), 28 July 1941, p. 2; Mayo FA: Eric Mayo, letter to parents, 3 June 1942 (quoting his brother Tim's first letter from captivity). Mayo continued classes in camp, passed his intermediate exam, and completing his studies after the war. Alexander records: Peter Mayo, email 4 May 2020.

watching their fellows on the stage. Paul Royle kept himself 'very engaged' by making model aeroplanes and yachts.[170] Guy-Grey Smith delved into art history and also 'found it was relaxing to draw and sketch and mess around with watercolours'.[171] He and the other artistic-minded kriegies such as Albert Comber and Howard Taylor developed their art practice, experimenting with media, technique, and perspective.[172] They ran classes and, along with their students, displayed their creations in arts and crafts shows. Reinforcing the importance of creative and intellectual interests, one of the posters in Centre Compound's 1942 show was entitled, 'Keep your mind occupied'.[173] Stimulating pastimes such as debating, bridge, and chess which could take hours to play were popular. So too was reading. 'Books saved minds', recalled Ron Mackenzie, as it offered a chance to mentally escape from the prison camp.[174]

During the long summer days, some gardened or went in for birdwatching. Most of the airmen focused on physical fitness. Walking the compound perimeter 'with one or more mates was excellent exercise, but also helped relieve frustrated and pent up feelings', recalled Charles Lark.[175] Many played golf. Cricket and football were enthusiastically enjoyed but all sorts

---

[170] IWMSA Royle: 26605, 2 December 2012.
[171] Hetherington, *Australian Painters*, p. 150. Quote: NLA HdBC: Guy Grey-Smith, 29 May 1965.
[172] Whitehead, 'World War II Prisoner of War Visual Art: Investigating its Significance in Contemporary Society', Honours thesis, pp. 9, 11.
[173] IBCCDA Hemsworth Collection: 'A15 NCO's Arts & Crafts Exhib. Stalag Luft 3. Aug 42'.
[174] AAWFA: Kerr 1489, 3 March 2004; Gordon FA: Gordon, letter to Aunt Mag, 30 June 1942; Osborne, letter to family, 25 May 1943; Fry FA: Charles Fry, letter to Beryl Smith, 3 March 1942; Snell, *Howard Taylor*, p. 21. See reading lists in wartime log books belonging to Baines, pp. 68–69; Johnston, p. 100; Fraser, pp. 11–20; Archer, pp. 142–145; Borsht, p. 113. Quote: Mackenzie, *An Ordinary War 1940–1945*, p. 61.
[175] Lark, *A Lark on the Wing*, p. 68.

of team sports and athletic events were on offer. 'Any sport you felt like', recalled Len Netherway.[176] The airmen revelled in their athletic prowess and physical fitness. 'General feeling of pride all round at what we think was a colossal effort for kriegies', recorded Huie Bowden.[177] From an emotional perspective, maintaining fitness for sport provided a basis for their continued promotion to those at home of their fit and well composure. On a practical level, athletic pursuits could be used to distract guards from escape attempts.[178] Jack Morschel considered that 'The circuit' around the compound was a safe place to discuss 'X' plans.[179] More importantly, sport ensured they were fit enough to escape or engage in escape-related work such as tunnelling. Escape-fitness also reinforced their status as active airmen behind barbed wire.

Stalag Luft III's escape culture was perhaps the most significant means by which those airmen who participated could manage monotony, even as it offered a chance to physically flee confinement. The 'X' organisation, however, contributed to some men's psychological problems. Some discovered they had claustrophobia.[180] Devastating and debilitating as it was at the time, DVA case files reveal that tunnel work and other escape efforts led to serious late-life anxieties and nightmares.[181] 'I am back in a POW camp

---

[176] Quote: AWM 54 779/3/129: 11 PDRC post-liberation debrief, Netherway.
[177] Bowden FA: 'Diary of Huie Bowden July 1944–May 1945', 15 October 1944, p. 7.
[178] Whittaker, Mark, 'The Men Marked X', *The Australian Magazine*, 26–27 March 1994, p. 40; Winn, *A Fighter Pilot's Diary*, p. 52; Alexander records: Greg McLeod, interview 15 January 2016. As well as acknowledging sport and the Wooden Horse effort, Pamela Cohen notes correlation between sport and escape in a number of camps in 'Behind Barbed Wire: Sport and Australian Prisoners of War', pp. 76, 85.
[179] Morschel, *A Lancaster's Participation in Normandy Invasion 1944*, p. 65.
[180] Dando-Collins, *The Hero Maker*, pp. 104–105; DVA NMX272113-01: letter to Deputy Commissioner, Department of Veterans' Affairs, 21 November 1996.
[181] Devastating: Dando-Collins, *The Hero Maker*, p. 105. DVA NMX272113-01: letter to Deputy Commissioner, Department of Veterans' Affairs, 21 November 1996; DVA

somewhere in Europe', *Robin Sumner* explained. 'Sometimes I'll be taking part in an escape attempt under enemy fire the circumstances are always hopeless and consequently frightening. In another dream I'm being buried alive in a collapsing escape tunnel (equally hopeless and frightening).'[182]

The tension of escape work may have contributed to a collective mental strain. A month before the March 1944 Great Escape, Protecting Powers' delegates visited Stalag Luft III. They reported that George Matthews and his fellow medical staff were concerned about the airmen. '[A]n increasing number of prisoners and particularly among those who have been in captivity for a long time, (3 or 4 years) are gradually losing their peace of mind, becoming more and more mentally unbalanced.' 'Psychosis cases' were also increasing, perhaps emanating from fear of possible discovery after the '"blitz" campaign' to finish off tunnel 'Harry' began in early 1944.[183] The situation was 'extremely grave' and the 'effect on some of the prisoners may be a lasting one unless some serious steps [are] taken soon'. But rather than transfer the complex cases to a 'special lazaret', such as at Stalag VIII-B, Lamsdorf, 'which might do more harm than good' a number of men were moved to the Belaria compound 'as this would secure a change of surroundings for them'. This helped some 'in a very small way'.[184]

MX078596-01: report from G.S.S Consultant Psychiatrist to Dr E.A.K., 31 March 1989; DVA NCPX25587-01: supplementary statement 18 July 1978.

[182] DVA NMX272113-01: letter to Deputy Commissioner, Department of Veterans' Affairs, 21 November 1996.

[183] 'Psychosis cases': NAUK WO 224/63A: Red Cross and Protecting Powers reports, 22–24 February 1944, Medical attention and sickness, pp. 4–5; Brickhill and Norton, *Escape to Danger*, p. 275.

[184] NAUK WO 224/63A: Red Cross and Protecting Powers reports, 22–24 February 1944, Medical attention and sickness, pp. 4–5.

The airmen did not know why some of their complement had been relocated.[185] Perhaps reflecting the social stigma of mental illness, their medical and senior officers failed to tell them. The airmen, however, constructed their own narrative which reflected their continuing status as elite *air men*, on duty, behind barbed wire. While '[s]ome of them', Paul Brickhill recounted, 'were completely harmless types who had nothing to do with "X"', a group of critical operatives in the escape organisation and 'fairly important workers' numbered among the transfers.[186] Accordingly, the airmen inferred that the Germans were aware that something big was afoot, especially as it followed an upsurge in camp security checks.[187] As time passed, the 'harmless types' were elided from the story to emphasise the purge's connection to escape work. Author and journalist Guy Walters, for example, states that all of the Belaria transferees were part of the escape organisation.[188] Shifting the focus from mental strain reinforced the fit and well and universal escape-mindedness composures. There was no place for mental disturbance in their expressions of martial masculinity.

Given the increase in escape work in the early months of 1944 and the collective strain of keeping it secret (one of the three tunnels had been discovered), it is likely that the advancing plans for a mass escape underpinned the medical staff's concerns. But how did the lead-up to the Great Escape affect individual mental well-being of those preparing to escape? Reg Kierath's last letter to his mother indicates nothing other than

[185] Brickhill, *The Great Escape*, p. 157.
[186] Brickhill, *The Great Escape*, p. 157.
[187] Brickhill and Norton, *Escape to Danger*, pp. 280–281.
[188] Walters, *The Real Great Escape*, p. 125.

his usual high spirits, tiredness of the domestic regime, and annoyance at the continual blaring of the camp loud speaker. When he wrote 'I fear I shall be doing the goose step, or else going crazy in the near future', Ada Kierath would have held no doubts about her son's sanity, or entertained any suspicion that he was planning to escape.[189] It seems, however, that James Catanach could barely suppress his excitement. 'Get my suit pressed', he told his friend Malcolm McEachern.[190]

Albert Hake's correspondence indicates a build-up of emotional turmoil not related to the forthcoming mass escape. The tone of his earlier letters had been bright and positive. Despite his separation from Noela, he continued to look to the future: 'tomorrow is another day [where] one's spirit rises with the sun'.[192] Hindsight reading of Hake's letters indicates he was busy with his work for the 'X' organisation as a compass maker, as well as his pride in it.[193] '[A]ll my time this month has been taken up making a working model of a patent device for a NZ Wing Commander. The idea promises big things in the future.'[194] Even so, as time passed, Hake became more morose. He continually expressed how much he missed his wife, his desperation to return to her, his fears that she was in love with someone else, his regret about not starting a family, and his sense that he would be too old by the time he returned home.[195] As well as his grief over the death of Mrs Rob, Hake's psychological state in the last months of his life was affected by the breakup

---

[189] Kierath FA: Reg Kierath, letter to Ada Kierath, 16 August 1943.
[190] 'Prison Camp Escapes Hinted in Letters', *The Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 22 May 1944, p. 2.
[192] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letter to Noela Hake, 15 December 1943.
[193] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letter to Noela Hake, 31 October 1943.
[194] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letter to Noela Hake, 28 February 1944 (second letter).
[195] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letter to Noela Hake, 25 December 1943; 28 February 1944 (first letter).

of his close-knit room crew when two of the members were transferred to Belaria. 'Well after almost two years together our old room (called "Anzac Cove") has finally split.' Close relations were not established with the non-Australian new arrivals. 'The list of names on our door now contains five names under "Anzac Cove" with the latters [sic] under the heading of "Some Other Cove"'.[196] As another wedding anniversary passed, Hake's mental state deteriorated further and hindsight reading indicates his clear intention to escape if he were selected. (As compass maker and a significant member of the 'X' organisation he stood a good chance of being chosen.) 'Well damn it all I'll be home for our next anniversary darling', he wrote on 1 March 1944, his third wedding anniversary. His last letter, written four days before the mass breakout, concluded, 'I hope I can justify your faith in me dearest one of these days. Remember me'.[197]

Caring for the psychologically disturbed

Medical staff played a significant role in caring for the psychologically disturbed. Along with the chaplain, the doctor was the most important post in camp.[198] As well as providing practical medical care, George Matthews, working with the senior British and American officers, asked the Protecting Powers' delegates to lobby Allied governments regarding repatriation or internment in a neutral country of all long-term captives, i.e. those believed most likely to be susceptible to mental strain.[199] They also urged Stalag Luft

[196] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letter to Noela Hake, 28 February 1944 (second letter).
[197] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letter to Noela Hake, 20 March 1944.
[198] Dack, *So you Wanted Wings, Hey!*, p. 93.
[199] NAUK WO 224/63A: Red Cross and Protecting Powers reports, 25–26 October 1943 and 22–24 February 1944, Medical attention and sickness, p. 4; NAUK WO 32/10757: Matthews' report, 17 February 1944; To The Secretary, Prisoners of War Department, Swiss Legation, Berlin, From Group Captain H.M. Massey, Senior British Officer, Stalag Luft III, 23

III's commandant, von Lindeiner, and his successors, Erich Cordes and Werner Braune, for appropriate treatment of airmen who were suffering psychological disturbances.

Their interest was not simply professional duty of care. They, as did aircrew and the armed services in general, believed nervous problems of any sort were contagious.[200] In the case of two men whom they considered 'mentally absolutely unbalanced', Matthews and his medical staff were concerned that they might 'constitute a danger to their comrades and that they might have a bad influence on the mental balance of several prisoners'.[201] Certainly, it was difficult living with those whose condition was serious, and, in some cases forbearance wore thin. Calton Younger recalled that 'the melancholic was pitiful but he was a burden, and sometimes a menace'.[202] The medicos lobbied for better care and were successful for a time in negotiating parole walks outside the camp.[203] Escorted outings relieved stress and Huie Bowden was one in East Compound who enjoyed a barefooted stroll and swim as well as the 'sense of having "been somewhere"'.[204] After the

February 1944, Re – or ex-patriation of old prisoners of war Article 72 of the Geneva Convention (Massey's covering letter to Matthews' report).

[200] 3 Squadron RAAFA: 'Tom Wood Diary', p. 25; Mackenzie, *An Ordinary War 1940–1945*, p. 62; NAUK WO 224/63A: Red Cross and Protecting Powers reports, 22 and 23 March 1943. Medical attention and sickness, pp. 4–5; Complaints, p. 6; Muir, '"Idiots, imbeciles and moral defectives": Military and government treatment of mentally ill service personnel and veterans', p. 42; Shephard, *A War of Nerves*, pp. 286–287.

[201] NAUK WO 224/63A: Red Cross and Protecting Powers reports, 22 and 23 March 1943. Medical attention and sickness, pp. 4–5; Complaints, p. 6.

[202] Younger, *No Flight From the Cage*, pp. 116–117.

[203] NAUK WO 224/63A: Red Cross and Protecting Powers reports, 22–24 February 1944, Medical attention and sickness, pp. 4–5; Walton and Eberhardt, *From Commandant to Captive*, p. 113.

[204] Bowden FA: 'Diary of Huie Bowden July 1944–May 1945', 18 August 1944, pp. 8–11.

Great Escape, however, walks were curtailed in North Compound, as were inter-compound visits, sports, and entertainments.[205]

Matthews also attempted to have severe cases moved to lazarets specialising in 'mental diseases'.[206] While he had some success later in the war, earlier efforts were often impeded by German suspicion that the medical staff were encouraging men to fake symptoms.[207] There was some basis to that belief.[208] Throughout the *Luftwaffe* camp system, airmen simulated physical and mental illness, hoping they would be medically repatriated.[209] Both Fraser Falkiner and Francis James who had genuine wounds to their eyes rubbed in irritants to make them worse.[210] Some coached others on what symptoms to display, including Digby Young, a medical student before joining the RAF.[211] Doubts were later raised by RAAF medical staff regarding one Australian's medical repatriation. *Fergus Bennett* had suffered dyspepsia, a duodenal ulcer, and 'indigestion which he had repeatedly reported in the hope of achieving repatriation on medical grounds which he accomplished in Sept 1944'.[212] Indeed, according to an RAAF medico, *Bennett* had 'made the most of indigestion'.[213]

---

[205] NAUK WO 224/63A: Red Cross and Protecting Powers reports, 22 May 1944, Discipline, p. 5.
[206] NAUK WO 224/63A: Red Cross and Protecting Powers reports, 22 and 23 March 1943. Medical attention and sickness, pp. 4–5; Complaints, p. 6.
[207] Walton and Eberhardt, *From Commandant to Captive*, p. 111; NAUK WO 224/63A: Red Cross and Protecting Powers reports, 22 and 23 March 1943. Medical attention and sickness, pp. 4–5; Complaints, p. 5, 6 November 1944. Medical attention and sickness, p5.
[208] Jonathan Vance cites a number of instances in *Objects of Concern*, p. 165.
[209] Haygood, 'Malingering and Escape: Anglo-American Prisoners of War in World War II Europe', pp. 1–30.
[210] AAWFA: Falkiner 0661, 17 March 2004; AAWFA: Gaulton 1276, 3 February, 2004.
[211] MacKenzie, *The Colditz Myth*, p. 342; Calnan, *Free as a Running Fox*, p. 279.
[212] Dyspepsia and duodenal ulcer: DVA NMX057465-01: hospital or sick list—record card, 16 September 1944. Quote: MRU medical board, 6 April 1945.
[213] DVA NMX057465-01: synopsis of medical history, 20 April 1945.

Such behaviour can be viewed in a number of ways. In one reading, would-be repatriates were active airmen trying to return to flying duties. In another, deceiving the Germans was considered a valid action in their battle behind barbed wire. From yet another perspective, fakers were motivated purely by self-interest. Whatever their rationale, Sydney Dowse implied in his biography of Harry 'Wings' Day that the practice was condoned.[214] This had serious consequences. It risked displacing genuine psychiatric cases and creating tension with sceptical Germans. Certainly, von Lindeiner believed the camp's medical staff played their part in abetting malingerers; he questioned the medical expertise of Matthews and the Australian medical officer, Roger Playoust. Two men under their care had been provisionally diagnosed with 'mental disorder', while another, who displayed 'hysteria-like' 'fits' and 'queer' behaviour, was thought to have succumbed to a 'prison psychosis'. As the latter was eventually declared 'mentally normal', the Germans accused the medical staff of inciting him to act in an 'abnormal and striking manner'. Von Lindeiner also suspected the medicos of over-treating their patients.[215] Professional relationships with von Lindeiner soured. Playoust, in particular, bore the brunt of the commandant's ire and was transferred to another camp.[216] At least two men were disadvantaged by German scepticism when requests to move them to expert care were denied because their 'attacks' were 'neither very serious nor of frequent

[214] Smith, *Wings Day*, pp. 144–145.
[215] NAUK WO 224/63A: Red Cross and Protecting Powers reports, 22 and 23 March 1943. Medical attention and sickness, p. 4.
[216] NAUK WO 224/63A: Red Cross and Protecting Powers reports, 22 and 23 March 1943. Medical attention and sickness, p. 4, Report from The Senior British Officer [Kellett] Stalag Luft III to Major General Sir Richard Howard-Vyse KCMG, DSO, Chairman, Prisoner of War Department, British Red Cross Society, 25 August 1943. Appendix G: Health Report by Senior British Medical Officer Major G.B. Matthews, RAMC.

recurrence'.[217] One was later killed 'during an attempt—made during a fit of madness—to escape. Seeking to fly from the Infirmary he got caught up on the barbed wire. The sentry who did not recognise the prisoner, shot him'.[218]

While Matthews and his medical staff were able to provide some care for the serious cases, ultimately, and exemplifying their strong fraternal bonds, the airmen themselves took responsibility for the mental health of their fellows. Old hands warned new arrivals of the dangers of going around the bend.[219] Friends kept alert for symptoms of depression or behavioural changes and reported them to compound leaders.[220] They worried about and cared for those who were not successfully managing captivity.[221] Douglas McConchie, East Compound's Australian chaplain, had difficulty adjusting to the crowded, noisy life and lack of contact from home. He spent much time in his bunk, became more introspective, slept little, and soon required nursing by the Scottish chaplain, Douglas Thompson, and a small group of close friends who 'brothered him lovingly'.[222]

George Matthews feared 'permanent mental deterioration' in those who had been in captivity for three or four years.[223] Herbert Massey also worried

---

[217] NAUK WO 224/63A: Red Cross and Protecting Powers reports: mental disorders, 2 February 1943.
[218] NAUK WO 224/63A: Red Cross and Protecting Powers reports, 26 July 1943. Medical attention, pp. 4–5.
[219] Todd FA: Ken Todd, wartime log book, p. 11; Cousens (ed.), *The Log*, p. 68; Stephenson, 'Experiences of a Prisoner of War', p. 29; Borsht Archive: Borsht, 'A Life Well Lived', p. 20; Alexander records: Borsht, interview 28 January 2016.
[220] Walton and Eberhardt, *From Commandant to Captive*, pp. 84, 111.
[221] NAUK WO 224/63A: Red Cross and Protecting Powers reports, 2 February 1943. Infirmary, p. 5.
[222] Thompson, *Captives to Freedom*, pp. 157–158. McConchie's service records, as well as those of the Australian medical officer, Roger Playoust, reveal that both experienced mental strain during captivity. NAA Series B883 records of service: WX1530 Douglas Keith McConchie, NX185 Andre Roger Playoust.
[223] NAUK WO 32/10757: Matthews' report, 17 February 1944; NAUK WO 224/63A: Red Cross and Protecting Powers reports, 25–26 October 1943, 22–24 February 1944, Medical attention and sickness, p. 4.

about the increase in 'mental and nervous cases', and saw signs 'amongst a number, that they were reaching "breaking point"'.[224] Yet, contradicting the concern of Matthews, Massey, and the Protecting Powers' visitors about failing mental health, Eric Stephenson recalled that, in his experience as a medical orderly 'the number of those who were so afflicted that they stayed in their bunks all day could be counted on the fingers of two hands'.[225] Conferring after the war with Geoff Cornish, his fellow assistant in the Belaria Compound lazaret, Stephenson remembered only three psychiatric cases there and in North Compound.[226] Paul Royle recalled, 'one chap … only one out of thousands'.[227] Yet, two weeks after Matthews and Massey formally stated to the Protecting Powers' visitors their opinions regarding the psychological well-being of Stalag Luft III's airmen prisoners, Harry Train wrote in his diary that a kriegie was 'found unconscious in his bed in the East Camp with his wrists cut'. This was not Train's first mention of men who, in his words, failed to 'stick it out'.[228] Nor was he the only one to record details of those who took their own lives by slitting wrists or throat, or jumping from buildings or under trains during transit.[229] Many recalled deaths by suicide in

[224] To The Secretary, Prisoners of War Department, Swiss Legation, Berlin, From Group Captain H.M. Massey, Senior British Officer, Stalag Luft III, 23 February 1944, Re – or ex-patriation of old prisoners of war Article 72 of the Geneva Convention (Massey's covering letter to Matthews' report).
[225] Stephenson, *Three Passions and a Lucky Penny*, p. 50.
[226] Stephenson, 'Experiences of a Prisoner of War', p. 31.
[227] IWMSA Royle: 26605, 2 December 2012.
[228] Arnel archive: Train, 'A Barbed-Wire World', 8 March 1944, p. 50.
[229] AWM PR05675: Grey-Smith, diary, 12 November 1942, 10 July 1943, 20 August 1943. Wrists: Lark, *A Lark on the Wing*, p. 76; Arnel archive: Train, 'A Barbed-Wire World', 1 July 1943, p. 42, 8 March 1944, p. 50; IWMSA Younger: 23329, [no day] November 2002; throat: Kerr, *Shot Down*, p. 140; jumping from buildings: Arnel archive: Train, 'A Barbed-Wire World', 12 November 1942, p. 34; under trains: Arnel archive: Train, 'A Barbed-Wire World', 19 August 1943, p. 43.

late-life recollections and memoirs.[230] It seems that in minimising the extent of serious cases in recollection, Royle, Cornish, and Stephenson were reinforcing the airmen's carefully constructed fit and well composure which could not accommodate the psychologically disturbed.

'Round the bend' may have been a light-hearted umbrella term used by airmen captives to cover a range of psychological symptoms and behaviour but, in the case of the most extreme manifestation of distress, it described the act: suicides were '"around the bend" efforts'.[231] Although troubling for some, given their living conditions, suicides were not unexpected. 'Imagine 1500 young, educated, energetic men cramped up into close barbed wire confinement, repressed physically and mentally', Ronald Baines wrote in his wartime log book. 'Can you wonder that many cannot stand the strain—wire psychosis—complete mental breakdowns—attempted suicides.'[232] What Baines discovered from witnessing those who could not cope has been well-documented in post-war research: anxiety can precipitate suicide and many who took their own lives had been suffering mental illness.[233]

Despite Baines' contemporary recognition that some airmen could not bear the strain, Syd Wickham recalled that he was 'surprised to learn that … a Kriegie had committed suicide'.[234] In 'purposely [leaving] a person's name

---

[230] IWMSA Royle: 26605, 2 December 2012; DVA NCPX25587-01: supplementary statement 18 July 1978; Kerr, *Shot Down*, p. 140; Wickham, *We Wore Blue*, p. 162; Lark, *A Lark on the Wing*, pp. 76–77.
[231] Arnel archive: Train, 'A Barbed-Wire World', 26 September 1942, p. 29, 1 July 1943, p.42.
[232] Baines FA: Baines, wartime log book, 5 July 1944, p. 15.
[233] Barraclough, Bunch, Nelson, and Sainsbury, 'A Hundred Cases of Suicide: Clinical Aspects', p. 355; Rozanov and Carli, 'Suicide Among War Veterans', p. 2513; Straw, 'A "ruined man": Returned Servicemen and Suicide in Western Australia', in Baldino, and Brennan, (eds), *1915*, 2016, p. 45.
[234] Wickham, *We Wore Blue*, p. 162.

out' of his memoir 'to save them or their relatives undue embarrassment', Wickham suggests that his astonishment derives from a still lingering (in 2000) social and religious stigma attached to suicide.[235] Genuine surprise, too, may have arisen from the fact that prisoner suicides in German camps were rare. As of October 1944, only twenty-two British suicides had been reported to the Red Cross. This may have been an under-representation, but the low figure still indicates the scarcity among the 142,319 British servicemen incarcerated in Germany and Italy.[236] Even where cases were concentrated in special hospitals their existence appears to have been underplayed. POW doctor Trevor Gibbens, who worked in a number of prison camp hospitals, barely includes the subject in his thesis relating to prisoner psychology, despite noting in a table that eighteen of the 116 inpatients (15.52 per cent) at the prison hospital where he worked had attempted suicide.[237]

None of the cohort took their own lives during captivity. The survivors honoured the few who did commit suicide as fallen servicemen—they had lost the continuing battle against the enemy. They were given military funerals, led by chaplains (with flag covered coffin and pall bearers), which were attended by their fellows.[238] Many airmen, at the time and in late-life reflection, were empathetic to the plight of those who failed to effectively

---

[235] Wickham, *We Wore Blue*, pp. 9, 179. Quote: p. 9. Stigma: 'Suicide Stigma. Opinions Differ Among Clergy', *The Canberra Times*, 13 January 1934, p. 4; Rev. Dr. Rumble M.S.C. and his Radio Talks to the Unseen World! Catholic Problems Solved: Guilt of Suicide', *Catholic Freeman's Journal* (Sydney), 6 August 1936, p. 10; Crime: Jowett, Carpenter, and Tait, 'Determining a Suicide under Australian Law', pp. 355–379.
[236] Makepeace, *Captives of War*, pp. 3, 178–179.
[237] Gibbens, 'The Psychology and Psychopathology of the Prisoner-of-War', MD thesis, pp. 35, 70, 75 (table).
[238] For example, the funeral of Robert Howard Edwards, who died on 26 September 1942, in Oflag XXI-B, Schubin. Arnel archive: Train, 'A Barbed-Wire World', 29 September 1942, p. 29.

negotiate captivity. When one 'RAF [flight lieutenant] went round the bend and charged the wire', Frank Falkenmire, who had been downed only two-and-a-half months earlier, could not 'blame him'.[239] Reacting against the noise, stench, and almost animalistic behaviour in crowded confinement, Ron Mackenzie for a brief moment had an inkling of why some men took their own lives.[241] Recognising the stigma associated with mental illness, the airmen drew on what author Frederic Manning termed their 'inalienable sympathy of man for man' to protect their fellows' long-term reputations.[242] While Harry Train appeared to lack compassion for those who could not 'stick it out' and included their names in his original camp diary, he omitted them from the copy he distributed to family and friends.[243] Others obscured names through misspelling, attributing a *nom de guerre*, or by simply not recording it.[244]

To those who had learned to cope with the strains of captivity, suicide was calamitous.[245] Despite their rarity, the few deaths multiplied in some ex-kriegie memories to 'many'. Contradicting their fit and well composure, this perhaps highlighted their own wartime fear of losing mental control. 'Many prisoners could not stand the strain and "wire fever" was common', *Sean Hanrahan* believed. 'Many committed virtual suicide by deliberately walking

---

[239] Falkenmire, 'Diary Extracts – Stalagluft III', 17 June 1943, in King, *War Gave Us Wings*, 115.
[241] Mackenzie, *An Ordinary War 1940–1945*, p. 47.
[242] Manning, *Her Privates We*, cited by Roper, *The Secret Battle*, p. 258.
[243] AWM PR84/139: Train, Henry Roland, diary; Train'A Barbed-Wire World', 26 September 1942, p. 29; 14 November 1942, p. 35; 1 July 1943, p. 42. Quote: Arnel archive: Train, 'A Barbed-Wire World', 8 March 1944, p. 50.
[244] Wickham, *We Wore Blue*, pp. 9, 179. John Bartram Kiddell, who died in Stalag Luft III on 1 July 1943, was variously referred to as Kilian, Jimmy Cadell, and Gaddell. Smith, *Wings Day*, p. 107; AWM PR05675: Grey-Smith, diary, 10 July 1943; Lark, *A Lark on the Wing*, pp. 72, 76–77; Nelson, *If Winter Comes*, p. 78.
[245] IWMSA Royle: 26605, 2 December 2012.

into the wire to be shot.' [246] John Dack, who was captured in late October 1944, three months before Stalag Luft III's evacuation, implied an acute prevalence of mental imbalance when he recalled 'the never-ending occurrence of "Going-round-the-bend"'.[247] Even as they cared for their fellows *in extremis* the airmen were unsettled by suicidal intent, their own failure to prevent it, and—paradoxically, given their own agency—the sense that, but for 'the grace of God', they could have suffered the same fate. Former medical orderly Geoff Cornish recalled encountering only a handful of psychiatric cases, yet found the lingering memories of death and his powerlessness in the face of them difficult to confront. 'There was, I think, at least two that I know of suicides where the boys just ignored the warning wire, straight up to the main wire and started climbing over it, and of course they were shot, machine gunned', he remembered. 'We weren't allowed to go and help them or anything. They just died there and then. That was horrible to see. I don't want to dwell on that one, it was awful.'[249] For Richard Winn, however, not committing suicide, no matter how difficult his situation, was a considered choice. Disturbed by one man who was shot running at the wire, he 'decided I would not do this'.[250] Winn's strength of character, many believed, was typical of his generation.[251] They had an ingrained resilience.[252]

Hubert Hunnicutt felt he had 'coped well' with all that he had endured: 'the stress of being a member of aircrew, our crash, the post-crash trauma and

---

[246] DVA NCX065122-02: personal statement, 17 January 1980.
[247] Dack, *So you Wanted Wings, Hey!*, p. 93.
[249] AAWFA: Cornish 1388, 2 July 2004.
[250] Winn, *A Fighter Pilot's Diary*, p. 46.
[251] DVA MX078596-01: report from G.S.S Consultant Psychiatrist to Dr E.A.K., 31 March 1989; Stephenson, *Three Passions and a Lucky Penny*, pp. 50–51.
[252] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 2 March 2017.

the P.O.W. Camps'. But 'on reflection', he conceded that he 'may have concealed an "anxiety state" without being conscious of it'.[253] That *Hunnicutt* could be unaware of his anxiety highlights Alec Arnel's belief that the Australian airmen 'were fairly tough. Fairly strong emotionally' and, as such, they weathered well the emotional and psychological ups and downs of kriegie life.[254] Most recognised that the blues were a temporary state. Their strength of character, emotional maturity, resilience, humour, and agency, enabled the majority to effectively manage their mental health both as *air men* in their air force discipline and acts of disruptive agency, and as men of emotion as they cared for their fellows or drew strength from their room crews and loved ones at home. 'We coped', recalled Paul Royle. 'We wouldn't be here if we didn't.'[255] As Alex Kerr concluded, their 'natural optimism' stopped 'them from going around the bend'.[256]

*****

The cohort and their comrades may have treated 'round the bend' flippantly but the range of psychological disturbances it encompassed was very real and unsettling. The kriegies needed to manage 'round the bend's' manifestations. Indeed, every prisoner was aware of what could happen if they did not.[257] Even so, the mental health of many Australians was affected. Contemporary personal, official and medical evidence, however, indicates their overall success at managing it. Few were admitted to camp medical facilities and,

[253] MX045167-01: appeal against determination, 19 August 1985.
[254] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 2 March 2017.
[255] IWMSA Royle: 26605, 2 December 2012.
[256] IWMSA Kerr: 24826, 18 March 2003.
[257] Cousens (editor), *The Log*, p. 68; Stephenson, 'Experiences of a Prisoner of War', p. 29; Borsht Archive: Borsht, 'A Life Well Lived', p. 20; Alexander records: Borsht, interview 28 January 2016.

while eleven of Stalag Luft III's Australians were medically repatriated from Germany, only *Fergus Bennett's* repatriation seems to have related to psychological disturbance.

Chapter eight turns from the barbed-wire battleground to home. It changes focus from the kriegies to their loved ones by highlighting the affective experiences of the airmen's home-based emotional communities as they responded to captivity.

Chapter Seven: Images

Kriegie life had its ups and downs and the airmen were susceptible to depression. Collectively and individually, they learned to manage it, and were largely successful. Many were honest in letters and their pictorial records about suffering the 'blues'.

Image 81: 'Bod after supper—'45 Blues', 2 January 1945, by Huie Bowden, in his wartime log book, p. 58. Bowden Family Archive.

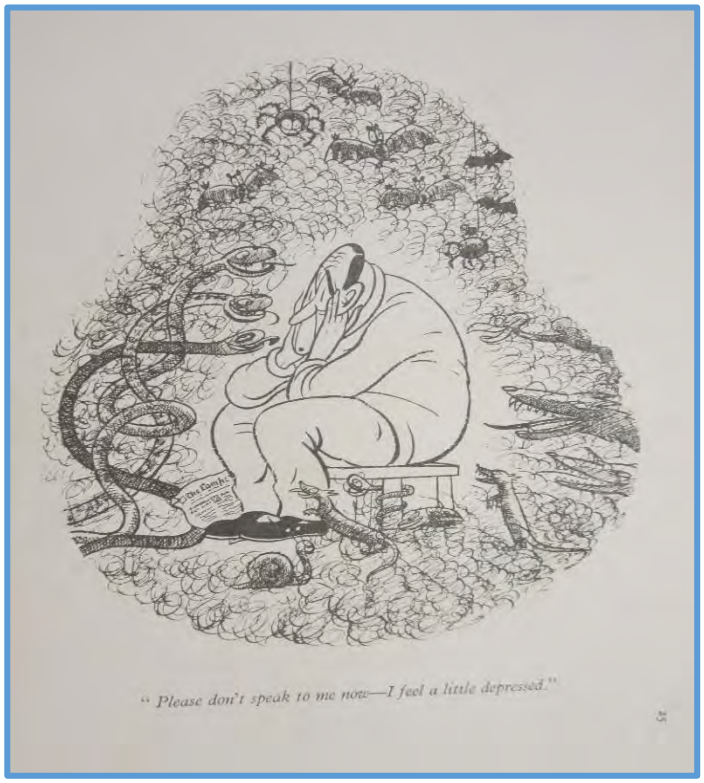
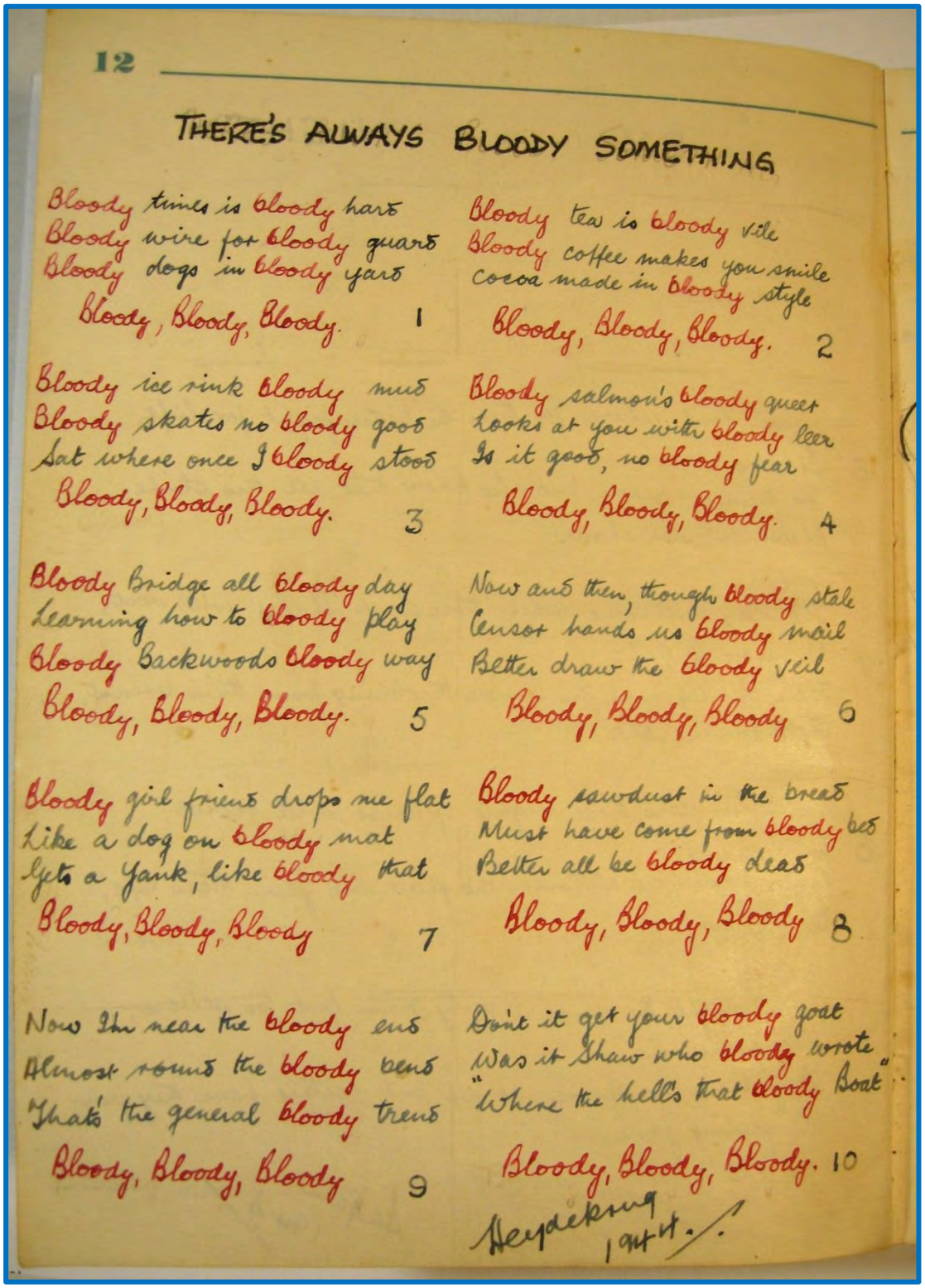


Image 82: 'Please don't speak to me now—I feel a little depressed', R. Anderson and D. Westmacott, *Handle with Care*, p. 25.

Humour was one of the most effective methods of managing moods. The airmen also deployed it to take the sting out of declining mental states when they made fun of 'round the bend'.



12

THERE'S ALWAYS BLOODY SOMETHING

Bloody times is bloody hard
Bloody wire for bloody guard
Bloody dogs in bloody yard
Bloody, Bloody, Bloody. 1

Bloody tea is bloody vile
Bloody coffee makes you smile
Cocoa made in bloody style
Bloody, Bloody, Bloody. 2

Bloody ice rink bloody mud
Bloody skates no bloody good
Sat where once I bloody stood
Bloody, Bloody, Bloody. 3

Bloody salmon's bloody queer
Looks at you with bloody leer
Is it good, no bloody fear
Bloody, Bloody, Bloody. 4

Bloody Bridge all bloody day
Learning how to bloody play
Bloody Backwoods bloody way
Bloody, Bloody, Bloody. 5

Now and then, though bloody stale
Censor hands us bloody mail
Better draw the bloody veil
Bloody, Bloody, Bloody 6

Bloody girl friend drops me flat
Like a dog on bloody mat
Gets a Yank, like bloody that
Bloody, Bloody, Bloody 7

Bloody sawdust in the bread
Must have come from bloody bed
Better all be bloody dead
Bloody, Bloody, Bloody 8

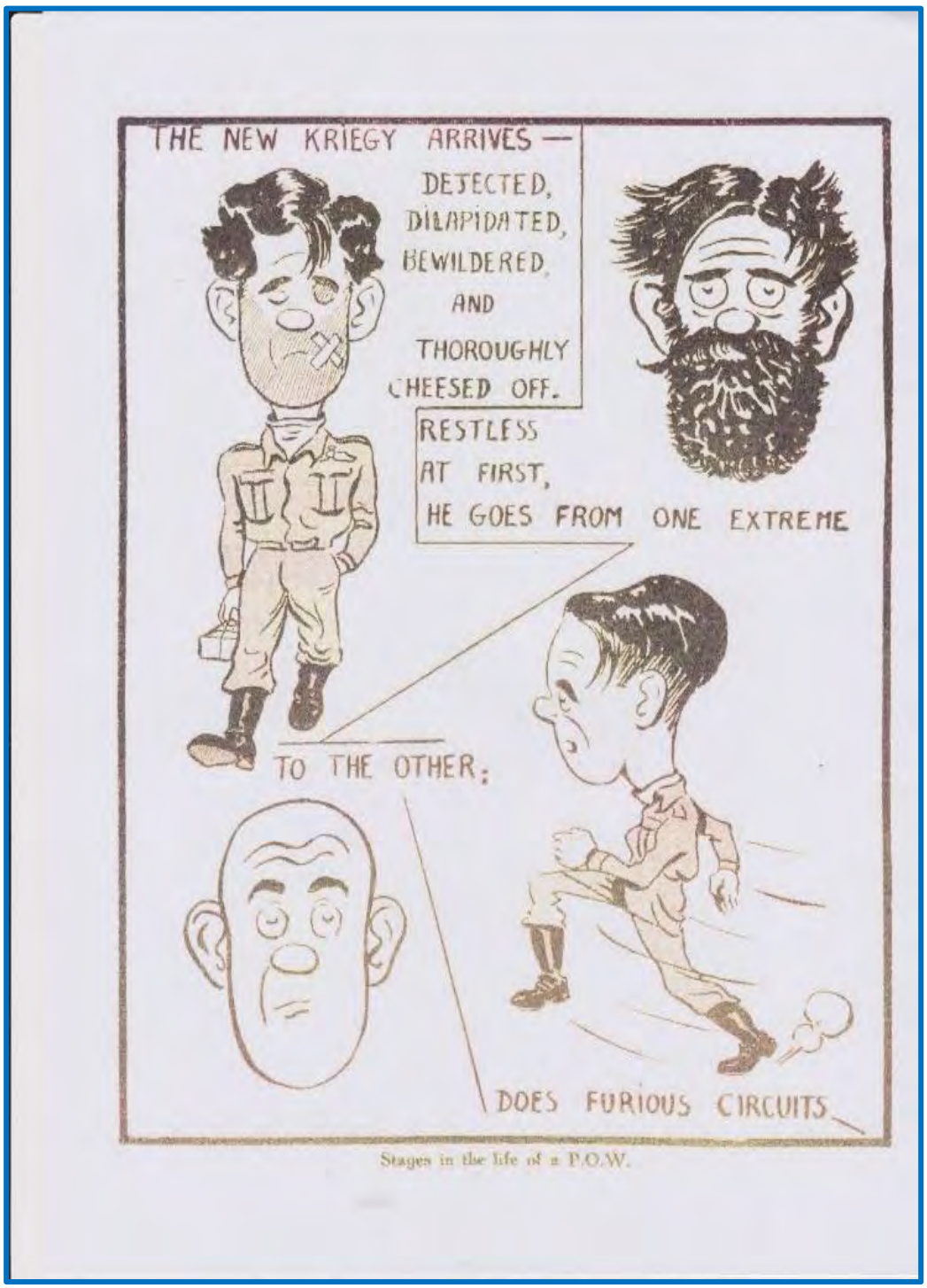
Now I'm near the bloody end
Almost round the bloody bend
That's the general bloody trend
Bloody, Bloody, Bloody 9

Don't it get your bloody goat
Was it Shaw who bloody wrote
"Where the hell's that bloody Boat"
Bloody, Bloody, Bloody. 10

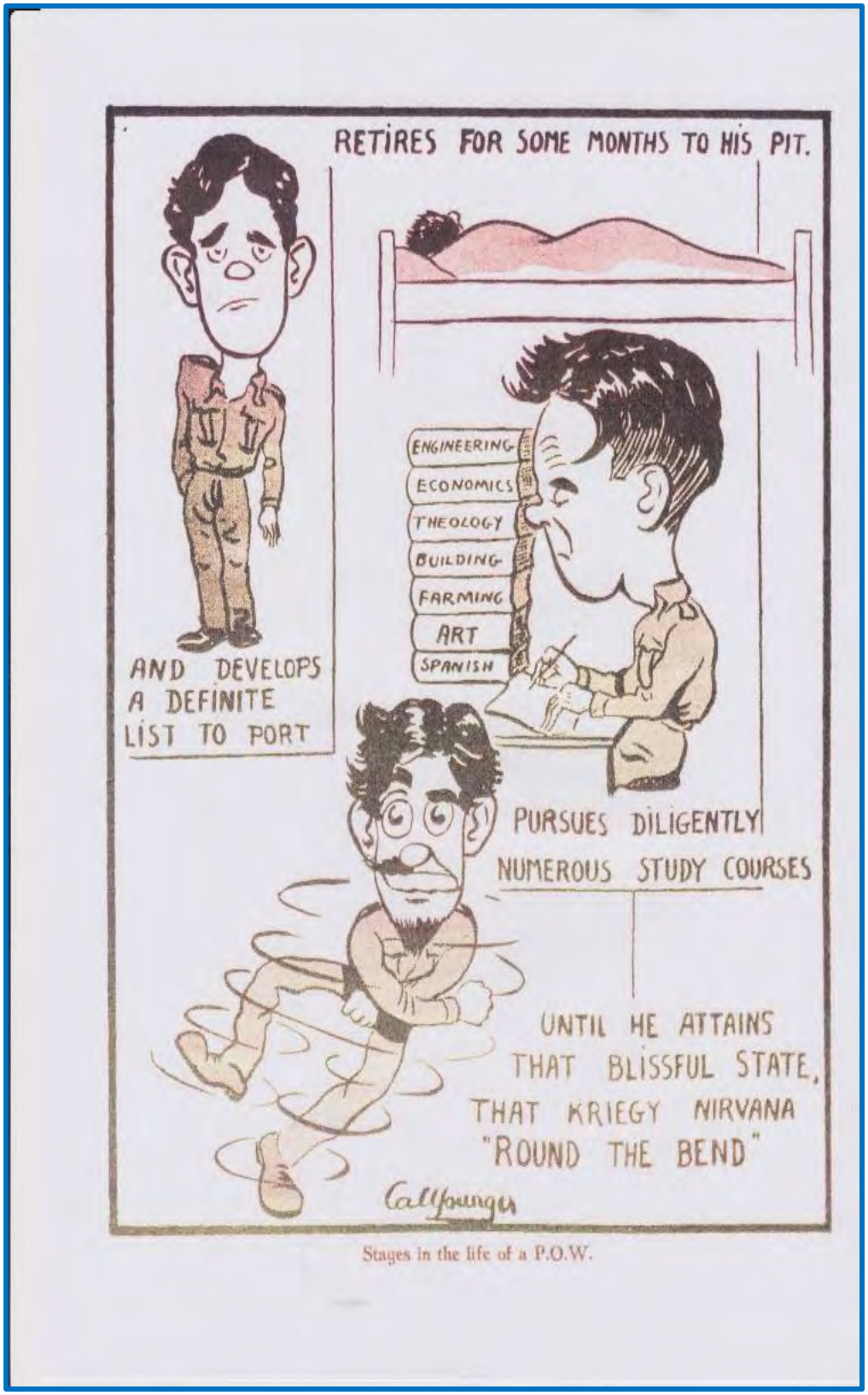
Heydekrug
1944.

Image 83: 'There's Always Bloody Something', unknown author. This version in Alex Kerr's wartime log book, p. 12. Kerr Archive.

The kriegies recognised the variety of moods that could assail them in captivity, as well as the different stages of POW life. Calton Younger's humorous depiction also acknowledges the attempts they took to manage their mental conditions.



Stages in the life of a P.O.W.



Stages in the life of a P.O.W.

Images 84–85: 'Stages in the life of a P.O.W.', by Cal Younger, *Get a Load of this*, [pp. 30–31].

Adopting a Prune-like guise, Bill Fordyce depicts his falling optimism of a speedy return home. It is telling that, rather than using a blank page in his wartime log book, he chose the title page, which notes that the log book is ‘a remembrance from home’.

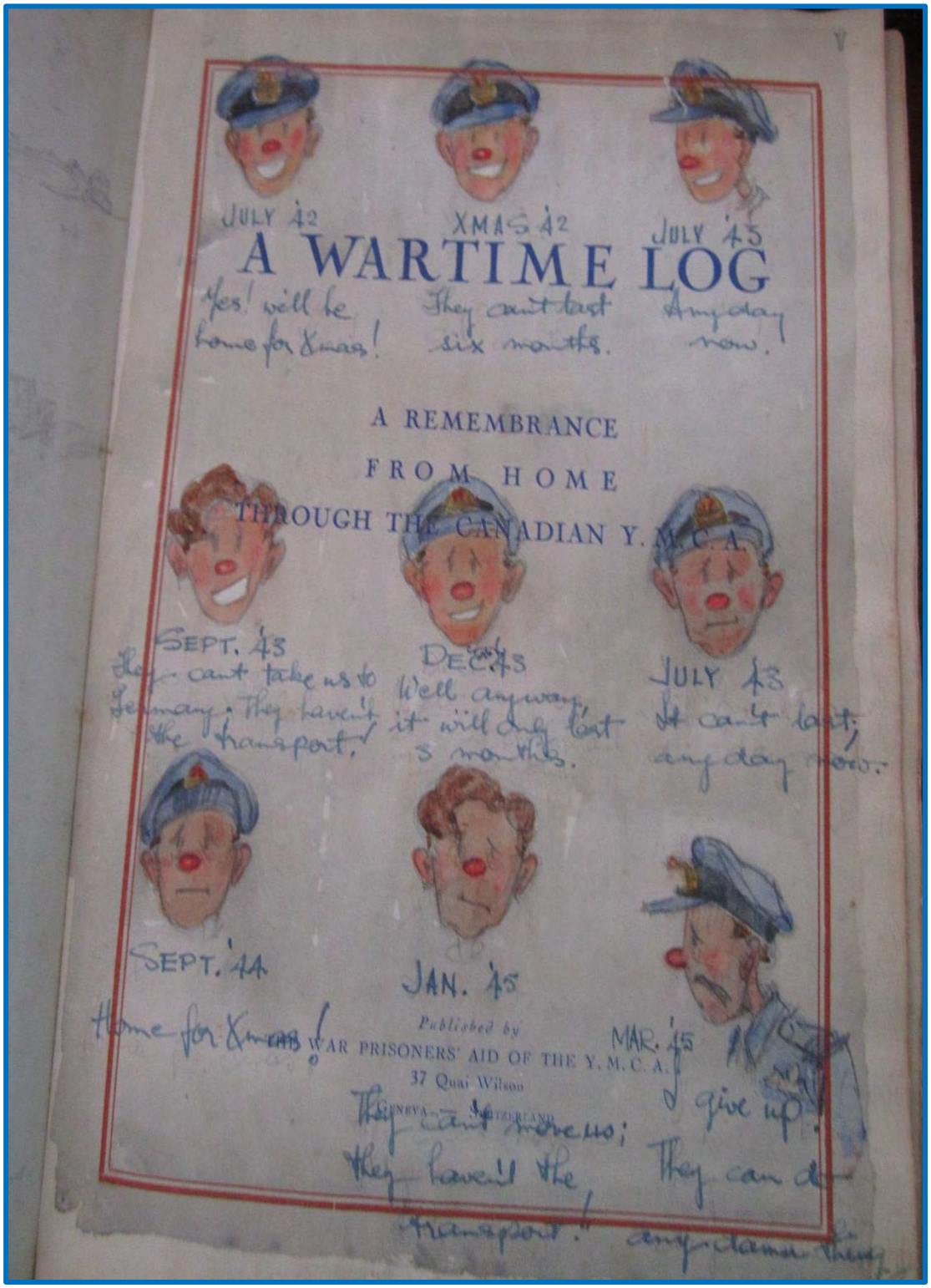


Image 86: ‘Yes! Will be home for Xmas!’, by Bill Fordyce, in his wartime log book. Fordyce Family Archive.

Purposeful activity helped to manage moods and the airmen participated in sports, theatre, art shows, and the 'X' Organisation. They also studied, read, and kept in contact with their loved ones. It seems, though, that they needed to remind themselves to keep busy, as this arts and craft show poster reveals.

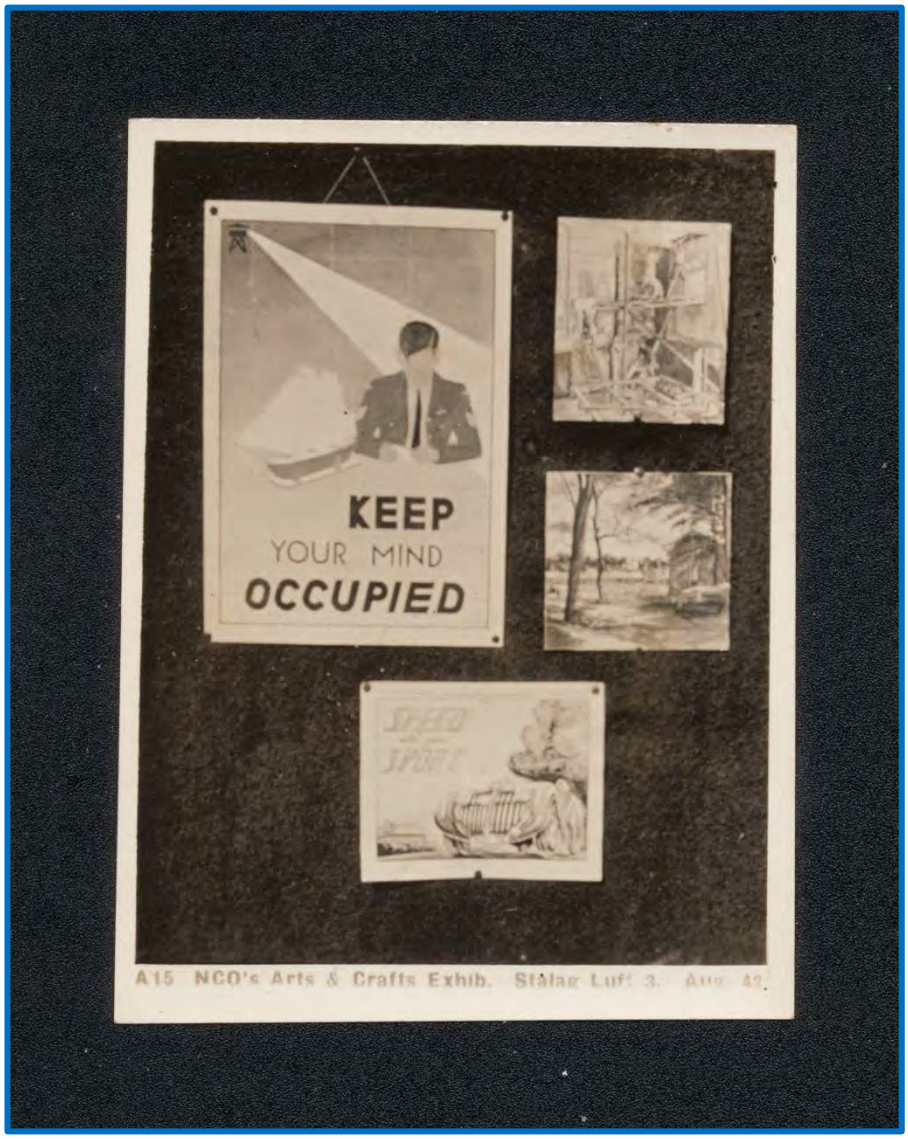


Image 87: 'Keep your mind occupied', NCO's Arts & Crafts Exhib. Stalag Luft 3, August 1942. Hemsworth Collection, Item A15, International Bomber Command Centre Digital Archive.

A small number of airmen in captivty succumbed to ‘round the bend’. Their fellows accorded them full air force honours at their funerals. A number of airmen had copies of these photos recording the funerals of RAF officers Robert Edwards and Peter Lovegrove, in Oflag XXI-B, Schubin, in September and November 1942 respectively, suggesting, perhaps, that they were reminding themselves that ‘there but for the grace of God, go I’.

Images 88–89: Funerals of Robert Edwards and Peter Lovegrove, Oflag XXI-B, Schubin, 1942. Photographs mounted by George Archer in his wartime log book. Archer Family Archive.

Chapter Eight: Neither Neglected nor Forgotten

The predominant perception of the home front response to captivity is that women waited passively for their men to return.[1] Women did wait, and many did so willingly and publicly. 'We'll just have to wait now till the war is over', Lola Kerwin declared to a reporter when she heard that her brother, Basil, had been captured.[2] 'It has been a long time now darling', Beryl Smith told Charles Fry, 'but even if it is as long again (which I don't think it will be) you will still find me waiting for you'.[3] Mothers, fathers, and friends also waited. No one, however, passively marked time. Love and responsibility were not put on hold. Parents and partners worked ceaselessly to make captive lives more bearable. Even as they ensured partners' comfort and reassured them that they were neither neglected nor forgotten, women did not forget their own needs. Wives, fiancées, and sweethearts asserted their sexual and romantic identities to ensure that they, in turn, were not forgotten. Prisoners' comfort was not the exclusive domain of close-knit family or romantic partners. Acting upon the natural human impulse to help those in less fortunate circumstances, altruistic communities of kindness, including the airmen's own 'brotherhood of airmen', also provided for the airmen's well-being.[4] Emotional communities of mourning provided solace to the families of those who were killed in the post-Great Escape reprisals.

---

[1] 'Fractured Lives', PhD thesis, p. 59. For perception, see the section entitled, 'The Ordeal of Waiting Families', in Jalland, *Changing Ways of Death in twentieth-century Australia*, pp. 162–170.

[2] Lola Kerwin, quoted in 'Reported Prisoner of War. Pilot Officer Kerwin', *Queensland Times* (Ipswich), 9 December 1940, p. 4.

[3] Fry FA: Beryl Smith, letter to Charles Fry, 31 May 1944.

[4] Jay Winter used the phrase 'community of kindness' in relation to those who helped the bereaved during and after the Great War. Janette Bomford used it in relation to prisoners of

Home-based support of prisoners of war of Germany and Italy has attracted international attention.[5] Australian scholarship, however, largely examines the families of Great War captives and prisoners of the Japanese.[6] Popular writing focuses on the loved ones of those who died in the Great Escape.[7] Following scholars such as Michael McKernan, Janette Bomford, and Kate Ariotti, this chapter argues that those affected by potential loss and actual separation from their loved ones did not wait passively. They, too, exerted agency in alleviating their own suffering and that of their men folk.[8] This chapter also builds on Joy Damousi's examination of the emotions of bereavement as it explores how families of those who did not return grieved.[9] Accordingly, this chapter addresses a significant oversight in Australian historiography by highlighting the affective responses of the family and loved ones of Australian prisoners of war in Europe, as well as the emotional and sexual strains of separation experienced by wives, fiancées and sweethearts.

Visceral emotions

From the first news that an airman was missing, families responded viscerally: shock, denial, anguish, and distress.[10] They were overwhelmed by

---

war. Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*, p. 34; Bomford, 'Fractured Lives', PhD thesis, p. 73.

[5] Makepeace, 'Living Beyond the Barbed Wire', pp. 158–177; *Captives of War*, pp. 128–153; Gann, 'Correspondence, Camaraderie, and Community: The Second World War for a Mother and Son', MA thesis; Hately-Broad, *War and welfare*.

[6] AWM MSS1500: Peters, 'The lived experience of partners'; McKernan, *This War Never Ends*; Bomford, 'Fractured Lives' PhD thesis; Ariotti, *Captive Anzacs*.

[7] Williams, *A True Story of the Great Escape*; Alexander, '43 Years. Albert Hake: An Australian in the Great Escape'; Alexander, '"How deeply we feel his loss": Condolences to William Mercer Catanach, on the death of his son, Jimmy'.

[8] McKernan, *This War Never Ends*; Bomford, 'Fractured Lives', PhD thesis; Ariotti, *Captive Anzacs*.

[9] Damousi, *The Labour of Loss*; Damousi, *Living with the Aftermath.*

[10] Such responses to the wartime missing are universal. Roper, *The Secret Battle*, pp. 205–232; Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*, pp. 39–44; Scates, *Return to Gallipoli*, pp. 52–60.

the uncertainty of not knowing if their loved ones were alive, dead, or captured. Severe emotional reactions arose from dread that, rather than 'missing', their loved ones were in fact dead. The memory of the terrible day was ingrained in their memories. Many suffered physically and psychologically. Doug Hutchinson's wife, Lola, was 'breaking my heart'.[12] She dramatically lost weight.[13] 'I haven't been well, the worry and anxiety always sends my blood pressure up', confided May Fraser, the mother of Donald.[14] Their anguish was palpable. '[It] just goes on and on in my head, and makes me fear very much, that I will not see my son again.'[15] Fathers also felt the emotional strains. Reverend Walter Betts' apprehension over the fate of his son, Wesley, was apparent to the Department of Air's official who minuted their conversations. '[H]e expressed gratitude.' 'Rev Betts called anxious…' 'He is anxious to send a cable to his son.' 'I assured him.'[16]

While Sophie Johnston had no doubt she would see her son, Eric, again, that certainty eluded many.[17] May Fraser dreaded 'the worst … in my heart I am very afraid'.[18] Scholars Joy Damousi and Janette Bomford have both observed the bereavement-like period in between learning that loved ones had gone missing and discovering they had been taken prisoner.[19] Indeed, fearing death was likely, many experienced what Beverley Raphael terms

---

[12] Hutchinson FA: Lola Hutchinson, letter to Doug Hutchinson, 1 October 1943.
[13] Hutchinson FA: Lola Hutchinson, letter to Doug Hutchinson, 31 October 1943.
[14] Fraser FA: May Fraser, letter to Ted Garside, 10 April 1943. Kate Ariotti also notes the physical, psychological and emotional responses on first hearing the distressing news in '"At Present Everything is Making us most Anxious"', in Beaumont, Grant, and Pegram (eds), *Beyond Surrender*, pp. 57–74.
[15] Fraser FA: May Fraser, letter to Ted Garside, 1 April 1943.
[16] NAA A705, 166/5/530 Wesley Betts, minute sheet.
[17] Alexander records: Evelyn Johnston, interview 18 October 2016.
[18] Fraser FA: May Fraser, letter to Ted Garside, 1 April 1943.
[19] Damousi, *The Labour of Loss*, p. 123; Bomford, 'Fractured Lives', PhD thesis, p. 66.

‘anticipatory grief’ and its stark emotions of ‘shock, numbness, disbelief, and denial’. Distress was profound, as was their ‘fear, anxiety, and even helplessness’.[20] Extended family, friends, and colleagues responded to the ‘anticipation of loss’ by forming ‘circles of mourning’, their own grief-based emotional communities.[21] They sent condolence-like letters which offered solace, sympathy, and empathy. As well as social niceties, these supportive articulations recognised and partly assuaged the emotional pain of loss.[22] Family friend Dorrie Power offered Doug Hutchinson’s parents the (awkwardly expressed) comfort of an all too common travail. ‘There are not many of us who are not sharing the same worry.’[23] William Hurditch aligned himself with other families, particularly from his own district, who were also ‘sick at heart wondering what has happened to sons, fathers, husbands, or brothers posted “missing” in the vortex of a world war’.[24] Lola Hutchinson was overwhelmed by the concern of fellow workers and customers as strengthening expressions of sympathy flooded in:

> The manager and staff have been wonderful to me, I don’t think I could even repay them for their kindness to me. You know Doug it has taken this trouble to make me realise how many true friends we have. Space will not allow me to tell you who they all are but one of these days I’ll show you all the letters and telegrams I’ve received from people. Truly Doug, without telling any lies, I’ve had hundreds of people coming into

---

[20] Raphael, *The Anatomy of Bereavement*, pp. 50–51.
[21] For ‘anticipation of loss’ refer Damousi, *The Labour of Loss*, p. 66. For ‘circles of mourning’ refer Scates, *Return to Gallipoli*, p. 9.
[22] Boddice, *The History of Emotions*, p. 184; Boddice, *Pain: A Very Short Introduction*, pp. 53–64.
[23] Hutchinson FA: Dorrie Power, letter to Jess Hutchinson, 9 August 1943.
[24] ‘Sergt. Pilot Hurditch A Prisoner of War. First Reported Missing’, *Crookwell Gazette* (NSW), 15 July 1942, p. 5.

> the shop and out home to enquire about you. As for the phone calls, well, I thought I'd have to engage someone to answer all the calls. Gee sweetheart it's good to know people think so much of my husband.[25]

Religious families turned to God and their faith communities. William Hurditch felt 'sure Providence would return' his son.[27] Friends of Frank and Jess Hutchinson had a 'strong feeling of faith and trust in God' that Doug, 'would return to us'.[28] Religion, however, was not a panacea for all. While 'not a religious person', Evelyn Charles, who for five months had no knowledge of the fate of her sweetheart, Eric Johnston, would often 'sit in the back' of Melbourne's St Paul's cathedral. One day, 'I went and sat down quietly and there was a couple … She was breaking her heart. Absolutely. And I couldn't stand it. So I got up, I went to work. … and do you know, I never, ever went back'. Evelyn had felt alienated from both church and a potentially shared experience. 'I hadn't worked out whether they were mourning someone or whether they were missing someone. Whether they were like me.'[29] Perhaps too, she was unwilling to identify herself as a grieving woman. While Evelyn experienced little emotional support from church or family, she and Johnston's mother, Sophie, were mutually supportive.[30]

Clinging to hope was a natural, positive reaction to bad news. It made waiting endurable and, for many, proved sustaining. William Hurditch

---

[25] Hutchinson FA: Lola Hutchinson, letter to Doug Hutchinson, 1 October 1943.
[27] 'Sergt. Pilot Hurditch A Prisoner of War. First Reported Missing', *Crookwell Gazette* (NSW), 15 July 1942, p. 5.
[28] Hutchinson FA: Joy and Bill of West Wyalong, letter to Frank and Jess Hutchinson, 15 August 1943.
[29] Alexander records: Evelyn Johnston, interview 18 October 2016.
[30] Alexander records: Evelyn Johnston, interview 18 October 2016.

publicly declared that his son, Douglas, 'went forth from the land of the boomerang, and like the boomerang' would return.[31] 'Next-of-kin letters' penned by squadron commanders, adjutants, and aviation friends mirrored condolence letters. Although not usually received by Australian families until long after firm news had been cabled, squadron communications offered hope (sometimes unrealistically) that the missing airman had survived.[32] Fellow airmen were keen to share their certainty that the missing would return. 'I do hope [my cable] has made you feel much easier as to [Reg's] whereabouts and also made you feel as sure as we are that he is unhurt and is a POW', Doug Davidson told Ada Kierath.[33] Despite having no direct knowledge of the circumstances of Donald's last action, May Fraser was keen to accept the 'little gleam of hope' offered by Ted Garside when he gave her his opinion of Donald's chances of survival. 'I am trying to keep my chin up and believe like all the rest of my family that Don is a prisoner.'[34] Hope, for Evelyn Charles, however, alternated with uncertainty. 'I had no idea. … all there was were tears and hope and days when I think yes, and no, no, it's not going to happen. Up and down.'[35] Evelyn, like Margery Gray and others who sent letters 'out into the blue', continued to write to their loved ones.[36] 'I suppose I am a bit crazy writing these letters when I haven't any definite news of you

[31] 'Sergt. Pilot Hurditch A Prisoner of War. First Reported Missing', *Crookwell Gazette* (NSW), 15 July 1942, p. 5.
[32] MHRC CPA: Wing Commander Francis Powley, letter to Walter Phelps, 29 January 1944; Wickham, *We Wore Blue*, p. 176. For an example of false hope, refer Alexander, *Jack Davenport: Beaufighter Leader*, p. 151.
[33] Kierath FA: Pilot Officer Doug Davidson, letter to Mrs Ada Kierath, 27 April 1943.
[34] Fraser FA: May Fraser, letter to Ted Garside, 10 April 1943.
[35] Alexander records: Evelyn Johnston, interview 18 October 2016.
[36] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 10 December 2015. For others who wrote in hope that the missing would receive their letters, refer Damousi, *The Labour of Loss*, p. 121.

sweetheart, but I just know that you are allright [sic] and that by the time these reach their destination you will have arrived back safely.'[37]

Long-distance nurturing

Communications—whether official or private—between Australia and Germany were uncertain. 'I explained to Mr [sic] Betts that due to bombing attacks on Germany from time to time enemy administration and communications were disorganised', explained a clerk in the Department of Air's Casualty Section to Wesley Betts' father.[38] Sometimes advice took weeks, even months.[39] That long waiting was 'most unbearable' for Beryl Smith.[40] 'The last three months have seemed like three long years to me', wrote Evelyn Charles on 6 October 1944.[41] While Evelyn fretted until official advice came through, some families were not content to wait.[42] They took the initiative and instituted their own enquiries. Some, such as Walter Phelps, wrote to the Red Cross.[43] Ethel Righetti got in touch with the YMCA.[44] Walter Betts and Herbert Adams contacted the Department of Air's Casualty Section; Adams travelled from Sydney to Melbourne especially to receive 'particulars' regarding his son, Denis.[45] Others, like Englishwoman Freda Pollard, who lived in Lancashire and had heard nothing from her fiancé,

---

[37] Johnston FA: Evelyn Charles, letter to Eric Johnston, 2 October 1944.
[38] NAA A705, 166/5/530: Wesley Betts, minute sheet.
[39] NAA A705 166/35/8: Alan Righetti, minute sheet.
[40] Fry FA: Beryl Smith, letter to Charles Fry, undated, c. 27 August 1941.
[41] Johnston FA: Evelyn Charles, letter to Eric Johnston, 6 October 1944.
[42] Refer Damousi, *The Labour of Loss* p. 120; Fraser FA: May Fraser, letters to Ted Garside, 1 and 10 April 1943.
[43] MHRC CPA: Mrs A.E. Simonett, Director, Red Cross Bureau for Wounded, Missing & Prisoners of War, letter to Mr W.J. Phelps, 24 July 1944. Refer also Bomford, 'Fractured Lives', PhD thesis, p. 71.
[44] NAA A705 166/35/8 Righetti: minute sheet.
[45] NAA A705, 166/5/530 Wesley Betts, minute sheet; NAA A705, 166/3/314 Adams: minute Sheet (10 September 1941).

Kenneth Wright, wrote to RAAF Headquarters in London.[46] Julia Osborne was so anxious during the month-long wait for confirmation of her son John's status that she consulted a psychic who assured her he was alive.[47]

Confirmation of safety was 'a great event' received 'with gladness and thanksgiving'.[48] May Fraser's initial grief-like reaction then changed to one of acceptance.[49] For many, it signalled a return to some semblance of normalcy. Homefolk resumed their usual household and social duties or went back to work. Noela Hake contributed directly to the war effort by working in a munitions factory. Evelyn Charles was an operator in the Postmaster-General's Department. Beryl Smith was a typist in the PMG's telephone branch before transferring to the personal staff of the Minister for Supply and Development. Lola Hutchinson was a supervisor at Woolworths. Their letters, full of the minutiae of home- and work-life, reflect their attempts to return to normal and to allay their ongoing anxiety for their absent men.[50] The daily trivialities also connected the airmen to pre-captivity lives which they could still recognise. Women's letters also highlighted a cultural response. As Dorrie Power's letter indicates, many were in the same situation. Life and the war effort had to go on.

---

[46] NAA A9301 403176 Wright: Freda Pollard, undated letter to RAAF Overseas Headquarters.
[47] Alexander records: Carlene Scifleet, interview 9 June 2016.
[48] 'great event': Mayo FA: Eric Mayo, letter to parents, 3 June 1942. 'gladness': Fry FA: Beryl Smith, letter to Charles Fry, 14 August 1941. As Kate Ariotti indicates, this was a universal response. Ariotti, '"At Present Everything is Making us most Anxious', in Beaumont, Grant, and Pegram (eds), *Beyond Surrender*, p. 60.
[49] Alexander records: Barbara Fotheringham, interview 26 June 2016.
[50] This is particularly evident in the letters of Lola Hutchinson, Beryl Smith and Eva Green. Refer Damousi, *The Labour of Loss*, p. 117 for correspondence as evidence of allaying feelings of loss and absence.

Despite responsibilities within and outside the home, their absent airmen continued to take prime position in their lives. For many, long-distance nurturing was expressed by writing letters and preparing parcels. Ada Kierath, Eva Green, Martha Fry, Minnie Archer, and Mary O'Byrne maintained loving bonds between their absent sons and those at home by exchanging and relaying news. So too did the cohort's other female family members, and their wives, fiancées, and sweethearts. While letter writing was mainly the province of female relations, the kriegies also received regular heartening missives from their male friends and relations.[51] 'Great joy today', wrote Justin O'Byrne. 'I have received letters from Dad, Brendan, Ray's five, Tom's two, Pauline, Kath and Pam and am absolutely delighted.'[52] The large quantity of mail handled by the Red Cross alone—which posted its millionth letter from Australia during 1943—demonstrates that close and extended families needed to sustain their links to their absent loved ones. (The cohort's Harold Longworth was featured as the recipient of that milestone letter.)[53]

Letters and parcels provided a direct link to the airmen captives and were vital proof to the imprisoned men that they remained in their loved ones' hearts. They also provided solace to the sender through the act of writing, selecting and packaging; they were physical representations of love and concern, and fulfilled families' deep-seated need to help the absent airmen in

[51] SOR JCC: 2013.CAT050, James Catanach, letter to William Alan Catanach, 28 March 1943; NAM JOC: John Osborne, letter to family, 24 November 1943; O'Byrne FA: Justin O'Byrne, letters to family, 24 August 1942 and 27 April 1943; Archer FA: Archer, letters to family, 22 December 1942 and 29 April 1943. For references to cheering quality of letters: Arnel archive: Arnel, letter to Margery Gray, [undated Christmas–New Year period 1944–1945]; AWM PR05675: Grey-Smith, diary, 19 July 1941; Arnel archive: Arnel, letter to Mrs Gray, 22 March 1944); O'Byrne FA: Justin O'Byrne, letter to family, 24 November 1943.
[52] O'Byrne FA: Justin O'Byrne, letter to family, 24 November 1943.
[53] 'Million Letters', *Daily News* (Perth), 23 October 1943, p. 15.

any way they could. 'Darling, I am doing absolutely everything possible for you', Beryl Smith told Charles Fry.[54] While parcel contents addressed the airmen's physical requirements, letters meant so much more than just the news they contained. They bridged the divide between home and prison camp and stimulated nostalgic evocations of their past lives. 'Do you remember the last crop of potatoes that were planted … and how the boys used to pelt them at anyone going along', asked Eva Green.[55] Letters were tangible connections so precious that Doug Hutchinson and Errol Green carried theirs on the forced march, and James McCleery mounted in his wartime log book (which he also carried on the march) one from his sister, Laura: his 'first news from home'.[56]

One of the greatest hazards to the well-being of prisoners of war was, perhaps, 'the fear of becoming a forgotten man'.[57] '[T]he great thing for these fellows is to know that they are not forgotten whilst they are prisoners.'[58] Publicly declaring they had not forgotten their sons and husbands, loved ones constantly reassured the airmen of their continued place in their lives and hearts. Mothers and wives wore Female Relatives' Badges.[59] 'I do hope you receive our mail', wrote Eva Green. '[W]e never miss to write twice each week. … You are never from my thoughts for many moments of the day. My first thoughts in the morning and the last at night.'[60] '[P]lease don't feel

---

[54] Fry FA: Beryl Smith, letter to Charles Fry, 31 January 1942. For psychological need to provide aid, refer Bomford, 'Fractured Lives', PhD thesis, p. 65.
[55] Green FA: Eva Green, letter to Errol Green 21 June 1942.
[56] AWM PR88/160: McCleery, Laura Scott, letter to James McCleery, 21 August 1944, mounted in wartime log.
[57] Newman, 'The Prisoner-of-War Mentality', pp. 8–9.
[58] 'News from Germany. Rotary's Good Work'. Norman Dunn Hears of Max', *Mudgee Guardian and North-Western Representative* (NSW), 1 July 1943, p. 14.
[59] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 10 December 2015; Alexander records: Evelyn Johnston, interview 18 October 2016.
[60] Green FA: Eva Green, letter to Errol Green, 28 June 1942.

neglected or forgotten', Beryl Smith pleaded with Charles Fry, 'as I am thinking of you every minute of the day and night'.[61]

As well as privately remembering her fiancé, Beryl Smith publicly ensured he was not forgotten. Without the standing of a wife and, accordingly, not entitled to the Female Relatives' Badge, Beryl highlighted her connection to a serviceman by promoting and wearing the Caterpillar Club Badge which Charles Fry had arranged to send to her. It was also a tangible link to her fiancé, 'because it is the only thing I have belonging to you which I can wear and I am very proud indeed to wear it'.[62] In some ways, too, the badge represented Fry: 'I am wearing the Caterpillar badge with its eyes pointing to mine, darling'.[63] In doing so, as Joy Damousi notes, she created 'a presence out of … absence'.[64] Beryl assiduously cultivated that imagined presence. She promoted Fry's service beyond their family and friendship circle. She fed items about him to newspapers; provided details to 'the Official War Historian for incorporation in their records of deeds by Australians'; and made enquiries to the Minister for Air regarding Fry's omission from the Honour Roll contained in the Australian War Memorial's 1943 publication, *RAAF Log*.[65] While perhaps not as persistently active as Beryl, other women also ensured their menfolk were publicly remembered. Richard Winn's mother, Betty, proudly wore the white gold brooch her son gave her before

---

[61] Fry FA: Beryl Smith, letter to Charles Fry, 30 October 1941.
[62] 'Flier's Girl Gets his Caterpillar', *Truth* (Sydney), 7 November 1943, p. 17; 'To a typist came a gold caterpillar', *The Sun* (Sydney), 7 November 1943, p. 4. Quote: Fry FA: Beryl Smith, letter to Charles Fry, 29 October 1943.
[63] Fry FA: Beryl Smith, letter to Charles Fry, 31 May 1944.
[64] Refer Damousi, *The Labour of Loss*, p. 121.
[65] Jeff James, RAAF Recruiting Drive Committee NSW, letter to Beryl Smith, 9 September 1943; Fry FA: Beryl Smith, letter to Editor, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 December 1943; Fry FA: Beryl Smith, letter to Charles Fry, 15 March 1944; Minister for Air, letter to Beryl Smith, 15 April 1944.

he embarked.[66] Aubrey Mace's wife, Maida, and Allen Mulligan's mother, Eulalie, forwarded photographs sent from prison camps to newspapers or POW magazines.[67] Eulalie also sent letters from her son to the paper, as did the families of Arthur Tebbutt, Rod Ferry, Reg Giddey, and William Trickett.[68] Frederick Archer passed on George's regards to relatives, neighbours, a member of his Masonic lodge, and 'all at the office and the crowd at Brighton'.[69] Brothers and sisters made certain that their captive siblings were not forgotten.[70] Lola Hutchinson constantly talked about her husband and passed on news of his well-being when she heard from him. As a consequence, she regularly elicited expressions of good wishes from friends and acquaintances, which she passed onto Doug in her letters.[71]

The emotional divide

Women's wartime correspondence reveals their emotional turmoil. Wives, fiancées and sweethearts worried over their partners' health and well-being. 'Do you know at times I nearly go crazy, wondering what you are doing and

---

[66] Johnson, 'From Choirboy to Dogfighter'.
[67] 'Australian airmen in Stalag Luft 3', provided by Mrs A.W. Mace to NLA FERG/4550: *P.O.W.*, No. 17, 15 June 1943, p. 5. A copy was also sent to the Red Cross publicity officer, 'News from Germany', *Morning Bulletin* (Rockhampton, QLD), 28 August 1943, p. 5. 'A group of our airmen in Stalag Luft III' was 'kindly sent by Allen Mulligan's mother and published in NLA FERG/4550: *P.O.W.*, No 14, 15 March 1943, p. 11.
[68] From Eulalie Mulligan, 'Red Cross Parcels Received by DFC Winner', *Wellington Times* (NSW), 13 October 1941, p. 12. 'Life in German Prison Camp', *The Scone Advocate* (NSW), 18 September 1942, p. 4; 'Prisoners of War. Conditions in Germany, *Albany Advertiser* (WA), 30 November 1942, p. 4; 'Letter from Germany. Flying-Officer Reg. Giddey Writes Home', *Dungog Chronicle: Durham and Gloucester Advertiser* (NSW) 25 January 1944, p. 1; 'Prisoners talk of coming home', *The Australian Women's Weekly*, 5 August 1944, p. 14. For publication of private letters, refer also to Bomford 'Fractured Lives', PhD thesis, p. 63.
[69] Archer FA: Archer, letter to his mother, 16 October 1943.
[70] 'Prisoner still full of fight', *The Australian Women's Weekly*, 10 July 1943, p. 10; 'Prisoner-of-war oarsman passes accountancy exam', *Weekly Times* (Melbourne), 13 December 1944, p, 25; 'Sunderland air-gunner writes poem to lost comrades', *The Australian Women's Weekly*, 15 April 1944, p. 10; *Telegraph* (Brisbane), 15 May 1943, p. 3.
[71] Hutchinson FA: Lola Hutchinson, letters to Doug Hutchinson, 14 November 1943, 20 February 1944, and 25 June 1944.

if you are alright', Lola Hutchinson told Doug.[72] Just as the kriegies did, they feared their partners would forget them or turn away from them romantically. Loneliness and misery assailed them. Their apprehensions were exacerbated by the lack of contact. 'It is over two months since I received your last letter-card, Chas', wrote Beryl Smith, 'and words cannot express my anxiety to hear from you again'.[73] They constantly hoped for news. 'I have missed your letters [obscure] darling', wrote Evelyn Charles. 'I won't know myself when they start coming again. The last three months have seemed like three long years to me I can only hope that the next few days will bring some happy news for us all.'[74] Their anguish became physical.[75] 'Oh darling I do love you so my body just seems as tho' it's had a large slice out of it since you went away', confided Lola.[76]

Women assuaged their emotional pain through thinking of and writing to their absent partners. Lola Hutchinson decided she 'mightn't feel quite so miserable if I sat down in front of the fire and talked to' her husband 'for a little while'.[77] Both prisoners of war and their loved ones optimistically believed captivity would be curtailed immediately following an imminent, and fully expected victory. 'It will be great when we are together again and I trust it will not be much longer now', Beryl Smith told Charles Fry.[78] Their certainty did much to ameliorate their distress at separation, as well as to convince their partners of their own fidelity. '[U]ntil I write again my darling

[72] Hutchinson FA: Lola Hutchinson, letter to Doug Hutchinson, 29 April 1944.
[73] Fry FA: Beryl Smith, letter to Charles Fry, 18 May 1942.
[74] Johnston FA: Evelyn Charles, letter to Eric Johnston, 2 October 1944.
[75] Boddice, *Pain: A Very Short Introduction*, pp. 6–7.
[76] Hutchinson FA: Lola Hutchinson, letter to Doug Hutchinson, 10 October 1943.
[77] Hutchinson FA: Lola Hutchinson, letter to Doug Hutchinson, 7 August 1945.
[78] Fry FA: Beryl Smith, letter to Charles Fry, 29 October 1943.

all my love and I am still waiting', wrote Evelyn Charles.[79] Lola Hutchinson's rider to her assertion that 'if we both keep on hoping, we'll be together again soon, won't we', however, suggests only a qualified certainty, or one which fluctuated depending on her emotional state.[80]

Like their menfolk, those at home craved letters. 'Darling I am just living in the hopes of receiving a letter from you', Beryl Smith wrote to Charles Fry.[81] For them, letters were significant artefacts in their own right.[82] They were, as Joy Damousi notes, 'precious, even sacred' objects.[83] They were artefacts of nostalgia which reignited memories and kept alive emotional connections. Beryl Smith, Evelyn Charles, Noela Hake, and Lola Hutchinson clung to and treasured every page written by their partners. (Mothers too filed away their sons' letters.[84]) They cheered themselves up by rereading them. 'Do you know sweetheart', Lola Hutchinson told Doug, 'I've reread all your letters so many times and particularly the one you wrote on 25 March', their fifth wedding anniversary.[85]

Nostalgia was a powerful emotion which imbued every romantic partner's letter. It enabled a sense of togetherness, but it also reflected sexual tension.[86] 'My dear I've been listening to a good programme on the radio, they have been playing lots of new numbers and one of them, a favourite of mine, is "Every night about this time"', wrote Lola Hutchinson. 'It's funny

---

[79] Johnston FA: Evelyn Charles, letter to Eric Johnston, 29 December 1944.
[80] Hutchinson FA: Lola Hutchinson, letter to Doug Hutchinson, 14 November 1943.
[81] Fry FA: Beryl Smith, letter to Charles Fry, undated, c. 20 October1941.
[82] Boddice, *The History of Emotions*, p. 38.
[83] Damousi, *The Labour of Loss*, p. 19.
[84] Kierath Family Archive; Green Family Archive; Williams, *A True Story of the Great Escape*, p. 90.
[85] Hutchinson FA: Lola Hutchinson, letter to Doug Hutchinson, 3 July 1944.
[86] Roper, 'Nostalgia as an emotional experience in the Great War', p. 426.

but when I hear it played I always think of you, somehow the words bring back memories.'[87] Nostalgia is not the exclusive domain of the past: it is also future-looking.[88] For both the prisoner of war and his partner, wistful thinking often related to dreams of their reunion. 'Am intensely looking forward to your return Charl—all my love is yours', wrote Beryl Smith to her fiancé.[89] Future-looking nostalgia also focused on marital intimacy, expressed by women obliquely in descriptions of the contents of their glory boxes, or more overtly, such as Lola Hutchinson's joyous, 'How my heart skips a beat when I think of the day when once again I can feel your arms around me'.[90] As they did for the airmen, nostalgic tokens such as photographs spanned the emotional divide and imaginatively brought the women's loved ones into their presence.[91] 'It is really marvellous to see your dear face again Charles and it makes me feel much closer to you, if that is possible' enthused Beryl Smith. (Beryl always carried five photographs of Fry in her wallet.)[92] 'As for the proof [photograph]' Doug Hutchinson sent to Lola just before he was taken prisoner, 'well I think it is so like you that my heart aches every time I look at it and I might add it's here in front of me now'.[93]

Women felt the sexual tensions of separation. Making this clear in their letters, they promoted themselves as sexual beings. Emphasising their attractiveness, availability, and fitness for future romance and motherhood

---

[87] Hutchinson FA: Lola Hutchinson, letter to Doug Hutchinson, 27 February 1944.
[88] Roper, 'Nostalgia as an emotional experience in the Great War', p. 422.
[89] Fry FA: Beryl Smith, letter to Charles Fry, 4 March 1943.
[90] 'Glory box' references include Fry FA: Beryl Smith, letter to Charles Fry, 20 December 1942; Hutchinson FA: Lola Hutchinson, letter to Doug Hutchinson, 16 July 1944. Hutchinson FA: Lola Hutchinson, letter to Doug Hutchinson, 18 September 1944.
[91] Roper, 'Nostalgia as an emotional experience in the Great War', pp. 423, 425, 434.
[92] Fry FA: Beryl Smith, letters to Charles Fry, 23 April 1943; Charles Fry, 5 July 1945 (3) (five letters in wallet).
[93] Hutchinson FA: Lola Hutchinson, letter to Doug Hutchinson, 13 October 1943.

was their version of their partners' fit and well composure which stressed virility. Reflecting an increasing awareness of the place of sexuality in marriage and that both partners could achieve fulfilment, Lola Hutchinson's letters reveal that she and Doug had enjoyed an active and satisfying marital intimacy.[94] She often reminded him of it as well as her own attractiveness.[95] 'My dear you should see me now', she wrote. '[I]t's terribly hot and I'm lying on the floor with only a pair of scanties, a floral skirt and a white open neck blouse on.'[96] Loose fitting scanties, or French knickers, as Lola liked to inform Doug, were just one of the 'many undies and what nots' she had packed into her glory box for her post-return trousseau.[97] Hutchinson, however, was too circumspect or worried about who else was reading his censored mail; he failed to respond to her sexual provocation. Lola reacted. After receiving a series of emotionally tepid missives, she made it clear she expected him to take an equal part in keeping alive their pre-war ardour.[98] Lola's evocative image of scanties and open-necked blouse eventually incited a response: 'I must say your description of how you were coping with the hot weather was rather vivid. Almost distracting to me'.[99] While Lola and Noela Hake elicited sexual responses from their husbands, Charles Fry did not acknowledge his fiancée's demure reference to her feminine physicality when she posted him a photograph of herself in a swimming costume.[100] Beryl

---

[94] Bongiorno, *The Sex Lives of Australians*, pp. 198, 202; Lake, 'Female desires: The meaning of World War II', pp. 267–284.
[95] Hutchinson FA: Lola Hutchinson, letters to Doug Hutchinson, 25 December 1943, 1 January 1944, 13 February 1944, Monday 3 July 1944; 26 November 1944.
[96] Hutchinson FA: Lola Hutchinson, letter to Doug Hutchinson, 1 January 1944.
[97] Hutchinson FA: Lola Hutchinson, letter to Doug Hutchinson, 16 July 1944.
[98] Hutchinson FA: Lola Hutchinson, letter to Doug Hutchinson, 6 February 1944.
[99] Hutchinson FA: Doug Hutchinson, letter to Lola Hutchinson, 1 May 1944.
[100] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letter to Noela Hake, 3 March 1943; Fry FA: Beryl Smith, letter to Charles Fry, 13 October 1942; Fry FA: Charles Fry, letter to Beryl Smith, 26 May 1943.

Smith never indicated how she felt about Fry's lack of reaction, nor of his failure to respond to her more direct sexual overtures, such as, 'I am just living for the day of your return, Charles my dearest, and then "WHOOPEE"'.[101] She did, however, feel the strain of perennially cheery and sexless letters, and imagined her fiancé felt it as well.[102]

While the Hutchinsons reunited and Beryl married her Charles—both enjoying long marriages—some relationships were severely strained. Some did not survive. Tony Gordon's sweetheart Rosemary Breheny (whom he eventually married), was a reluctant correspondent—eleven months once elapsed between her letters—and a long relationship with an American marine only ended with his death in 1944.[103] Nancy Gilliat ended her engagement to Calton Younger via a 'dear John' letter.[104] Graham Berry's fiancée married an American sailor.[105]

Emotional communities

Families of servicemen in both world wars bonded together to provide friendship and support.[106] They created their own emotional communities. Initially focused on 'their' prisoner of war, these communities provided mutual support and solace, as well as practical and emotional sustenance to those behind barbed wire. Walter Betts asked the Department of Air for the

---

[101] Fry FA: Beryl Smith, letter to Charles Fry, 6 September 1943. Quote: letter to Charles Fry, 5 March 1943.
[102] Fry FA: Beryl Smith, letter to Charles Fry, 12 December 1944.
[103] Gordon FA: Gordon, letters Aunt Mag, 31 May and 30 September 1942; Alexander records: Drew Gordon, interview 19 July 2016.
[104] Younger, *No Flight From the Cage*, pp. 116–117.
[105] Birth notice, *The West Australian* (Perth), 2 August 1944, p. 1.
[106] Peter Stanley describes the network formed by families of Nine Platoon and Six Troop, 2 Commando respectively in *Men of Mont Quentin* and *Commando to Colditz*. For suffering women sharing experiences, refer Bomford, 'Fractured Lives', PhD thesis, p. 35.

names and addresses of his son's crew members.[107] Ethel Righetti contacted the families of Keith Baxter, Neil Thomas, and Willard Fethers to pass on the happy advice that their sons were with Alan and, like him, were in good health. She then phoned the Casualty Section asking that they inform the Baines and McCormack families that their sons were also well.[108] Supportive friendships developed within the next-of-kin community. From an initial correspondence where they exchanged letters and snippets of news from their son and husband, Grace Mayo and Isabel Currie, the wife of Tim Mayo's rear gunner, formed a caring relationship that extended beyond 'their' prisoners of war.[109] Some spanned continents. Minnie Archer developed a strong connection with Dot Gibbs; Beryl Smith was in frequent contact with Margaret Archibald; and Noela Hake corresponded with Ella Fraser. Not all attempts at news-sharing, however, produced positive results. When John Vivash informed his family that he and all crew were 'safe and well', his father, Frank, wrote to the parents of his crew members to advise the happy news, only to discover that three had been told that their sons had died.[110]

The Prisoner of War Relatives' Association (POWRA) provided a formal mechanism for kinfolk to seek and obtain mutual support. Founded in January 1942 by Sydney Smith, the father of a prisoner of war, it also, according to foundation member Beryl Smith, intended to 'greatly help to alleviate conditions for prisoners of war'.[111] POWRA raised funds for

---

[107] NAA A705, 166/5/530 Wesley Betts: M.C. Langslow, letter to Reverend W.F. Betts, 7 June 1944. Refer to minute sheet for reference to Reverend Betts' anxiety.
[108] NAA A705 166/35/8 Righetti, minute sheet.
[109] NAA A705 166/5/818 Currie: Grace Mayo, letter to Isabel Currie, 29 September 1942.
[110] Vivash, NAA: A705, 166/42/92, John Vivash, letter to mother, 13 December 1944; Frank Vivash, letter to Casualty Section, 13 February 1945.
[111] Fry FA: Beryl Smith, letter to Charles Fry, 9 February 1942.

Australian POWs in Europe and Japan and lobbied the government regarding their conditions. It was also a powerful support organisation. With branches around the country, POWRA had 9,000 paying members by 1943, including families of the Stalag Luft III cohort.[112] As well as regularly meeting, visiting, and exchanging news of 'their' prisoners of war, the mainly female members shared their anxieties about their menfolk and their joy on hearing from them. They received the monthly POWRA magazines, which included extracts from official reports relating to prisoners of war as well as letters and photographs sent in by families. Beryl Smith scoured the magazines for details about Charles Fry's camps so she could gain a sense of his new life.[113] It was a false impression, however, as was that gained from published Red Cross reports by Noela Hake, Mona Train, and other wives and mothers.[114] POWRA's relentlessly cheery representations of fit, happy, ingenious men making the most of their captivity through sport, theatre, education, and other worthy time-filling pursuits—including the front page 'All are fit and well and very optimistic in Stalag Luft III'—would have misled many concerned relatives.[115] The airmen, however, endorsed these comforting depictions because they reinforced their own public and private fit and well composure. They would also stop the women from worrying. 'I would have you believe the pleasant pictures of happy POWs which I am assured are portrayed to

[112] 'War Prisoners Relatives' Association, *The Advertiser* (Adelaide), 13 May 1943, p. 4.
[113] Fry FA: Beryl Smith, letter to Charles Fry, 4 April 1942, 1 May and 11 June 1942.
[114] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letters to Noela Hake, 11 May 1942, 23 November 1942, 5 September 1943; Arnel archive: Train, 'A Barbed-Wire World', 2, 17 November 1942, pp. 34, 35; Baines FA: Baines, wartime log book, p. 11.
[115] NLA FERG/4550: *P.O.W.*, No. 20, 15 September 1943, p. 1. See also 'Skating the rage at Luft III', No 16, 15 May 1943, p. 14; 'They're camp weary in Luft 3. But They Crack Hardy and Keep Their Minds Busy with Sport and Theatricals', No 12, 15 January 1943, p. 8.

worried relatives by the POWRA', Albert Hake told Noela.[116] 'The Red Cross seems to paint our life here as a bed of roses', Harry Train, recorded in his diary. 'Perhaps it is just as well that way.'[117]

POWRA facilitated the formation of genuine friendship and supportive bonds between its members, not unlike those enjoyed by the female workers Penny Summerfield discusses in *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*.[118] Lola Hutchinson was particularly active in forming small, supportive emotional communities; her wartime letters to her husband reveal that she was in contact with at least seven of the cohort's family members (mainly wives). Lola often asked Doug to pass on greetings from them to his fellow prisoners.[119] 'Should you know [*Adam Kelly*] tell him I've met his wife and that she is well and eagerly awaiting his home coming.'[120] Perhaps recognising the 'mutually supportive wartime unity' which Lola fostered, POWRA officials especially sent women to see her.[121] Sometimes, however, contact with other wives caused consternation. 'Do you know sweetheart I've not had any mail from you for months. I can't understand it as Mrs Horsley and Mrs Greenaway have both had mail quite recently.'[122]

The responsibility for prisoner comfort reached beyond the immediate family. Extended emotional communities also provided for airmen's well-

---

[116] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letter to Noela Hake, 5 September 1943.
[117] Arnel archive: Train, 'A Barbed-Wire World', 17 November 1942, p. 35.
[118] Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*, pp. 167–174.
[119] Hutchinson FA: Lola Hutchinson, letter to Doug Hutchinson, 14 May 1944.
[120] Hutchinson FA: Lola Hutchinson, letter to Doug Hutchinson, 9 July 1944.
[121] Hutchinson FA: Lola Hutchinson, letters to Doug Hutchinson, 4 September, 14 November, and 12 December 1943. Quote: Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*, p. 170.
[122] Hutchinson FA: Lola Hutchinson, letter to Doug Hutchinson, 14 September 1944. Lola had met the wives of William Horsley and Lindsay Greenaway.

being. Altruistic communities of kindness—Jay Winter's more intimate variation of his 'fictive kin'—included families, friends and friends of the family, work colleagues, employers, old schools, church congregations, benevolent organisations, members of hospitality schemes, and others concerned with the prisoners' well-being.[123] Together they relieved the strains of captivity through letters and comfort parcels.[124] London's Rotary Clubs adopted 'by correspondence' fellow Rotarians from Australia to whom they would send books, cigarettes, and 'regular friendly cheery letters'.[125] A journalist at the Frankston *Standard* called on 'any local people who care to oblige Digby Young' by sending reading material and tinned foods to 'leave them in the safe keeping of the Red Cross'.[126] Tim Mayo's sister-in-law's mother donated £100 to the Red Cross in London to fund a parcel for Tim in addition to 'a lot of comforts enumerated for POW who had been wounded'.[127] Even the Senior British Officer at the newly opened Stalag Luft III wrote to the next of kin of the first arrivals to let them know of the camp

[123] For 'fictive kin', refer Winter, 'Forms of Kinship and Remembrance in the Aftermath of the Great War', in Winter and Sivan, (eds), *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 40–41. For 'community of kindness', refer Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*, p. 34. Bomford refers to supportive communal support for prisoners of Japan. 'Fractured Lives', PhD thesis, p. 73.

[124] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letter to Noela Hake, 30 June 1942; NAM JOC: John Osborne, letter to family, 31 March 1943; Archer FA: Archer, letter to family, 25 October 1942; O'Byrne FA: Justin O'Byrne, letter to family 9 July 1942; and Fry FA: Beryl Smith, letter to Charles Fry, 14 August 1942.

[125] 'News from Germany. Rotary's Good Work. Norman Dunn Hears of Max', *Mudgee Guardian and North-Western Representative* (NSW), 1 July 1943, p. 14. Quotes: AWM PR88/160: McCleery, Douglas Martin, letter to James McCleery, 22 August 1944, mounted in wartime log.

[126] 'Prisoner of War. Frankston Footballer-Pilot', *Standard* (Frankston, VIC), 21 March 1941, p. 1.

[127] NAA A705 166/5/818 Currie: Grace Mayo, letter to Isabel Currie, 29 September 1942.

amenities and to solicit their assistance in obtaining books, sports gear, and musical instruments via the Red Cross.[128]

The Dominion and Allied Services Hospitality Scheme, which offered holidays *en famille* for servicemen in Britain, became a form of fictive kin. Cy Borsht recorded how he and his crew mates were 'adopted' by 'Mum Longmore' and her family.[129] The schemes' hosts were important members of the community of kindness, many of whom developed caring relationships with their temporary charges. Accordingly, some airmen asked their hosts to be their next of kin in the event of their deaths.[130] Others called on them to act for them during captivity. They agreed, and the prisoners' families, in turn, acceded to their loved ones' requests to formally designate those caring people *in loco parentis* for the duration. Even without official UK-next of kin status, British friends, such as Ella Fraser, with whom Albert Hake spent his leave, sent letters, parcels, and cigarettes.[131] So too did Canadian host families.[132] While family acted for their menfolk from love or familial responsibility, others acted beneficently through altruism, a sense of charity, or perhaps simply a desire to make captivity more comfortable and bearable. The motivation of Margaret Archibald, a distant relative of Charles Fry, was clear. 'May I assure you', she wrote to Beryl Smith, 'that my sisters and I are doing all we can to help Charles. We leave no stone unturned if we think there

[128] NAA A705 166/5/818 Currie: Wing Commander H.M.A. Day, letter to Grace Mayo, 24 March 1942 (copied to Isabel Currie).
[129] Borsht Archive: Borsht, 'A Life Well Lived', p. 15.
[130] Alexander, 'Miss Celia Macdonald of the Isles "who has been a particularly good friend"', pp. 15–25.
[131] Preen FA: John Hannan, letter to Noela Hake, 4 June 1942; Albert Hake, letters to Noela Hake, 15 April 1942, 28 March, 29 April, and 25 September 1943.
[132] Arnel archive: Train, 'A Barbed-Wire World', 19 August 1942, pp. 22–23; 21 August 1942, p. 23.

is a possibility for help for I make no bones about this—our men who are prisoners need it'.[133]

Recognising the financial impost he had placed on his UK next of kin (as well as the drain on their rations), George Archer asked his parents to send parcels of chocolate and dried fruit to Harold and Dot Gibbs. 'I'm sure they would greatly appreciate it. So would I.'[134] Beryl Smith also contributed to the cost of parcels.[135] Through the goodwill of British benefactors acting on their behalf, Australian next of kin, like Beryl, felt '[w]e are all doing what we can' by vicariously providing for their menfolk.[136] Beryl also fund-raised for POWRA, and joined the Voluntary Aid Detachment.[137] Others similarly assisted their loved ones by participating in the Red Cross' general war-related work. Lola Kerwin was secretary of Ipswich's Prisoner-of-War Adoption Scheme committee.[138] Volunteer work and fundraising could be a family affair. Both May Fraser and her daughter, Alison Fotheringham, were members of the local Red Cross branch, run by Nellie Fotheringham, Alison's mother-in-law, whose son was a prisoner of the Japanese.[139] Alison's daughter, Barbara, contributed to her school's Junior Red Cross penny-a-week fund.[140] Noela Hake was also a Red Cross volunteer.[141] Doug Hutchinson asked Lola to 'do me a favour and donate five pounds to [the Red

---

[133] Fry FA: Margaret Archibald, letter to Beryl Smith, 23 June 1942.
[134] Archer FA: Archer, letter to family, 2 June 1943.
[135] Fry FA: Beryl Smith, letter to Charles Fry, 18 May 1942.
[136] Fry FA: Beryl Smith, letter to Charles Fry, 31 May 1942.
[137] Fry FA: photograph of Beryl Smith wearing a Voluntary Aid Detachment badge; letter to Beryl Smith from Sydney Smith, Hon. Secretary, POWRA, acknowledging receipt of donation of 30/- proceeds from raffle organised by Beryl, 8 July 1942.
[138] 'News of the Day. Prisoner-of-War Fund', *Queensland Times*, 8 August 1942, p. 2.
[139] Alexander records: Barbara Fotheringham, interview 26 June 2016.
[140] Alexander records: Barbara Fotheringham, letter, undated, received 4 July 2016.
[141] Preen FA: Albert Hake, letter to Noela Hake, 8 September 1942.

Cross], and tell them it is in appreciation of the fine work they are doing for us lads over here'.[142] Mothers made donations in their sons' names and forwarded extracts from their letters praising the work of the Red Cross, some of which were published.[143] Despite these (and other) fund raising efforts, the Australian Red Cross did not send parcels to POW camps. They provided money to the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Canadian and American Red Cross organisations.[144] Those who did not know about the cooperative arrangements were disconcerted by the lack of Australian parcels. It seemed to them that they had been abandoned. Ken Carson's son, John, recorded that his father 'was always upset' at receiving nothing from the Australian Red Cross.[145]

Demonstrating the strong fraternal bonds of the 'brotherhood of airmen', some squadron bonds remained firm as former comrades remembered their captured colleagues. No. 12 Squadron RAF set up a fund to supply extra comforts to their captive members.[146] So too did 460 Squadron RAAF.[147] Bill Fordyce, however, felt abandoned by 458 Squadron which 'never wrote to you in prison camp, they didn't keep up contact with you. If you are in a prison camp you're dead'.[148] As officer-in-charge of the RAAF's

---

[142] Hutchinson FA: Doug Hutchinson, letter to Lola Hutchinson, 18 August 1943. She did so in early 1944. Hutchinson FA: Lola Hutchinson, letter to Doug Hutchinson, 1 January 1944.
[143] 'Tribute from a C.Q. Prisoner', *Morning Bulletin* (Rockhampton, QLD), 22 July 1944, p. 3 submitted by Cecil Cameron's mother, Mrs M. A. Kerrisk; 'Red Cross Parcels Received by DFC Winner', *Wellington Times* (NSW), 13 October 1941, p. 12; 'Keeps them Alive' (in Vox's 'Out Among the People' column) *Advertiser* (Adelaide) 19 November 1943, p. 6.
[144] Oppenheimer, *The Power of Humanity*, p. 108.
[145] Carson, 'Brisbane's Ken Carson: Prisoner of the Axis. Part Ten. Kriegies Didn't Live for Food Alone', p. 21.
[146] Alexander Smith, NAA A9301 404382, Flight Lieutenant F.T. Neal, letter to The Secretary, Prisoners of War Department, London, 3 February 1943.
[147] Arnel archive: Train, 'A Barbed-Wire World', 22 July 1942, p. 20.
[148] Fordyce in Billett, *Memories of War*, p. 210.

Overseas Casualty Section, Squadron Leader William Melville, perhaps, made up for any squadron deficiencies. Conscientiously, with understanding and sympathy, he corresponded with Australian prisoners of war 'on all matters' relating to their captivity; some even became 'my very real friends'.[149] In doing so, he provided a 'voice' for them within the RAAF, and was able to act directly on their behalf, including on conditions of service, promotions, comforts, and even allotments from pay to the airmen's next of kin. 'Thank you for informing my people of my need for a blanket, & also the Red Cross of my needs in the book-line.'[150] In acting for, and on their behalf, Melville reinforced that the airmen prisoners of war were still valuable members of the air force 'brotherhood'. Significantly, he demonstrated that the RAAF had neither forgotten, nor neglected its men.

As one of the first Australians to return from a German prisoner of war camp, Charles Lark, who had been medically repatriated in October 1943, recognised his privileged ability to provide up-to-date details about the well-being of his fellow prisoners. Within days of arriving in Australia, he requested from the Department of Air's Casualty Section contact details for the next of kin of his closest friends within Stalag Luft III, and visited as many as he could, including the Archers and Syd Wickham's mother.[151] The RAAF made clerical staff available to assist in writing to those who lived too far away for personal meetings.[152] When they heard Lark was back in the

---

[149] Conscientious, understanding and sympathy, from NAA A9300 Melville W.M. Quotes: Kierath FA: Squadron Leader W.M. Melville, letter to Mrs Ada Kierath, 20 June 1944.
[150] NAA A9301 405349, Devenish-Meares, Jack Devenish-Meares, letter to Squadron Leader Melville, 18 October 1944.
[151] NAA A705 166/26/670 Lark: Lark, letter to Wing Commander Reid, 25 December 1943; Archer FA: Archer, letter to family, 17 January 1944; Wickham, *We Wore Blue*, p. 189.
[152] NAA A705 166/26/670 Lark: Casualty Section, letter to Charles Lark, 1 January 1944; NAA A705 166/5/821 Birchley: Lark, letter to Mrs N. Birchley, 17 January 1944.

country, some families wrote to the Casualty Section asking for details of their loved ones.[153] Others contacted him direct such as Doug McLeod's fiancée, Jean Yelland, to whom Lark passed on a message from McLeod who had 'especially asked me to send his love to you … and I know how much he looks forward to your letters'.[154] A note from one of his fellow prisoners published in the POWRA magazine with Lark's address may have prompted others to 'try and get in touch'.[155] As time passed, Lark met, at their behest, the loved ones of men he had never known in camp, such as Eulalie Mulligan, Lola Hutchinson, and Beryl Smith.[156] Actively promoting the kriegies' fit and well composure, Lark often gave a rose-tinted gloss to life in camp which was treated sceptically by some, including Beryl who was usually only too keen to believe overly-positive depictions of camp life. According to Beryl, Lark had told Eulalie that the men built sand hills in front of their huts, and pretended they were 'sunbaking at Bondi and Coogee. Would it were true!'[157] Although Lola appreciated Lark giving her a sense of her husband's experiences, she was not comforted: 'I still can't help worrying. … Charles tells me not to worry as he feels sure you will be home with me soon, but it's all right for people to tell one that, it's so much harder to believe'.[158]

In retrospect, Lark recalled that he 'was asked whether he would be willing to spend a few weeks visiting the next of kin of some of [his] mates',

---

[153] NAA A705 166/26/670 Lark: D.P.S. (Casualty Section), letter to Charles Lark 2 February 1944.
[154] NAA A705 166/26/670 Lark: Lark, letter to Jean Yelland, 17 January 1944.
[155] NLA FERG/4550: *P.O.W.*, No. 29, 15 June 1944, unattributed letter, 16 January 1944, p. 2.
[156] Fry FA: Beryl Smith, letter to Charles Fry, 21 January 1944; Hutchinson FA: Doug Hutchinson, letter to Lola Hutchinson 20 June 1944 (2nd one).
[157] Fry FA: Beryl Smith, letter to Charles Fry, 21 January 1944.
[158] Hutchinson FA: Lola Hutchinson, letter to Doug Hutchinson 16 January 1944.

and that, '[n]aturally I agreed'.[159] His RAAF casualty file, however, clearly demonstrates that this was a self-appointed task.[160] Regardless of the initiating spark, Lark's undertakings appear altruistic, emanating from genuine friendship and concern, but his daughter, reflecting on the post-war anxiety he experienced as a consequence, identifies another potential motivating factor: 'Dad felt guilty that, first of all, he survived the plane crash, then he felt guilty leaving all his friends in prison camp because he was one of the first repatriations'.[161] Certainly, it was not an easy duty for Lark: 'I must admit there were some occasions when I found this very difficult'.[162] It was, however, an important undertaking. As well as lobbying the Casualty Section on behalf of his still-captive comrades, Lark had attempted to allay grief and soothe troubled hearts by acting as an agent of the bereaved.[163]

Mourning the dead

Fewer than 300 Australians died in European prisoner of war camps.[164] Twenty-three were members of the RAAF.[165] Some died of natural causes, others from wounds, or illness. Only a handful were killed other than as a

---

[159] Lark, *A Lark on the Wing*, p. 80.
[160] NAA A705 166/26/670 Lark: Charles Lark, letter to Wing Commander Reid, 25 December 1943; Casualty Section, letter to Charles Lark, 1 January 1944.
[161] Alexander records: Jennifer Walsh, interview 29 April 2017.
[162] Lark, *A Lark on the Wing*, p. 80.
[163] See example NAA A705 166/26/670 Lark: Lark, letters to Wing Commander Reid, 15 January 1944 and 12 December 1944, and Wing Commander G.C. Reid, letter to Charles Lark, 18 January 1945. For grief-assuaging actions of Great War soldiers see Jalland, *Changing Ways of Death in twentieth-century Australia*, pp. 61–64 and Damousi, *The Labour of Loss*, p. 9. For prisoners of war as 'agents of the bereaved', see Ariotti, *Captive Anzacs*, p. 70. For details of Lark's attempts to assuage grief through providing first-hand descriptions of his last action refer to correspondence to and from the Hancocks family on his casualty file, and in his comments regarding the Great Escape in NLA FERG/4550: *P.O.W.*, No. 29, 15 June 1944, Charles Lark, letter, 2 June 1944, p. 5.
[164] Totals vary. Rosalind Hearder records 234. The Department of Veterans' Affairs states 265. Hearder in Beaumont, with Joshi, Bomford, Blair and Pratten, *The Australian Centenary History of Defence Volume VI, Australian Defence: Sources and Statistics*, p. 345.
[165] Nelson, *Chased by the Sun*, p. 246.

result of escapes. From a statistical perspective, twenty-three RAAF POW deaths in Europe is barely comparable to the 7412 who died in Japanese captivity.[166] But each death brought immeasurable pain and grief to loved ones.

Hope of a safe return was never fulfilled for the families of the Australians killed in the post-Great Escape reprisals, or for the Shierlaw family whose son, John, was felled by allied strafing during the forced march in April 1945. Like thousands of other families who lost sons, husbands, brothers, and nephews, their grief was real, not anticipatory. They, like Mildred Williams, were 'dazed by loss' and 'profoundly affected'.[167] Historian Bruce Scates notes 'the private world of loss and bereavement' yet this moving and challenging time was also very public.[168] The post-Great Escape reprisals were front page news and the deaths of the five Australians were construed as 'murder' or 'execution'.[169] The closest equivalent was the deaths by beheading of prisoners of Japan.[170]

---

[166] Hearder in Beaumont, with Joshi, Bomford, Blair and Pratten, *The Australian Centenary History of Defence Volume VI, Australian Defence: Sources and Statistics*, p. 344.
[167] Quote: Williams, *A True Story of the Great Escape*, p. 245. Refer also to Jalland, *Changing Ways of Death in twentieth-century Australia*, pp.127–170.
[168] Scates, with McCosker, Reeves, Wheatley and Williams, *Anzac Journeys*, p. 11.
[169] Front page news: 'Allied Airmen Shot after Mass Escape', *The Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 20 May 1944, p. 1; 'Shootings at Prison Camp. Germans Kill 47 Allied Airmen', *The Advertiser* (Adelaide), 20 May 1944, p. 1; RAAF Officers Shot in Attempting to Escape. Flight. Lieut. Kierath of Narromine Amongst Victims', *Gilgandra Weekly* (NSW), 25 May 1944, p. 1. 'cold-blooded murder': 'Sensational Mass Escape. Airmen Burrowed Out of Stalag', *The Advertiser* (Adelaide), 30 May 1944, p. 4; 'Prisoners Murdered by Nazis. Britain Determined to Punish Criminals', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 June 1944, p. 3; '"Vilely Murdered". Shot after Recapture. R.A.F. Officers' Escape', *The West Australian* (Perth), 28 February 1946, p. 7. 'execution': 'True Facts of POW Executions', *Army News* (Darwin, NT), 24 June 1944, p. 1944, p. 1, citing UK Foreign Secretary, Mr Eden.
[170] See for example, that of RAAF pilot William Newton. 'Japs beheaded Australian V.C. Samurai sword ended life of fearless Salamoa [sic] dive-bomber', *The Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 2 September 1945, p. 3; 'Newton VC Beheaded by Japs at Salamoa [sic]', *Sunday Times* (Perth), 9 September 1945, p. 14. See also Jalland, *Changing Ways of Death in twentieth-century Australia*, 145–146.

Depth of private grief can be inferred from actions. Suffering the second wartime death of a son (and following the loss of her husband and a daughter in 1938), Ada Kierath drew strength from her church and priest.[171] Her family gathered around her; Bert, her eldest son, almost immediately resigned his appointment with the Volunteer Defence Corps.[172] Mildred Williams attended séances, hoping to contact her missing son.[173] For Noela Hake, who had had only a brief courtship and marriage before her husband embarked, gleaning details of Albert's past, service, and captive lives from those who knew him was a lifetime endeavour. Isabel Amos shared extracts from her son Bill's letters from Stalag Luft III and, in an altruistic gesture—she would be potentially forsaking news of Bill because of German restrictions on number and length of POW letterforms—told Noela she would 'be only too pleased to ask my son, when next I write, if he can give me any news at all of your husband'.[174] Noela also wrote to Ella Fraser.[175] Later she read and reread the poetry of Robert Kay Hallam, sent to her in 1962 by the author, a former orderly who was in North Compound during the construction of the escape tunnel; three of his poems honoured the dead escapers.[176] She also corresponded with one of Albert's childhood friends for details of his early life.[177] Knowing so little about her husband, losing him before their union was tested by the marital pressures and stresses of everyday life, reading and re-

---

[171] Alexander records: Peter Kierath, interview 2 May 2016. Gregory Kierath was killed in action at Tobruk on 14 April 1941.
[172] NAA B884: record of service, Herbert William Kierath, N353343.
[173] Williams, *A True Story of the Great Escape*, p. 245.
[174] Preen FA: Isabel Amos, letter to Noela Hake, 7 September 1944.
[175] Preen FA: Refer correspondence between Noela Hake and Ella Fraser, 1944–1946, in particular Ella Fraser, letter to Noela Hake 29 June 1945, which includes a report from a returned prisoner named 'Davidson'.
[176] Alexander records: Max Preen, email 4 September 2015; Hallam, *The Scarecrow Said and other poems*, pp. 38–41, 46.
[177] Preen FA: Correspondence between Noela Hake and Jean Heckendorf, 1987.

reading his letters, treasuring the few records which delineated his short life, and never remarrying, did Noela idealise Albert? Did she forever view him through rose-tinted glasses, overlooking the epistolary indications that they were not always in accord? If she viewed their lives nostalgically, she was not the only one.[178]

Objects of material culture became, for many, talismans of remembrance. Acknowledging the emotive contents and demonstrating their own sentimental attachment to them, Ada Kierath and Noela Hake kept the letters written by Reg and Albert, as well as condolence letters and telegrams. William Catanach arranged those he received in a scrapbook, preserving his private grief for his son, James, between its covers; his list of all who had expressed sympathy fills almost ten double-columned pages.[179] Sometimes stilted and trite, condolers' formulaic responses to death—'I am very sorry you are called upon to bear so much sorrow … do try and bear up'—were genuine.[180] They were at once attempts to convey emotion and empathy even as they reflected the stoic self-control expected by wartime society.[181] Regardless of their deficiencies, recipients cherished them as records of love, sympathy, and communal recognition of emotional pain.[182] Families kept programmes from the Great Escape's official memorial service conducted in London, as well as descriptions of the ceremony, held at the Church of St Martin-in-the-Fields on 20 June 1944, from those who attended in their

---

[178] Damousi, *Living with the Aftermath*, pp. 64–69.
[179] For William Catanach's scrapbook, refer SOR JCC: 2013.CAT030, Scrapbook Two; Alexander, '"How deeply we feel his loss": Condolences to William Mercer Catanach, on the death of his son, Jimmy'.
[180] Preen FA: Mr and Mrs Crofts, letter to Noela Hake, 19 May 1944.
[181] For socially-expected self-management of emotional expressions, refer to Noakes' *Dying for the Nation: Death, Grief and Bereavement in Second World War Britain*, p. 11.
[182] Boddice, *Pain: A Very Short Introduction*, pp. 53–64.

stead.[183] 'You would, I know, have deeply appreciated the tribute which was paid today had you been present and I only hope that, in what I fear has been a very inadequate way, I have been able to give you something of the scene', Squadron Leader William Melville wrote to Ada Kierath after he returned from the ceremony. 'Today's service has given us all fresh resolution and inspiration in the job that still lies ahead but whether it be long or short, and in the years to come, we will not forget the example which your son and the others with him have set.'[184]

Drawings, photographs, and descriptions of graves consoled.[185] The Great Escapers' next of kin treasured pictures of the prisoners' memorial, where the ashes of their dead had originally been interred.[186] They kept paperwork relating to the location and care of Imperial War Graves Commission graves where the ashes were later buried.[187] Most dear to the bereaved were the last tangible connections to their deceased loved ones, their personal effects. William Catanach pasted into his scrapbook the letters from Malcolm and Hazel McEachern referring to the despatch of his son's

---

[183] NAA A705 163/64/183 Williams: Squadron Leader W.M. Melville, letter to The Secretary, Department of Air, 22 June 1944 provided copies of the memorial service programme for the Kierath, Catanach, Williams and Hake next of kin. Refer Preen Family Archive for Noela Hake's copy of the program. For the Catanach copy of the memorial service programme, refer SOR JCC: 2013.CAT049. For descriptions of the ceremony, refer Preen FA: Ella Fraser, letter to Noela Hake, 9 August 1944 and Kierath FA: Squadron Leader W.M. Melville, letter to Ada Kierath, 20 June 1944 and SOR JCC: 2013.CAT030, Malcolm McEachern, letter to William Catanach, 21 June 1944. (Fraser was the Hake representative, Melville represented the Kieraths, and Malcolm McEachern attended the memorial ceremony on behalf of the Catanachs.)

[184] Kierath FA: Squadron Leader W.M. Melville, letter to Ada Kierath, 20 June 1944.

[185] Scates, *Return to Gallipoli*, p. 10.

[186] Preen FA: Photographs of the prisoners' memorial were provided by His Majesty's Air Attaché at Warsaw, to Air Ministry London, who despatched them to the Casualty Section, Department of Air, who then forwarded them to Noela Hake on March 1947. Sir Arthur Street, Permanent Under Secretary of the British Air Ministry, sent reproductions of a drawing of the prisoners' memorial which forwarded by Central Repository Kit Store to the Australian next of kin. Also refer NAA A705 163/64/183, Williams, letter dated 5 March 1945.

[187] SOR JCC: 2013.CAT055; Preen and Bligh family archives.

possessions.[189] Margaret Bligh, sister of Tom Leigh, kept his medals, his Mentioned in Despatches clasp, his air gunner wings, an incomplete desk set, and the few photographs and family letters recording her siblings' childhood before their separation immediately after the death of their mother. (Tom and their brother David stayed in Britain and Margaret was sent to relatives in Australia.) Her uncle later sent her the only extant letter written during Tom's captivity.[190] Margaret Shierlaw thanked the RAAF's Central Repository Kit Store for the suitcase full of her son's belongings which had been 'sent back in splendid order'. Though she and her husband, Howard, 'felt very sad' she considered that 'we were very lucky to receive so much that belonged to our boy'.[191]

Private emotions, too, were reflected in military mourning practices, as they had done since the Great War: 'Rituals of mourning became central to cultural life'.[192] Reflecting this, Noela Hake, who already proudly wore her Female Relatives' Badge in recognition of her husband's wartime contribution (and the sacrifice to their relationship of his overseas commitment), applied for and wore the Mothers' and Widows' Badge after Albert was killed in the post-Great Escape reprisals. While grieving mothers had considerable status during the Great War, their social prominence and accolade by virtue of grief had abated by the Second World War.[193] Even so, Mildred Williams, a 'snob' overly concerned with her own 'station and

---

[189] Refer SOR JCC: 2013.CAT030, Scrapbook Two.
[190] Alexander records: Winifred Chevalier, interview 26 April 2017. Refer Bligh FA.
[191] NAA A705 166/37/60: Shierlaw, Mrs M.B. Shierlaw, letter [no recipient address, Dear Sir], 7 April [1946].
[192] Davidson and Damousi in 'Introduction', Davidson and Damousi, (eds), *A Cultural History of the Emotions. Volume 6. In the Modern and Post-Modern Age*, p. 2.
[193] Damousi, *The Labour of Loss*, pp. 26–27, 30, 106; 'This Badge Is—', *The Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), 22 August 1941, p. 4.

status', and particularly ambitious for her son John's standing as a gallant air force officer, applied for the 'bereaved Mother's Badge' after his death.[194] As Williams had served with the RAF, she was not eligible for it. Her granddaughter, Louise, suggests that Mildred saw this not as a matter of bureaucracy, but because her country failed to acknowledge 'her loss'.[195] Perhaps also, in Mildred's eyes, it diminished her Great Escaper son's status and perceived sacrifice. Perhaps too, she appreciated the performative aspect of symbols of mourning: they, like wearing black, were part of a long-recognised public performance of grief; they were part of a recognised costume of bereavement.[196]

In memoriam notices enable families to actively 'mediate their grief' via traditional public mourning rituals.[197] They engendered continued connection. Those placed by Noela Hake, like others before (and after), spanned the years; her perpetual grief was evident in *The Sydney Morning Herald*'s 'On Active Service' notices until at least 1969. 'Loved and remembered', she wrote, echoing Albert's final plea to 'Remember me'.[198] As time passed, some families exerted a degree of control over how organisations remembered their sons and either initiated or acquiesced to

---

[194] For 'snob' and 'station and status', refer Williams, *A True Story of the Great Escape*, p. 17. Other quotes: NAA A705 163/64/183 Williams: minute sheet; Mildred Williams, letter to D.P.S. Casualty Section, 30 May 1944. Concern re son's standing: NAA A705 163/64/183 Williams: Mildred Williams, letter to Casualty Section, 20 May 1944 (rank); 31 July 1944 (DFC); minute sheet (Mentioned in Despatches).
[195] Williams, *A True Story of the Great Escape*, p. 233.
[196] For 'performance of bereavement', Noakes, *Dying for the Nation: Death, Grief and Bereavement in Second World War Britain*, p. 12.
[197] Scates, *Return to Gallipoli*, p. 24. Michael McKernan notes the Fothergill family's 30-year run of notices for their son who died at Gallipoli. *Remembrance Day: the effects of war on Australian society*. *In Memoriam* notices from James Catanach's parents, former girlfriend, family, and nanny, were inserted into the Family Notice section of *Argus* (Melbourne) 25 March 1947, p. 2. Quote: Larsson, 'A Disenfranchised Grief', p. 86.
[198] As indicated in Trove's on-line newspaper search, and the *Sydney Morning Herald* Archive. Preen FA: Albert Hake, letter to Noela Hake, 20 March 1944.

requests to commemorate their dead. Adelaide's St Peter's College established the John Shierlaw Memorial Prize.[199] The G.R. and R.V. Kierath Prize was endowed in 1957 for the Sydney Church of England Grammar School's best woodworker, in memory of Reg Kierath and his brother, Gregory, who had been killed at Tobruk.[200] All were invited by the Imperial War Graves Commission to include personal inscriptions on the permanent headstones. Reflecting their faith, the Shierlaws opted for 'Thy will be done'. Noela Hake's spoke of her abiding love and grief for her husband: 'Dearly loved and sadly missed by loving wife Noela'. James Catanach's inscription positioned his death as both a sacrifice and duty: 'His duty fearlessly and nobly done. Ever remembered'. Tom Leigh's sister, Margaret, selected a meaningful verse from Rudyard Kipling (which was abridged by the Commission to accord with the sixty-six letter limit) and asked that his Australian birth ('of Australia') and rank of air gunner be acknowledged.[201] Like many who perhaps bore too great a grief, Mildred Williams did not choose an inscription for John's headstone. She did, however, elect to include reference to the land of her son's birth ('of New Zealand') and that he was a pilot. Ada Kierath did not select an inscription or additional details. Her son's headstone remains bare, other than the mandatory name, age, service details, and date of death.

The next of kin of those killed in the post-Great Escape reprisals did not mourn alone. The affective bonds of emotional communities of mourning—

[199] 'St Peter's College Speech Day', *The Advertiser* (Adelaide) 18 December 1948, p. 10.
[200] Alexander records: Peter Kierath, interview 2 May 2016.
[201] Blair FA: letters, Imperial War Graves Commission to Margaret Bligh, 21 July 1953 and 3 November 1953.

including those who had condoled during their anticipatory mourning—provided solace in the wake of death.[202] Sympathy and prayers for God's comfort mingled with their horror at the circumstances of the airmen's deaths. 'We were all so horrified when the news came through', Ella Fraser told Noela Hake.[203] 'Everyone is distressed at this dreadful act', wrote Malcolm and Hazel McEachern to William Catanach.[204] Some tried to make sense of the escapes which lead to their deaths. 'I suppose he was impatient to get home to you', the Crofts suggested to Noela.[205] Condolers' emotions were strong. Some, however, were unable to fluently articulate them. 'Words are useless at present', wrote the father of one of James' Catanach's crew members and fellow prisoner of war, 'but I do want you to know how deeply we too feel his loss'.[206]

Grieving family members often form fictive kinship ties to help assuage their grief.[207] Noela Hake joined the War Widows' Guild in 1979, thirty-five years after the death of her husband. The Guild is a sororal emotional community which provides mutual, sustaining support, as well as a shared 'sense of belonging' to those who live with loss and grief.[208] While Noela drew strength from her sisters in grief, there is no evidence to suggest that

---

[202] Scholars have adopted a number of names for the emotional communities providing solace to the grieving. For 'community of mourners', refer Larsson, 'A Disenfranchised Grief', p. 80. Bruce Scates uses the term 'fellowship of mourning', *Return to Gallipoli*, p. 12. Jay Winter used the term, bond of bereavement' to link mourners. Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*, p. 228.
[203] Preen FA: Ella Fraser, letter to Noela Hake, 9 August 1944.
[204] SOR JCC: 2013.CAT030, Scrapbook Two, Malcolm McEachern, letter to William Catanach, 21 June 1944.
[205] Preen FA: Mr and Mrs Crofts, letter to Noela Hake, 19 May 1944.
[206] SOR JCC: 2013.CAT030, Scrapbook Two, Ralph B. Anderson, letter to William Catanach, 18 May 1944.
[207] Sivan, 'Private pain and public remembrance in Israel', in Winter and Sivan, (eds), *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 177–204.
[208] Damousi, *Living with the Aftermath*, p. 19.

either she or the next of kin of the other Australians killed in the post-Great Escape reprisals gained solace from a shared bereavement. Tom Leigh was not recognised as an Australian so no-one other than her immediate family knew that Margaret mourned. The Kierath family archive contains no note from Mildred Williams to Ada Kierath, and no Hakes, Kieraths or Williams appear in William Catanach's scrapbook. The Great Escape next of kin, however, were not entirely separate from those who shared a similar loss. Sir Arthur Street, Permanent Under-secretary of the British Air Ministry, whose son, Denys, was one of those killed, sent reproductions of a drawing of the prisoners' memorial to the Australian next of kin.[209] Jadwiga Tobolska, widow of Pawel Tobolski who had also been shot in the reprisals, wrote to Noela Hake 'as one sore heart to another to try to help you in your sorrow … & to offer my sympathy & friendship'.[210] Harry 'Wings' Day, one time Senior British Officer at Stalag Luft III, who was 'on the same escape' as Reg Kierath, offered Ada sympathy and, despite no factual basis, assurance that 'your son knew nothing of the fate in store for him after capture until the actual act was carried out'.[211]

As the dead's fellow prisoners had done, many of the extended community of mourning composed the deaths as sacrifices or acts of gallantry. It allowed them to both express and assuage their grief.[212] It also elevated the deaths above the ordinary. Group Captain Thomas White, former

---

[209] NAA A705 163/64/183 Williams: Central Repository Kit Store, letter to Mildred Williams, 5 March 1945; Preen FA: Air Ministry, letter to Noela Hake, 21 January 1945; SOR JCC: 2013.CAT055C: Air Ministry, letter to William Catanach, 21 January 1945. For significance of grave descriptions, refer Scates, *Return to Gallipoli*, p. 10.
[210] Preen FA: Jadwiga Tobolska, letter to Noela Hake, 3 June 1947.
[211] Kierath FA: Wing Commander H.M.A. Day, letter to Ada Kierath, 6 July 1945.
[212] *The Cost of War*, p. 72.

prisoner of the Ottomans and James Catanach's commanding officer at 1 Initial Training School, Somers, felt, with Catanach's death, 'almost as if I had lost a son myself'. He believed the young man's 'name and memory will long endure as among the noblest of those who gave their all'.[213] Friends of the Catanach family wrote of James' sacrifice in condolence letters and *in memoriam* notices.[214] Squadron Leader William Melville admitted to Ada Kierath that 'I cannot express how much the sacrifice which they have made has meant to me personally'.[215] Harry 'Wings' Day considered that Reg 'would face death as he had already faced [it] before—fearlessly and gallantly'.[216] The escapers' deaths were also publicly construed within the noble tradition of Christian sacrifice. Alluding to the final line in John Gillespie Magee's 'High Flight' where the author-pilot 'Put out my hand, and touched the face of God', the RAF chaplain-in-chief at the Church of St Martin-in-the-Fields commemorative service, stated that, 'Their sacrifice was touched by the finger of God'.[217]

Acknowledging that escape was a legitimate aspect of air force duty, the Great Escapers were Mentioned in Despatches for 'distinguished service'. Demonstrating that the British nation valued the 'sacrifice of the dead', Great Escape families—like every other war-bereaved family within the Commonwealth—were sent commemorative scrolls lauding a 'sacrifice'

---

[213] ADB Rickard, 'White, Sir Thomas Walter (1888–1957)'; SOR JCC: 2013.CAT030, Scrapbook Two, condolence letter Thomas W. White to Mr Catanach. 22 May 1944.
[214] SOR JCC: 2013 CAT030, Scrapbook Two, condolence letter Charles Martell to 'My dear friend', 18 May 1944; Winifred Munt 'Da' in *Argus* (Melbourne), 24 March 1945, p. 2; *Argus* (Melbourne), 25 March 1946, p. 2; *Argus* (Melbourne), 25 March 1947, p. 2; *Argus* (Melbourne), 25 March 1948, p. 2.
[215] Kierath FA: Squadron Leader W.M. Melville, letter to Ada Kierath, 20 June 1944.
[216] Kierath FA: Wing Commander H.M.A. Day, letter to Ada Kierath, 6 July 1945.
[217] Vance, *A Gallant Company*, p. 294.

which had 'help[ed] to bring the peace and freedom for which he died'.[218] They also received letters from the King and Queen offering 'heartfelt sympathy' and praying 'that your country's gratitude for a life so nobly given in its service may bring you some measure of consolation'. William and Sybil Catanach framed (to mount on a wall, rather than mantelpiece) their formal condolence letter from the King and Queen, James' Mentioned in Despatches certificate, and James' squadron's next-of-kin letter. Those national, military, and regal expressions of sympathy publicly acknowledged duty and sacrifice. Those on display in the Catanach home ensured that no family member or visitor could ever forget James' ultimate contribution. Such public balms to grief are treasured by the Great Escape families. The Catanach items have been donated to the Shrine of Remembrance's archive so future generations can also acknowledge James' sacrifice in a place which publicly honours sacrifice. Whether in family or public archive, these physical representations—scrolls, certificates, letters—were and are cherished objects of affect.

*****

Noela Hake never remarried. Her love for her husband was unwavering. Separated through war service and his early death, Noela and Albert were symbolically reunited on her death in twin plaques at the Canobolas Gardens Crematorium, Orange. The inscription on Hake's plaque—'loved husband of Noela'—echoes the words Noela chose for his headstone: 'Dearly loved … loving wife Noela'. 'Lest we forget' is a direct response to Hake's final plea

[218] 'sacrifice of the dead': Noakes, *Dying for the Nation: Death, Grief and Bereavement in Second World War Britain*, p. 9. 'peace and freedom' from commemorative scroll.

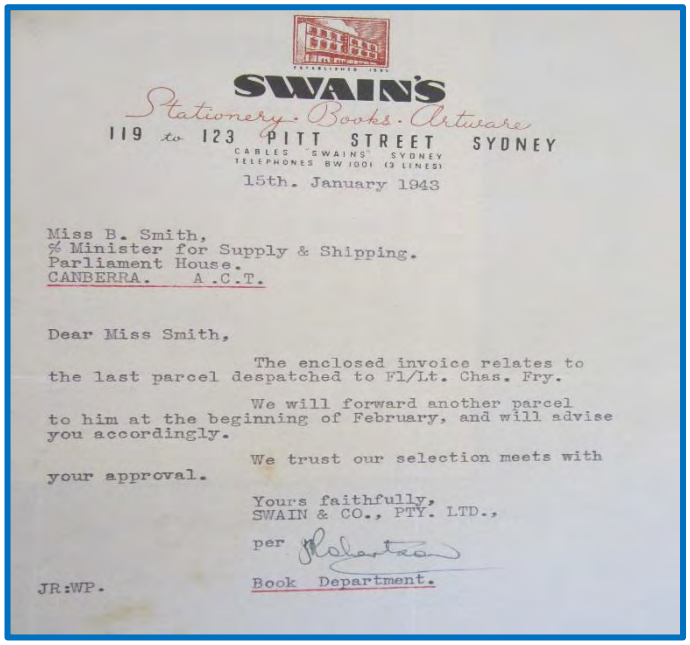
to Noela, ‘Remember me’, and an assurance that both she and his extended family never forgot and ever remember him.

Noela’s caring agency during her husband’s captivity—and that of other women for their loved ones—sprang from their desire to bridge the emotional divide of separation and, in the case of wives, fiancées, and sweethearts, ensure the stability of their relationships. Romantic partners also actively ensured that they themselves were not forgotten as sexual beings. Those with the welfare of the captive airmen at heart worked in concert or individually through love, concern, and altruism to mitigate the strains of the airmen’s captivity. Long-distance nurturing demonstrated that women and men were not content to wait passively for the return of ‘their’ prisoners of war. They ensured that the airmen were neither neglected nor forgotten. They were agents in their loved ones’ comfort. They were also agents in their own right. Emotional communities of kindness provided mutual support for those suffering the strains of separation. Communities of mourning provided solace to the grieving.

Ultimately, the wait of the majority of the cohort’s families would be over; their airmen would return home to establish civilian lives. Homecoming and post-war adjustment is the focus of chapter nine.

Chapter Eight: Images

Women did not wait passively for their men to return. They worked tirelessly for their comfort in captivity to assure them they had not been forgotten. Beryl Smith provided direct support to her fiancé, Charles Fry, through letters and parcels, including regular despatches of books and newspapers. She also vicariously provided support through fundraising for POWRA and volunteer work for the VAD. Not entitled to the Female Relatives' Badge, Beryl publicly signalled her connection to Fry by wearing his Caterpillar Club Badge and her VAD badge.



SWAIN'S

Stationery · Books · Artware

119 to 123 PITT STREET SYDNEY

CABLES "SWAINS" SYDNEY
TELEPHONES BW 1001 (3 LINES)

15th. January 1943

Miss B. Smith,
% Minister for Supply & Shipping.
Parliament House.
CANBERRA. A.C.T.

Dear Miss Smith,

The enclosed invoice relates to the last parcel despatched to Fl/Lt. Chas. Fry.

We will forward another parcel to him at the beginning of February, and will advise you accordingly.

We trust our selection meets with your approval.

Yours faithfully,
SWAIN & CO., PTY. LTD.,

per

Book Department.

JR:WP.

Image 90: Despatch notice from Swain's. Fry Family Archive.

To a typist came a gold caterpillar

FACT'S Canberra Correspondent

To blonde, blue-eyed Beryl Smith, typist to Supply Minister John Beasley, came this week a small package from England.

When she opened it, a gold caterpillar fell out, a badge of the Caterpillar Club for pilots who have saved their lives by bailing out.

It was sent to her as the fiancee of Flight-Lieut. Charles Fry, DFC, of Hamilton, Newcastle, who bailed out in Crete and is now in a prison camp in Germany.

Fry, who went to Greece with the RAF, won his DFC when he took on 15 enemy aircraft, shot down one and probably destroyed another. His score is six Nazi planes.

Image 91: 'To a typist came a gold caterpillar', *The Sun* (Sydney), 7 November 1943, p. 4. Fry Family Archive.

Image 92: Beryl Smith wearing her VAD badge. Fry Family Archive.

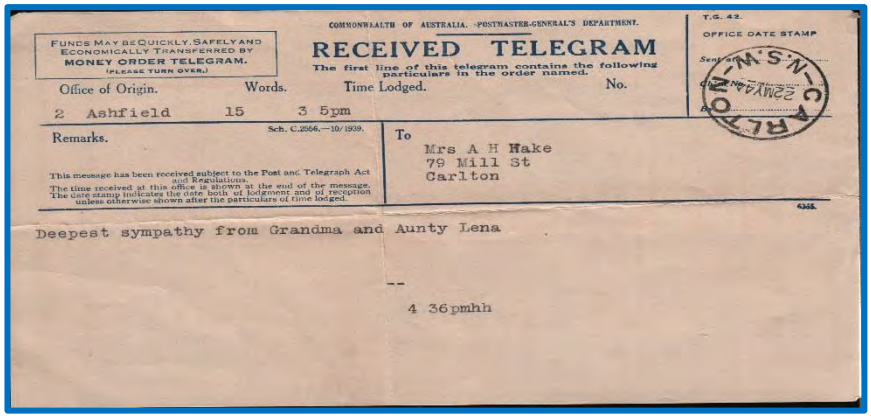
Noela Hake, in turn, wore her Female Relatives', Mothers' and Widows', and War Widows' Guild badges, signifying her changing identity and public status from wife to widow. Each badge denoted membership of emotional communities which provided support and solace; the latter two badges also symbolised that she was actively keeping alive the memory of Albert.[1]

Image 93: Noela Hake wearing her Female Relatives' Badge. Preen Family Archive.

Image 94: Wife to widow. Noela Hake's badges. Left to Right: Mothers' and Widows' Badge; War Widows Guild badge; Female Relatives' Badge. Preen Family Archive.

[1] Damousi, *Living with the Aftermath*, p. 20.

The bereaved of those killed in the post-Great Escape reprisals treasured and preserved objects of emotion. Noela Hake kept condolence letters and telegrams. William Catanach pasted letters from close family friends into a scrapbook, and listed the names of all those who sent supportive messages. Margaret Leigh treasured a handful of photographs, an incomplete desk set, and her brother, Tom's, service medals and 'wings'.


FUNDS MAY BE QUICKLY, SAFELY AND ECONOMICALLY TRANSFERRED BY MONEY ORDER TELEGRAM. (PLEASE TURN OVER.)

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA. POSTMASTER-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT.

RECEIVED TELEGRAM

The first line of this telegram contains the following particulars in the order named.

T.S. 42.

OFFICE DATE STAMP

Office of Origin. Words. Time Lodged. No.

2 Ashfield 15 3 5pm

Remarks.

Sch. C.2566.—10/1909.

This message has been received subject to the Post and Telegraph Act and Regulations.

The time received at this office is shown at the end of the message. The date stamp indicates the date both of lodgment and of reception unless otherwise shown after the particulars of time lodged.

To

Mrs A H Hake
79 Mill St
Carlton

Deepest sympathy from Grandma and Aunty Lena

--

4 36pmhh

Image 95: Condolence telegram to Noela Hake. Preen Family Archive.

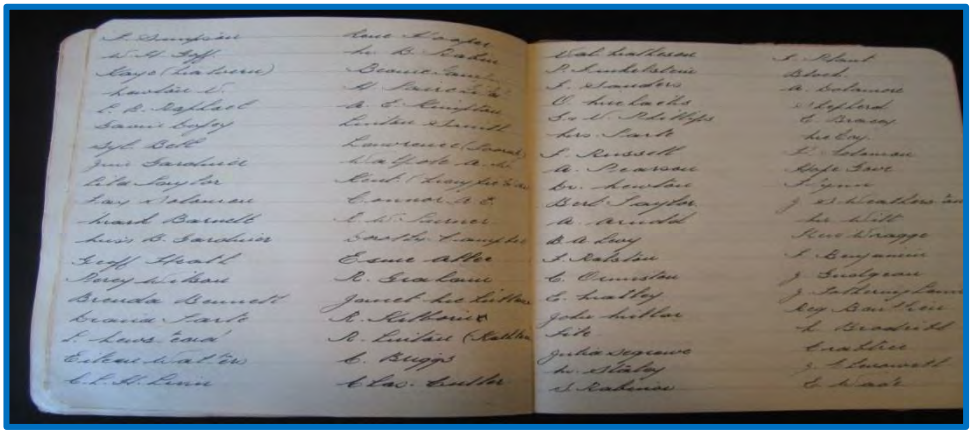
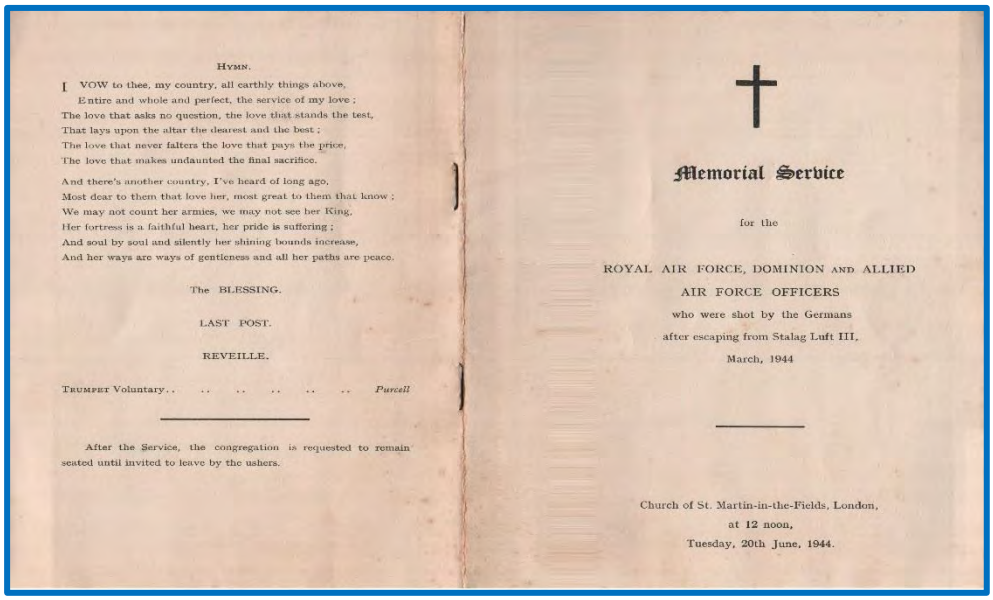


Image 96: Extract from William Catanach's record of condolers, Shrine of Remembrance, James Catanach Collection: 2013.CAT030, Scrapbook Two. Used with permission of the Shrine.

Image 97: Tom Leigh's desk set, which came to his sister, Margaret after his death. Bligh Family Archive.

The Great Escape bereaved could not attend the memorial service held at the Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, London, 20 June 1944. British-based family, friends, or RAAF personnel attended on their behalf. Recognising that the mourners required tangible connections to the ceremony, they sent close family members descriptions of the service as well as the order of service. The King and Queen sent them expressions of sympathy which recognised that the escapers had given their lives for their country.



HYMN.

I VOW to thee, my country, all earthly things above,
Entire and whole and perfect, the service of my love;
The love that asks no question, the love that stands the test,
That lays upon the altar the dearest and the best;
The love that never falters the love that pays the price,
The love that makes undaunted the final sacrifice.

And there's another country, I've heard of long ago,
Most dear to them that love her, most great to them that know;
We may not count her armies, we may not see her King.
Her fortress is a faithful heart, her pride is suffering;
And soul by soul and silently her shining bounds increase,
And her ways are ways of gentleness and all her paths are peace.

The BLESSING.

LAST POST.

REVEILLE.

TRUMPET Voluntary.. .. .. *Purcell*

After the Service, the congregation is requested to remain seated until invited to leave by the ushers.

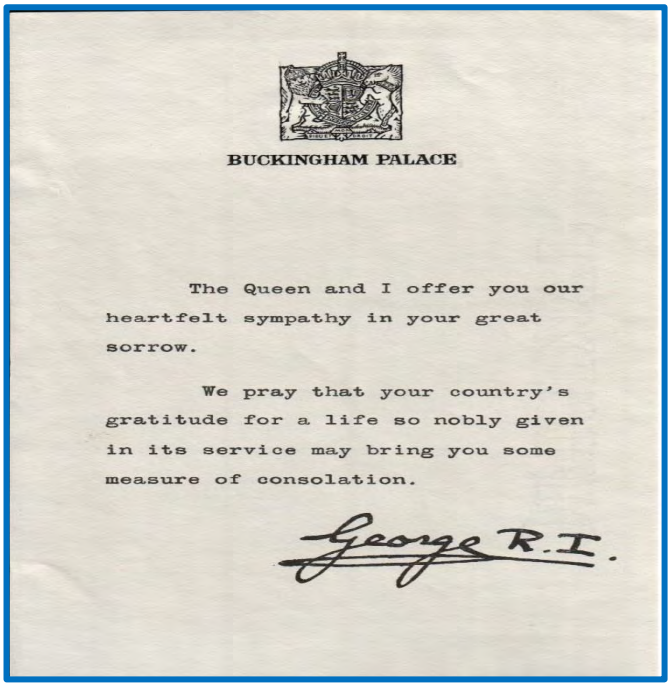
Memorial Service

for the

ROYAL AIR FORCE, DOMINION AND ALLIED AIR FORCE OFFICERS
who were shot by the Germans
after escaping from Stalag Luft III,
March, 1944

Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, London,
at 12 noon,
Tuesday, 20th June, 1944.

Image 98: Noela Hake's copy of the memorial service for the Great Escapers, held at the Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, London, 20 June 1944. Preen Family Archive.



BUCKINGHAM PALACE

The Queen and I offer you our heartfelt sympathy in your great sorrow.

We pray that your country's gratitude for a life so nobly given in its service may bring you some measure of consolation.

George R.I.

Image 99: Expression of sympathy from the King and Queen, sent to Noela Hake. Preen Family Archive.

The deaths of the Great Escapers were recognised as noble sacrifices for King and Country and each family was issued a commemorative scroll. Echoing the expression of sympathy from the King and Queen as well as the public acknowledgement of sacrifice, James Catanach's stepmother, Sybil, chose the words 'his duty fearlessly and nobly done' for his headstone.

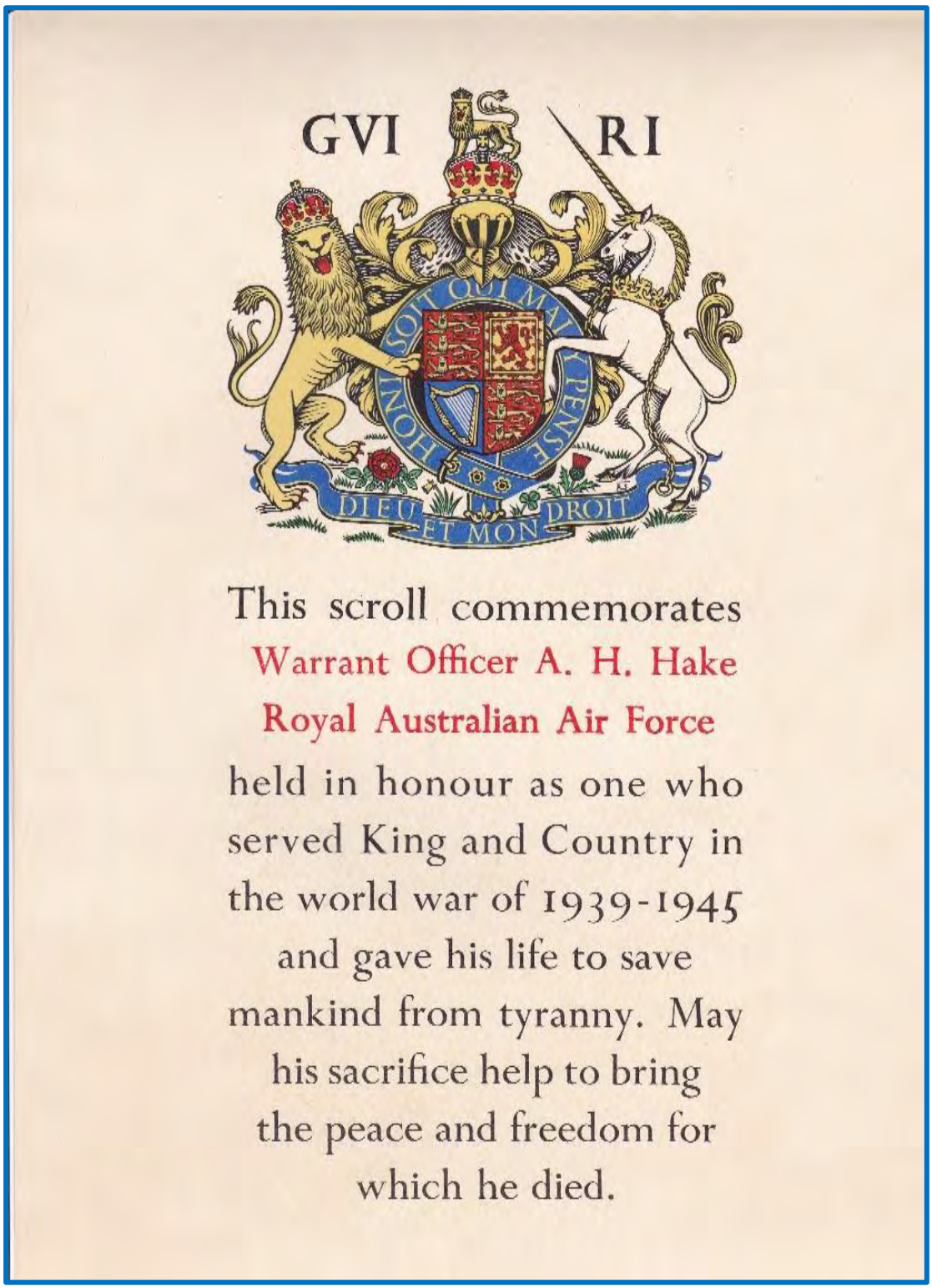


Image 100: Scroll commemorating Albert Hake's noble sacrifice. Preen Family Archive.

Image 101: James Catanach's headstone: 'His Duty Fearlessly and Nobly Done', Old Garrison Cemetery, Poznan, Poland. RAAF Deaths Photographic Archive of Headstones and Memorials WW2.

The inscription on Albert's crematorium plaque—'loved husband of Noela—echoes the words Noela chose for his headstone: 'Dearly loved … loving wife Noela'. 'Lest we forget' recalls Albert's final plea to Noela, 'Remember me'.

Image 102: Albert Hake's headstone. Old Garrison Cemetery, Poznan, Poland. Preen Family Archive.

Image 103: Noela's and Albert's commemorative plaques, Canobolas Gardens Crematorium, Orange. Preen Family Archive.

Part Three: Legacy of captivity

Chapter Nine: Establishing Civilian Lives

The four chapters of part three explore the emotional, psychological, social, and moral legacy of captivity.[1] Taking as a starting point Stephen Garton's pioneering work of the returned serviceman, *The Cost of War*, these chapters move beyond 'the aftermath of war' for servicemen in general to scrutinise the lifetime legacy of captivity.[2] Chapters nine and twelve especially build on studies by Janette Bomford, Michael McKernan, and Kate Ariotti which highlight the hidden casualties of captivity—the airmen's families.[3] While airmen as men of emotions continue to be emphasised, this part—and particularly chapter nine—introduces a new identity which emerged when they were discharged, that of civilian. Analysis of group experience complemented by telling examples features in parts one and two. In part three, however, more detailed personal accounts are privileged. These 'particulars', as literary scholar Samuel Hynes argues, exemplify the '*human* tale of war'. In this case, the 'particulars' reveal the human aspect of captivity's legacy, especially trauma.[4]

---

[1] The phrase 'legacy of captivity' has been used by a number of scholars addressing the long-term effects of captivity including: Beaumont, 'Gull Force comes home: The aftermath of captivity', p. 51; Bomford, 'Fractured Lives', PhD thesis, p. 1; Ariotti, 'Coping with Captivity: Australian POWs of the Turks and the Impact of Imprisonment during the First World War', PhD thesis, p. 19; Twomey, *The Battle Within*, p. 63.
[2] Garton, *The Cost of War*, p. vii.
[3] Bomford, 'Fractured Lives', PhD thesis, and 'A wife, a baby, a home and a new Holden car: family life after captivity', in Crotty and Larsson (eds), *Anzac Legacies*, pp. 107–125; McKernan, *This War Never Ends*. Ariotti discusses the supportive role of family and the broader community for the Australian prisoners of the Ottoman Empire during the Great War in '"At Present Everything is Making us most Anxious"', in Beaumont, Grant, and Pegram, (eds), *Beyond Surrender* and *Captive Anzacs*.
[4] Hynes, *The Soldiers' Tales*, p. xvi. (Original emphasis.)

Chapter nine examines the legacy of captivity for both the former airmen and their loved ones. It also surveys the 'legacy of loss' which many former kriegies suffered: their air force and martial identity; sense of masculinity; and physical and psychological health.[5] Despite these significant losses, the former airmen chose to 'get on with life', as was typical of their generation.[6] They strove for emotional stability and economic security. Accordingly, chapter nine argues that, in exerting agency over the post-war effects of captivity, the cohort attempted to manage the legacy of captivity. They were not, however, always successful.

While this thesis has largely drawn on the cohort's contemporary writings to describe their wartime mental and emotional states, chapter nine considers post-war medical evidence for 128 of the post-1946 survivors (37.54 per cent of the post-1946 cohort; the 'medical sample'), including eighty-three DVA case files. Those former airmen suffered a range of physical ailments relating to war service and captivity. Eighty-five of them (64.41 per cent of the medical sample) experienced some emotional or psychological disturbance after liberation and homecoming, in the immediate post-war years, and in later life (the 'psychological sample').

Most studies of the emotional and psychological consequences of captivity are limited in scope, evidence, or cohort.[7] The most comprehensive

---

[5] Bomford uses the term 'legacy of loss' in 'Fractured Lives', PhD thesis, p. 1.
[6] Quote: DVA QMX126934-01: report from Dr R.G., 30 October 1989.
[7] Collie, 'Returned Prisoners of War: A Suggested Scheme for Rehabilitation', pp. 407–411; Newman, 'The Prisoner-of-War Mentality', pp. 8–10; Whiles, 'A Study of Neurosis among Repatriated Prisoners of War', pp. 697–698; Jeffrey and Bradford, 'Neurosis in Escaped Prisoners of War', pp. 422–435; Gibbens, 'The Psychology and Psychopathology of the Prisoner-of-War', MD thesis; Bavin, 'A Contribution Towards the Understanding of the Repatriated Prisoner of War', pp. 29–35; Makepeace, *Captives of War*, Chapter 7, 'Resettling', pp. 197–223; Jones and Wessely, 'British Prisoners-of-War: From Resilience to

international study based on personal testimony and medical records is epidemiologist Gilbert Beebe's analysis of morbidity, disability and maladjustments of American captives and their servicemen control group from the Second World War's European and Pacific theatres as well as the Korean War.[8] Australian studies are also restricted.[9] The majority focus on prisoners of the Japanese.[10] The most comprehensive Australian morbidity study, drawing on DVA records, statements by private medical practitioners, and over 600 personal interviews, is that of 1,937 former prisoners of Japan and Europe conducted for the POW Association of Australia by Ian Duncan (a doctor and former prisoner of war) and his colleagues in the early 1980s.[11] This thesis, then, is the first to exclusively analyse the medical records and personal testimony of former Australian prisoners of Germany and Italy from liberation to death. It is also the first to examine the post-war mental health of former Australian airmen captives. Their lifetime medical and anecdotal evidence indicates that a significant majority—almost two-thirds—of the medical sample—experienced mental disturbances. This is perhaps surprising, given the attention to the mental health of former prisoners of

---

Psychological Vulnerability', pp. 163–183; Ursano and Rundell, 'The Prisoner of War', in Jones, Sparacino, Wilcox, Rothberg, and Stokes, *War Psychiatry*, pp. 431–455.

[8] Beebe, 'Follow-up Studies of World War II and Korean War Prisoners: II. 'Morbidity, Disability, and Maladjustments', pp. 400–422.

[9] Raftery, *Marks of War*; Roberts-Pedersen, 'Damage', pp. 82–101.

[10] 'Some aspects of medical investigation and treatment [relating to Australian prisoners of war], issued by authority of the Repatriation Commission, September 1947, cited in Lloyd and Rees, *The Last Shilling*, p. 300; Burges Watson, 'Post-traumatic Stress Disorder in Australian Prisoners of the Japanese: A Clinical Study', pp. 20–29; Dent, Tennant, and Goulston, 'Precursors of Depression in World War II Veterans 40 years after the War', pp. 486–198; Bomford, 'Fractured Lives' PhD thesis; Twomey, *The Battle Within*. Twomey also analysed applications to the Civilian Internees' Trust Fund in *Australia's Forgotten Prisoners*.

[11] Duncan, Greenwood, Johnson, Mosher, and Robertson, 'Morbidity in Ex-prisoners of War', p. 7. Their cohort represented about 15.5 per cent of the total number of POWs across all conflicts in 1983. The report only notes the total former prisoners studied, not the numbers of those imprisoned in Japan and Europe. The co-authors were all former POWs. Duncan and Robertson had medical degrees and Mosher had science qualifications.

Japan; evidence that they and their loved ones experienced unabating emotional and psychological pain; and Australian and international research highlighting that they had suffered physically and mentally more as a group than other western ex-prisoners of war.[12] In considering the lifetime post-war mental disturbances of former prisoners of Germany and Italy, this chapter—along with chapter ten—addresses a major gap in the medical and social history of Second World War prisoners of war and their families. Accordingly, it makes an original contribution to Australian and international captivity, repatriation (return), and medical and psychological scholarship.

Liberation

Such were the conditions on the forced marches which took place in January–February and April 1945 and in final holding camps, that several airmen suffered mental distress. Forty-five percent of the war crimes sample considered their treatment—forced to walk in the snow, lack of food, water, and medical facilities, transport in cattle trucks, inadequate shelter, and brutality—to be war crimes. Memories of the trek remained fresh and many of those who exhibited post-war psychological distress mentioned aspects of the march in medical testimony immediately after the war, and in later life.[13] That period was 'an ordeal' and included their 'worst experiences of the

[12] Beaumont, 'Gull Force comes home: The aftermath of captivity', pp. 43–52; AWM MSS1500: Peters, 'The lived experience of partners'; Bomford, 'Fractured Lives', PhD thesis; McKernan, *This War Never Ends*, p. 224.

[13] Fresh memories: DVA MX076290-01: Appellant's letter, 5 October 1953; SLSA SRG 869 Series 16: Mervyn Bradford, item 2, 30 November 1989. References to forced march at MRUs: DVA MX167147-01; DVA QMX148794-01; DVA MX076290-01. Late-life references relating to psychological distress: DVA QMX148794-01: Report, Dr R.G.E. to L.W.G. (advocate), 23 February 1976; DVA MX076290-01: Appellant's letter, 5 October 1953; DVA QMX082505-01: lifestyle survey 9 October 1990.

war'.[14] So traumatic was it for at least one man that he portrayed the trek as lasting months.[15] '[S]urvival was on our mind all the time', recalled Alec Arnel.[16] Many of the airmen were strafed by Allied aircraft; John Shierlaw was killed on the road out of Stalag 357, Fallingbostel. They endured severe hunger, bouts of dysentery, and lost weight; some became bodily as well as mentally debilitated.[17] Ross Breheny recalled starving men 'reached the stage of walking x-rays'.[18] Conditions in Stalag III-A, Luckenwalde were so bad Ken Todd dubbed it a 'concentration camp'.[19]

Liberation and repatriation were exhilarating.[20] The airmen were ecstatic to be back on British soil.[21] The unattached went to parties, rekindled platonic friendships, or lost no time in 'chasing around the popsies in Brighton'.[22] Many 'went crazy' as they released sexual tension with willing partners; some were tested for non-specific urethritis, gonorrhoea, and syphilis.[23] Those with British sweethearts and wives had 'wonderful' reunions.[24] Many of the liberated, however, were overcome. Reception in

---

[14] 'ordeal': AWM 54 779/3/129: 11 PDRC post-liberation debrief, Steele. 'worst experience': Nightingale FA: Nightingale, 'Wartime Records of Robert Roy Nightingale' [Prologue], [unpaginated].
[15] DVA MX030250-01: MRU medical board 5 October 1945.
[16] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 23 June 2016.
[17] DVA case files reveal many airmen were malnourished, had lost weight, and that some conditions had been exacerbated by dysentery.
[18] SLSA SRG 869 Series 16: Ross Breheny, item 12 [undated].
[19] Todd FA: Ken Todd, wartime log book, 4 February 1945, p. 89.
[20] Nightingale FA: Nightingale, wartime log book, 'EATS Scheme dates', p. 5; Royle archive: Royle, wartime log book, 2 May 1945, p. 41; MHRC CPA: Colin Phelps, letter to parents, 2 May 1945.
[21] Johnston FA: Johnston, letter to Evelyn Charles, 27 May 1945; Archer FA: Archer, letter to family, undated June 1945; SLSA SRG 869 Series 14: Wesley H. Betts, item 92, 23 January 2002.
[22] Royle archive: Paul Royle, diary 11, 16, 17, 19 and 22 May 1945; MHRC CPA: Colin Phelps, letters to parents, 24 May 1945. 'popsies': Roe (ed.), *The Bill Amos Story*, p. 71.
[23] DVA QMX082505-01; DVA MX008152-01; DVA NMX292929-01; DVA MX063770-01; DVA QMX149896-01; DVA QMX022543-02. Quote: Alexander records: Arnel, interview 23 June 2016.
[24] Baines FA: Baines, wartime log book, [6 May 1945], p. 34.

Britain was 'overwhelming'.[25] 'Kriegies wandering round in teeming rain looking dazed', wrote Bill Fordyce. 'I feel like crying.'[26] He was not the only one. Even romantic reunions were not necessarily carefree. One man who had pined for his wife exhibited what was later recognised as captivity-related stress even as the couple enjoyed their second honeymoon. Although he did not admit his 'nervous tension' at post-liberation medical boards, doctors had detected a fine finger tremor and elevated blood pressure.[27]

The former kriegies experienced what might now be called 'culture shock'. Having become largely habituated to captivity, barbed-wire life was 'normal'.[28] Liberty was not.[29] 'I was completely unsettled and bewildered by being back in England again', Albert Comber wrote to his sister, Win.[30] Even after a few days, Ken Carson was 'still rather dazed as it has been quite a change from Kriegie existence to civilisation'.[31] 'In a few days we knew our mistake', wrote Alec Arnel. 'We weren't ready for the hustle and bustle of this life. We couldn't stand the crowds. Noises irritated.'[32] Strangers made some feel nervous.[33] Catching a bus or train was 'a big event' for Les Harvey.[34] Speaking for himself and collectively, Arnel admitted that, during

[25] Arnel archive: Arnel, letter to Margery Gray, 21 May 1945.
[26] Fordyce FA: Fordyce, wartime log book, 2 May 1945, p. 137.
[27] As cited in DVA QMX148794-01: Report, Dr R.G.E. to L.W.G., (advocate), 23 February 1976.
[28] Whiles, 'A Study of Neurosis among Repatriated Prisoners of War', pp. 697–698.
[29] Mackenzie, *An Ordinary War 1940–1945*, p. 107; Johnston FA: Johnston, letter to Evelyn Charles, 27 May 1945.
[30] Comber FA: Comber, letter to Win and George Dye, [date removed c. 6 July 1945].
[31] Carson FA: Ken Carson, letter to mother and sister, 9 May 1945.
[32] Arnel archive: Arnel, letter to Margery Gray, 21 May 1945.
[33] DVA QMX034497-03, MRU medical board, 8 October 1945; Arnel archive: Harvey, 'Over, Down and Out', p. 27.
[34] Arnel archive: Harvey, 'Over, Down and Out', p. 27.

those early weeks in Britain the emotionally stunned 'failed dismally to cope'.[35]

Despite emotional disjunction, as they had done in captivity, the former kriegies assured their loved ones that they were in fine fettle.[36] Some, like George Archer, with eyes firmly on their futures, pursued commercial opportunities.[37] Others studied. Alan Righetti, who had been in the wool business before the war and part way through an agricultural science degree, went to Bradford 'to have a look at the wool industry there' and took a short course in textiles at Leeds University.[38] Sporty types publicly displayed their fitness. Hugh Lambie and Bill Trickett were two of the RAAF rowing representatives at the Henley-on-the-Thames regatta.[39] Keith Carmody resumed his place as captain in the RAAF cricket team during the Victory Test series.[40] They, and others, demonstrated to all that they had physically recovered from the privations of the last months of war. To do otherwise might have impugned the airmen's martial and masculine identities and contradicted their carefully composed attitude of fit and well.

As some men later admitted, however, elated by the prospect of home, they intentionally hid or inadvertently masked physical debility, emotional reactions, or lingering captivity-related psychological disturbances.[41] It was a

---

[35] Arnel archive: Arnel, letter to Margery Gray, 21 May 1945.
[36] Fry FA: Charles Fry, letter to Beryl Smith, 20 June 1945; Keith Mills FA: Keith Mills, letter to Phyllis Mills, 22 July 1945; Comber FA: Comber, letter to Win and George Dye, postmark 6 July 1945.
[37] Archer FA: Archer, letter to family, 25 June 1945.
[38] AAWFA: Righetti 0984, 16 September 2003.
[39] 'Swivel', 'Australian Oarsmen on the Thames', *Weekly Times* (Melbourne), 18 July 1945.
[40] Barker, *Keith Carmody*, pp. 71–80.
[41] DVA MX161399-01: appeal on determination, 15 February 1977; DVA MX078596-01: report from G.S.S Consultant Psychiatrist to Dr E.A.K., 31 March 1989.

common trait among the newly liberated. Some dissembled at post-liberation medical examinations or did not declare that they had been treated in the camp lazaret.[42] Others thought their symptoms of little importance. They, like *Mark Derrett*, brushed them aside because they wanted 'a quick discharge'.[43] So, too, did *Martin Quinlan*. 'My immediate desire was to return to civilian living & forget the lesser moments of prison life in Germany.'[44] While *Johnny Baynton* readily admitted to obvious conditions such as scabies and a weak ankle during his pre-discharge examination, he humorously avoided acknowledging anything more serious by declaring that his only 'other [ailment] of any kind' was a 'stiff upper lip'.[45]

So effective was their masking or denial, that only a handful of post-liberation medical reports indicate culture shock or any lingering emotional or psychological effects of captivity. A rare exception reveals how *Jonathan Dexter*, sleeping in a hospital ward, 'jumped out of bed, got through a half open window and baled out, going through the thick glass roof of a veranda'. When questioned later, 'it appeared he has been continuously thinking about his being shot down over Germany and baling out, especially since his interrogation when he had to write out his experiences six times'.[46] Generally, medical staff at personnel reception centres appear to have been pleased with the airmen's fitness and health. Even *Rodney Patton* who had experienced

---

[42] Dissembled: AAWFA: Winn 1508, 4 March 2004; Wheeler, 'Talented pilot who soared', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 September 2012. Lazaret: DVA MX211247-01: 11 PDRC medical examination, 14 June 1945; DVA MX041391-01: 106 PRC special medical board, 13 June 1945.
[43] Winn, *A Fighter Pilot's Diary*, p. 61; Quote: DVA MX076290-01: statement accompanying DVA Claim for Medical Treatment and Pension, 4 October 1982.
[44] DVA NMX188716-01: supporting statement, 5 November 1953.
[45] DVA QMX149896-01, discharge examination report, 25 October 1945.
[46] DVA MX305007-01: 39 SSQ, RAF Hospital, specialist's report, 19 July 1945.

torture during captivity and had been *in extremis* throughout the forced march was assessed as fit for immediate repatriation.[47] Indeed, variations on 'No injury. No illness', and 'Does not require further rehabilitation … Fit Repat[riation]', were common.[48] Such assessments reinforced the airmen's collective fit and well composure.

Letters to loved ones better describe the extent of post-liberation shock. After three years in captivity, it took Albert Comber 'much longer than I had hoped it would to get back to scratch again', he confided to Win. He admitted that, soon after arriving in Britain, he 'realised that mental and physical efficiency were by no means 100 per cent'.[49] Although he wanted to return to Australia, he accepted a commission from RAAF Headquarters in London to 'do the story, in pictures and words, of the Australian Air Force prisoners in Italy and Germany'.[50] That delay 'will mean that I will arrive home more my own self in every way'.[51] He would also, he believed, have time to recover; 'always very, very tired after the last weeks of strain and worry in Germany'.[52] Subsequent letters, however, indicate that Comber continued to be emotionally unsettled. He worried about his immediate future.[53] He later recalled feeling 'desperately tired and jittery'.[54] Yet, at his RAAF medical examination on 2 August 1945, he gave no indication of any residual effects

---

[47] DVA NMX247300-01: 11PDRC special medical examination, 2 July 1945.
[48] Special medical examinations at 11 PDRC: DVA VMX144931-01: 26 June 1945; DVA NMX293081-01: 26 May 1945; DVA MX030250-01: 4 July 1945.
[49] Comber FA: Comber, letter to Win and George Dye, 11 July 1945.
[50] AWM: A.H. Comber, artist, letter, 16 December 1990.
[51] Comber FA: Comber, letter to Win and George Dye, 11 July 1945.
[52] Comber FA: Comber, letter to Win and George Dye, [date removed c. 6 July 1945].
[53] Comber FA: Comber, letters to Win and George Dye, [date removed, c. early September 1945], 12 September 1945, 10 October 1945.
[54] DVA MX078596-01: report from G.S.S Consultant Psychiatrist to Dr E.A.K., 31 March 1989.

of captivity and was deemed 'fit repatriation immediately'.[55] Comber's later explanation for his post-liberation confusion was that he had been so relieved to be out of the war that he was 'on a high' and truly believed himself to be well.[56]

Alec Arnel had been 'in a "flat spin"', since his return. It was all too 'much excitement for nerves that have become somewhat frayed', he admitted to his sweetheart, Margery. 'The result is that I am going away for a rest.'[57] Accordingly, a 'holiday tour' courtesy of the Dominion and Allied Services Hospitality Scheme helped Arnel and many others become attuned to freedom. It gave them a chance to 'sort out' their thoughts; 'to examine oneself honestly', and to reconcile the past with the present, and future.[58] It also allowed the airmen to think of new careers.[59] Recognising how much they needed care, the more motherly hostesses provided vital nurturing.[60] The silence of country homes proved a balm after the hubbub of overcrowded camps. By the time he returned to Brighton after his farm stay, Eric Johnston's 'nerves are very much steadier now'.[61] Alec Arnel, however, did not recover. 'I'm in hospital', he wrote to Margery. He had experienced a physical and psychological collapse.[62]

Homecoming

---

[55] DVA MX078596-01: 11 PDRC special medical examination, 2 August 1945.
[56] DVA MX078596-01: report from G.S.S Consultant Psychiatrist to Dr E.A.K., 31 March 1989.
[57] Arnel archive: Arnel, letter to Margery Gray, 21 May 1945.
[58] Arnel archive: Arnel, letter to Margery Gray, 12 June 1945.
[59] Archer FA: Archer, letter to family, 19 August 1945; Comber FA: Comber, letter to Win and George Dye, 11 July 1945.
[60] Arnel archive: Arnel, letter to Margery Gray, 1 June [1945]; Johnston FA: Johnston, letters to Evelyn Charles, 24 June and 6 July 1945.
[61] Johnston FA: Johnston, letter to Evelyn Charles, 24 June 1945.
[62] Arnel archive: Arnel, letter to Margery Gray, 5 July [1945].

Doug Hutchinson viewed his departure from Britain as 'the beginning of another adventure'.[63] He, like other imminent repatriates, was 'looking forward to being home'.[64] The long sea voyage provided an opportunity to transition from the 'long and arduous' road of captivity 'strewn with pain, both physical and mental', to home.[65] Almost 700 RAAF ex-prisoners of war sailed to Australia in August–September 1945 on the SS *Orion*.[66] Others followed later. While shipboard life provided a relaxing interlude before a return to reality, concerns about mental health were perhaps never far from their minds. Less than three weeks into the *Orion*'s voyage, the ship-board journal, *'Repatter'*, reported that 'Ship Happy' had replaced 'Stalag Happy' as nerves unravelled in the restricted space and limited society.[67]

Many of the disembarking airmen found homecoming as disconcerting as liberation, particularly those who had dreamed of quiet reunions with family, sweethearts, fiancées, or wives.[68] Rather than an understated return, those sailing on the *Orion* were greeted with street parades and 'tumultuous' public welcomes in Sydney, Melbourne, and other capitals.[69] The throngs

---

[63] Hutchinson FA: Doug Hutchinson, letter to Lola Hutchinson, 8 August 1945.
[64] AAWFA: Austin 0382, 5 June 2003.
[65] 'The Way Home', *'Repatter': Journal of the Royal Australian Air Force Repatriates on board the S.S. Orion of the Orient Line, August–September 1945*, No. 1, 10 August 1945.
[66] 'More Ex-prisoners Here Today. City Procession of A.I.F., Airmen', *The Sun* (Sydney), 9 September 1945, p. 2.
[67] 'The Sharp End', *'Repatter': Journal of the Royal Australian Air Force Repatriates on board the S.S. Orion of the Orient Line, August–September 1945*, No. 10, 27 August 1945.
[68] Fry FA: Charles Fry, letter to Beryl Smith, 20 June 1945; Hutchinson FA: Doug Hutchinson, letters to Lola Hutchinson, 11 and 25 July 1945; Arnel archive: Arnel, letter to Margery Gray, 25 July 1945.
[69] 'Tumultuous': SLSA SRG 869 Series 14: Wesley H. Betts, item 92, 23 January 2002; 'More Ex-prisoners Here Today. City Procession of A.I.F., Airmen', *The Sun* (Sydney), 9 September 1945, p. 2; 'Crowded City Streets to Welcome Home Men From Europe', *The Herald*, 10 September 1945, p. 3; 'City Will Welcome POW's [sic] Today. Drive Through Streets on Arrival', *Argus* (Melbourne), 10 September 1945, p. 16; AAWFA: Austin 0382, 5 June 2003; 'Home', *The Telegraph* (Brisbane), 11 September 1945, p. 4; AAWFA: Kerr 1489, 3 March 2004.

overwhelmed.[70] *Even so, t*he 'joy of reunion' was the prevailing emotion.[71] Underneath however, was a sense of hollowness as some airmen realised they could not forget the strains of captivity as easily as they had anticipated, and that life would not be as they had imagined when they had indulged in kriegie nostalgia. 'Do you think, if we asked nicely, for a passage back', Max Dunn, cynically enquired, 'That the Gov'ment would allow it—or would they still insist / We endure our homeland's "welcome" from that Hell'.[72] Some repatriates, perhaps, received a cold shoulder rather than an exuberant welcome; their marriages had been strained before embarkation.

'The new beginning was fraught with difficulties', recalled Ron Mackenzie.[73] The 'tremendous shock' of homecoming was akin to that of capture; the need to adapt to 'a way of life that had changed greatly' was reminiscent of the adjustments to 'a completely different way of life' that were required behind barbed wire.[74] Reflecting culture shock as much as a dissonance between kriegie nostalgia and reality, John Dack found that '[w]hilst everything was still the same, somehow everything was different'.[75] Mackenzie felt '[w]e were strangers at home'.[76] For some there was an awakening grief. Alex Kerr's 'delight' at return was 'tinged with sadness' as he recognised that friends and 'neighbourhood kids' had lost their lives during the war.[77] Knowing how much life had altered, Melbourne's *Argus* newspaper

---

[70] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 2 March 2017.
[71] Johnston FA: 'The joy of reunion', *Sun News Pictorial* (Melbourne), undated news clipping.
[72] Dunn, *Poems of Norman Maxwell Dunn*, 'Let's Go Back', 19 September 1945, p. 23.
[73] Mackenzie, *An Ordinary War 1940–1945*, p. 114.
[74] Duncan, Greenwood, Johnson, Mosher, and Robertson, 'Morbidity in Ex-prisoners of War', pp. 1–2.
[75] Dack, *So you Wanted Wings, Hey!*, pp. 146–147.
[76] Mackenzie, *An Ordinary War 1940–1945*, p. 114.
[77] Kerr, *Shot Down*, p. 190.

published a 'digest of happenings' during their absence.[78] The informative booklet did not include explanations of the unsettling emotional and psychological disturbances many were experiencing. Yet some lingering 'Internment Effect' had been anticipated.[79] The airmen's own wartime log entries and artworks laughingly predicted it, and home front humourists poked fun at it.[80] Military services had long recognised the connection between captivity and mental disturbance. With the advent of medically repatriated servicemen during the Second World War medicos had identified an 'adjustment disorder'.[81] Resettlement problems had already arisen for many from the 'exceptionally abnormal conditions' of captivity.[82] Those, in some cases, were exacerbated by 'factors arising on or after return, which contribute to and may precipitate the agitations and worries arising during that difficult period'.[83] The emotional disjunction between home as remembered, imaginary castles-of-dreams created in camp, and 'home as it may be', was recognised.[84] So, too, was the affective dimension of resettlement. The 'strain of separation, with the sudden superimposed strain

---

[78] *While you were Away: A Digest of Happenings in Australia 1940–1945*, p. 1. Similar editions were distributed by the AIF and Red Cross.
[79] Quote: DVA CX26598-01: MRU medical board, 16 October 1945.
[80] Drawing: waiter to former POW seated at table: 'A can of bully sir? Yes Sir!'; Baines FA: Baines, wartime log book, p. 84; drawing: 'Home at Last': out-of-place former kriegie sitting with po-faced fellow diners at a posh dinner, laughing madly and loudly declaring '… funniest thing I ever heard!! …', Anderson and Westmacott, *Handle with Care*, p. 106; drawing: department store floor walker/manager to former RAAF lift attendant: 'The Air Force MAY have accustomed you to giving altitude in feet, Hubson, but the Boodle Emporium likes it expressed in terms of haberdashery, perfumery, lay-by, and so on', competition entry by Hesling, *The Australasian* (Melbourne), 27 October 1945, p. 40.
[81] Jones and Wessely, 'British Prisoners-of-War: From Resilience to Psychological Vulnerability', pp. 164–165.
[82] Dr A.T. Edwards (Medical Superintendent, Callan Park Hospital), 'War and Mental Disorders. Scientific Approach to Causes and Treatment. Domestic and Social Stresses', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 September 1944, p. 2.
[83] NAUK WO 32/10757: Repatriate POW report, [undated, c. mid 1944].
[84] 'Homecoming of War Prisoners', (contributed by the Tweed Rehabilitation Officer) *Tweed Daily* (Murwillumbah, NSW), 17 September 1945, p. 5.

of reunion with a life which has with time and circumstances moved on, should cause some emotional unrest and make [the repatriates] irritable and unstable'.[85]

Experts believed that not every repatriate would display 'emotional and mental strain'.[86] Newspapers, however, warned of a wide-scale epidemic. 'Medical authorities say that no man who has experienced capture, starvation, and the agony of waiting in concentration camps can emerge untainted by one or the other of the neuroses.'[87] Journalists speculated as to whether the newly liberated 'will be warped … normal or … strange'.[88] They, accordingly, educated readers about what to expect, advising that returning prisoners of war would need 'a helping hand'.[89] Some primed womenfolk to care, nurture, and 'manage your returning man's diet'.[90]

Acknowledging the repatriates needed an additional adjustment period before discharge, the RAAF sent them to medical rehabilitation units where, as military orthodoxy indicated, 'correct handling should help in preventing

---

[85] NAUK WO 32/10757: Repatriate POW report, [undated, c. mid 1944].
[86] NAUK WO 32/10757: Repatriate POW report, [undated, c. mid 1944]; Whiles, 'A Study of Neurosis among Repatriated Prisoners of War', pp. 697–698; Cochrane, 'Notes on the Psychology of Prisoners of War', pp. 282–284; Main, 'Clinical Problems of Repatriates', pp. 354–363. Quote: 'Homecoming of War Prisoners', (contributed by the Tweed Rehabilitation Officer) *Tweed Daily* (Murwillumbah, NSW), 17 September 1945, p. 5.
[87] 'POW Ordeal Leaves Scars', (By a Special Correspondent, who was a Prisoner-of-War in Germany) *Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), 27 March 1945, p. 2.
[88] 'Normal' Quote: Harry Standish, 'How Our Men Stood up to the Prisons of Germany', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 April 1945, p. 2. NLA FERG/4550: *P.O.W.*, No. 37, 15 February 1945, 'Excitement in German Camps', p. 1; No. 41, 15 June 1945, 'Our Airmen POW', *P.O.W.*, pp. 8–9; *P.O.W.*, No. 41, 15 June 1945, 'Rehabilitation Problems', p. 15.
[89] 'Homecoming of War Prisoners', (contributed by the Tweed Rehabilitation Officer) *Tweed Daily* (Murwillumbah, NSW), 17 September 1945, p. 5.
[90] Quote: NLA FERG/4552: 'When he Returns', *The Red Cross Prisoner of War Official Monthly Bulletin*, No. 22, August 1945, p. 1. 'Homecoming of War Prisoners', (contributed by the Tweed Rehabilitation Officer) *Tweed Daily* (Murwillumbah, NSW), 17 September 1945, p. 5; 'Preparation of Food for Repatriates', *The Braidwood Dispatch and Mining Journal* (NSW), 8 June 1945, p. 4; 'Repatriated P.O.W. Need Care in Food', *The Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), 4 June 1945; p. 5. Most articles did not differentiate between prisoners returning from Japanese or European camps.

the occurrence of more serious and perhaps persistent or progressive changes of mentality in the more severely affected'.[91] Discipline was relaxed. Constructive pastimes were encouraged, healthy food was plentiful, and the airmen received attention from RAAF doctors, nurses, physical education instructors, and physiotherapists. 'This two weeks did wonders for our return to normal, both mentally and physically', John Dack recalled.[92]

DVA case files suggest that recuperation time worked for some; a third of the medical sample demonstrated little or no residual disturbance after return (or throughout their post-war lives). Some, however, as they had done in Britain or now for the first time, masked their true state. Alec Arnel was one whose emotions were still awry but, a*s he had recently married Margery, he kept his symptoms to himself because, all he 'wanted to do was get out' and return to his bride. He insisted that he was 'as fit as a fiddle'.*[93] *His, and other undeclared n*ervous conditions, went undetected.[94] *Accordingly, medical* boards discharged from RAAF service men who were not mentally fit.[95] *Not all* symptoms of disturbance, however, could be concealed. Despite medicos' belief that the men would recover quickly, some did not.[96]

Oliver Henderson's examining doctor did not consider his 'mild depressive state' was 'in any way serious'. *Henderson* was, after all, 'physically splendid' and only 'suffering from the let-down so frequently seen

---

[91] NAUK WO 32/10757: Repatriate POW report, [undated, c. mid 1944].
[92] Dack, *So you Wanted Wings, Hey!* p. 148.
[93] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 2 March 2017.
[94] Alexander records: Evelyn Johnston, interview 18 October 2016; AAWFA: Austin 0382, 5 June 2003.
[95] DVA NMX233512-01: discharge examination report, 25 October 1945; 'emotional instability': DVA QMX082505-01: MRU medical board, 17 October 1945 and letter, 17 August 1990.
[96] Newman, 'The Prisoner-of-War Mentality', p. 9; Bavin, 'A Contribution Towards the Understanding of the Repatriated Prisoner of War', p. 34; DVA MX008152-01: MRU medical board, 5 October 1945; DVA CX26598-01: MRU medical board, 16 October 1945.

in men of high purpose on their return to civil life'.[97] Still uncomfortable in crowds and drinking alcohol 'in moderation', *Henderson* was discharged in October 1945 and immediately applied for a war service-related pension, claiming 'constitutional insufficiency owing to being a POW'. At a medical examination six months later, the doctor recorded that *Henderson* was an '[e]xcellent physical specimen and very good mental type' but was 'having a lot of difficulty in settling down to life in Australia'. In mid-1946, the Repatriation Board determined that *Henderson* had 'Mild Depressive phase of Anxiety Neurosis' and granted him a partial pension.[98] His condition persisted. The former airman proved difficult to live with and was violent towards his younger brother. Over the years, the 'physically splendid' man of April 1946 developed a hernia, haemorrhoids, and appendicitis. He also experienced 'stomach condition' (1945); 'nervous disorder' (1946–47); stomach condition and dermatitis (1948); stomach condition (1952); nervous disorder and stomach condition (1953–54), 1955–60) and 1961–62); hypertension; and, in 1962, 'chronic duodenal ulcer as a result of depression and anxiety brought on as a prisoner of war in Germany'.[99]

Albert Comber was another whose post-captivity jitters did not abate. Despite his hopes of time to recover, the recently married Comber was admitted to a convalescent depot in January 1946 with 'anxiety state'.[100] He had had 'no rest or holiday since release from POW camps' and now evinced 'anorexia, general indisposition & loss of weight'. He told the medical board

[97] DVA QMX034497-03, MRU medical board, 8 October 1945.
[98] DVA QMX034497-02: medical history summary.
[99] DVA QMX034497-01: claim form [date stamped 31 October 1962]; summary of application, 16 September 1958.
[100] DVA MX078596-01: report on admission to convalescent Depot, 21 January 1946.

that 'he feels in need of a good rest'. The board expected that a short stay at a medical rehabilitation unit would 'complete his final physical rehabilitation'.[101] Despite declaring himself 'a new man' on 11 February 1946, Comber's physical and emotional problems appeared to snowball.[102] By June 1946 he had an inflamed appendix and tonsils (both removed). His '[p]ersisting disabilities' included 'indigestion, general indisposition and tiredness', all 'connected with service in particular POW period'.[103] He was discharged with 'no disability' on 18 July 1946 despite a mild anxiety state and conjunctivitis.[104] The next month, the Repatriation Commission admitted his 'Nervous Disorder'.[105]

While perhaps an element of his condition related to his whirlwind courtship and marriage in Britain within weeks of meeting Eve, Comber's anxiety worsened. His marriage and family life were happy, supportive and fulfilling, yet July 1946's mild anxiety state progressed to a nervous breakdown in the 1960s.[106] During the next thirty years he battled '[a]nxiety, nervousness, frustration, irritability'. Although the company he established was successful, he personally struggled in the business world, and had to retire early. In addition, 'chronic gastric symptoms, diarrhoea have come to rule my social life'.[107] He 'suffers from tension, anxiety, irritability, insomnia with nightmares, "terrible panic spasms" with fears of dying, and noises in

[101] DVA MX078596-01: MRU medical board, 28 January 1946.
[102] DVA MX078596-01: convalescent depot, medical officer's progress notes.
[103] DVA MX078596-01: discharge examination report 26 June 1946.
[104] DVA MX078596-01: final medical board, report 17 July 1946.
[105] DVA MX078596-01: letter dated 14th August 1946, referred to in Appeal to Repatriation Commission, 7 November 1966.
[106] DVA MX078596-01: opinion of medical board, 17 July 1946; lifestyle report, 16 March 1989; report from G.S.S Consultant Psychiatrist to Dr E.A.K., 31 March 1989.
[107] DVA MX078596-01: lifestyle report, 16 March 1989

his head. He is unable to go out to dine or visit friends, as the panic is likely to overtake him'.[108] Comber was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder in 1989. His condition lasted a lifetime.[109]

Getting on

'Freedom had its problems', Les Harvey stated.[110] 'I think I … went overboard with the taste of freedom', Rex Austin admitted. 'I was probably a little wild.'[111] They, and others, delayed 'real life' as long as possible, as they enjoyed hectic social whirls.[112] Putting captive lives behind and adapting to civilian life, for many, was not easy. For some, it took years. Some perhaps never did. 'Have never been able to settle down and get back to a normal way of living', attested Ronald Hines in 1971.[113] 'How long did it take you to settle back to civilian life then?', oral historian Janet Billett asked Bill Fordyce on 5 September 2002. 'What's the date today? … It took until today. I haven't recovered yet.'[114]

Adapting took a conscious effort; it was a process they had to manage. Just as they had to acclimatise to captivity, 'we adjusted our minds to our new status'.[115] Many of the recently liberated wanted to 'forget about' their difficult wartime experiences.[116] Even those obviously suffering

---

[108] DVA MX078596-01: report from G.S.S Consultant Psychiatrist to Dr E.A.K., 31 March 1989.
[109] Additional details above from Alexander records: Cath McNamara, interview 18 July 2016.
[110] Arnel archive: Harvey, 'Over, Down and Out', p. 26.
[111] AAWFA: Austin 0382, 5 June 2003.
[112] AAWFA: Hutchinson 0540, 17 June, 2003.
[113] NAA B503 POW Trust fund application: R873 Hines, 402086, 29 June 1971.
[114] Fordyce in Billett, *Memories of War*, 2004, p. 206. Fordyce died in February 2008.
[115] Kerr, *Shot Down*, p. 182.
[116] AAWFA: Hutchinson 0540, 17 June, 2003. Quote: DVA QMX126934-01: report from Dr R.G., 30 October 1989.

psychological disturbance like Albert Comber made a conscious effort to 'get on'.[117] Many reinforced this desire by working hard, dedicating themselves to family life and religious or charitable concerns, and energetically enjoying recreational pursuits.[118] It was a natural reaction—and the most common. It was also a culturally appropriate response, actively encouraged by families, friends, and government policy.[119] Some like Comber, *Adam Kelly*, and Roland King, took advantage of re-establishment programmes such as war service home loans and the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme which funded university education and vocational training for former servicemen and women.

Silence has an important place in composure.[120] By deliberately omitting facts and emotions, selective silence is both a strategy to avoid traumatic memories or provocations of memory and a way of constructing a life narrative without trauma.[121] Choosing to be silent is also an act of personal agency; it is a powerful coping mechanism. Moreover, it can be culturally endorsed.[122] The cohort had encountered and practised many forms of socially constructed silence. They belonged to a generation which did not generally speak of difficult or emotional experiences; they were expected to

---

[117] Quote: DVA QMX126934-01: report from Dr R.G., 30 October 1989.
[118] Raftery and Schubert, *A Very Changed Man*, p. 55; Allport, *Demobbed*, p. 219; *Memory, War and Trauma*, p. 155.
[119] Encouraged by family and friends: AAWFA: Austin 0382, 5 June 2003; Edna Donaldson, letter to Charles Fry, 10 May 1945. Government policy: *Return to Civil Life: A Handbook of Information for Members of the Forces on the Road Back to Civil Life*; Macintyre, *Australia's Boldest Experiment: War and Reconstruction in the 1940s*, Chapter 9, 'Demobilisation', pp. 314–352.
[120] Winter, 'Thinking about Silence', in Ben-Ze'ev, Gino, and Winter (eds), *Shadows of War*, pp. 4–11.
[121] Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, pp. 78–79.
[122] Winter, 'Thinking about Silence', in Ben-Ze'ev, Gino, and Winter (eds), *Shadows of War*, p. 30.

be stoic.[123] They had embraced wartime censorship as an operational requirement. They had omitted details of serious injury from wartime letters to promote their collective fit and well composure. They also knew how to deploy silence for their own benefit. In an era where mental illness was stigmatised, they could avoid its social shame by not disclosing their disturbances. They could also protect themselves from perceptions in some quarters that they were malingerers.[124] 'I wanted to talk about it, get it off my chest', Richard Winn recalled, 'but in those days you were supposed not to say anything, you were supposed to keep a stiff upper lip'.[125] In the wake of advice from the medical profession not to talk about their experiences, many of the psychological sample, like other ex-servicemen and prisoners of war, deliberately avoided speaking and thinking of the past; they told stories with deliberate gaps.[126] 'Like so many', Helen Richards wrote of Brian, 'my late husband barely spoke of these times; he belonged to that corps of men who put those days behind' them.[127]

The onus was on women to help their men move on.[128] 'We are all glad to know you are among us again and I hope the past will soon be forgotten and you will be able to laugh it all away', wrote Charles Fry's sister, Edna, in May 1945.[129] Many did just that. Earle Nelson 'found that after being back home for some time, I was able to recall the pleasant and humorous detail

---

[123] Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, p. 159.
[124] Muir, '"Idiots, imbeciles and moral defectives"', p. 46; DVA QMX058112-02: report by Dr J.W., 11 August 1967.
[125] AAWFA: Winn 1508, 4 March 2004.
[126] Bomford, 'Fractured Lives', PhD thesis, 253–254; Raftery and Schubert, *A Very Changed Man*, 51; AWM MSS1500: Peters, 'The lived experience of partners'.
[127] SLSA SRG 869 Series 14: Helen T. Richards, item 44, 19 September 2001.
[128] Bomford, 'Fractured Lives', PhD thesis, p. 150; 'Smooth their way back', *Argus*, 11 September 1945, p. 7.
[129] Edna Donaldson, letter to Charles Fry, 10 May 1945.

with great clarity'. He could no longer remember the triggers of his 'periods of despair'.[130] Some wives also embraced silence. They too wanted to forget about the war. Mavis Netherway, her son recalled, 'put a massive embargo on anything to do with the war as she bore the brunt of the Missing on Operations telegram' and the long waiting for Len's return.[131] She and others were content not to talk about their husband's war or captivity experiences. Others accepted that the men did not want to talk. It was a common response.[132]

By mid-life, selective silence was ingrained. The former kriegies were happy to share humorous anecdotes and tales of prison camp camaraderie which evoked pleasant memories—particularly stories about how they bested the Germans. Bill Fordyce became a noted raconteur; there was a performative aspect of his hilarious retellings.[133] Humour shifted the focus from traumatic recollection. 'Every now and again [Eric would] tell us little snippets', Evelyn Johnston recalled.[134] But far too many shunned anything which would trigger overwhelming negative emotions such as fear and psychological pain. For some, like *Hubert Atkinson*, this included not attending Anzac Day ceremonies.[135] Len Netherway, who also rarely went to Anzac Day marches, shied away from recollecting captivity, particularly the rigours of the forced march, 'rather than relive the horror of it'.[136] Silence for

---

[130] Nelson, *If Winter Comes: RAAF Service 1939–1945*, p. 71.
[131] Alexander records: Mike Netherway, email 20 May 2020.
[132] Damousi, *Living with the Aftermath*, p. 100.
[133] Bill Fordyce, after-dinner speech at the 458 Squadron Melbourne All States Reunion, 13 April 1989.
[134] Alexander records: Evelyn Johnston, interview 18 October 2016.
[135] DVA QMX126934-01: report from Dr R.G., 30 October 1989.
[136] Alexander records: Mike Netherway, interview 28 September 2016.

those deeply affected by the deaths of the fifty airmen killed in the post-Great Escape reprisals may have been a reflection of continuing grief, mirroring 'liturgical silences' which, as Jay Winter points out, 'are essential parts of mourning practices … not speaking enables those experiencing loss to engage with their grief in their own time and in their own ways'.[137]

Some did not consider it appropriate that their wives hear about their experiences, either through a desire to protect them from the horrors or because they felt that women could not understand them.[138] It was, at a most generous interpretation, paternalistic. Jay Winter, however, notes the essential sexism in rejecting female capacity to empathise.[139] Mervyn Fairclough, one of the Australians incarcerated in Buchenwald concentration camp, told his wife, Elaine, that '[i]f you want to ask me anything about the war, ask me now because I won't be talking about it again' and, until 1962, she recalled, 'that was the way it was'.[140] Eric Johnston, another survivor of Buchenwald, also chose not to speak of his experiences. In response to Evelyn's question, 'Why when you came home didn't you ever talk about it? Why didn't you—perhaps because I didn't ask you—but you tell me, why was it all pushed away?', Johnston replied, '[I]t was all part of life that I didn't particularly want to remember. And I didn't want to worry my relatives and you in particular—what I'd been through … I didn't want to tell you about

[137] Winter, 'Thinking about Silence', in Ben-Ze'ev, Gino, and Winter (eds), *Shadows of War*, p. 4.
[138] Hunt and Robbins, 'World War II veterans, social support, and veterans' associations', pp. 178–180.
[139] Winter, 'Thinking about Silence', in Ben-Ze'ev, Gino, and Winter (eds), *Shadows of War*, p. 6.
[140] Burgess RC: Elaine Fairclough, 'Elaine Fairclough's Special Visit to France', speaking notes for [unidentified] CWA meeting, [c. October 1997].

them, didn't want you upset'.[141] Johnston hid his 'emotional scars' of captivity and brutal treatment well. What he did share with Evelyn was not visited upon his children. It was, their son stated, 'the private torture they shared together'.[142]

Loss

Discharge formally severed the cohort from their air force identity, status, and fraternity. It provoked considerable emotional and psychological stress. Paradoxically, although welcomed home by family and community, the former kriegies were no longer their central focus. Rather than again relying on familial and social support which had proved so supportive in captivity they were expected to almost immediately reassert their masculine independence. But, as indicated in cartoons by Anderson and Westmacott, former prisoners of war did not easily slip into post-war society.[143] Several took a 'long time to really settle down to the normal life style'; for others it was years before they adjusted.[144]

Homecoming precipitated loss of military identity. 'We didn't get the sort of attention we thought we'd get', Bill Fordyce recalled. 'We imagined that we'd been terribly important people, firstly because we were Air Force, secondly because we were aircrew.'[145] Fordyce was not alone in reacting against the lack of interest in a service which had once been considered glamorous and utterly masculine. Officers, like Fordyce who had been used

---

[141] *The Lucky Ones: Allied Airmen and Buchenwald*, 1994. Directed by Michael Allder.
[142] Alexander records: Colin Johnston, interview 18 October 2016.
[143] 'Home at Last', Anderson and Westmacott, *Handle with Care*, p. 106; Arnel archive: Harvey, 'Over, Down and Out', p. 26; AAWFA: Austin 0382, 5 June 2003.
[144] Quote: AAWFA: Hutchinson 0540, 17 June, 2003.
[145] Fordyce in Billett, *Memories of War*, 2004, p. 205.

to responsibility, exciting operational work, and a certain cachet within the air force's 'caste' system, also had difficulty fitting into society and a workforce which did not necessarily value that experience.[146] There was also a broad feeling that returned servicemen had no 'exalted place' in post-war Australia.[147] Harking back to an inadequate welcome and social amenities for returnees after the Great War, Max Dunn considered that Australia 'failed us badly'.[148]

The factor which perhaps most rankled for Fordyce as he tried to settle into civilian life was that his identity as a former prisoner of war was not recognised publicly.[149] His sense that society did not recognise the harsher elements of his captivity emanated from the pervasive belief of government and the public that wartime imprisonment in Europe was relatively benign, characterised by active resistance and escape, and that the former airmen captives had emerged from it in rude health after experiences which paled in comparison with those suffered by prisoners of the Japanese.[150] 'Looking hale and hearty', the recently repatriated were presented as virile, sexual, and masculine beings.[151] Pictures of fit, happy, and healthy-looking former prisoners of Europe provided a stark contrast to photographs of 'lean, wan-

---

[146] McCarthy, *Last Call of Empire*, pp. 129–130. John Barrett notes also that some of his cohort's officers and NCOs 'felt their loss of identity and prestige', as well as their wartime authority. Barrett, *We Were There*, p. 380.
[147] McKernan, *All In!*, p. 271.
[148] Dunn, *Poems of Norman Maxwell Dunn*, 'Let's Go Back', 19 September 1945, p. 23.
[149] Fordyce in Billett, *Memories of War*, p. 205.
[150] Garton, *The Cost of War*, p. 215; MacKenzie, *The Colditz Myth*; Monteath, 'Behind the Colditz Myth', in Beaumont, Grant, and Pegram (eds), *Beyond Surrender*, pp. 116–117. For government perception of greater trauma see correspondence relating to 1989 amendments to the veterans' entitlements legislation which gave a greater range of benefits only to former prisoners of Japan: SLSA SRG 869 Series 16: R.D. Hughes, Federal Secretary to Geoff Blackett, item 1, 20 November 1989; SLSA SRG 869 Series 14: Helen T. Richards, item 44, 19 September 2001.
[151] *Morning Bulletin* (Rockhampton, QLD), 13 September 1945, p. 3.

faced men' arriving from Japanese camps.[152] Reports of atrocities and early accounts of captivity, such as Rohan Rivett's *Behind Bamboo*, highlighted their travails and mental states.[153] Ultimately, 'the emaciated and semi-naked bodies' of former prisoners of Japan became 'emblematic images' of the Australian captivity experience.[154]

As Jay Winter notes, '[i]mages speak in ways which are hard to control'.[155] An unanticipated consequence of the kriegies' fit and well narrative was that, in civilian life, it precluded recognition of any traumatic experience. The former airmen had no public identity as suffering victims of war. Fordyce and his fellows did not appear to recognise the irony that they had created this perception through their collective composure of fit and well during captivity and before discharge. If, then, as Christina Twomey has argued, images of emaciated bodies evoked a sense of redemptive suffering and subsequent communal sympathy, what of the former airmen who presented themselves as fit and healthy?[156] Over time, some, like Mervyn Bradford, deliberately deferred to the greater trials of prisoners of the Japanese.[157] Whenever he spoke of his experiences, Fordyce always

---

[152] 'lean, wan-faced men' from 'Street Drive of POWs Stirs Crowds. Cheering Thousands Give Great Homecoming', *Argus* (Melbourne), 20 September 1945, p. 1. Garton, '"Fit only for the Scrap Heap": Rebuilding Returned Soldier Manhood in Australia after 1945', p. 52; Twomey, 'Emaciation or Emasculation: Photographic Images, White Masculinity and Captivity by the Japanese in World War Two', p. 300. Newspaper articles and images include: 'Home', *The Telegraph* (Brisbane), 11 September 1945, p. 4; 'RAAF Prisoners-of-War from Europe Welcomed', *Argus* (Melbourne), 11 September 1945, p. 11; 'Emaciated Prisoners in Japanese Camp', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 September 1945, p. 1.
[153] 'Blackburn's Plea'. "Give Special Treatment to Prisoners"', *News* (Adelaide), 22 September 1945, p. 1; 'Army Medical Warning on Neurosis. Must Ease Worries of Former Prisoners', *The Herald* (Melbourne), 27 October 1945, p. 7; Rivett, *Behind Bamboo*.
[154] Twomey, *Australia's Forgotten Prisoners*, p. 1.
[155] Winter, 'Thinking about Silence', in Ben-Ze'ev, Gino, and Winter (eds), *Shadows of War*, p. 17.
[156] Twomey, 'Emaciation or Emasculation: Photographic Images, White Masculinity and Captivity by the Japanese in World War Two', p. 308.
[157] SLSA SRG 869 Series 16: Mervyn Bradford, item 2, 30 November 1989.

'emphasise[d] that whatever happened to us, it was a 100 times worse in Japan'.[158] Alan Righetti stated that '[w]e didn't suffer anything like [those] in the hands of the Japanese'.[159] The former airmen, accordingly, allowed their experience to be overshadowed. The trauma of their experience was minimised by self and society.

Forging new emotional bonds

Discharge severed connections to the cohort's primary emotional community—the 'brotherhood of airmen'—yet it was something many did not expect. Few had any conception as they filled their wartime log books with civilian addresses how they would be affected by the loss of 'the emotional strengths' of their air force fraternity and kriegie camaraderie.[160] When the former prisoners returned to their own countries, states, and cities, many found they no longer had the support of operational crew, squadron, or room crews. Some of the newly returned felt alienated. 'The war was over, you no longer were one of a lot of people', noted Doug Hutchinson. 'You were a loner.'[161] *Oliver Henderson* expressed bitter nostalgia as he told a medical officer he was 'a damned lot happier as POW in Germany'.[162] Those whose nerves continued to unravel could not be buoyed by the kriegie fraternity's collective humour. Captivity's 'round the bend' or shipboard 'Stalag Happy' were no longer laughing matters.

---

[158] Bill Fordyce, after-dinner speech at the 458 Squadron Melbourne All States Reunion, 13 April 1989.
[159] AAWFA: Righetti 0984, 16 September 2003.
[160] Main, 'Clinical Problems of Repatriates', p. 360.
[161] AAWFA: Hutchinson 0540, 17 June, 2003.
[162] DVA QMX034497-02: case history, 23 April 1946.

Many tried to maintain the bonds forged in service and captivity.[163] Some men stayed in the air force, or rejoined after a time.[164] Some enjoyed life-long friendship bonds. Former crew members and kriegie roommates Ken Todd and Herbert Bruce Keen (known as Bruce) became brothers-in-law when Todd married Keen's sister, Jean. (They had met at a reunion hosted by Keen.)[165] Distance, combined with work and family demands, however, made contact other than at the occasional reunion difficult for the majority. Some of those who gathered in Melbourne for a 1951 screening of *The Wooden Horse*, for example, had not seen each other since liberation.[166] Some joined the ex-prisoner of war association, but it largely catered to those living in capital cities. The disparity of experience, for some, also proved problematic. While former prisoners of Germany and Italy were considered valuable members, the association's social life focused more on ex-prisoners of Japan. Rex Austin appreciated what they had gone through but he found no 'connecting spark'.[167] Alec Arnel spurned any reminders of captivity and that included membership of the association.[168] Marriage—and new identities as husband and father—replaced the ties of air force and kriegie brotherhood. The former airmen turned towards the family unit as their new emotional community.

---

[163] Clif Tucker, letter, Charles Fry, 2 December 1945; *Courier Mail* (Brisbane), 21 November 1951, p. 8; Alex Gould, letter, Charles Fry, 12 November 1946.
[164] Alec Arnel, Tony Burcher, Tony Gordon, Douglas Hurditch, and Brian Hayes stayed in or later rejoined the air force.
[165] Alexander records: Peter Todd, interview 13 October 2015.
[166] Gordon FA: Dunstan, Roberts, '19 Diggers "relive" years in German prison camp', *Melbourne Herald*, 3 October 1951, unpaginated clipping.
[167] AAWFA: Austin 0382, 5 June 2003.
[168] Alexander records: Arnel, interviews, *21 February 2018 and* 12 November 2015.

As Michael Roper stresses, homecoming is 'as much about women as men'. The 'most immediate emotional impact' was experienced within the home.[169] Loving married couples stood the best chance of weathering resettlement and any accompanying psychological disturbances.[170] Even so, while the separated had longingly anticipated carefree romantic reunions, as the Tweed Rehabilitation Officer cautioned, 'there may be psychological differences between husband and wife'.[171] Experts predicted that mutual readjustment might be compounded by former kriegies' inability to adapt to new physical and emotional environments.[172] As well as trying to find new homes and jobs, some had to reacquaint themselves with wives and children they had not seen for years or youngsters they had not even met; at least 5.4 per cent of the cohort's pre-captivity couples were parents.[173] For the single, there was a sense that there was no time to lose in forming marital bonds. 'You must find it difficult to believe I am twenty-six. If I get married after the war I will be just the same age as Daddy was when he walked you down the aisle!', wrote one man to his mother shortly after D-Day when optimism of a speedy end of the war was high.[174] At least twenty of the cohort married in

---

[169] Roper, *The Secret Battle*, pp. 284–285.
[170] Bomford, 'A wife, a baby, a home and a new Holden car', in Crotty and Larsson (eds), *Anzac Legacies*, p. 115.
[171] Carefree reunions: Fry FA: Beryl Smith, letter to Charles Fry, 12 December 1944; Arnel archive: Arnel, letter to Margery Gray, 21 May 1945; Hutchinson FA: Doug Hutchinson, letter to Lola Hutchinson, 27 July 1945. Quote: 'Homecoming of War Prisoners', (contributed by the Tweed Rehabilitation Officer) *Tweed Daily* (Murwillumbah, NSW), 17 September 1945, p. 5.
[172] 'Homecoming of War Prisoners', (contributed by the Tweed Rehabilitation Officer) *Tweed Daily* (Murwillumbah, NSW), 17 September 1945, p. 5; Main, 'Clinical Problems of Repatriates', p. 356.
[173] Of John Barrett's cohort, 16 per cent of those who had enlisted left behind wives and children. Barrett, *We Were There*, p. 371.
[174] NLA FERG/4550: *P.O.W.*, No. 36, 15 January 1945, unattributed letter, 30 June 1944, 14. See also Bomford, 'A wife, a baby, a home and a new Holden car', in Crotty and Larsson (eds), *Anzac Legacies*, p. 120.

Britain before embarking for Australia. Others became engaged and arranged for their fiancées' passage.[175] Husbands were also eager to resume their marital lives. 'I just can't wait to get back and hold you in my arms once again', Len Netherway told Mavis in a letter written two days after his thirtieth birthday. '[B]ut believe me it won't be just once, but all the time, because night & day, you are my one & only sweetheart. How's that for a spiel. I'm getting romantic in my old age.'[176] Australian women set in motion their own wedding plans and walked down aisles within weeks of their fiancés' disembarkation. (Five of the cohort's Australian brides married in September 1945, three in October 1945, and one in November 1945.) Some couples met soon after homecoming and rushed to the altar. At least 40 per cent of the cohort's bachelors tied the knot before the end of 1946. Almost two-thirds of those who had been single at liberation were married by 1950. Many of those unions contributed to Australia's post-war 'baby boom'.[177]

A 'vital determination to achieve biological continuity' and, perhaps, 'symbolic immortality', was a visceral way to put the past behind them.[178] This proved problematic for some newly-weds and reuniting spouses. The *Thornes* had early sexual problems, emanating from *Brendan's* war wounds; it took four days to consummate their marriage.[179] While *Warren Nash's* 'marital relations are happy' and he was 'sexually sufficient', he 'often has

---

[175] Fallows, *Love & War*, pp. xiv–xvi; 'Stirling Castle Arrives', *Advocate* (Burnie, Tasmania), 22 February 1946, p. 5; '"Wonderful Weather" Said New Arrivals', *Sun* (Sydney), 20 June 1946, p. 13; 'Fordyce in Billett, *Memories of War*, p. 205.
[176] Netherway FA: Len Netherway, letter to Mavis Netherway, 15 June 1945.
[177] Curthoys, Martin, Rowse, (eds), *Australians*, p. 60.
[178] Macleod, 'The reactivation of post-traumatic stress disorder in later life', p. 629. Janette Bomford also recognises the biological imperative in her cohort. Bomford, 'Fractured Lives', PhD thesis, p. 158.
[179] DVA QMX082505-01: letter, 17 August 1990.

no control and is previous'.[180] *Wilfred Mosse* was semi-impotent for many years.[181] A week after the *Barries'* marriage, *Hugo* 'made no attempt to have sexual relations' with *Petronella*. He criticised her constantly, and started to voice his regret about not marrying another woman. He asked his wife to leave as he 'needed time to consider our marriage and his feelings for the other woman'. *Petronella's* health was affected and she had a nervous breakdown.[182]

Marriage and family life represented normality.[183] But rather than step back into a traditional masculinity, the gender balance of many relationships had been upset.[184] Irene Baines and Pearl Bradford had joined the women's services. Beryl Smith had lived independently from her family and worked for a federal government minister. Lola Hutchinson and Evelyn Charles held civilian jobs with considerable responsibility. One woman carried on her business, engaging household help with her children. Young mothers singlehandedly managed families. They and others were very different from the women the airmen had left behind. Some men, perhaps, had not appreciated how much their loved ones had changed. While some, like Beryl Smith, were content to leave their war-duration jobs to embrace marriage and motherhood, others, such as Lola Hutchinson, preferred economic independence. Some had to work to either support debilitated husbands or contribute to household finances affected by disrupted working lives.[185]

---

[180] DVA XC026892-02: statement by Dr J.M.G., 20 December 1949.
[181] DVA MX124472-02: clinical report from psychiatrist, 28 October 1965.
[182] NSW SA: NRS-13495-26-127-514/1962. Pseudonyms used to protect identity.
[183] AWM MSS1500: Peters, 'The lived experience of partners', p. 15.
[184] White, 'War and Australian Society', in McKernan and Brown (eds), *Australia: Two Centuries of War and Peace*, p. 414.
[185] DVA QMX082505-01: lifestyle survey, 9 October 1990; Alexander records: Evelyn Johnston, interview 18 October 2016.

Accordingly, returned airmen had to adjust to new gender dynamics; women, too, had to negotiate their post-war roles. Those women who wanted to maintain independence did so in light of societal expectations that they should return to the kitchen or care for physically or mentally damaged husbands.[186] Few men were prepared to compromise their traditional roles.[187] Some were suspicious of strong women. Doug Hutchinson had to put aside his hopes for children.[188] Some men's masculinity, perhaps, was threatened when they had to accept supportive nursing care from wives.

Asserting civilian masculinity

The regulated environment of RAF Station Sagan may have sustained during captivity, but it militated against effective post-war adjustment. A number of the psychological sample became 'institutionalised'—decisions had been made for them and their lives had been subject to air force discipline, both in operational service and captivity.[189] The rules of RAF Station Sagan, especially those relating to the 'X' organisation, limited personal decision-making. Harold Roberts, who 'was still under 21 when I was captured [in November 1941] ... did not develop my ideas to the outside world'. He struggled for some time.[190] While John Dack thought it 'wonderful to be home again', he, and many others facing the practicalities of their new life, discovered a range of ambiguities and challenges which required active

[186] Garton, *The Cost of War*, pp. 180–181.
[187] Main, 'Clinical Problems of Repatriates', p. 360.
[188] AAWFA: Hutchinson 0540, 17 June, 2003.
[189] Arnel archive: Harvey, 'Over, Down and Out', pp. 26–27.
[190] NAA B503 POW Trust fund application R571: Roberts, 406082, 4 June 1952.

decision-making.[191] 'When do I start work again? … Where will we live after the wedding?' Even, 'What sort of clothes do I need?'[192] The recently returned from all services found that 'the strangest adjustment of all' was putting aside uncertainty and taking control of their own lives.[193]

Breaking free of service and camp regimentation was of paramount importance. Australian post-war reconstruction was underpinned by strategies to help demobilised servicemen re-enter the workforce quickly and easily; women were encouraged back to their homes and traditional housewifely duties.[194] The physically-able had little difficulty finding work.[195] Many had even prepared for their future careers in camp, or while they awaited embarkation for Australia. Some expected to return to pre-war positions. Employment represented more than a means of throwing off the shackles of captivity and air force discipline. Work provided an opportunity to permanently pack away kriegie recipe books and aprons. It was a social and familial duty essential to their concept of civilian masculinity and identity.[196]

Some made the transition from *air men* to up-and-coming career men with little hardship. Graham Berry's new career path, however, came at personal and financial cost. Berry's 'war caused disabilities' prevented him

---

[191] Dack, *So you Wanted Wings, Hey!*, p. 146; Main, 'Clinical Problems of Repatriates', p. 361.
[192] Dack, *So you Wanted Wings, Hey!*, p. 148.
[193] McCalman, *Journeyings*, p. 202.
[194] Garton, 'Return home', in Damousi and Lake (eds), *Gender and War*, p. 197; White, 'War and Australian Society', in McKernan and Brown (eds), *Australia: Two Centuries of War and Peace*, pp. 409, 411; Raftery and Schubert, *A Very Changed Man*, p. 56; Curthoys, Martin, Rowse, (eds), *Australians*, p. 61; Macintyre, *Australia's Boldest Experiment: War and Reconstruction in the 1940s*.
[195] Curthoys, Martin, Rowse, (eds), *Australians*, p. 255.
[196] McCalman, *Journeyings*, p. 145; Garton, 'Return home', in Damousi and Lake (eds), *Gender and War*, p. 19; Raftery and Schubert, *A Very Changed Man*, p. 56.

from returning to his lucrative pre-war employment as a contract driller. To 'try and overcome this loss in my earning powers', he 'studied and passed in five subjects in the leaving certificate'. While an achievement, 'considering that I was compelled to leave school at the age of thirteen during the last economic depression and had just moved into a new home with two little children', it put a 'strain … on my indifferent health'. Even so, passing that examination allowed him to apply 'for permanency in the Commonwealth Public Service'.[197] As Berry indicated, it was not easy establishing stable careers, or forging ones which reflected qualifications or talents. There was, for many, an incoherence between the idea of work and the reality of employability. Some could not make up their minds what they wanted to do.[198] Others could not settle; Len Netherway and *Adam Kelly* were two of those with patchy employment records. Evelyn Johnston recalled that Eric 'was sort of wandering a little bit before he went back to the public service'.[199]

Berry revealed that the pressure of learning new skills or studying while working and with young children in the house could also contribute to stress and anxiety.[200] A number who had embraced rural lives also found post-war establishment hard. Mental states directly contributed to business collapses.[201] Disregard for authority also impeded employment stability.[202]

---

[197] NAA B503 POW Trust fund application R485: Berry, 407281, 22 June 1953.
[198] DVA MX008152-01: MRU medical board, 5 October 1945; AAWFA: Hutchinson 0540, 17 June, 2003; DVA NMX188716-01: case summary, 6 December 1960.
[199] Alexander records: Evelyn Johnston, interview 18 October 2016.
[200] NAA B503 POW Trust fund application R485: Berry, 407281, 22 June 1953.
[201] DVA MX305007-01: neuropsychological assessment, 15 March 2000; DVA MX124472-02: Repatriation Department medical history sheet, 28 October 1965; NAA B503 POW Trust fund applications: R1213: Scanlan, 402615, 3 June 1952; R589 Thomson, 406604, 28 October 1958; R802 Herman, 425697, 31 October 1974.
[202] Bavin, 'A Contribution Towards the Understanding of the Repatriated Prisoner of War', p. 29; Newman, 'The Prisoner-of-War Mentality', p. 9; Twomey, *The Battle Within*, p. 119.

While the cohort had readily accepted air force and kriegie discipline, some were disgruntled by workplace strictures. Harold Roberts could not work under supervision. He had 'a prejudice to any person such as a person who is my immediate boss or principal who gives me orders. My nature is an independent one and three and a half years of POW aggravated that'.[203] *Martin Quinlan*, 'irked by rigid discipline', was, after a succession of jobs, convicted of embezzlement.[204] Even during a period of full employment, some could not find work because of physical or mental disability, or were 'unable to work the hours that my job requires'.[205] By 1960, at least 39 per cent of the medical sample had to live with physical limitations arising from service and captivity. Gordon Hughes, who suffered 'Nerves + 2nd degree burn marks, chest & stomach & sleep' was even in 1973 still suffering employment-related 'material prejudice'. 'Work opportunities, after leaving service, refused half dozen chances of employment, due to facial burn marks not yet healed, so had to take employment, not involving meeting the public (it still applies).'[206]

Written shortly after his marriage to Barbara, Max Dunn poetically expressed 'bitter cynicism' at the couple's inability to find a home during Australia's post-war housing and building shortage: 'the Germans gave us shelter, crowded though it was, / While Australia gives us nothing—'cept some cheers'.[207] Members of the cohort were just a fraction of the many

---

[203] NAA B503 POW Trust fund application R571: Roberts, 406082, 4 June 1952.
[204] DVA NMX188716-01: case summary, 6 December 1960.
[205] NAA B503 POW Trust fund applications: R602 King, 415154, 6 February 1953; R903 O'Connell, 403033, 28 August 1964; R802 Herman, 425697, 31 October 1974. NAA B503, R765 Jeffries, 414355, 8 April 1952; R1213, Scanlan, 402615, 3 June 1952. Quote: R477 Moore, 286942, 8 April 1952.
[206] NAA B503 POW Trust fund application R528: Hughes, 417192, 2 April 1973.
[207] Dunn, *Poems of Norman Maxwell Dunn*, 'Let's Go Back', 19 September 1945, p. 23.

Australians who struggled to meet mortgage, living, and education costs as well as family health expenses. Some were so incapacitated they had to rely on others to carry out traditionally masculine household or maintenance tasks. Failure to make ends meet was humiliating for both partners, particularly when they had to prove their financial inadequacy to seek assistance from the POW Trust Fund. Some, like Graham Berry, preferred 'to stand on one's own feet if possible' but, 'health and peace of mind' were so greatly affected by straitened financial circumstances they had to put aside their pride and apply for a grant.[208] 'I am now 57 years of age', wrote Ronald Hines, who suffered 'neurosis and nervous disorder'. '[M]y health is now deteriorating to the extent of finding it a little difficult to earn enough to support my wife and myself.'[209] Stella Healey's health 'suffered considerably from the shame of having the debt continually over our heads', wrote her husband Frederick.[210] But in speaking of Stella's shame, Healey implied his own.

Unemployment, business and farming failures, debt, and faltering physical and mental health inhibited many former airmen's ability to fulfil their societal and masculine duty to provide for families. Some could not make the transition to civilian. They were, as Stephen Garton notes, experiencing 'a crisis of masculinity'.[211] But, for every masculine crisis, there was often collateral damage for women and children. Mavis Netherway, 'a highly strung' woman who 'worried a lot about a lot of things' battled to maintain her equilibrium in the face of Len's inability 'to keep paid work',

[208] NAA B503 POW Trust fund application R485: Berry, 407281, 22 June 1953.
[209] NAA B503 POW Trust fund application: R873 Hines, 402086, 29 June 1971.
[210] NAA B503 POW Trust fund application: R970 Healey, 412064, 23 July 1959.
[211] Garton, 'Return home', in Damousi and Lake (eds), *Gender and War*, p. 192.

recalled their son.[212] Some women, however, paid a price for their nurturing care. Their own mental health eroded as they attempted to ameliorate their husbands' conditions.[213] 'She also suffers greatly from nerves with severe depression, indecisiveness & loss of confidence', *Brendan Thorne* wrote of *Amelia*. 'This is totally foreign to her nature as previously she was very confident & competent all through her air force & business careers & motherhood.'[214]

Adam Kelly's 'crisis' had unimagined ramifications. Twenty-six year-old *Pattie Kelly* was three months pregnant when her husband, *Adam*, disappeared on 24 July 1948, the day before their sixth wedding anniversary, and exactly three years after he had arrived back in Australia. With a two-year-old son, a seven-month-old daughter, and unable to work, *Pattie* could not pay rent. First she lived with her father, then moved into her mother's Housing Commission home in Bankstown, one of Sydney's outer suburbs. Later, she received a Widows Pension, payments from the Repatriation Department, aid from the Child Welfare Department, and child endowment. After expenses (rent, insurance premium, and housekeeping), she had less than 7 shillings a fortnight in her purse.[215] Despite *Pattie's* efforts, she could not locate *Kelly* who was plagued by war-related neurosis and functional dyspepsia.[216] He did not even return when their daughter was accidentally

---

[212] Alexander records: Mike Netherway, email 20 May 2020.
[213] DVA NMX233512-01: case history, 19 February 1960 ('Wife also has bad nerves'); DVA MX171449-02: psychiatrist report, 2 August 1966 ('wife recently treated for nerves'). A number of wives in Janette Bomford's cohort were also 'nervy' at various times. 'Fractured Lives', PhD thesis, p. 238.
[214] DVA QMX082505-01: lifestyle survey, 9 October 1990.
[215] NRS-13495-21-365-4631/1952. Pseudonyms used to protect identity.
[216] NAA B503 POW Trust fund application R853. Pseudonym used to protect identity.

killed in January 1950 while playing on a swing near her grandmother's house: it would never have occurred if *Pattie* and the children had not been forced to move from Randwick. The last time *Pattie* saw her husband was in April 1951 at the Albion Street Children's Court when he was committed to Long Bay Gaol for non-payment of maintenance. He was released in November after scraping together the £60 arrears. He again disappeared, and *Pattie* initiated divorce proceedings for desertion. She was granted a decree nisi in August 1955, and given custody of her two children.[217]

And what of *Adam Kelly*, as *Pattie* grieved her toddler's death, battled to survive as a deserted wife on a patched-together pension income, and tried to forget her 'unhappy matrimonial experience' while raising two youngsters?[218] Between his departure from the family home and 1953, *Kelly* lived in Melbourne, Adelaide, and Brisbane, and was employed variously as a wool classer, aerodrome clerk, and assistant manager in a shoe shop. An investigator employed by *Pattie's* solicitor had 'received information' that *Kelly* had been a patient at Greenslopes Repatriation Hospital in Brisbane. While the investigator was unable to confirm this, it is possible that, with a history of war-related neurosis, *Kelly* had received treatment there.[219] In January 1954, then living in New Zealand, he applied for financial assistance from the POW Trust, attesting that the material prejudice and hardship he suffered as a consequence of captivity was 'Depression which comes from worry'. He found that 'I get very depressed and worry at the least thing due

[217] NRS-13495-21-365-4631/1952. Pseudonyms used to protect identity.
[218] NRS-13495-21-365-4631/1952. Pseudonyms used to protect identity.
[219] A note on *Kelly's* service record indicates that he had been hospitalised at some point, and referred to a medical file.

mainly to my present position regarding my debts'. Those debts including travel between New Zealand and Sydney to visit his dying mother, and expenses relating to his wife's 'future maternal confinement including baby clothes'. This wife was not *Pattie*. It is not known if *Kelly* had entered into a bigamous marriage with the *Mrs Kelly* he named on his POW Trust application, or if he had simply given her his surname as a matter of form (or if she even existed). His residence in New Zealand, however, did explain why *Pattie* could not find him. His war-related neurosis perhaps illuminates a 'crisis of masculinity' which included an erratic post-war work and relationship history and the abandonment of a woman who had 'eagerly' awaited 'his home coming'.[220] *Kelly's* DVA case file was not available for consultation so it is not known if his neurosis emanated from a protracted resettlement or if it was an early sign of life-long trauma. What is known is that there remained a peripatetic element to his life. In 1954, he resided in Auckland, New Zealand. In 1957, he had moved to Wellington. By 1968, he was back Australia and was at one point living in Perth. In 1977, he resided in Melbourne. In 1979 he was living in Brisbane.

Domestic unrest

The 'crisis of masculinity' had an even darker side. In claiming monetary assistance from the POW Trust, applicants had to link to captivity hardships such as physical and mental ill-health, financial difficulties, employment woes, and domestic insecurity. Domestic lives—as indicated by *Pattie Kelly's* experiences—were clearly affected by material and emotional disadvantages

[220] Hutchinson FA: Lola Hutchinson, letter to Doug Hutchinson, 14 May 1944.

emanating from captivity. The most extreme aspect of household instability—domestic violence—unsurprisingly, was not often alluded to in POW Trust or DVA case files consulted for this thesis.[221] Yet, as Michael Roper indicates of traumatised Great War veterans, violence in the homes of returned servicemen was not unknown.[222] Even where there is no overt residue of trauma, social, financial, and relationship difficulties often precipitate domestic unrest.[223] It is impossible to gauge the full extent of family violence in Australia before the 1990s; historian Elizabeth Roberts-Pedersen speculates that much 'was subsumed and silenced by the broader question of domestic readjustment'.[224] Certainly, as Stephen Garton notes, domestic violence in the immediate post-war years was just one of a number of social ills seen by journalists, ex-service groups, and politicians as arising from resettlement.[225] Nor, as Christina Twomey writes, is it possible to determine the extent to which captivity contributed to family unrest.[226] It was not possible to survey all of the cohort's marriages, nor even just those of the psychological sample. There is an array of public access restrictions imposed on divorce records alone. However, where marital situations could be studied, it is apparent that domestic aggression, abuse, violence, or coercive behaviour figured in the lives of at least 10 per cent of the psychological sample. Precipitating factors cannot be discerned but, in all of these cases, the former

---

[221] Stephen Garton discovered family violence in his sample of case files across three conflicts. Garton, *The Cost of War*, pp. 200–202. Christina Twomey writes of instances uncovered in POW Trust applications from former prisoners of Japan. Twomey, *The Battle Within*, pp. 144–155.
[222] Roper, *The Secret Battle*, pp. 294–295.
[223] Curthoys, Martin, Rowse, (eds), *Australians*, p. 88.
[224] White, 'War and Australian Society', in McKernan and Brown (eds), *Australia: Two Centuries of War and Peace*, p. 414; Twomey, *The Battle Within*, pp. 144, 148; Roberts-Pedersen, 'Damage', p. 96.
[225] Garton, *The Cost of War*, p. 200.
[226] Twomey, *The Battle Within*, p. 148.

airmen were at the time experiencing some degree of mental disturbance which, for the majority, was either attributed to, or believed to have been caused by, captivity.

Hugo Barrie slapped, shoved, and hit *Petronella* with his fist during the course of a tempestuous relationship. One evening he abused her, 'struck her across the face with his hand, stood over her in a menacing fashion and pulled her off her chair by her hair'. *Barrie* again threatened to hurt his wife, verbally abused her, and once more 'struck her across the face', hurling yet more abuse at her. *Petronella's* fragile mental health continued to 'deteriorate greatly', as did *Barrie's*.[227] *Madeleine Reed's* husband twice threatened to kill her. 'The first time he held a carving knife against my throat and was stopped from going any further by our son … coming into the room. The second time, without any argument or quarrel, he knocked me over and kicked me about the face and head.'[228] *Hayley Myatt's* husband *Marcus* 'assaulted me at the matrimonial home by grabbing me by the hair, shaking me and banging my head against the wall … [he] also pulled out some of my hair'. This was not an isolated incidence; it 'occurred so frequently that I am unable to remember the actual dates'. *Hayley* sued for divorce on the grounds of repeated assaults and beatings; her November 1959 statement includes a long catalogue of violent physical abuse extending over five years.[229] Domestic violence in *Benedict Shaw's* first marriage was repeated in his second. *Polly*, his second wife, had to contend with periods of sullen quietness where he 'did not speak to me or my children for some days at a time' and frequent 'fits of bad

[227] NSW SA: NRS-13495-26-127-514/1962. Pseudonyms used to protect identity.
[228] Family documents. Identity protected at request of family.
[229] NSW SA: NRS-13495-25-153-668/1960. Pseudonyms used to protect identity.

temper'. *Shaw* drank, which seemed to fuel his anger. After one silent drinking session, he muttered something to *Polly*. When she could not make it out, 'he then took hold of me and a scuffle took place'. Somehow, 'a sideboard was pulled over and some crockery was damaged'. *Polly* 'called the Police down' and a few days later took out a summons against her husband.[230] *Francine MacKinlay* attested that *Matthew* '[b]ecame violent with his father, knocked him down the stairs' and was also 'aggressive and difficult at home' after 'calling in at the local R.S.L. club'.[231] Her implication (which is supported by other evidence) is that her husband was drinking. *Gerard Lane's* family suffered verbal abuse, coercive control, and violence.[232] Young children were living in all of these homes; *Bethany Lane* was only three when her mother was hospitalised after a 'scene' when 'Dad was furious'.[233] *Hubert Atkinson's* physical aggression was accidental: while suffering a PTSD-related nightmare, the sixty-five-year-old awoke to find himself hitting his wife.[234]

Violence had profound effects on family life. Women endured cruelty from men they had once trusted. They learned to fear what their husbands would do to them or their children. Family members stepped delicately around the former airmen, not knowing when tempers would erupt. Young lives were disrupted when their mothers permanently or temporarily left the family home. Children witnessed violence and alcohol-induced rage. One

[230] DVA NMX233512-01.
[231] DVA QMX022543-01: case history 12 April 1960, 28 April 1967.
[232] Alexander records: *Bethany Lane*, emails 26, 27 February 2020. Gerard Lane and Bethany Lane are pseudonyms. Their identities have been protected at the request of the family.
[233] Alexander records: *Bethany Lane*, email 26 February 2020.
[234] DVA QMX126934-01: report from Dr R.G., 30 October 1989.

sibling left home to avoid it, as did one man's son. *Oliver Henderson*, a formerly good-natured man returning to his childhood home, was 'bad tempered, harsh and cynical, and morose'. While it had been 'exceeding difficult' to manage him, his moods, and his violence towards his much younger brother during the first two years of his return, he was 'much better' by 1950. Even so, '[t]he family does not seem able to please him whatever they do', *Henderson's* mother stated.[235] *Simon McGrath's* adult daughter, *Sally*, did not directly concede that her father was violent, but implied it when she admitted to his specialist that it 'was difficult at home and "living with father was very unpredictable"'.[236] Later testimony from *McGrath's* elderly wife, however, was explicit: she was 'reluctant to instigate activities with Vet due to abusive behaviour'.[237]

Bethany Lane 'endured a lot of verbal abuse. Loud shouting that made me very fearful'. Her father, *Gerard* was 'very controlling [in] what we did or said'. He was at times cruel. 'He found it funny at times to let us experience ridicule.' He was often explosively angry. Without warning, and in front of *Bethany*, 'he was suddenly slapping Mum across the face'. The teen was 'shocked and left the room crying'. Although *Lane* was 'a lot of the time in good humour and tried to do things that would bring us joy', including providing his children with an education that had been denied him during the Depression years, his moods were unpredictable and he could turn suddenly. He had high expectations and 'the pressure from him stifled me'. While *Lane's* 'verbal abuse was not continuous', it had consequences for *Bethany*.

[235] DVA QMX034497-02: report from medical social worker, 3 November 1950.
[236] DVA NMX280688-01: report by Dr G.M. to Mr T.P., 15 June 1988.
[237] DVA NMX280688-01: clinical notes, 4 May 1998

She knew he was 'so damaged' and in pain 'without us understanding what it was all about'. In hindsight, and perhaps making excuses for him as part of her attempt to ultimately forgive him, she thought that 'what Dad had been through made him seek to make us ready for anything we might meet up with in life as a challenge'. She also realised that 'Dad usually eventually came through with compassion on those he inflicted with emotional pain'. But *Lane's* behaviour precluded intimacy. *Bethany* lacked the warm, 'safe, stable foundation' she needed. 'Hugs were not something we indulged in when we were young.' She became withdrawn and alienated from her father. She bowed to his coercion to live a life he wanted (including, as a child, to be seen and not heard) until, in her twenties, 'I felt uncomfortable living that way and not being who I felt I really was'. She fled Australia for five years.[238]

Many of the cohort's mentally disturbed drank excessively. In some cases it was to manage mental distress.[239] Guy Grey-Smith used it as 'a crutch'.[240] For *Jonathan Dexter*, it was to obliterate physical and emotional pain.[241] It was not unusual of their generation.[242] So great were the numbers of drinkers treated at Brisbane's Greenslopes Repatriation Hospital that, when *Stewart Frost* was admitted because of a stroke, he was considered to be 'another drunk' by one of the medical staff.[243] Alcohol was often a factor in aggressive behaviour and family violence.[244] *Simon McGrath* 'had been a

---

[238] Alexander records: *Bethany Lane*, emails 26, 27 February 2020.
[239] DVA MX124472-02: alcohol questionnaire, 8 January 2004.
[240] Gaynor, *Guy Grey-Smith*, p. 87.
[241] DVA MX305007-01: neuropsychological assessment, 15 March 2000.
[242] Barrett, *We Were There*, p. 269; McCalman, *Journeyings*, p. 202; Raftery and Schubert, *A Very Changed Man*, p. 69; Roberts-Pedersen, 'Damage', p. 100; Twomey, *The Battle Within*, p. 112.
[243] DVA QMX058112-01: letter to medical superintendent, 1 February 1968.
[244] DVA NHX068219-01: psychiatrist report 13 November 1958; DVA NMX188716-01: case summary, 6 December 1960; Family documents. Identity protected at request of family.

heavy drinker for as long as [his daughter, *Sally*] could remember'. Linking her father's drinking, nervousness, agitation, and unpredictable behaviour, *Sally* advised his doctor that he had been 'constantly reliving with the family his war experiences'.[245] While domestic violence can be connected to alcohol, not all heavy drinkers were violent, aggressive or abusive. Their behaviour, however, could also have serious ramifications for families. *Jonathan Dexter*, who felt that 'his drinking extended from a social habit to a necessity', also gambled. He admitted in late life that 'his war experiences (including 12 months as a German POW) and work pressures caused him to drink heavily, and this eventually resulted in the loss of all [four of] his businesses'.[246] Once he nearly lost his house.[247] Many of the cohort—including some of the psychological sample—drank so heavily it was a factor in their early deaths. Thirty-one-year-old Roland King died of acute alcoholic poisoning. Denis Adams was fifty-four when liver cirrhosis and failure claimed his life. Former cricketer Keith Carmody was fifty-eight when he succumbed to liver cancer, and *Matthew MacKinlay* was sixty-six when he died of liver cirrhosis.

Captivity- and service-related mental disturbances contributed to many post-war marital breakdowns. Marital difficulties generally, including divorce and separation, appeared to be above average in Ian Duncan and colleagues' study of former prisoners of Europe and Japan. Christina Twomey and John Barrett note marital stress among their cohorts. W.H. Whiles also indicates a high percentage of marriage failure among wartime

[245] DVA NMX280688-01: report by Dr G.M. to Mr T.P., 15 June 1988.
[246] DVA MX305007-01: neuropsychological assessment, 15 March 2000.
[247] DVA MX305007-01: psychiatrist's report, 9 July 1980.

British repatriates.[248] Mental distress, however, was not, perhaps, the overriding factor in all relationship difficulties. After all, many a marriage is contracted despite an unsound basis, where personality incompatibilities are missed because of rose-tinted glasses. Indeed, some people, as *Martin Quinlan's* psychiatrist noted, '[s]hould not have got married'.[249] Medical and divorce records, however, indicate that the mental effects of war service and/or captivity underpinned some of the psychological sample's failed marriages.

Pregnant and only eighteen when she walked down the aisle—the groom was nineteen—*Betty Hewson's* marriage was never stable. During the *Hewsons* early years together, *Clarrie* had gone 'out with some girls'. *Betty* retaliated by claiming she 'was going to go out with some men'. 'After my husband's return from war service in August 1946', *Betty* attested, '[h]e came to see me and he said he did not want to resume married life with me again, because he said he was in love with some other girl'. After a short while they reconciled. The first four months 'were all right' but *Hewson* became uncharacteristically 'morose and would not speak to me except on most necessary occasions, he went out at night and stayed out very late'. This continued until about July 1947, when 'one week-end he packed his clothes and just walked out …'. *Betty* initiated divorce proceedings and the *Hewsons*, who had married in 1937, divorced in 1949.[250] We do not know how *Betty*

[248] Duncan, Greenwood, Johnson, Mosher, and Robertson, 'Morbidity in Ex-prisoners of War', p. 7; Twomey, *The Battle Within*, pp. 132–154, 142; Barrett, *We Were There*, p. 370; Whiles, 'A Study of Neurosis among Repatriated Prisoners of War', p. 698. See also Gimbel, and Booth, 'Why Does Military Combat Experience Adversely Affect Marital Relations?', pp. 691–703.
[249] DVA NMX188716-01: Dr C., psychiatrist, 20 July 1965.
[250] NSW SA: NRS-13495-19-436-958/1949. Pseudonyms used to protect identity.

fared in her post-*Clarrie* life as she raised their daughter. *Hewson* remarried in 1951 but was plagued by stomach upsets, pain, dyspepsia, and nerves. His symptoms did not abate. By 1968 he had social anxieties, depression, and frequent nightmares. He was diagnosed with 'Anxiety Hysteria'.[251] 'Such are the ravages of war & POW life' that *Hewson* was invalided out of the public service with a chronic ulcer and anxiety neurosis.[252] Four years before his death, the 86-year-old attested that 'I am breathless, irritable and am suffering flashbacks, nightmares from operational service in WWII. These include having to parachute at night at 13,000 feet and being shot down into the sea and being a POW for two and three quarter years'. His physical and psychological 'woes' were such that, '[a]ll in all I find difficulty in envisaging my future as anything but bleak'.[253] *Hewson's* post-war state was more than a consequence of an unstable relationship and readjustment to civilian life. His moroseness appears to have been an early indication of serious, long-term psychological disturbance.

Within a decade of their husbands' liberation, four other wives filed for divorce. Three women who suffered physical violence divorced their husbands. Two left theirs on a number of occasions. As a result of the 'significant emotional turmoil' emanating from captivity, 'leading to alcohol dependence and a significant dysfunction in his relationship', *Rodney Patton* abandoned his wife and children within five years of marriage.[254] While his second marriage was more loving, supportive, and long-lasting, the profound

[251] DVA MX231738-02: Dr J.A.D., psychiatrist, 11 January 1968.
[252] DVA MX231738-02: lifestyle questionnaire, 16 February 1987.
[253] DVA MX231738-02: lifestyle questionnaire, 25 November 2004. 'Woes' from letter to DVA, 22 December 1992.
[254] DVA NMX247300-01: Dr A.E.P., Consultant Psychiatrist, [date not clear] October 1993.

mental damage arising from his experiences in Buchenwald, including torture, left a terrible legacy on that union too: 'My nervous condition has been getting increasingly worse for the past twenty odd years. So much so that at the present time my life & that of my wife has become unbearable & a nightmare'.[255]

*****

Not all women's stories could be examined as part of this study; it is not known how many of the cohort's wives 'put up' with abusive or difficult marriages. Some women clearly did, as Joy Damousi notes. Damousi also demonstrates that love, sympathy, or empathy had little to do with it. Some wives felt obliged to stay because of children, religion, economic dependence, or societal expectations. That some of the cohort's wives initiated divorce to escape difficult marriages indicates that they did not accommodate their husbands' problems for whatever reason. They expressed agency by putting self (and children) above spouse. Others may have continued to endure tortuous situations. They are all unrecognised victims of captivity.

Despite the difficult marital lives of some, the majority of cohort marriages survived, as did many of their generation's unions.[256] Some were happy, some were not. For some, such as *Rodney Patton* and *Clarrie Hewson*, second marriages were more successful. Just as kriegie brotherhood proved sustaining in captivity, 'good emotional support' in stable marriages bolstered men during mental turmoil.[257] It alleviated psychological and emotional

[255] DVA NMX247300-01: application for increase in disability pension, 12 October 1993.
[256] McCalman, *Journeyings*, p. 209; White, 'War and Australian Society', in McKernan and Brown (eds), *Australia: Two Centuries of War and Peace*, p. 415.
[257] Quote: MX045167-01: reasons for decision, 22 August 1985.

disturbance.[258] Those airmen with bad marriages, however, seem to have suffered the most distress. But, while some wives helped manage their husbands' emotional and psychological disturbance and make it bearable, they could not entirely allay it. While many marital bonds were strong, they did not replace the protective, communal ties of air force brotherhood and RAF Station Sagan. Yet, even in the absence of those collective wartime bonds, and reeling from the emotional shock of liberation, homecoming, and discharge, the former airmen consciously made the effort to 'get on' and put traumatic wartime experiences and memories behind them. They adjusted to civilian life by working towards emotional stability and economic security. Even with the loving aid of their wives, however, some airmen suffered mental health problems in the immediate post-war years which they attributed to the conditions of wartime internment. For many of the cohort psychological disturbances ran parallel to career, familial, and social success. Despite the challenges of post-war adjustment, those men exerted agency by rigorously attempting to manage their conditions through selective silence, and by establishing civilian identities, satisfying and financially viable work lives, and new emotional communities. Their agency was an extension of that expressed in captivity. It was also culturally endorsed. Not all of the former airmen were successful in marital and family relationships or in employment, but agency is demonstrated not by success, but by effort.

Despite former kriegies' agency, not all emotional and psychological disturbance could be permanently quashed or resolved. Some reactions

[258] Nigel Hunt refers generally to the role social support plays in allaying traumatic responses. Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, p. 3. Refer also, Hunt and Robbins, 'World War II veterans, social support, and veterans' associations', pp. 178–180.

manifested decades later. Some conditions recurred and continued. Long-term psychological disturbance, post-traumatic stress symptoms, and traumatic responses are discussed in chapter ten.

Chapter Nine: Images

Homecoming was an emotional event, especially for couples. While for many it was a time of overwhelming happiness, some felt the strains of return and resettlement. Image 104 encapsulates the joy some couples experienced when they were at last reunited. Evelyn Charles and Eric Johnston, who married in 1946, purchased this image and framed it.

Image 104: 'The Joy of Reunion', *Sun News Pictorial* (Melbourne), undated news clipping. Johnston Family Archive.

Image 105: Framed photograph of 'The Joy of Reunion' (left) and formal portrait of Eric Johnston during RAAF training (right), October 2016. The centre photograph is of Evelyn and Eric's grandson, 19-year-old Bradley, who was about the same age as RAAF trainee Eric. Johnston Family Archive.

The RAAF, other services, and the government produced guides to help repatriates settle in.

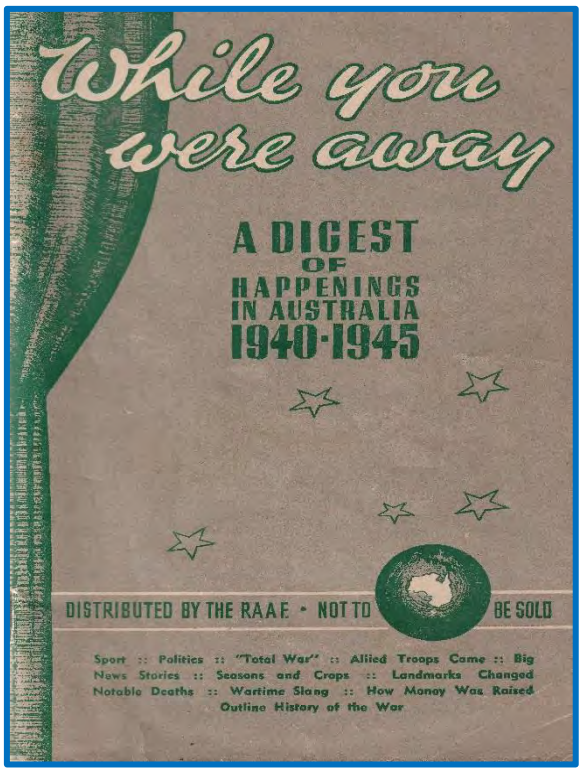


Image 106: *While you were Away: A Digest of Happenings in Australia 1940–1945*.

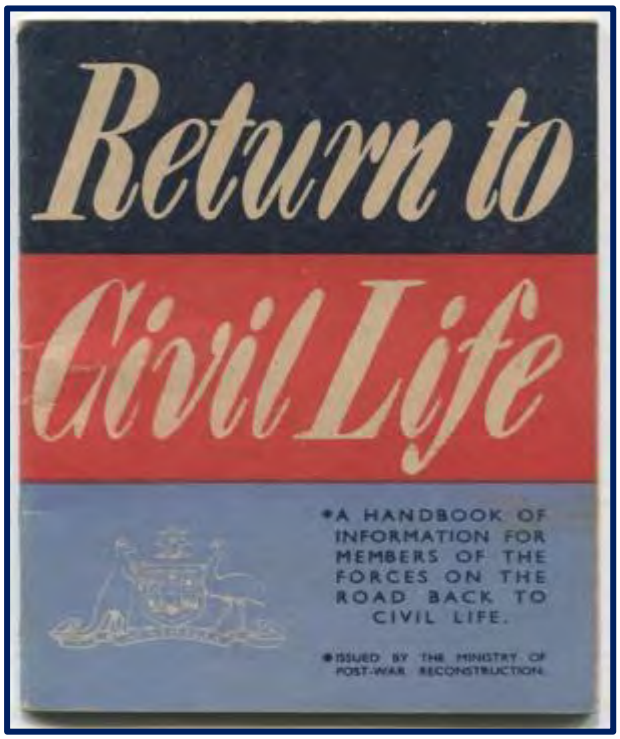


Image 107: *Return to Civil Life: A Handbook of Information for Members of the Forces on the Road Back to Civil Life*.

The airmen anticipated resettlement difficulties and, characteristically, joked about them. While some readjustment problems were kept within the family, some, as images 108–110 reveal, could not be hidden.

Image 108: 'A can of bully, sir? Yes sir!', unknown artist, in Ronald Baines' wartime log book, p. 84. Baines Family Archive.

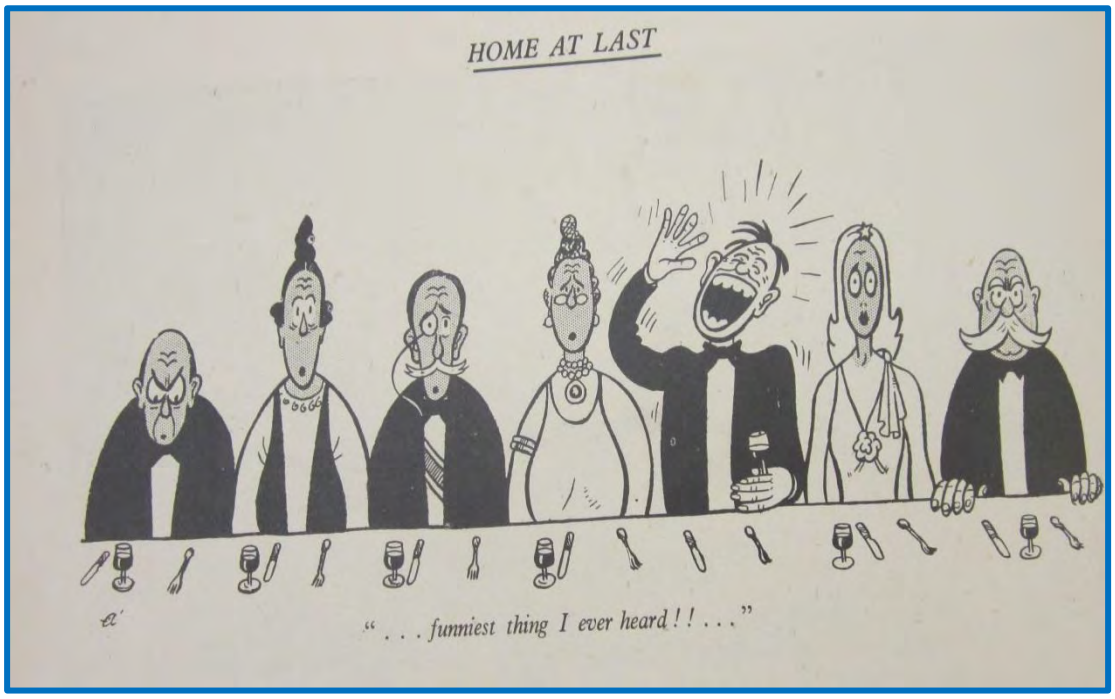


Image 109: 'Home at Last: "… funniest thing I ever heard!! …"', R. Anderson and D. Westmacott, *Handle with Care*, p. 106.

Image 110: 'The Air Force MAY have accustomed you …', by Hesling, *The Australasian* (Melbourne), 27 October 1945, p. 40.

Chapter Ten: Living with Captivity Trauma

Ian Duncan and colleagues determined that, '[p]sychologically all POW took an enormous battering'.[1] One-third of the medical sample, however, enjoyed post-war lives free of captivity- and service-related psychological disturbance. As expected, many of those displaying early psychological or emotional symptoms settled down after a period of adjustment which, in some cases, lasted years. Some of the psychological sample, however, experienced disturbances which continued for decades; psychological states manifested or reactivated in late-life. This chapter considers long-term psychological disturbance, post-traumatic symptoms, and captivity trauma. It discusses the health consequences of long-term anxiety and stress, including early death. It highlights those men whose psychological distress was so great that they contemplated, attempted, or committed suicide. This chapter also considers how the mental resilience which was central to successful adaptation during captivity broke down in many cases, leading to psychological vulnerability. It argues that, while ex-prisoners' resilience may have been compromised, their agency was not.

Post-traumatic symptoms and captivity trauma

Psychiatric orthodoxy in the post-war years focused on resilience, the capacity to adapt.[2] Unless there was an inherent mental flaw, it was believed that former servicemen, including prisoners of war, should be able to 'get over' any residual mental effects of service or captivity, and that lingering

[1] Duncan, Greenwood, Johnson, Mosher, and Robertson, 'Morbidity in Ex-prisoners of War', p. 6.
[2] Jones and Wessely, 'British Prisoners-of-War: From Resilience to Psychological Vulnerability', p. 175; Newman, 'The Prisoner-of-War Mentality', pp. 8–10.

symptoms would diminish in time.[3] Repatriation (DVA) policy rejected the notion that psychological disturbances emanated from some sort of 'barbed-wire syndrome': they were physical manifestations common among the ranks of returning servicemen and not peculiar to former prisoners of war.[4] Some serious mental states, were, however, recognised.

Before 1980, the majority of those with severe psychological disturbance were diagnosed with anxiety neurosis or one of its forms, including anxiety state, reactive depression, tension state, and psychoneurosis.[5] These, according to the Repatriation Department and its successor, the Department of Veterans' Affairs, were mental illnesses arising from a 'faulty reaction to stress'. The 'degree of stress' and the 'susceptibility of the personality involved' often provoked 'sustained abnormal intensity of emotional feeling'.[6] In other words, psychiatric orthodoxy, firmly entrenched since the Great War and continuing beyond the Second World War, dictated that those displaying mental disturbances were predisposed to them.[7] Their conditions arose from personal weakness or 'a tainted heredity'.[8] Such an attitude cast doubt on original fitness for service, which the airmen contested.[9] 'When I volunteered for war service I was accepted into air crew. I must have

---

[3] Bavin, 'A Contribution Towards the Understanding of the Repatriated Prisoner of War', p. 34.
[4] Garton, *The Cost of War*, pp. 225–229.
[5] Ursano and Rundell, 'The Prisoner of War', in Jones, Sparacino, Wilcox, Rothberg, and Stokes, *War Psychiatry*, p. 442.
[6] DVA MX008152-01: cited in reason for determination, 13 September 1978.
[7] Dr A.T. Edwards (Medical Superintendent, Callan Park Hospital), 'Understanding the "Bomb-Happy" Serviceman', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 July 1945, p. 2; Whiles, 'A Study of Neurosis among Repatriated Prisoners of War', pp. 697–698; Bavin, 'A Contribution Towards the Understanding of the Repatriated Prisoner of War', p. 34; Muir, '"Idiots, imbeciles and moral defectives"', p. 45; Roberts-Pedersen, 'Damage', pp. 85–87; Twomey, *The Battle Within*, pp. 35–36.
[8] Edwards 'Understanding the "Bomb-Happy" Serviceman', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 July 1945, p. 2.
[9] DVA NMX188716-01: supporting statement, 5 November 1953; case summary, Dr C., 23 August 1965.

been perfectly fit, physically & mentally … & certainly there could not have been any sign of a psychoneurological reaction', *Martin Quinlan* contended.[10] Indeed, RAAF recruitment records confirm that air force recruits had high standards of physical and mental health: predisposition was discovered in only a small number of those with post-liberation psychological disturbances.[11] Later studies found that predisposition was not necessarily an underlying factor.[12] Belief in predisposition may have been unfounded but it was certainly a bureaucratic convenience. As Kirsty Muir notes, by shifting causation of mental illness from service or captivity to a pre-existing condition arising from civilian life or hereditary factors, DVA was not obliged to offer much-needed assistance to individuals considered responsible for their own mental states.[13]

Predisposition was displaced in 1980 when the US *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (*DSM-III*) described post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a condition which could manifest when a person experienced a stressful event 'that would evoke significant symptoms of distress in almost anyone'.[14] Trauma, not heredity, was central to a diagnosis. Despite the new diagnostic framework, PTSD was for many years under-recognised in Australia's former Second World War servicemen because DVA took some time to come to grips with it.[15] Five years after PTSD had been included in *DSM-III*, the department, according to its Secretary, Derek

---

[10] DVA NMX188716-01: supporting statement, 25 January 1984.
[11] Whiles, 'A Study of Neurosis among Repatriated Prisoners of War', p. 697.
[12] Ursano and Rundell, 'The Prisoner of War', *Military Medicine*, p. 179.
[13] Muir, '"Idiots, imbeciles and moral defectives"', pp. 44–45.
[14] Brett, Spitzer, and Williams, 'DSM-III-R Criteria for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder', p. 1233.
[15] Kidson, Douglas, and Holwill, 'Post-traumatic stress disorder in Australian World War II Veterans attending a psychiatric outpatient clinic', p. 566.

Volker, still had 'little information about the illness and disease patterns'.[16] As such, some of those deprived of assistance because of predisposition perhaps remained victims of DVA's policy to refuse acknowledgement of war-caused liability. The mental states of six of the psychological sample had been linked to heredity rather than service. Denied early recognition of war-related mental disturbance, all six endured long-term psychological states. Another eight of the psychological sample died before the disorder was formally recognised. DVA accepted only four of the psychological sample's PTSD claims. The first was in 1989, two years after the condition's diagnostic criteria had been refined in *DSM-III-R*. The conditions of two who had been privately diagnosed in 1989 and 1993 were not recognised by DVA. The conditions of two others, following the criteria of *DSM-III-R*, were accepted in 1993. Two claims for PTSD accepted by DVA in 2000 and 2001 respectively followed the criteria in *DSM-IV*. (DVA case files reveal that none of the psychological sample were diagnosed under the criteria of 2013's *DSM-5*.[17]) None of those claimants numbered among the six whose conditions had been linked to heredity.[18] Five survived twenty-two to thirty-five years after the advent of PTSD and the sixth was one of the twelve of the psychological sample who died during PTSD's first decade. Another ten of

[16] 'Veterans still shell shocked: secretary', *The Canberra Times* (ACT), 13 July 1985, p. 13.
[17] This revision was the first not to use roman numbers in its title.
[18] DVA MX124472-02: report, 11 November 1965; DVA NMX188716-01: case summary, Dr C., 23 August 1965; DVA MX008152-01: departmental medical officer's opinion, cited in reason for determination, 13 September 1978; DVA NMX280688-01: medical practitioner report, 30 November 1971; DVA XC026892-02: report by Dr B.F.H., psychiatrist, 12 July 1950; DVA MX305007-01: report by Departmental Medical Officer, 12 August 1980.

the psychological sample died before DVA's first PTSD Statement of Principles, an internal guidance document, was formulated in 1994.[19]

Lack of a diagnostic label does not mean that a condition does not exist. Retrospective evaluation of post-traumatic symptoms can reveal the existence of PTSD. *Rodney Patton's* occupational physician, for example, noting a 1956 assessment of 'acute situational adjustment', believed in 1995 that 'the more modern diagnosis of Chronic Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is more appropriate'.[20] Examining post-traumatic symptoms recorded in the archived case files of 590 former servicemen and prisoners of war admitted to Tasmania's Millbrook Rise hospital from 1942 to 1952, psychiatrists Paddy Burges Watson and Brett Daniels assessed 19 per cent of their cohort as having partial PTSD.[21] Burges Watson and Daniels followed-up their archival research by interviewing twelve of the original patients. They found that eight 'had symptoms satisfying a diagnosis of PTSD' and concluded that 'PTSD symptoms were probably common during and after' the Second World War.[22] A New Zealand study was more conclusive. Recognising post-traumatic symptoms even from the earliest days of homecoming, psychiatrist A.D. 'Sandy' Macleod, diagnosed all of his cohort of forty-five veterans from the European theatre who were recipients of New Zealand's war pension

---

[19] DVA Instrument No. 15 of 1994: 'Statement of Principles concerning Post Traumatic Stress Disorder', p. 2.
[20] DVA NMX247300-01: Dr M.B., Occupational Physician report, 10 March 1995.
[21] Burges Watson and Daniels, 'Post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms in the files of Australian servicemen hospitalized in 1942–1952', p. 13. Burges Watson and Daniels referred to criteria outlined in *DSM-IV*. They could not identify full cases of PTSD because of lack of details in case files regarding some significant criteria. Medical professionals, as was common practice at the time, had not recognised some symptoms as indicative of mental disorder.
[22] Burges Watson and Daniels, 'Follow up of post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms in Australian servicemen hospitalized in 1942–1952', p. 18.

(psychiatric)—including prisoners of war—as 'currently suffering chronic PTSD'.[23]

Three criteria were fundamental to a diagnosis of PTSD. Firstly, the veteran had to have been exposed to a significant stressor which precipitated symptoms of distress. The stressor could be a single traumatic event, a series of occurrences, or a prevailing circumstance such as prolonged fear which could include serious threat or actual harm to the person or to those close to them such as family or friends. Secondly, the stressor had to be re-experienced, such as through intrusive memories, nightmares, flashbacks, or even events that resembled some aspect of the original stressor or which symbolised it, thus provoking emotional memories which are as intense or as distressing as those associated with the initial trauma. Thirdly, the veteran had to demonstrate some form of 'psychic numbing' of experience, such as amnesia or deliberate attempts to avoid thoughts or feelings related to the traumatic stressor or event, or anything which aroused memories. In addition to the three fundamental criteria, the veteran had to experience at least two specified factors which included sleep disturbance, difficulty concentrating, and hyperarousal. As well as encompassing an exaggerated startle response, hyperarousal could manifest as hypervigilance, irritability or outbursts of anger, and physiological reactions arising from events symbolising or resembling the original stressor.[24] The assiduous selective silence practised

[23] Macleod, 'The reactivation of post-traumatic stress disorder in later life', p. 627. Macleod referred to criteria outlined in *DSM-III-R*.
[24] Macleod did not itemise the diagnostic criteria. Details are drawn from Schnitt and Nocks, 'Alcoholism Treatment of Vietnam Veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder', pp. 179–189 and Brett, Spitzer, and Williams, 'DSM-III-R Criteria for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder', pp. 1232–1236.

by many of the cohort could be interpreted as a symptom of PTSD. It is important to note, however, that while a symptom/behaviour may be included in the PTSD assessment framework, its presence does not necessarily indicate PTSD. Avoidance—not talking about experiences and shunning anything that recalled them—was an act of agency for some members of the cohort. It was also a culturally and socially endorsed mechanism to manage memories and was, in many cases, and for many years, successful.

Sandy Macleod's New Zealand cohort exhibited symptoms of trauma because they had PTSD. By extension, other veterans displaying post-traumatic symptoms, including members of the psychological sample, perhaps also had PTSD, despite a lack of diagnosis. But, as research by Burges Watson and Daniels highlights, retrospective diagnosis is problematic; PTSD is also, as psychologist Nigel Hunt notes, notoriously difficult to diagnose in contemporary patients because of the many categories of assessment.[25] From his work with ageing veterans of the Second World War, Hunt recognises that many continue to have psychological problems—particularly when reminded of events—including trauma.[26] Hunt, accordingly, posits that post-traumatic symptoms should be acknowledged as indicating 'war trauma'. He argues that war trauma is a more encompassing 'disorder', which 'subsumes PTSD' as well as depression, anxiety, phobias, and the effects of alcohol or drug abuse, which often occur together but are

[25] Burges Watson, 'Post-traumatic Stress Disorder in Australian Prisoners of the Japanese', pp. 20–29; Burges Watson and Daniels, 'Follow up of post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms', pp. 18–21; Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, pp. 55–58.
[26] Hunt and Robbins, Telling Stories of the War: Ageing Veterans Coping with their Memories through Narrative', pp. 57–60.

not included in PTSD's assessment criteria.[27] 'War trauma' as a term also subsumes the trauma of captivity. While there is no doubt that many airmen experienced war trauma as a consequence of aerial operations, and, as such, Hunt's argument regarding war trauma applies to them, the term 'captivity trauma' will also be used in this thesis to denote the trauma experienced by the cohort as a consequence of wartime imprisonment.

Both Macleod and Hunt recognise the affective dimension of psychological disturbance. Macleod considers the 'indelibility of [PTSD's] emotional impact', as well as the 'emotional pain' relating to the original trauma which is reawakened on reactivation.[28] In addition to fear, helplessness, and horror which are fundamental to a PTSD diagnosis, Hunt indicates that war trauma can also provoke shame, anger, and a breakdown in an individual's sense of self and worth.[29] As this thesis explains, these emotions are experienced by airmen on capture, and long afterwards. By adopting a broad focus on post-traumatic symptoms as well as war and captivity trauma, this thesis is better able to acknowledge the deep-seated and long-lasting emotional and psychological impact of war service and captivity. It also provides a prism through which severe emotional and psychological disturbances experienced within months of homecoming and discharge, and within the first years of return, can be viewed.

Some expressions of the cohort's 'internment effect' or culture shock may have related to adjustment difficulties. Not all did, however. While many

[27] Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, pp. 58–59.
[28] Macleod, 'The reactivation of post-traumatic stress disorder in later life', pp. 626, 629, 630, 632.
[29] Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, p. 62.

eventually made a successful transition to civilian life, anxiety states were common in both the psychological sample and in other post-war psychiatric cohorts.[30] Half of Sandy Macleod's subjects documented anxiety and other psychological symptoms within months of homecoming and discharge that went beyond the expected adjustment difficulties.[31] Ian Duncan and his colleagues found that depression was common in their subjects, as were anxiety state (37.14 per cent of ex-prisoners of Germany and Italy), stress (30.96 per cent), and nervous dyspepsia (26.12 per cent).[32] Macleod suggests that some early manifestations of mental disturbances may have been expressions of PTSD. Hunt argues that they reflect war trauma. In the case of prisoners of war, they also perhaps indicate captivity trauma. Given the compounding strains and stresses of captivity, evacuation, and homecoming, and the fact that many of the psychological sample tried to mask or deny continuing mental instability—similar to avoiding/dampening symptoms which is one of the fundamental criteria for a PTSD diagnosis—rather than experiencing culture shock, some of the cohort's psychological disturbance, particularly that of Albert Comber who was later diagnosed with PTSD, and *Clarrie Hewson* and *Oliver Henderson*, who were not, can now be seen as captivity trauma.

---

[30] Including Thomas Main's and Trevor Gibbens': Main, 'Clinical Problems of Repatriates', pp. 361–362; Gibbens, 'The Psychology and Psychopathology of the Prisoner-of-War', MD thesis, pp. 134–135.

[31] Macleod, 'The reactivation of post-traumatic stress disorder in later life', p. 628. Beebe's cohort also displayed a high frequency of psychological disturbances in the early post-liberation years. Beebe, 'Follow-up Studies of World War II and Korean War Prisoners', pp. 400–422. Many of Raftery's and Schubert's cohort had experienced difficulties in settling back into civilian life. Raftery and Schubert, *A Very Changed Man*, p. 51.

[32] Duncan, Greenwood, Johnson, Mosher, and Robertson, 'Morbidity in Ex-prisoners of War', p. 7.

Long-term psychological disturbance

DVA case files reveal that fifty of the cohort experienced some degree of mental disturbance after liberation. Many who had been assessed as fit for discharge from RAAF service demonstrated serious conditions within five years of war's end. After a decade, thirty-six of the medical sample (28.13 per cent) had claimed or were medically diagnosed with a mental condition. Richard Winn, undertaking his medical degree at the time, 'had a nervous breakdown and severe depression'.[33] *Chester West* requested in 1949 'a check-up re my nerves which are very bad at present'.[34] *Warren Nash* experienced a recurrence of captivity-related nerves after liberation and 'nervous debility' in 1946. In 1949, he lodged a claim with DVA for 'nervous disability'. 'He is liable to burst into tears in the evening ... He was unable to study "just couldn't look at a book". Considers that he is getting worse.'[35] Ken Carson, considered '[s]ufficiently adjusted' in 1945, had, by 1951, suffered night sweats for eighteen months, the probable cause of which was 'anxiety state'. The following year, his 'nervous condition' was accepted by DVA.[36] *Gerald Boyce*, a former Buchenwald internee, arrived at his medical rehabilitation unit with fair appetite, sleeping, and concentration. He joined the organised sports programme. When he left a few weeks later, he declared he was '[p]hysically feeling fit' and was assessed as being in good shape.[37] Yet, for the next five years, he had three or five severe nightmares a year and,

[33] AAWFA: Winn 1508, 4 March 2004.
[34] DVA MX338303-01: record of evidence, 20 September 1949.
[35] DVA XC026892-02: statement by Dr J.M.G., 20 December 1949.
[36] DVA MX032967-01; convalescent depot medical board, 1 October 1945, Repatriation Commission treatment & report form, 13 December 1951, letter Deputy Commissioner, 24 January 1952.
[37] DVA SMX021401-01: MRU medical board, 5 November 1945.

in 1948, housing difficulties 'reduced me to a very nervous state and I don't think my nerves, which were badly frayed through War Service can stand the additional worries much longer'.[38]

Some of those early conditions, such as Winn's, appear to have subsided. Carson and *Boyce* successfully managed their psychological disturbances for many years. For some, like *Nash* and *West*, early expressions of nervous conditions evolved into long-term mental distress and damage. Twenty-nine of the psychological sample (34.12 per cent) experienced two or more decades of mental disturbance.[39] Such longevity suggests continuing captivity trauma. The effects on veteran and family were obvious.[40] 'In 25 years of marriage my husband never spent one night of undisturbed sleep—up and down', wrote Iris McVie. 'Two daughters survive him and the effects of their "less than peaceful" childhood plague them now and forever.'[41] While no harm may have been intended, some children perhaps suffered 'transgenerational trauma'; they too suffered the effects of the original trauma, either by exposure when their father relived it (such as in nightmare), spoke of it during re-activated distress, or through family violence.[42] Drew Gordon watched his father, Tony, 'sitting on the floor in the corner of a darkened room, lit only be a tallow lamp' speaking 'to imaginary wartime companions'—'people who weren't there'—and witnessed violent attacks on

---

[38] Nightmares: DVA SMX021401-01: as detailed in report by M.C.S., Visiting Psychiatrist, 14 April 1989. Quote: DVA SMX021401-01: letter to Repatriation Commission (re war service home loan application), 7 May 1948.
[39] DVA case files indicate decades-long disturbance for twenty-one men. Non-medical/informal sources indicate another eight.
[40] Raftery and Schubert, *A Very Changed Man*, pp. 26–27; DVA MX076290-01: statement accompanying DVA Claim for Medical Treatment and Pension, 4 October 1982; DVA CX26598-02: disability pension medical report, 14 May 1981.
[41] SLSA SRG 869 Series 14: Iris McVie, item 28, [undated, received 2 September 2001].
[42] Raftery and Schubert, *A Very Changed Man*, p. 111.

his mother.[43] Suggesting, perhaps, 'transgenerational transmission of trauma' as Marianne Hirsch describes, he directly attributes his PTSD-like symptoms to his father's experiences.[44]

Some early conditions which seemed to settle reappeared years later. *Michael Forster* 'suffered from a mild depression as an ex-prisoner of war in 1945', one medico wrote. 'This required one consultation and no treatment. It appears to have been a transient problem and a fairly normal reaction to a traumatic experience, which subsided spontaneously.' *Forster's* post-war 'hyperemotionalism', may have evinced culture shock and adjustment to post-war life. By 1978, however, *Forster* had war-related 'anxiety neurosis'.[45] While *Fergus Bennett's* medical repatriation for dyspepsia and duodenal ulcer may have been considered dubious, his post-war medical records reveal that he went on to suffer epigastric pain for a decade after the war.[46] After subsiding, it restarted in the 1960s.[47] By 1970 he had hypertension, and in the mid-1970s claimed 'nerves', among other conditions.[48] Some reactions did not manifest for years or decades. 'He seems to have managed well for at least the first fifteen years post-war', noted *Simon McGrath's* doctor.[49] *Dean Harrison* was assessed as physically fit and

---

[43] Sitting and speaking: Alexander records: Drew Gordon, email 24 April 2020; 'people who weren't there', Alexander records: Drew Gordon, interview 19 July 2016.
[44] Hirsch, 'The Generation of Postmemory', p. 107; Alexander records: Drew Gordon, interview 31 May 2016.
[45] DVA MX008152-01: reason for determination, 13 September 1978.
[46] Dyspepsia and duodenal ulcer: DVA NMX057465-01: hospital or sick list—record card, 16 September 1944; minute to Assistant Director (Medical Services) in Papua New Guinea, from General Hospital Port Moresby, 23 September 1963.
[47] DVA NMX057465-01: minute to Assistant Director (Medical Services) in Papua New Guinea, from General Hospital Port Moresby, 23 September 1963.
[48] DVA NMX057465-01: appeal to War Pensions Entitlement Appeal Tribunal, 28 May 1970; reason for determination, 24 September 1975.
[49] DVA NMX280688-01: medical practitioner report, 30 November 1971.

'psychologically well adjusted' in the weeks before discharge.[50] By 1990, however, '[a]nxiety [was] a prominent feature of [his] daily life'.[51] *Derek Sheppard* 'took a long time to feel normal and I think that one of the problems was that I felt normal and wasn't'. *Sheppard* managed this sense of disjuncture well over the decades; his DVA case file indicates no evidence of mental disturbance before 1991. His medical records and oral history testimony then reveal psychological distress which had become unbearable and unmanageable.[52] DVA accepted his claim for PTSD in 1993.

Some conditions proved anything but transitory; some assurances of abatement by air force medicos were spectacularly wrong. *Jonathan Dexter*, who baled out of a hospital window in July 1945 and was declared 'physically and mentally fit' three months later, drank and gambled, and had a claim of 'psychoneurosis' accepted by DVA in 1981.[53] *Roger Baird*, who experienced 'Internment Effect' in October 1945, commenced treatment for anxiety state in 1951. 'I have a general nervousness. I cannot concentrate on my job, I have heavy long hours, I do not sleep well. I dream a lot—night mares [sic]. Appetite fair, Very jittery. Most things upset me.'[54] His condition escalated over the years. By 1981, his mental health had 'worsened over the past two years. I get depressed about twice per week, lasting 1–2 days. … I usually feel tense, and small things irritate me. The condition caused friction between myself and workmates. … I take alcohol'.[55] He died six years later of

[50] DVA MX182982-01: MRU medical board, 8 October 1945.
[51] DVA MX182982-01: DVA Medical Examination Psychiatric form, 3 May 1990.
[52] DVA MX074694-01:-02. Details of oral history testimony not included to protect identity.
[53] DVA MX305007-01.
[54] DVA CX26598-02: statement at examination, 15 November 1951.
[55] DVA CX26598-02: disability pension medical report, 14 May 1981.

myocardial infarction. *Daniel Weller*, assessed 'fit repat. Immediately' before sailing to Australia was still 'smoking heavily' after homecoming and 'continued to do so because of his anxieties over his return to civilian life & the establishment of his business'.[56] The 'stress [he] suffered as a POW' was 'accepted as a causal factor in the development of hypertension', which contributed to his death by cardiac arrest at age 74.[57]

Dreams, nightmares, and flashbacks reflected traumatic memories.[58] War-related thoughts led to insomnia or restless sleep patterns. Many of the psychological sample had frequent nightmares. Some had waking experiences, emotionally distressing flashbacks where they felt they were living wartime events; some were so disoriented they could barely recognise them as traces of memory. Some suffered both. Bill Fordyce, who had been caught in the tunnel when the Great Escape was discovered, used to dream about it for four or five years 'on the anniversary'. But, after a time, 'I wasn't dwelling on it so I didn't think about it and didn't worry about it'.[59] 'For years woke up screaming about our shooting down' *Winston Evans* wrote in 1980.[60] Ken Carson, whose nightmares had been an 'intermittent problem' for three decades, stated in 1988 that they had worsened in recent years. They were 'more frequent although more impossible to predict and unfortunately as much upsetting to my wife as it is to myself'.[61] Carson's son recalls that his

[56] DVA MX211247-01: statement by wife in claim for pension, 9 August 1992.
[57] DVA MX211247-01: statement of reasons in determination re wife's pension, 26 October 1992.
[58] Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, p. 15.
[59] AAWFA: Fordyce 0523, 19 June 2003.
[60] DVA VMX134018-01: statement in support of a claim for medical treatment and pension, 8 October 1980.
[61] DVA MX032967-01: letter applying for increase in disability pension and acceptance of new disability, 26 August 1988.

father had 'troubled sleep'. He often woke from his nightmares with 'a yelp', or a shout.[62] As he aged, *Julian Macpherson's* 'conditions of his Service tend to come back and haunt his subconscious dream process and daytime thinking'.[63] *Rodney Patton* 'describes recurrent intrusive recollections of his war time experiences'—including nightmares—'and often being overwhelmed by a sense of dread and anxiety'.[64]

Seven of the psychological sample had nervous breakdowns or collapses (including two whose mental disturbances were relatively short-lived, and Mervyn Fairclough who died soon after his collapse).[65] While most received professional treatment, *Brendan Thorne* chose not to, despite being 'a complete mess'. He 'was concerned that if I admitted [to 'Repat'] what a bad state I was in I could be placed in an institution with more drugs and possible shock treatment'. Instead, '[m]y burning ambition was to get better and I was determined to fight my way back on my own … I gradually picked up and coped'. Unfortunately, 'by 1970 I was having real problems again'.[66]

Thorne's response was not uncommon. *Martin Quinlan* and *Warren Nash* also attempted to rehabilitate themselves.[67] For years *Stewart Frost* treated abdominal discomfort (which had started in captivity) by belching and

---

[62] Alexander records: John Carson, email 5 February 2020: 'A Son's Pilgrimage to Zagan in 2003'; email 25 March 2020.
[63] DVA NMX293081-01: report of T.W.E. to Deputy Commissioner, Department of Veterans' Affairs, 20 June 1994.
[64] DVA NMX247300-01: Dr A.E.P., Consultant Psychiatrist, [date not clear] October 1993.
[65] DVA QMX082505-01: letter, 17 August 1990; DVA QMX022543-01; report by vocational guidance officer, 18 July 1960; DVA MX078596-01: (frequent references), refer also Alexander records: Cath McNamara, interview 18 July 2016; Gaynor, *Guy Grey-Smith*, p. 3; 'short-lived': NAA B503 POW Trust fund application: R331 Shields, 408098, 5 May 1952; AAWFA: Winn 1508, 4 March 2004; Burgess, *Destination Buchenwald.* Kenthurst: Kangaroo Press, 1995, pp. 157–158.
[66] DVA QMX082505-01: letter, 17 August 1990.
[67] DVA NMX188716-01: supporting statement, 5 November 1953; DVA XC026892-02: case history, 20 December 1949.

non-prescription antacid. 'I did not think the pains required medical attention until my recent serious loss of blood.'[68] Their reluctance to go to 'Repat' reflected a determined masculine independence but it was perhaps shaped by societal values which positioned any government welfare—even war-service benefits—as charity, or a handout. Welfare dependency was seen as a feminised state.[69] As a consequence, men preferred physical and mental suffering instead of being perceived as a 'bludger'. Historian Gary Baines notes of servicemen in general that in labelling them victims, there is 'a very real danger of minimising their agency'.[73] Fear of treatment or societal censure may have driven *Thorne* to avoid 'Repat', but by trying to self-manage his condition, not claiming benefits, keeping his illness within the family, and thus avoiding being seen as a broken man as well as a belated war casualty stigmatised by mental illness, he demonstrated agency. He also attempted to assert manly independence rather than submit to benefit dependency. This, however, had consequences. His manly pride and sense of self-sufficiency delayed much-need treatment. It was also perhaps at the expense of his wife, *Amelia*, who bore an 'excessively heavy share of responsibility … in supporting the family and trying to maintain harmony'.[74]

Physical consequences of long-term mental disturbance

Stewart Frost's belching was a physical manifestation of his mental disturbance. There are also clear links between anxiety and stress and

[68] DVA QMX058112-02: record of evidence, 28 November 1960.
[69] Garton, *The Cost of War*, pp. 103–104
[73] Baines, in Huxford, Alcalde, Baines, Burtin, and Edele, 'Writing Veterans' History', p. 119.
[74] DVA QMX082505-01: lifestyle survey 9 October 1990.

atherosclerosis and cardiovascular events; alcoholism; and hypertension.[78] Ian Duncan and colleagues recorded high numbers of stress and anxiety cases as well as small, but significant, numbers of cardiovascular conditions in their living cohort.[79] While it was not possible to carry out a complete morbidity study for the cohort's post-1946 survivors, DVA case files, along with the death certificates of seventy former airmen who died at or before the age of sixty-six (fifty-six of whom are not part of the psychological sample), indicate that atherosclerosis and cardiovascular disease, alcohol-related conditions, and hypertension feature repeatedly. This suggests that long-term and chronic mental disturbances affected physical health to the extent that they contributed to many of the cohort's premature deaths.[80]

DVA case files do not as a matter of course include details of death. However, those of *Daniel Weller*, *Hubert Atkinson*, and *Oliver Henderson* indicate that all died of or had heart-related conditions. *Mitchell Bonner*, whose cause of death was not recorded, died suddenly during an overseas holiday visiting wartime friends. Previously, he had had a number of myocardial infarctions, and DVA had accepted a claim of 'anxiety reaction'

---

[78] Yao, Meng, Hao, Zhang, Gong, and Guo, 'Chronic stress: a critical risk factor for atherosclerosis', pp. 1429–1440; Smith, and Randall, 'Anxiety and Alcohol Use Disorders: Comorbidity and Treatment Considerations', pp. 414–431; Schumm and Chard, 'Alcohol and Stress in the Military', pp. 401–407; 'Alcoholism Treatment of Vietnam Veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder', pp. 179–189; Greengage, Kulaksizoglu, Cilingiroglu, and Ali, 'The Role of Anxiety and Emotional Stress as a Risk Factor in Treatment-Resistant Hypertension', pp. 109–129; DVA QMX148794-01: Report, Dr R.G.E. to L.W.G., (advocate), 23 February 1976.

[79] Duncan, Greenwood, Johnson, Mosher, and Robertson, 'Morbidity in Ex-prisoners of War', pp. 5, 7.

[80] The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare states that premature deaths occur at a younger age than a selected cut-off which, for the period 1997–2012, was 75. Institute of Health and Welfare, 'Premature mortality in Australia 1997–2012'.

six years before his death as well as ischaemic heart disease five years before.[81]

Death certificates reveal that thirty of the cohort's premature deaths were caused by cardiovascular disease; twenty-five deaths (35.71 per cent) specifically related to the heart. Eight are included in the psychological sample. Four were relatively young men with long-standing cardiac conditions.[82] Family evidence suggests that mental disturbance emanating from service or captivity perhaps was a factor in the early deaths of two men not included in the psychological sample. Denis Adams died of liver failure and cirrhosis. He was only fifty-four. His brother-in-law, Ken Fletcher, recorded that Adams' drinking habit, which 'slowly destroyed his marriage' was to 'obtain relief from the horrors he had endured' as a prisoner of war.[83] The 1946 marriage of Cecil Metcalfe Agg had been short-lived. He remarried in 1948, almost three years before his death by coronary occlusion at the age of thirty-eight; he also had atheroma (degeneration of the artery walls). His sister believed that '[h]e survived the war but died as a result of it …'.[84] The cohort's early deaths had consequences for families. Women were widowed with reduced financial security. Some long-term homemakers had to return to work. Elaine Fairclough, who 'never expected my life to go the way it did' after her forty-year-old husband, Mervyn, died of a heart attack following a

[81] DVA CX090487-01.
[82] Mervyn Fairclough (40); Charles Shields (49); David McVie (52); Jack Haydon (52).
[83] Fletcher FA: Fletcher, 'Snapshots of the Past: Brief Historical Records of Fletcher Family Relatives and Friends. Denis Adams', October 2005.
[84] NAA A9300 Agg CEM, 415211, Letter, Mary White to Officer in Charge, Historical Section, Department of Defence (Air), 26 June 1981.

psychological collapse, devoted her life to charity work.[85] She, like others, had to negotiate new lives as individuals, rather than as spouses. Children lost fathers during their formative years. Seven of those who died of cardiovascular conditions before the age of fifty left children under the age of eighteen; the youngest was three years old.

While dementia is not a psychological condition, those with it exhibit both emotional and psychological symptoms. Moreover, as Sandy Macleod notes, dementia 'exposes older (and traumatic) memories as more recent memories are lost'. Three of his cohort were clinically dementing.[86] Many of Duncan and colleagues' cohort also displayed dementia-like conditions resembling Alzheimer's and Wernicke's diseases which were not related to alcohol. They attribute those cases to long-term deprivation of essential vitamins and protein during captivity.[87] Perhaps so, but Omar Meziab and colleagues conclude that there is some evidence linking captivity status and PTSD with an increased risk of dementia.[88] Six of the cohort, including four of the psychological sample, developed some form of dementia in old age, including Alzheimer's disease. At least four were disturbed by traumatic memories of service or captivity as they declined. Exacerbated by morphine, Charles Fry re-experienced a burning aircraft. Trying to bale out, he removed every tube he was hooked up to.[89] Former second pilot Len Netherway tried

---

[85] 'Elaine Fairclough (Nee Stott)', Lost Katanning, <https://lostkatanning.com/katanning-women/elaine-fairclough/#gallery-1>. Fairclough was awarded her town's Citizen of the Year in 1985 and 1989, an OAM in 1985, and Red Cross service awards.
[86] Macleod, 'The reactivation of post-traumatic stress disorder in later life', p. 630.
[87] Duncan, Greenwood, Johnson, Mosher, and Robertson, 'Morbidity in Ex-prisoners of War'. p. 7.
[88] Meziab, Kirby, Williams, Yaffe, Byers, and Barnes, 'Prisoner of war status, posttraumatic stress disorder, and dementia in older veterans, s236–s241.
[89] Alexander records: Pat Martin, email, 5 August 2019.

to 'break out' of his nursing home's secure ward through a laundry chute. According to his son, he blamed himself when his Wellington went down in the Mediterranean, even though he was not the pilot.[90] Charles Lark was a serial escaper from his nursing home. '[I]n his mind, his daughter recalled, 'he felt that he was back in a prison camp'.[91] *Sean Hanrahan* who had suffered decades of great psychological distress, vividly detailed his unabating captivity trauma which had left 'effects on my physical, psychological, nervous and other systems' in a personal statement to DVA, two-and-a-half years before the disorientation and aggression of his pre-senile dementia precipitated a move into permanent hospital care. His death followed twenty-two months later.[92]

Suicide

So overwhelming was their captivity trauma that some former airmen questioned their lives and existence. A survey by psychiatrist Brian Barraclough and colleagues found that a high proportion of those committing suicide had also experienced mental illness. Barraclough also notes that depression features in the majority of suicides, and considers it likely that 'social stresses, particularly those affecting domestic life increase the risk' for those with depression, and alcoholics.[93] More recent studies indicate that those suffering PTSD and depression have a high chance of thinking about,

[90] Alexander records: Mike Netherway, email, 1 January 2020.
[91] Alexander records: Jennifer Walsh, interview 29 April 2017.
[92] DVA NCX065122-02, personal statement, 17 January 1980; summary of Case history 29 June 1982.
[93] Barraclough, Bunch, Nelson, and Sainsbury, 'A Hundred Cases of Suicide: Clinical Aspects', p. 371.

planning, and attempting suicide.[94] Social factors and relationships may also play a role in suicide ideation (i.e. imagining or planning it) among vulnerable ex-servicemen.[95] Kriegie brotherhood was largely successful in protecting those whose thoughts in captivity had turned to suicide. Analysis of death certificates, coroners' reports, and DVA case files, however, suggests that, in the absence of RAF Station Sagan's strong, collective emotional and psychological support, three of the psychological sample questioned the merits of life, or thought about suicide. One of those who contemplated suicide was Richard Winn. Assailed by 'depression, the feeling that you're worthless' during his medical studies, he had a nervous breakdown. '[I]t got to the stage actually I thought of suicide, I didn't carry it out or try but it went through my mind, I thought I couldn't carry on.'[96] Winn, who had consciously decided not to commit suicide while in captivity, made a similar decision.[97] On advice from his father, a noted psychiatrist and pioneering psychoanalyst, he sought professional assistance.[98]

Others, however, did not seek help. *Martin Quinlan* 'made an abortive … attempt by electricity'.[99] Two possibly took their own lives; their intention is not known. Fifty-year-old Digby Young's death from barbiturates mixed with alcohol *may* have been suicide—the inquest gave an open verdict.[100] The

---

[94] Wisco, Marx, Wolf, Miller, Southwick, and Pietrzak, 'Posttraumatic stress disorder in the US veteran population: results from the National Health and Resilience in Veterans Study', pp. 1338–1346.
[95] Rozanov and Carli 'Suicide Among War Veterans', pp. 2504–2519.
[96] AAWFA: Winn 1508, 4 March 2004.
[97] Winn, *A Fighter Pilot's Diary*, p. 46.
[98] Roy Winn was a medical officer with the Australian Army Medical Corps and had treated shell-shocked soldiers during the Great War. He subsequently experienced mental disturbance. Winn believed his father probably had post-traumatic stress disorder. AAWFA: Winn 1508, 4 March 2004. See also ADB Garton, 'Winn, Roy Coupland (1890–1963)'.
[99] DVA NMX188716-01: case summary, 6 December 1960.
[100] Death certificate 7 October 1966.

other, Roland King, had been medically repatriated because of wounds and tuberculosis. He suffered from a number of physical disabilities as well as 'neurosis'. Nine years after the war, he was still ravaged by tuberculosis, and suffered 'great mental strain occasioned by my matrimonial troubles'. His wife had divorced him, claimed his war service home, and threatened to take the children back to Britain, where she had been born. King was also in financial trouble; he had been unemployed for eighteen months. His death at the age of thirty-one in February 1954 from acute alcoholic poisoning was not determined by inquest to be suicide, yet, his despair is clear in his testimony to the POW Trust Fund. It could, thus, perhaps be construed as 'death by bottle'.[101]

The deaths of two others suffering war-related trauma were determined by inquest to be suicide. One was 49-year old *Benedict Shaw*. He died in May 1964 after gassing himself in an oven. At the time, he was 'in a state of anxiety neurosis, apparently attributable to war service'. Both the coroner's report and *Shaw's* DVA case file indicate unabated mental distress since liberation; he had been admitted to psychiatric facilities a number of times, had 'frequent suicidal thoughts', and had made multiple suicide attempts. *Shaw* had been violent towards both his first and second wife; the summons for the most recent spousal assault was set down for hearing on the day he died.[102] The other was Tony Gordon. His DVA case file indicates no psychological damage. Gordon had not consulted his general practitioner, nor had he approached DVA for assistance for anything other than back strain and

[101] NAA B503 POW Trust fund application R602: King, 415154, 3 February 1953; death certificate 10 February 1954.
[102] DVA NMX233512-01; Coroner's report and documents; death certificate, 7 May 1964.

sinusitis. Yet both his son and wife had witnessed his disturbances. 'In my view', his wife attested, 'my husband's suicide was due to a mental condition which had commenced while he was a prisoner of war in Germany. … In recent years my husband became increasingly eccentric'. Gordon had kept his mental troubles to himself.[103] DVA case files reveal that six of the eight men suffered depression and at least four—including King—were subjected to social stress; *Shaw*, Gordon, and others had experienced considerable domestic unrest, including separation or divorce, and violence. The tragedy of their cases can be seen in context with other returned Australians. Stephen Garton notes from his survey of DVA case files from the two world wars and Vietnam that war pensioners suffered more unsettled post-war lives, including marital instability and employment difficulties, than 'ordinary Australians'. While not specifying percentages for former POWs, he found that suicide was about a third higher than the general male population for Second World War veterans.[104]

Late-life manifestation and reactivation

Many situations or events triggered post-traumatic symptoms in older veterans.[105] Some physical symptoms proved to be reactivation stressors. Arthritis, for example, recalled aching joints many experienced on the forced marches. Events similar to the original trauma or which echoed the emotional state experienced at the time also stimulated intrusive symptoms.[106] Other

[103] Gordon FA: DVA VX158593, Rosemary Gordon, Appeal to Repatriation Commission, 7 July 1968.
[104] Garton, *The Cost of War*, pp. 27–28.
[105] Macleod, 'The reactivation of post-traumatic stress disorder in later life', pp. 625–634; Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, p. 140.
[106] Macleod, 'The reactivation of post-traumatic stress disorder in later life', pp. 625–634.

triggers included loneliness, comorbid psychiatric illness, anniversaries and service reunions, and alcohol and psychotropic medication. Physical ill-health is one of the most prominent triggers, along with the emotional pain of losses associated with growing older such as reduced independence (needing help with personal care or typically masculine tasks), and inability to participate in leisure activities and the workforce (early retirement). It is not possible to determine whether any of these factors reactivated post-traumatic responses or provoked late-life manifestation for the psychological sample. Indicating the significant effects on their lives, however, many of the former airmen recorded emotional responses to loneliness, their inability to enjoy hobbies and leisure pursuits, their ill-health, and declining masculinity and virility. DVA case files more clearly indicate that retirement, events evoking the original trauma, and recording, recalling, and speaking about war service and captivity initiated or reactivated late-life post-traumatic responses.

Storms reminded *Rodney Patton* of the 'thunder-like noise that the bombs made at the time of the bombardment' of his camp; he developed a 'morbid phobia' of them.[107] Films brought past events into the present. *Gavin Brownlow* became 'very stressed if there is a film or video playing regarding war'.[108] *Odette*, the story of Special Operations Executive agent Odette Sansom who had been tortured in Fresnes prison, prompted Buchenwald survivor Mervyn Fairclough's collapse: 'A sudden panic overwhelmed him' as he watched the movie. 'Then, almost hysterical, he leapt to his feet and cried, "No, No! I've been there! I've been there!".'[109] Artist Guy Grey-Smith

[107] DVA NMX247300-01: Dr A.E.P., Consultant Psychiatrist, [date not clear] October 1993.
[108] DVA NMSS04454-01: psychiatric assessment, Dr T., 29 July 1986.
[109] Burgess, *Destination Buchenwald*, p. 157.

was in Phnom Penh during the 1970 Cambodian coup. Riots and violence sparked a nervous collapse; distressing memories of battle and incarceration, which he had 'barely suppressed', assailed him.[110] He 'struggled with his demons' when he returned to Australia. He became artistically blocked for some time.[111]

Retirement was an unhappy 'turning point' for many.[112] 'It is my experience from observing Prisoners of War', wrote *Stewart Frost*, 'that their problems'—including his own—'are really coming home to them at the age of 60 and onwards'.[113] Retirement, for some, triggered late-life psychological disturbance.[114] Employment underpinned the transition from the former airmen's martial identity to their civilian identity of family provider. Government reconstruction policy was geared towards equipping former servicemen with the education and skills they needed to contribute to the post-war economy.[115] Society encouraged immediate return to work. Accordingly, even those suffering physical debility or war and captivity trauma threw themselves into work and careers. It was an effective strategy, both reinforcing civilian masculine identity and actively avoiding bad memories of the past. Retirement, however, took away the protective benefits of work. It was rarely a personal choice; ill-health forced many to it.[116] *Gerald Boyce*

---

[110] Gaynor, *Guy Grey-Smith*, pp. 3, 85. Quote: p. 3.
[111] Gaynor, *Guy Grey-Smith*, pp. 3, 87. Quote: p. 3.
[112] DVA MX078596-01: lifestyle report, 16 March 1989.
[113] DVA QMX058112-02: letter to Deputy Commissioner, Department of Veterans Affairs, 22 April 1982.
[114] Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, p. 141.
[115] Garton, *The Cost of War*, p. 99; Macintyre, *Australia's Boldest Experiment: War and Reconstruction in the 1940s*, Chapter 9, 'Demobilisation', pp. 314–352.
[116] NAA B503 POW Trust fund applications R802: Herman, 425697, 31 October 1974; R746: Goldthorpe, 405849, 25 November 1972; DVA VMX109327-01: claim, 8 July 1994; DVA MX171449-02: psychiatrist report, 17 March 1983; DVA MX078596-01: lifestyle report, 16 March 1989; DVA VMX118518-01: statement relating to smoking, 12 May 1997.

could not concentrate for any length of time. 'Physical & nervous conditions made my mental attitude and application untenable.'[117] The former airmen grieved for the loss of their masculine identity, social contact, intellectual stimulation, and financial security.[118] *Marcus Myatt* 'states in his medical history, that his "nerves" got worse after retirement, now has financial and physical worries'.[119] *Gavin Brownlow*, who evidenced no psychological disturbances during a long and successful air force career, developed post-traumatic symptoms following retirement in 1976.[120] This 'showed up as problems on an overseas trip, he could not face, for example, seeing either Hamburg or Frankfurt where he'd been initially apprehended and later placed under interrogation'.[121] Some men's psychological states reflected 'loss of self-esteem' and their sense of masculinity as effective family providers.[122] Thirty-eight of the cohort had to ask for financial help from the POW Trust Fund; circumstances were such that two men each submitted two applications during the fund's twenty-five years of operation.

People forced to relive traumatic experiences may become distressed, particularly if they have previously maintained a determined silence.[123] DVA's bureaucratic requirements themselves potentially triggered post-traumatic memories and symptoms, or exacerbated existing war and captivity

---

[117] DVA SMX021401-01: claim form, 22 June 1995.
[118] DVA SMX021401-01: lifestyle report, undated [March/April 1989].
[119] DVA NCPX25587-01: reason for determination, 22 June 1978;
[120] He recorded no physical or psychological conditions, or material hardship emanating from captivity on an application to the POW Trust Fund. Source not recorded to protect identity.
[121] DVA NMSS04454-01: psychiatric assessment, Dr T., 29 July 1986.
[122] DVA NCPX25587-01: reason for determination, 22 June 1978; DVA SMX021401-01: lifestyle report, [undated March/April 1989].
[123] Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, p. 12; Hamilton, 'The Knife Edge: Debates about Memory and History', in Darian-Smith and Hamilton (eds), *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia*, p. 22.

trauma. A 1985 amendment to the *Repatriation Act* required claimants to demonstrate a 'reasonable hypothesis' that their incapacity arose from war service or captivity. To do this, they had to break their ingrained selective silence to contend that service or captivity caused or aggravated their condition, injury, disease, or (where widows were claimants) death. Medical and psychiatric reports recorded searching interviews during which memories were brought to the fore. Detailed personal statements describing traumatic events highlight distress. Even DVA's 'lifestyle' questionnaires, which queried the effects of incapacity on everyday living, potentially provoked psychological disturbance, or, at the very least, unwelcome emotional responses. Claimants were obliged to frankly declare details about their declining masculinity (physical capacity, inability to financially provide, sexual inadequacy) and other aspects of their conditions which affected family and social relationships. Long-term coping skills—silence, avoidance, suppression of memory—potentially failed as the former airmen were forced to relive for bureaucracy their wartime experiences and admit their current physical, psychological, and emotional failures.[124]

The effect of breaking ingrained silence is evident in *Gavin Brownlow's* case. He 'had never been able to discuss my dreadful war time experiences not even within my family'. This had proven an effective protective mechanism until his retirement. He then battled distressing trauma-related symptoms for more than a decade. In 1995, as part of the 'Australia Remembers' commemorative programme, he was 'asked by the organisers to

[124] Refer particularly: DVA file NMX280688-01; DVA NMX247300-01; DVA NMX293081-01; DVA MX078596-01.

give a series of talks' about his wartime experiences. 'I agreed to do so as I hoped they could act as a "catharsis"'.[125] 'Australia Remembers' commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the Second World War. Like the ceremonies and events surrounding the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Gallipoli landing five years earlier, it celebrated a 'heroic' generation and its service, and encouraged public engagement with the younger generation.[126] With 'Australia Remembers', the culturally-endorsed post-war silence as a means to 'get on' gave way to a socially-encouraged right to speak. As well as being cathartic as *Brownlow* anticipated, 'Australia Remembers', like other public programmes arising from the 'memory boom' of the 1990s, offered acknowledgement of experience and, perhaps, community forgiveness of those involved in publicly-perceived morally dubious acts, such as the Allied strategic bombing campaign.[127] 'Australia Remembers' encouraged storytelling on radio, in newspapers, and in memoir (via government funding for publication).[128] For Jack Morschel, the campaign 'provided an opportunity for many', including himself, 'to re-assess the grim years of 1939–45'.[129] He first published his memoir in 1995. Others of the cohort, perhaps, were also stimulated by the extended Second World War commemorative period from 1989 to 1995 to reflect on and write about their

---

[125] DVA NMSS04454-01: lifestyle questionnaire, 7 January 1999.
[126] Holbrook and Reeves, 'The Great War: Aftermath and commemoration', in Holbrook and Reeves (eds), *The Great War*, p. 2. Quote: Australia Remembers Task Force, *Australia Remembers 1945–1995*, p. 5.
[127] Winter, 'Thinking about Silence', in Ben-Ze'ev, Gino, and Winter (eds), *Shadows of War*, p. 9.
[128] Reed, *Bigger Than Gallipoli*, p. 179, note 19; 'The day the Russians took over', *The Canberra Times* (ACT), 15 February 1995, p. 39; Bomford, 'Fractured Lives', PhD thesis, pp. 289–290.
[129] Morschel, *A Lancaster's Participation in Normandy Invasion 1944*, p. 113.

experiences.[130] Some may have enjoyed the public acclaim stimulated by the programme.[131] Some perhaps revelled in sharing happy memories.

Speaking at colleges, schools, and other venues 'seemed to "open me up" for a time', *Brownlow* recalled, 'with an easing of some stress and anxiety'.[132] Significant military anniversaries, however, are potential triggers of emotional memories and trauma.[133] Media promoting them can also provoke distress.[134] The cathartic effect of story-telling associated with 'Australian Remembers' was short-lived. *Brownlow's* nostalgic recollections were destructive, not healing. '[A]fter some months the old problems', including debilitating flashbacks, 'returned and have remained to this day'.[135] *Brownlow's* reactivated trauma and subsequent diagnosis of PTSD were unanticipated legacies of a programme that, with no formal evaluation, was lauded a success.[136] According to Michael McKernan, the Ministerial Historical Advisor to the programme before, during, and in the years after, neither he, nor John Engledow, the Deputy Head of the 'Australia Remembers' Task Force, ever 'once thought of the damage the activities might have caused veterans'.[137]

Actively recalling trauma aroused mental distress for some of the Buchenwald survivors when they researched their experiences for

---

[130] Nelson's memoir was published in 1989, Dack's in 1993, and Mackenzie's in 1995.
[131] 'Our Local Heroes', *The Canberra Times*, 13 May 1995, p. 40.
[132] DVA NMSS04454-01: lifestyle questionnaire, 7 January 1999.
[133] Macleod, 'The reactivation of post-traumatic stress disorder in later life', p. 631; Hunt and Robbins, 'Telling Stories of the War: Ageing Veterans Coping with their Memories through Narrative', p. 59.
[134] Hilton, 'Case Report: Media Triggers of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder 50 Years After the Second World War', pp. 862–867.
[135] DVA NMSS04454-01: lifestyle questionnaire, 7 January 1999.
[136] Reed, *Bigger Than Gallipoli*, p. 167.
[137] Alexander records: Michael McKernan, email 25 September 2019.

compensation. By March 1947, according to *Gerald Boyce*, all of the nine Australians incarcerated there were 'now either complete or partial physical and nervous wrecks', including himself.[138] DVA case files were only available for five of the nine former Buchenwald internees. Those files reveal that post-traumatic symptoms re-emerged in four men after many years of successful management, including dampening down and avoidance. *Hubert Atkinson's* 'nightmares used to occur only once every three to six months but since he has been involved in researching his World War II experiences in order to qualify for a $10,000 grant in 1988 his symptoms … have all increased'.[139] *Atkinson* and *Boyce* submitted their late-life DVA claims within eighteen months of the Concentration Camp Committee's (CCC) determination to grant them compensation.[140] *Rodney Patton's* psychological condition appeared to have been stable for decades; the beginning of this period coincided with his second, successful marriage. His internment in Buchenwald was also recognised by the CCC. Distressing symptoms reappeared in 1992. In 1993, he applied for an increase in his disability pension.[141] While *Arnold Hibbert* also received compensation from the CCC, his first DVA claim was not until 1995, the publication year of Colin Burgess' *Destination Buchenwald* which recounted his, and other airmen's experiences in that concentration camp.[142] It also followed his involvement in a Buchenwald documentary.[143] Despite having suffered 'headaches and anxiety

---

[138] DVA SMX021401-01; letter to Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation, 29 March 1947.
[139] DVA QMX126934-01: report from Dr R.G., 30 October 1989.
[140] DVA SMX021401-01; claim form, 23 February 1989; DVA QMX126934-01: general medical examination and history, 8 September 1989. Both men were also involved in media publicity. A transcript of their ABC interview appears on DVA SMX021401-01.
[141] DVA NMX247300-01: application for increase in disability pension, 12 October 1993.
[142] DVA VMX118518-01: claim form, 22 June 1995.
[143] Details of documentary omitted to protect anonymity.

state with persistent nightmares and panic attacks since the end of the war', *Hibbert* had only come to a 'gradual realisation over a period of last 30 to 35 years' that his 'nervous trauma' was connected to his service and internment experiences, including 'continued maltreatment at Fresnes Prison (Paris) and Buchenwald Concentration Camp for several months … forced marches & further maltreatment until cessation of hostilities'.[144]

Talking and actively recalling traumatic events failed to assuage *Gavin Brownlow's* trauma. It appears to have triggered reactivation for some of the Buchenwald survivors. For others, however, divulging their stories proved beneficial. Roy Nightingale, who suffered from long-term chronic nervous and emotional debilitations, spoke little of his war and captivity to his children but he shared them with his wife, Beryl. He also compiled a comprehensive account of his experiences. That record was emotionally liberating, but it was so personal he would not allow anyone else to read it. The act of destruction was also therapeutic. Nightingale 'burned it as part of satisfying his own need for emotional catharsis'.[145]

Resilience

'I feel my life is ruined', *Simon McGrath* stated in 1993.[146] *Rodney Patton* claimed he was a 'nervous wreck all the time'.[147] Others attempted or committed suicide. But it is also evident that the majority of those with continuing, recurring, or reactivated symptoms learned to live with war and

[144] 'end of the war': DVA VMX118518-01: medical examination psychiatric, 11 October 1995. Other extracts: DVA VMX118518-01: claim form, 22 June 1995.
[145] Nightingale FA: Nightingale, 'Wartime Records of Robert Roy Nightingale' [Part I], p. 18.
[146] DVA file NMX280688-01: lifestyle questionnaire, 29 July 1993.
[147] DVA NMX247300-01: Dr M.B., Occupational Physician report 10 March 1995.

captivity trauma. Through their own agency, and with the support of loved ones, the former airmen actively managed the psychological legacy of captivity. Their coping methods were many and varied. Some drank. Others relied on self-administered or professionally prescribed medication. Many smoked. 'I had several jobs, finding it difficult to settle, smoking became a necessity to keep my nerves and sanity under some sort of control', *Arnold Hibbert* attested.[148] Some engaged in psychoanalysis or sought psychiatric treatment. Religious faith bolstered others. Many, like Alex Kerr, 'filtered out all the bad things … we remember[ed] only the good'.[149] DVA case files reveal that most of the psychological sample (as well as the medical sample, for that matter) remained as physically, intellectually, economically, and socially active as increasing age and the legacy of war wounds allowed. Many lived long, happy fulfilled lives. Thirty-one of the psychological sample survived into their eighties, sixteen into their nineties, and two became centenarians. Looking at the cohort as a whole, more than half were alive in their eighties. Fifty-nine were nonagenarians. Seven were centenarians. At the time of writing, three former airmen, including one centenarian, are still alive.

Resilience was a fact of life for the cohort's generation. Many had seen the physical and mental effects of the Great War on fathers, family, and members of their community. They were children and young adults of the Depression. They had seen the effects of hardship and had known it themselves. They had coped with and effectively managed the privations of

[148] DVA VMX118518-01: statement relating to smoking, 12 May 1997.
[149] IWMSA Kerr: 24826, 18 March 2003.

capture and captivity; some had endured what they considered war crimes. As a group, Alec Arnel considered, 'we were pretty resilient'.[150] It was an assessment with which others agreed. 'To put matters very bluntly', asserted Eric Stephenson who assisted the medical officer in Belaria Compound's lazaret, 'I think my generation coped … because we had a better idea of self-discipline than is apparent today. … [We] developed an attitude that whatever was thrown at us we just dealt with it'.[151] As Albert Comber's consultant psychiatrist assessed, those men, including Comber who endured decades of mental distress, were of a 'particular personality type, found among combatants, [who] carried on where lesser individuals would have given in'.[152]

Resilience underpins 'optimal adaptation'.[153] It is one explanation of why those who have been exposed to trauma do not develop post-traumatic symptoms.[154] A little over one-third of the medical sample—a significant minority—did not appear to suffer any degree of psychological disturbance or, if they had, it had not worried them unduly, and did not warrant DVA claims. Those with early expressions of disturbance, like Richard Winn, 'got over it'.[155] Cy Borsht's daughter, Jennifer, believes her father 'was fairly free of a lot of the lasting trauma suffered by many'. Borsht settled into post-war life well, and 'was always a very matter of fact type of man, the type to get in

---

[150] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 2 March 2017.
[151] Stephenson, *Three Passions and a Lucky Penny*, pp. 50–51.
[152] DVA MX078596-01: report from G.S.S Consultant Psychiatrist to Dr E.A.K., 31 March 1989.
[153] Ursano and Rundell, 'The Prisoner of War', in Jones, Sparacino, Wilcox, Rothberg, and Stokes, *War Psychiatry*, p. 435.
[154] Segovia, Moore, Linnville, Hoyt, and Hain, 'Optimism Predicts Resilience in Repatriated Prisoners of War: A 37-Year Longitudinal Study', p. 331.
[155] AAWFA: Winn 1508, 4 March 2004.

there and do the job to the best of his ability'. While 'I seem to recall that he may have had nightmares … they weren't overwhelming and he was able to cope with the fearful memories … I never recall him being violent, antagonistic, or showing signs of PTSD'.[156] Other repatriates similarly reintegrated easily into civilian life.[157]

Optimism, that happy ability to look on the bright side, is a personality trait which strongly underpins resilience in captivity.[158] Many of the men demonstrated it at times and Alex Kerr believed their inherent optimism helped them weather the emotional and psychological challenges behind barbed wire.[159] It allowed him 'to bear the vicissitudes of incarceration with fortitude because they did not seem so important to me at the time'.[160] While Kerr displayed some initial post-repatriation culture shock, he attested to not experiencing any long-term effects of captivity. 'I must have a thick hide or something … I didn't have nightmares or the shakes or any hang ups or any traumas or anything.'[161] Putting aside the pain and physical trauma of his downing and some of the harsher elements of captivity, Kerr, who conducted a number of interviews about his experiences and wrote a memoir, 'never found it stressful in any way to talk of war experiences' because most 'were all pretty good'.[162] Kerr attributed his ability to forget the bad things of service

---

[156] Alexander records: Jennifer Long, email 4 September 2019.
[157] DVA X215879-01; DVA MX187207–01; DVA MX143182-01; DVA VMX211663-01. Martin Crotty and Marina Larsson acknowledge that, for some, return 'is a relatively smooth process'. Crotty and Larsson, 'Introduction: the many faces of return', in Crotty and Larsson (eds), *Anzac Legacies*, p. 3.
[158] Segovia, Moore, Linnville, Hoyt, and Hain, 'Optimism Predicts Resilience in Repatriated Prisoners of War: A 37-Year Longitudinal Study', p. 334.
[159] IWMSA Kerr: 24826, 18 March 2003.
[160] Kerr, *Shot Down*, p. 196.
[161] AAWFA: Kerr 1489, 3 March 2004.
[162] Kerr, *Shot Down*, p. 51. Quotes: AAWFA: Kerr 1489, 3 March 2004.

and captivity to his 'inbuilt optimism', which had served him and others so well in captivity.[163]

Buchenwald survivor *Gerald Boyce* put aside his captivity trauma within a decade of liberation, despite long-term hospitalisation because of tuberculosis, housing difficulties, and a disabled daughter. He lived (from DVA's perspective) a relatively untroubled life for decades until his traumatic memories were reactivated. Roland King, however, drank himself to death within nine years of homecoming. Two broken marriages and lack of spousal support do not explain how *Benedict Shaw*, a competent airman who 'served with distinction with RAAF & awarded DFC', came to gas himself nineteen years after release.[164] Why did the majority's resilience enable them to survive psychological disturbances and wartime trauma, yet that of the handful failed?

The strains of escape work, including the fear of discovery and claustrophobia, perhaps played a part in psychological disturbance. Sixteen per cent of those identified as either escaping or carrying out escape-related work had some degree of psychological disturbance in post-war life. Personality type may well have been a factor underpinning the cohort's resilience. Temperament, personal attributes, 'reflectiveness when confronted with new situations' and 'personality flexibility' all positively influence resilience.[165] Christina Twomey suggests that 'captivity compromised …

[163] IWMSA Kerr: 24826, 18 March 2003.
[164] DVA NMX233512-01: file minute/case summary, 25 August 1964.
[165] 'reflectiveness': Beaumont, 'Remembering the resilient', in Holbrook and Reeves (eds), *The Great War*, p. 142. 'personality flexibility': Ursano and Rundell, 'The Prisoner of War', in Jones, Sparacino, Wilcox, Rothberg, and Stokes, *War Psychiatry*, p. 434.

capacity for steady employment'.[166] It seems captivity weakened more than employability, business acumen, or career stability. Captivity also compromised resilience for some of the psychological sample. *Roger Baird*, who 'underwent a good deal of mental stress' while in Bomber Command, suffered the long-term consequences of it.[167] The former pilot experienced housing and financial troubles, failed businesses, the death of a young daughter, and marital collapse. Despite seeking professional psychiatric assistance and the solace of good friends, including a pilot (like himself) from his old squadron, his psychological disturbances never lessened.[168] In the absence of RAF Station Sagan, air force identity, and fraternity, and even with post-war family and social supports, some men, like *Baird*, despite their best efforts, simply could not cope with war or captivity trauma or the vicissitudes of life. While the men, their families, and medical professionals counted on their ability to bounce back, captivity, somehow, broke down some men's natural resilience.

*****

One-third of the medical sample indicated no psychological disturbance; that not everyone was 'deeply traumatised' by their wartime experiences is a point emphasised by a number of historians as well as psychologist Nigel Hunt.[169] By resorting to social protections; not thinking about the original stressor;

---

[166] Twomey, *The Battle Within*, p. 119.
[167] DVA CX26598-02: statement at examination, 15 November 1951.
[168] DVA CX26598-01: 02.
[169] Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, p. 81; Twomey, *The Battle Within*, p. 133; Pegram, *Surviving the Great War*, p. 169; Beaumont, 'Remembering the resilient', in Holbrook and Reeves (eds), *The Great War*, pp. 135–153. Quote: Pegram. Alan Allport notes, in his study of British repatriates which includes former prisoners of war, that 'Not every ex-soldier was scarred forever by the war, either physically or mentally'. *Demobbed*, p. 220.

avoiding anything which would trigger recollection of it; and eschewing stimuli which resembled the initiating spark of trauma; the majority of the psychological sample demonstrated 'vigorous and sustained protective mechanisms'.[170] Their agency in doing so reflects their resilience; their resilience enabled their agency.

Compromised resilience might not be the only explanation for unremitting captivity trauma. In some cases, moral troubling perhaps exacerbated traumatic responses. The moral dimension of service and captivity is the subject of chapter eleven.

[170] Macleod, 'The reactivation of post-traumatic stress disorder in later life', p. 626.

Chapter Eleven: The Moral Dimension

Writing of his experiences of 'psychology and religion' in Stalag Luft III's 'church in camp', Reverend Douglas Thompson recalled that many of his airmen parishioners suffered 'moral and personal problems'. He recognised that his congregation's 'intolerable mental burdens' arose because they were both *air men* and men of emotions.[1] In acknowledging the personal, military, social, and religious dimensions of the airmen's psychological and emotional states, Thompson was an early recorder of what has recently come to be called 'unseen wounds' or 'moral injury'.[2] This chapter explores the cohort's moral challenges, the emotions provoked, and how they responded to them. It discusses the triggers of moral troubling: fraternal bonds; the duty to kill; and witnessing or suffering inhumane acts. It also considers moral troubling as an aspect of war and captivity trauma. This chapter argues that those who allayed their moral troubles did so largely through their own agency, the help of loved ones, or through faith. In doing so, the former airmen demonstrated resilience and an ability to accept and manage the moral legacy of service and captivity.

Consideration of moral concerns is a relatively recent area of scholarship.[3] The majority of those studies have been conducted by American

---

[1] Thompson, *Captives to Freedom*: 'psychology and religion', p. 161; 'church in camp', p. 160; 'moral and personal problems', p. 163; 'intolerable mental burdens', p. 162.

[2] 'unseen wounds': Frame, (ed.), *Moral Injury*. 'moral injury': Litz, Stein, Delaney, Lebowitz, Nash, Silva, and Maguen, 'Moral Injury and moral repair in war veterans', pp. 695–706; Shay, 'Moral Injury', pp. 57–66; Frame, (ed.), *Moral Injury*, 2015; Hodgson and Carey, 'Moral Injury and Definitional Clarity: Betrayal, Spirituality and the Role of Chaplains', pp. 1212–1228.

[3] Drescher, Foy, Kelly, Leshner, Schutz, and Litz, 'An Exploration of the Viability and Usefulness of the Construct of Moral Injury in War Veterans', pp. 8–13; Maguen and Litz, 'Moral Injury in Veterans of War', pp. 1–6; Farnsworth, Drescher, Nieuwsma, Walser, and Currier, 'The Role of Moral Emotions in Military Trauma: Implications for the Study and Treatment of Moral Injury', pp. 249–262; Currier, Holland, and Malott, 'Moral Injury, Meaning Making, and Mental Health in Returning Veterans', pp. 229–240; Frame, (ed.),

researchers studying living cohorts.[4] Recent exceptions include historian and cleric Tom Frame's edited collection which highlights moral injury as an unseen wound; a detailed research report commissioned for the Australian Defence College's Centre of Defence Leadership and Ethics; and a pilot study of the effect of moral injury on UK military veterans.[5] Little detailed work has been done with modern historical cohorts.[6] Exceptions include brief accounts of moral experiences in the First and Second World Wars, and historian Tom Richardson's broad survey of Australian military history.[7] Only a few scholars have turned their attention to the moral basis of the Second World War's air campaigns.[8] Other than Frame's brief recognition of the 'inner stress and moral turmoil' of the Second World War's returning former captives, there has been little if any analysis of the moral troubles and emotions of prisoners of war.[9] While journalist Peter Marin discussed in 1981 the searing 'moral pain' suffered by American Vietnam veterans, scholarship has largely focused on 'moral injury', a phrase coined by clinical psychiatrist Jonathan Shay in 2002 to explain the effect on a person where 'there has been

---

Moral Injury, 2015; Neilsen, Macdonald, Scarr, Smith, Frame, (with Roberts, Richardson, Hall, and Ross), 'Moral Injury: From Theory to Practice', [hereafter Neilsen et al.]; Barnes, Hurley, and Taber, 'Moral Injury and PTSD: Often Co-Occurring Yet Mechanistically Different', pp. 98–105.

[4] See literature cited above, as well as Jonathan Shay's consideration of moral injury which arises from his work with traumatised Vietnam veterans. Shay, *Odysseus in America*; 'Moral Injury', pp. 57–66.

[5] Frame, (ed.), *Moral Injury*; Neilsen et al, 'Moral Injury: From Theory to Practice'; Williamson, Greenberg, and Murphy, 'Impact of moral injury on the lives of UK veterans: a pilot study', <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/jramc-2019-001243>.

[6] Frankfurt and Frazier, 'Review of research on Moral Injury in Combat Veterans', p. 320.

[7] Tyquin, 'In search of the unseen wound' and Robertson, 'Atrocity propaganda and moral injury' in Frame, (ed.), *Moral Injury*; Broom, 'Faith in the Furnace', PhD thesis, pp. 206–232; Richardson, 'Moral injury in Australian Military History', in Neilsen et al, Moral Injury: From Theory to Practice', pp. 67–87.

[8] Sutherland, 'Is moral injury the answer?', in Frame, (ed.), *Moral Injury*, p. 193; Grayling, A.C., *Among the Dead Cities*; Dobos, *Ethics, Security, and the War-Machine: The True Cost of the Military*, pp. 22–24.

[9] Frame, 'Introduction', in Frame, (ed.), *Moral Injury*, p. 1.

a betrayal of what's right, by someone who holds legitimate authority, in a high-stakes situation'.[10] Based on their survey of medical studies and literature, clinical psychologist Brett Litz and colleagues posited in 2009 a new working definition of moral injury: '*Perpetrating, failing to prevent, bearing witness to, or learning about acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations*'.[11] It has not, however, been universally accepted.[12] Historians, philosophers, ethicists, chaplains, counsellors, and medical professionals continue to debate and develop a comprehensive definition as they reinterpret existing evidence, consider new evidence, research the causes of moral injury, and trial possible treatment models.[13]

Moral injury is the end point of extreme, distressful unresolved moral troubling, rather than the unease encountered while wrestling with the rightness or wrongness of an event, action or inaction, or sight witnessed. Rather than focusing exclusively on moral injury, this chapter discusses the broad range of moral concerns of an historical cohort—Australian airmen prisoners of war—which resulted in some degree of moral troubling, including, perhaps, moral injury. In doing so, this chapter addresses a considerable gap in moral injury enquiry.

The cohort alluded to moral matters in DVA medical testimony and reports, memoir and biography, oral history interviews, and newspaper articles. Some family recollections touch on 'their' POW's moral troubling. These sources indicate or imply that at least forty-two members of the cohort

---

[10] Marin, 'Living in Moral Pain', pp. 68–80. Quote: Shay, *Odysseus in America*, p. 240.
[11] Litz et al., 'Moral Injury and moral repair in war veterans', p. 670. Original emphasis.
[12] Frame, 'Introduction', in Frame, (ed.), *Moral Injury*, p. 3.
[13] For a survey of the many different definitions, including their own, refer Hodgson and Carey, 'Moral Injury and Definitional Clarity, pp. 1214–1217.

(12.28 per cent; the 'moral sample') were morally troubled to some degree about their service or captivity.[14] Most of the moral sample experienced more than one moral concern, and their troubles relating to service far outweigh those linked to captivity. As this thesis argues, the cohort remained active servicemen despite captivity and could not shed their martial identity, nor the emotions arising from it, simply because they had been taken prisoner. Significantly, the majority of moral troubles derived from the airmen's strong fraternity, forged in service and captivity. As such, a discussion of the full range of the cohort's service- and captivity-related moral troubles is warranted. This is the first group of Australian prisoners of war in which moral troubling has been investigated.

There is a strong relationship between emotions and the moral sense. If, when reflecting on moral matters, someone does not 'perceive the world aright, they will feel out of place, or out of time'.[15] This sense of wrongness and dislocation may then engender emotions which include shame, guilt, anger, disgust, or grief.[16] Guilt and shame especially are closely associated with moral troubling, particularly with moral injury.[17] Litz and colleagues conclude that shame, rather than guilt, is the most damaging of those emotions.[18] Certainly, many of the cohort experienced debilitating shame

---

[14] This figure is based on a cohort of 342 as nine of the 351 Australian airmen died between 1944 and 1946.
[15] Boddice, *The History of Emotions*, pp. 202–203.
[16] Litz et al., 'Moral Injury and moral repair in war veterans', p. 699; Steinberg, 'Emotions and History in Eastern Europe', in Matt and Stearns, (eds), *Doing Emotions History*, p. 80; Farnsworth, Drescher, Nieuwsma, Walser, and Currier, 'The Role of Moral Emotions in Military Trauma', p. 249; Dobos, 'Moral trauma and moral degradation', p. 126, and Neilsen, 'Dents in the Soul', p. 137, in Frame, (ed.), *Moral Injury*.
[17] Frame and Smith, 'Moral injury and moral pain: working definitions', in Neilsen et al, Moral Injury: From Theory to Practice', p. 44.
[18] Litz et al., 'Moral Injury and moral repair in war veterans', p. 699.

when captured but most overcame this as they actively managed captivity. Analysis of the moral sample reveals that guilt is the predominant emotion evoked by moral troubling. In many cases, it is stimulated by the platonic love which underpinned their fraternal connection to crew members and friends, or, in the case of one man, marital love.[19] As well as guilt (twenty-six men, 65 per cent), the principal emotions exhibited by the moral sample are fraternal love (thirteen men, 37 per cent) and horror from witnessed events (eight men, 20 per cent). Others experienced shame, despair, fear and disgust.

Fraternal bonds

It has long been recognised that servicemen feel guilt and grief over the death of their comrades, particularly those in close-knit fighting units.[20] The airmen's fraternity was strong, both on operational service and in captivity. Those fraternal bonds triggered strong moral emotions and responses. In some instances, emotional responses relating to death precipitate anxiety reactions or 'combat-induced neurosis' which often lasted a lifetime.[21] In some cases they resulted in PTSD.[22] Almost 31 per cent of the psychological sample were bomber pilots, a large proportion of whom suffered two or more decades of psychological disturbance. Bomber pilots' emotional ties were based on more than brotherly love. They were underpinned by the captain's responsibility for crew safety and a perceived obligation to remain in a stricken aircraft until all had parachuted out or to maximise the survival

[19] DVA QMX082505-01: lifestyle survey 9 October 1990.
[20] Coleman, 'The Group Factor in Military Psychiatry', p. 224; Berlin, 'Guilt as an Etiologic Factor in War Neurosis', p. 240; Jalland, *Death in War and Peace*, pp. 171–175.
[21] Berlin, 'Guilt as an Etiologic Factor in War Neurosis', p. 240.
[22] Neilsen, 'Dents in the Soul', in Frame, (ed.), *Moral Injury*, p. 135.

chances of the wounded who could not bale. Recognising they might die—and many did—was the ultimate expression of their fraternal love and sense of duty. Even when separated after downing, the captain's duty did not cease. *Winston Evans* '[n]ever forgot responsibility for loss of crew after official finish of tour'.[23]

Self-examination of actions and motives by veterans often leads to high levels of guilt, self-blame, self-loathing, or shame.[24] Eighteen of the moral sample were bomber pilots. While they could not in any way be to blame, nine (50 per cent of the captains) on contemplation assumed culpability for crew members' deaths or wounds. Len Netherway blamed himself for his aircraft crash, although he was only second pilot that day and not actually flying.[25] In their eyes, the pilots had failed in their obligation to crew safety. Despite being misplaced, their regret and anguish—their captain's guilt—was real and long lasting. Initially thinking his air gunner, Edward Holt, had been killed on impact, Tony Gordon blamed himself for his death. When he later learned the truth, he was 'very upset' at the wounds Holt had suffered.[26] Despite being taken captive himself, Alan McCormack agonised a lifetime over his decision to give the order to bale out which resulted in the death of one crew member and the capture of five others.[27] Former bomber pilot, *Julian Macpherson*, blamed himself when his crew were taken prisoner

[23] DVA VMX134018-01: statement in support of a claim for medical treatment and pension, 8 October 1980.
[24] Williamson, Greenberg, and Murphy, 'Impact of moral injury on the lives of UK veterans: a pilot study', <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/jramc-2019-001243>.
[25] Alexander records: Mike Netherway, email 1 January 2020.
[26] Alexander records: Drew Gordon, interview 19 July 2016.
[27] Alexander records: Michele McCormack, email 28 July 2019.

because he had ordered them to jump.[28] After crawling from their crashed aircraft, Reg Giddey and his crew ran from the blaze. About half a mile distant, Giddey took a head count and 'realised the two gunners were still there'. Guilt disregards practicality. '[T]hat's something I've always—always had on my conscience that I didn't go back and try to help them out.'[29]

Imagined culpability and grief mingled for captain and aircrew alike. Evidence reveals or suggests that twelve of the moral sample (29.27 per cent) suffered 'survivor guilt' because they had survived their last operation whereas other crew members had not. 'Only God knows what happened to our poor brave skipper … and our brave wireless operator … whose charred bodies were found huddled together … in the remains of our burnt out Halifax', wrote *Simon McGrath*, a former air gunner whose mental construction of his friends' death site was as vivid as if he had witnessed it. His grief, guilt, and horror at the imagined appalling sight were further exacerbated by recent conflict in the Middle East. 'How horrible to ponder on this with Iraq now in my mind.'[30] After navigator Les Harvey returned to Australia, relatives of the European air war's dead or missing approached him. 'I felt helpless and guilty that it was not due to any merit of my own that I survived when their son or brother had not.'[31] (That sense of guilt because

[28] DVA NMX293081-01: report of T.W.E. to Deputy Commissioner, Department of Veterans' Affairs, 20 June 1994.
[29] AWM 54 779/3/129: 11 PDRC post-liberation debrief, Giddey. Quotes: Giddey, in *Remembrance: a farewell to the generation now passing into history*, 2007. Directed by Larry McGrath.
[30] DVA file NMX280688-01: undated personal statement, received 6 August 1993.
[31] Arnel archive: Harvey, 'Over, Down and Out', p. 27.

of a capricious, or, as historian Alan Allport terms it, 'impertinent survival', was common regardless of service.[32])

Many former airmen deliberately did not think or speak about the distressing aspects of war service and captivity. It was, for many, an effective way to manage their war and captivity trauma. Similarly, some of the moral sample neither wrote nor spoke of their feelings regarding their dead friends. There was no indication of moral troubling on *Roger Baird's* DVA case file, for example, but the question arises—as it does for other former airmen who experienced the long-term effects of war and captivity trauma—could his psychological disturbance have had a moral dimension? *Baird*, a pilot, stayed at the controls until his crew had baled out. Two died and the others were captured. Could his trauma reflect an element of captain's or 'survivor guilt'?[33] Some children saw their father's silence as testament to their guilt that they, rather than their friends, had survived.[34] *Robin Sumner* was but one former airman who implied emotions in medical testimony. 'Five of us parachuted to safety and two good friends were killed.'[35] Other men were more explicit. Errol Green's daughter remembers her father yelling and crying as he recalled 'that fateful night floating in his parachute' as his aircraft plummeted down, 'fearing that all his mates had died in this crash'. Green's

[32] Allport, *Demobbed*, p. 191; Whiles, 'A Study of Neurosis among Repatriated Prisoners of War', p. 697.
[33] DVA CX26598-01.
[34] Alexander records: Greg McLeod, interview 15 January 2016; Alexander records: Jennifer Walsh, interview 29 April 2017.
[35] DVA NMX272113-01: letter to Deputy Commissioner, Department of Veterans' Affairs, 21 November 1996.

‘survivor guilt’ never abated. He ‘deeply’ mourned his dead friends until his own death, fifty-five years later.[36]

Guilt was not the exclusive province of captains and those who had survived a fatal downing. Eleven of the moral sample were troubled about aspects of captivity. Reflecting the newly recognised ‘phenomenon’ of the guilty repatriate whose ‘guilt feelings are very strong’, Charles Lark was conscience-stricken at escaping the rigours of captivity through medical repatriation while his friends remained behind.[37] Two men suffered great distress because they transgressed POW rules or felt they were letting down their kriegie brethren. ‘[W]hilst room cook I took a slice of bread, margarine and jam and afterwards felt it wasn’t mine—it belonged to the room’, *Wilfred Mosse* confessed.[38] *Robin Sumner* was ashamed that claustrophobia prevented him from tunnel work in the ‘X’ organisation. Carrying out other essential tasks did not assuage his shame.[39] Anthony ‘Tony’ Burcher was a gunner on one of the aircraft which bombed the Möhne Dam during Operation *Chastise*—the dam buster raid. His Lancaster was damaged, he baled out, evaded before capture, and was then hospitalised. His fellow crew member, the only other survivor of their aircraft, along with a friend in another aircraft who was downed during the same raid, were captured almost immediately. In trying to understand why both men committed suicide in late life, Burcher indicated that it was linked to the ill-treatment after capture which both (he

[36] Alexander records: Helen Green, email 2 August 2019.
[37] Alexander records: Jennifer Walsh, interview 29 April 2017. Quotes: Cochrane, ‘Notes on the Psychology of Prisoners of War’, p. 284. In raising the issue of guilt, and using the language of moral injury when he referred to the ‘psyche of repatriated prisoners’, Cochrane was alluding to the moral dimension of war-related psychological disturbance.
[38] DVA MX124472-02: Repatriation Department medical history sheet, 28 October 1965.
[39] DVA NMX272113-01: letter to Deputy Commissioner, Department of Veterans’ Affairs, 21 November 1996.

believed) experienced at the hands of the *Gestapo*. Burcher implied his guilt at their fate, and perhaps vicarious culpability in their deaths, by highlighting the disparity between his friends' treatment and his own: 'I was taken to a hospital and got the best of treatment. … But if they were got hold of by the Gestapo, I think that might have worried them'.[40]

The grief of men connected to the Great Escapers may have reflected an element of moral guilt. Tony Gordon, who repaired and constructed secret radios for the escape committee and was one of the 'X' organisation's metalworkers, grieved deeply throughout his life over the death of his close friend, James Catanach, who was killed in the Great Escape reprisals.[41] Gordon blamed himself for the fate of his crew. Did he also consider that his escape work contributed to the death of his friend? Len Netherway, who needlessly assumed culpability for the night he and his crew members were downed, was friends with Gordon Brettell, author of the de facto kriegie anthem, 'Escape' and another of those killed in the Great Escape reprisals. Within weeks of meeting, Netherway was posing for the gifted artist who carried out much of the 'X' organisation's forgery work. Brettell presented one of the portrait sketches to Netherway but the Australian, who spoke often of his life in camp, 'the theatre, the blokes he knew', never mentioned Brettell—either their friendship or his death. The portrait 'was sealed up' in Netherway's box of memorabilia which was rarely opened. Netherway's son, Mike, believes the sketch represents his father's 'buried trauma', symbolic of

[40] AWM S01656: Burcher, Tony [Anthony] 10 May 1993.
[41] Alexander records: Drew Gordon, interview 19 July 2016.

a continuing grief.[42] The portrait perhaps also reflects more of Netherway's misplaced culpability—this time regarding the fate of a close friend.

Some of those who participated in the Great Escape were also morally troubled. Paul Royle's escape partner was killed in the post-Escape reprisals. He did not have 'a clue as to why I wasn't chosen'. He could see 'no reason why one should live and not the other'.[43] Geoff Cornish claimed he did not regret giving up his place to 'one of the fifty they executed and an only son'. But guilt niggled: 'there are a few ghosts in there still', Cornish admitted, as he told of how he 'squibbed' meeting his friend's parents to condole. 'What do I say to them? I'm glad I took the decision I did and I didn't get shot and your son did? Or, I'm sorry that I wasn't shot in his place?'[44] Syd Wickham also shirked the condolence call. 'Although I sincerely intended to talk to [his navigator's widow], for some reason, any reason, I kept putting it off till next week. Consequently I still [in 2000] haven't seen her, and feel ashamed for not having done the right thing.'[45]

Inhumanity

Atrocities witnessed, perpetrated, or heard about provoke 'distinctly ethical suffering'.[46] Ten of the moral sample (25 per cent) were disturbed by inhumane acts. Most were distressed by sights they had witnessed and incidents they had been forced to perpetrate. Others assumed a vicarious culpability for atrocities. In talking to Vietnam veterans, Peter Marin

[42] Alexander records: Mike Netherway, email 18 May 2020.
[43] Edlington, 'The Great Escape Recalled', p. 15.
[44] IWMSA Cornish: 23327, 28 May 2003.
[45] Wickham, *We Wore Blue*, p. 264.
[46] Derwin, 'Moral Injury: Two Perspectives', in Leese and Crouthamel (eds), *Traumatic Memories of the Second World War and After*, p. 48.

identified a category of moral pain which 'has to do with what might be called "the world's pain"—the way we internalise and experience as our own the disorder, suffering, and brutality around us'.[47] Marin had recognised that existential sense of connectedness and vicarious culpability that is encapsulated by English cleric and poet John Donne ('No man is an island entire of itself … any man's death diminishes me, / because I am involved in mankind…').[48] When, shortly after liberation, Ron Mackenzie heard about inhumane acts carried out by both Allies and Germans during his imprisonment, he felt that '[t]here was something badly wrong'. His belief in the goodness of humanity was threatened. 'It was a lack of faith that, given either the opportunity or need, others or I would not have acted as "we" had acted at Belsen.' He saw, repeatedly in imagination, Belsen's dead, 'and sometimes the absent or distorted heads of the Celle bombing victims'.[49] Mackenzie, who was still undergoing operational training when he was downed on 6–7 August 1941 after a leaflet drop, had not bombed anyone, including the town of Celle on 8 April 1945, or the thousands of prisoners crowded onto a train destined for nearby Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. He had not witnessed the war crime perpetrated by SS guards and Celle citizens who had hunted down the train survivors (the so-called 'Celle hare hunt'). Nor had he seen or been involved in the atrocities at Belsen. Such was his sense of world connectedness, however, that he belonged to the 'we' who had. He doubted not only humanity's goodness but his own.

[47] Marin, 'Living in Moral Pain', p. 79.
[48] 'Meditation XVII, Devotions upon Emergent Occasions.'
[49] Mackenzie, *An Ordinary War 1940–1945*, p. 109.

Witnessed acts distress.[50] Atrocities defy any attempt to compose them 'into a coherent narrative'. As well as the sheer incomprehensibility of inhumane acts, misplaced guilt is often at the heart of the memory of atrocity. The witness was unable to do anything to stop the appalling action.[51] Tony Gordon's son tells how his father was 'sickened' by the treatment meted out to Russian prisoners of war. His senses were assaulted by 'the smell of death from the [nearby] Russian camp'. He 'could never forget that sweet smell of rotting corpses'.[52] 'Every morning', Gilbert Docking recalled, Russian prisoners at Stalag III-A, Luckenwalde 'would be dragging out a wooden vehicle … with dead Russian prisoners that [had] starved over night. … horrific sight … the camp was horrific and I found it difficult to maintain a kind of grip on myself'.[53] *Gavin Brownlow* was 'haunted … over the years' from 'witnessing the brutal treatment of half dead prisoners whom he believes were bound for [a] concentration camp'.[54] 'The horror of Buchenwald [took] its toll' on Mervyn Fairclough, his wife Elaine attested.[55] Buchenwald left its mark on others.[56] *Hubert Atkinson* '[s]aw people die in some strange ways'.[57] Even more disturbing for him was the ill-treatment of children.[58] 'He relates his protectiveness to his grandchildren to his memories of how the children

[50] Litz et al., 'Moral Injury and moral repair in war veterans', p. 700; Jones, 'Moral injury in time of war', p. 1767; Barnes, Hurley, and Taber, 'Moral Injury and PTSD: Often Co-Occurring Yet Mechanistically Different', p. 99.
[51] Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, pp. 147–149. Quote on page 148.
[52] Alexander records: Drew Gordon, interview 19 July 2016.
[53] NLA AHFC: Gilbert Docking, 2014.
[54] DVA NMSS04454-01: medical report by Dr P.C., 28 March 2002.
[55] 'The Final Chapter', *Great Southern Herald* (Kattaning, WA), 29 October 1997, p. 15
[56] Although the following is drawn from family or published sources which identify the former airmen, pseudonyms, which were used in previous chapters to protect identities where source material was drawn from DVA case files, are again used. Non-DVA sources are also deidentified.
[57] *Atkinson*, letter to sister, 22 July 1945.
[58] Unpublished manuscript, March 1996, provided by *Atkinson's* family.

in the concentration camp were treated.'[59] *Gerald Boyce* was forced to collect the dead and carry them on carts to the crematorium. Then he 'actually witnessed those terribly emaciated corpses being fed into the ovens'.[60] So traumatic was *Boyce's* reaction to this at the time that *Atkinson* considered his 'pilot would never be the same again' and, indeed, *Boyce* stated decades later that, '[i]t's a sight I can never, ever forget'.[61] *Rodney Patton* saw the loaded carts.[62] He recalled how the corpses had been thrown onto them 'like they were bags of wheat … Some of them were just kids. They didn't come back'.[63] Thirteen years later he attested to seeing 'more dead bodies than 1000 funeral directors would see in a lifetime … There are so many vivid photographic images still in my mind. I still have nightmares … I found it hard to believe people could do the sort of things that went on there'.[64]

Not all of the Australians incarcerated in Buchenwald appear to have been disturbed by what they witnessed. As they stayed together in national and crew groups, they saw the same things. *Arnold Hibbert*, who suffered great psychological distress including life-long nightmares and was diagnosed with PTSD, included no reference to moral troubling in his medical testimony and his son cannot recall his father expressing any.[65] The former airman's distress related only to his own harsh treatment. The question arises: does personal trauma override moral sensibilities? Perhaps, but in *Hibbert's* case, his apparent lack of revulsion to the inhumane acts he witnessed could

[59] Quote: DVA QMX126934-01: report from Dr R.G., 30 October 1989.
[60] Published source, 1999, p. 21.
[61] Atkinson, letter to sister, 22 July 1945; published source, 1999, p. 21.
[62] Newspaper article, 18 September 1945, p. 2.
[63] Newspaper article, 29 November 1987, p. 19.
[64] Newspaper article, 14 November 2000, pp. 1–2. Details omitted to protect identity.
[65] DVA VMX118518-01. Family source omitted to protect identity of the former airman.

possibly be explained by the fact that he ultimately retained his faith in humanity.[66]

The duty to kill

Servicemen are 'transformed into men who are prepared to kill and effect destruction'.[67] Killing is not only condoned, it is, as A.C. Grayling notes, taken for granted and 'licensed as a necessity'.[68] If, when looking through the prism of 'just war', the Allies had to defeat the Axis because of the moral ills they had perpetrated, those who participated in a just war had a 'moral duty to defeat those evils'.[69] As such, killing was morally justified, and if justified, accepting the requirement to kill made it easier for combatants to cope with the fact that they had to kill, even for those of religious sensibilities, such as Bruce Lumsden.[70] At peace with the reality that they would be agents of death, Lumsden and other bomber crew had no qualms about bombing operations, although they knew that 'not all bombs struck the target; indeed, only a relative few would be direct hits'. Their operational briefings reinforced strategic objectives, and they were convinced of the rightness of their work.[71]

When certainty in their duty to kill was shaken, doubts arose. While Bruce Lumsden accepted his 'clear duty to play the part that had been given to me', '[s]uddenly', during his tenth operation to the Ruhr Valley, 'out of the

---

[66] Family source omitted to protect identity of the former airman.
[67] Raftery, *Marks of War*, p. 37.
[68] Grayling, *War: An Enquiry*, p. 9.
[69] Grayling, *War: An Enquiry*, p. xiii.
[70] Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, p. 150; Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'Behind the Scenes', p. 93.
[71] Quote: Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'The Complete Tour', Lumsden, letter 23 September 1986; Bishop, *Bomber Boys Fighting Back 1940–1945*, p. 78.

blue, like a cannon shot, the question flashed into my mind: "This is Sunday afternoon, a special day for Christians; what are you doing here guiding this aircraft to drop bombs on a German city!"' Lumsden quickly dealt with his doubts. He 'shoved the question forcefully out of my mind and returned to my navigation'. He did not again ask it.[72] Even, after capture, as he was taken through the bomb-devastated German streets, 'I do not think my conscience was clouded by any sense of guilt'.[73]

Eighteen of the moral sample were bomber pilots (44 per cent), mustered, among other things, because of their communal sensibilities—an extension of air force fraternity. Twenty-one were bomber crew (50 per cent). Doubts and guilt about their part in the area bombing campaign came late in life for five men, including Lumsden, particularly in light of public scrutiny regarding the moral appropriateness of targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure.[74] Significant anniversaries also raised questions.[75] The 'Australia Remembers' programme stimulated many to reconsider their roles in the Second World War. Jack Morschel decided 'to assess RAF Bomber Command' because he had 'reservations about the tactics adopted. The pursuit of area bombing of German cities has been a real concern'.[76] Others were nudged to ponder the subject by members of younger generations. Cy

---

[72] Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'Behind the Scenes', p. 94.
[73] Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'The Complete Tour', Lumsden, letter 23 September 1986.
[74] Grayling, *War: An Enquiry*, p. xiv. Grayling's forensic scrutiny of the area bombing campaign in his bestselling *Among the Dead Cities*, first published in 2006, was hugely influential. Grayling, *Among the Dead Cities*, 2014. Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'The Complete Tour', Lumsden, letter 23 September 1986; Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'Behind the Scenes', p. 93.
[75] Begbie, 'Re-writing war history and healing old wounds', *The Canberra Times*, 19 February 1995, p. 8; Houghton, *The Veterans' Tale*, p. 257.
[76] Morschel, *A Lancaster's Participation in Normandy Invasion 1944*, p. 113.

Borsht's daughter recalls that her father 'felt much sadness and compassion for the lives lost'.[77] Some members of the cohort had been happy during the war to reappropriate the designations *Terrorflieger*, *Luftgangster*, and *Terrorbomber*. Yet, given the debate over Bomber Command's area bombing campaign—variously and emotively known as carpet bombing, saturation bombing, obliteration bombing, and mass bombing—it is not surprising that Morschel and others were troubled in later life by the deliberate targeting of civilians.[78] Errol Green, who had flown in a thousand-bomber raid on Bremen the night he was shot down, suffered 'much anguish that civilians were killed in his bombing raids'.[79] He told his daughter, Helen, that he had known before the operation that civilians would be targeted.[80] *Robin Sumner* experienced 'increased distaste' and escalating psychological distress 'for my part in the "carpet bombing" & murder of civilians in Germany, Italy & probably France'.[81] (Betrayal by a leader or institution, such as by government, army or air force, are included in modern definitions of moral injury. None of the moral sample, however, indicated any sense of moral betrayal.[82] Nor did they blame, for example, the air force or Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, RAF Bomber Command, Air Chief Marshal Arthur 'Bomber' Harris for the area bombing campaigns. They merely questioned their own part in it.)

As only three of the cohort's fighter pilots are included in the moral sample it seems that the majority had overridden any scruples about aerial

---

[77] Alexander records: Jennifer Long, email 4 September 2019.
[78] Houghton, *The Veterans' Tale*, p. 254.
[79] Alexander records: Helen Green, email 5 September 2019.
[80] Alexander records: Helen Green, email 7 December 2019.
[81] DVA NMX272113-01: statement re investigation of disability pension claim, 14 February 2002.
[82] Shay, *Odysseus in America*, p. 240; Frame and Smith, 'The evolution of warfare and the state—soldier compact', in Neilsen et al, Moral Injury: From Theory to Practice', pp. 63–64.

combat. Many of the cohort had wanted to be fighter pilots. They had the personality for it: 'they were pursuers, they were aggressive, they were individualists'.[83] But they did not necessarily see themselves as killers of men. 'I always wanted to be a fighter pilot', recalled Richard Winn. '[I]t wasn't to shoot anybody', however, 'but to shoot the planes down'.[84] By attacking aircraft, they could effectively divorce themselves from the act of killing men. Those who were particularly skilled at it were recognised as 'aces' and publicly acclaimed.[85] Charles Fry, an ace with five enemy aircraft destroyed, two probables and one damaged, indicated no misgivings regarding his operational work. His daughter, to whom he spoke often about his flying career, recalls that he 'viewed his life in the Air Force with great pride'. He saw 'his ability to fly aircraft' generally 'and in combat as a skill'. Fry also believed he had a 'duty to protect [the] freedom of countries being overrun by a regime of a powerful enemy and their ideals'.[86]

War and the duty to kill precipitated a moral struggle for former reconnaissance and fighter pilot Alec Arnel.[87] He had anticipated conflict but was troubled by the thought it. He knew he had to decide what part he would play in it, if any.[88] His immediate reaction when war was announced was 'a sense of I owe my loyalty to the King' and a feeling of duty towards his country. But the overriding feeling was 'deep depression' regarding the

---

[83] NLA Justin O'Byrne, 'Reminiscential conversations', 29 August 1983–28 July 1984, Tape 50.
[84] AAWFA: Winn 1508, 4 March 2004.
[85] Shores and Williams, *Aces High*, p. 9; 'Fought 15 Planes Single-handed', *Sunday Mail* (Brisbane), 24 August 1941, p. 5.
[86] Alexander records: Pat Martin, interview 5 August 2019.
[87] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 2 March 2017.
[88] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 7 August 2014; Alexander records: Arnel, interview 2 March 2017; Rolland (ed.), *Airmen I have Met*, p. 168.

conflict because, as a member of the Churches of Christ, he was religiously and philosophically against bearing arms. Would he abandon his pacifism or fight?[89] There was an added complexity. Arnel had begun to doubt whether his pacifism, to which he had been committed since the age of thirteen when he had given himself to God, was a genuine consequence of his faith, or whether he had been influenced by his father's Great War experiences, or his ensuing horror of person-to-person combat.[90] Arnel's efforts to understand his motives intensified. He asked himself, if 'the enemy landed in Australia and threatened my loved ones would I try to defend them?'[91] After much debate, 'the answer was clear—I would'. But then, he asked himself, what 'was the difference between defending them at home and defending them before the enemy got here?' He conceded there was no difference.[92] At that point he concluded that he was not a true religious pacifist. 'I knew that somehow or other I wasn't being honest. That I was letting my spiritual experience lead me into lying to myself.' Accordingly, he could not abstain from military service. Attracted to flying from an early age, the twenty-year-old decided to volunteer for the RAAF. He did not, however, feel at peace with his decision. 'I wanted to be a pilot. I didn't want to be in a war.'[93]

During training and operational service, Arnel 'had this sense that this is not where I should be'. He was able to put aside his moral dilemma during his first posting to a tactical reconnaissance squadron. Later, however, he was

[89] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 2 March 2017.
[90] Alexander records: Arnel, interviews, 7 August 2014 and 2 March 2017; Rolland (ed.), *Airmen I have Met*, p. 167.
[91] Rolland (ed.), *Airmen I have Met*, p. 168.
[92] Alexander records: Arnel, interviews, 7 August 2014 and 2 March 2017.
[93] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 2 March 2017.

sent to a fighter squadron operating in an offensive role. On one strafing sortie, Arnel fired on a target of opportunity before realising it was a Vatican convoy. The guilt he felt for that, other strafing sorties, and air-to-air combat, was overwhelming.[94] He loved the flying but 'I hated every bit of it. Why am I here and what is it all about anyway?' He 'was in conflict all the time'. Arnel's unease grew and he felt disconnected from God. His faith gave him no comfort. His spiritual dislocation and moral unease came to a head after his capture. On the way to Stalag Luft III he saw drab women at the railway station. 'I thought my mother at home looks a bit like that.' He realised, 'I had been trying to kill their sons'. The 'futility of war really hit me and the sense that I shouldn't be there was very strong'.[95]

Arnel was not the only one to ponder the war's value.[96] Recalling a visit to the graves of his crew members, Jack Morschel wrote, '[i]t is little consolation that they rest in an immaculately maintained War Graves Cemetery amongst thousands of other British Empire, Commonwealth, and Dominion forces graves. The question may well be asked: '*Was it worthwhile?*'[97] Paul Royle was emphatic. 'Well one thing I am quite convinced of is that fighting is no way to settle problems between nations. It is absolutely futile.'[98]

Personality, spirituality, and moral compass

[94] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 9 October 2014.
[95] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 2 March 2017.
[96] Some of John McCarthy's cohort considered that the war was a 'waste of lives'. *Last Call of Empire*, p. 129.
[97] Morschel, *A Lancaster's Participation in Normandy Invasion 1944*, p. 41. Morschel's emphasis.
[98] IWMSA Royle: 26605, 2 December 2012.

Moral troubles can precipitate profound changes to personality and spirituality; moral compasses may be thrown out of kilter.[99] Traumatic events or perpetrating morally dubious acts can also alter one's identity or sense of self, and disrupt a person's fundamental beliefs—world view—and self-respect.[100] Alec Arnel spoke repeatedly in interview of his loss of self.[101] He had felt a misfit; his identity as an operational airman sat awkwardly with his identity as a religious pacifist.[102] *Madeleine Reed* attested that, before 'his going overseas with the RAAF', her (then sweetheart) had been a 'gay and charming extrovert'. After his return, 'although on the surface the same person, I found after our marriage he was very changed'.[103] *Brendan Thorne* stated that *Amelia*, who had known him before embarkation, told him 'that when we married she realised I did not have the placid nature & stable temperament … but expected it would return with time but it did not'.[104] *Gerald Boyce* felt 'he changed through the POW experience and the aftermath'.[105]

Moral troubling might precipitate a loss of spirituality, or a change in faith.[106] A number of Australian airmen changed or lost their faith, or had an altered relationship with God. *Oliver Henderson* converted during captivity,

---

[99] Williamson, Greenberg, and Murphy, 'Impact of moral injury on the lives of UK veterans: a pilot study', <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/jramc-2019-001243>; Beard, 'Conceptual distinctions', in Frame, (ed.), *Moral Injury*, p. 121; Frame, 'Introduction', in Frame, (ed.), *Moral Injury*, p. 1.
[100] Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, pp. 10, 62; Beard, 'Conceptual distinctions', in Frame, (ed.), *Moral Injury*, p. 121; Frame, 'Introduction', in Frame, (ed.), *Moral Injury*, p. 1; Jones, 'Moral injury in time of war', p. 1767.
[101] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 2 March 2017.
[102] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 9 October 2014.
[103] Family documents. Identity protected at request of family.
[104] DVA QMX082505-01: lifestyle survey 9 October 1990.
[105] DVA SMX021401-01: as detailed in report by M.C.S., Visiting Psychiatrist, 14 April 1989.
[106] Drescher, Foy, Kelly, Leshner, Schutz, and Litz, 'An Exploration of the Viability and Usefulness of the Construct of Moral Injury in War Veterans', p. 9.

but abandoned Catholicism by 1950 as his post-war psychological difficulties increased.[107] Alec Arnel felt estranged from God.[108] Paul Brickhill's faith waxed and waned.[109] Cy Borsht ceased to believe.[110] Ethics and ethical behaviour may also be compromised if someone is morally troubled.[111] Criminal behaviour is one possible outcome.[112] Philosopher and ethicist Ned Dobos recognises as moral pain USAAF pilot Claude Eatherly's conscience-stricken anguish after flying a reconnaissance mission over Hiroshima before the atomic bomb was dropped. Despite having no role in involvement in the destruction of Hiroshima, Eatherly was consumed by an all-encompassing guilt for which he could not atone. Reflecting intense moral troubling—perhaps moral injury—Eatherly expressed his pain in a number of ways, including by committing petty crimes for no gain which, in his mind, proved his guilt.[113] The moral compasses of two of the moral sample were perhaps similarly damaged.

Despite a crippled aircraft, Tony Burcher's pilot, John Hopgood, continued to the target where their Lancaster was again hit by anti-aircraft fire. Burcher survived because, as he recognised, Hopgood, aware that he was committing suicide, flew on, gaining height to ensure his still living crew had

---

[107] DVA QMX034497-02: report from medical social worker, 3 November 1950.
[108] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 2 March 2017.
[109] David Langsam, 'After the Crackup', *The Age* (Melbourne), 1 May 1982; Dando-Collins, *The Hero Maker*, pp. 87, 315; Ramsland, *Flying into Danger*, p. 267; Wilcox, 'Paul Brickhill's War of Nerves', p. 31.
[110] Alexander records: Jennifer Long, email 4 September 2019.
[111] Drescher, Foy, Kelly, Leshner, Schutz, and Litz, 'An Exploration of the Viability and Usefulness of the Construct of Moral Injury in War Veterans', p. 9.
[112] Litz et al., 'Moral Injury and moral repair in war veterans', p. 698; Dobos: *Ethics, Security, and the War-Machine: The True Cost of the Military*, pp. 22–24. DVA NMX188716-01: case summary, 6 December 1960.
[113] Dobos: *Ethics, Security, and the War-Machine: The True Cost of the Military*, pp. 22–24. Eatherly's account appears in Anders and Eatherly, *Burning Conscience.*

the best chance of baling out. Although Burcher believed he 'came out mentally okay', his reference in interview to his friends' suicides and Hopgood's sacrifice suggests a lasting legacy of moral guilt, or at the very least, moral troubling over his comrades' fates.[114] This, as with Claude Eatherly, may have infiltrated his post-captivity life. Like many former prisoners of war, Burcher had difficulty adjusting to return and resettlement.[115] Different work, marriage within weeks of liberation, and the birth of a daughter fourteen months later, contributed to his unsettledness. His air force career was blighted by personal and domestic problems and he resigned his commission in 1952 after a series of negative assessments.[116] Eleven years later, he was gaoled for conspiracy to defraud a hire purchase company. Recognising Burcher's wartime valour, the judge considered his case 'tragic'.[117]

Martin Quinlan, like Burcher, had an unsettled post-war life, with many jobs and accommodation changes in the fifteen years after liberation. He was also financially insecure, had marriage problems, and had, at one stage, attempted suicide. As manager of a radio and television store, he embezzled some of the takings, was charged and put on a five year bond to repay the money.[118] Like Burcher's captain, *Quinlan's* pilot had stayed at the controls to ensure the safety of his crew. He died when the aircraft crashed in flames; all of his crew were captured. *Quinlan* had no outlet for his grief; operational

---

[114] AWM S01656: Burcher, Tony [Anthony] 10 May 1993.
[115] Whiles, 'A Study of Neurosis among Repatriated Prisoners of War', p. 697.
[116] NAA: A12372, O21979, Burcher, Anthony Fisher O21979: Reporting Officer's Certificate and Remarks (October–November 1951).
[117] 'Dam Buster Gaoled for 2 Years on HP Fraud', *The Daily Telegraph* (UK), 19 July 1963, p. 25.
[118] DVA NMX188716-01: case summary, 6 December 1960.

training and squadron life had encouraged emotional numbing. '[W]e had to stifle & hide our feelings about our comrades being killed.' Implying the longevity of his emotional connection to his pilot (and others killed during service) and perhaps a degree of 'survivor guilt', *Quinlan* admitted that '[a]ll of these things come against one in later years'.[119] Like Eatherly's, Burcher's and *Quinlan*'s crimes conceivably reflected their senses of guilt.

Moral dimension of war and captivity trauma

Moral injury is not a medical or psychological condition. It is an existential problem which can affect emotions, well-being, behaviour, social interaction, and spirituality.[120] Moral injury and PTSD can manifest independently.[121] They can also exist concurrently.[122] Twenty-four (57.14 per cent) of the moral sample experienced some degree of post-traumatic symptoms. The moral dimension of war trauma was recognised in *DSM-III* which included 'survivor guilt' as a symptom of PTSD. In *DSM-III-R*, it was listed as an associated feature of PTSD, rather than a diagnostic factor.[123] Subsequent iterations of *DSM* fail to acknowledge the extent of war trauma's moral dimension.

---

[119] DVA NMX188716-01: supporting statement, 25 January 1984.
[120] Maguen and Litz, 'Moral Injury in Veterans of War', p. 1; Barnes, Hurley, and Taber, 'Moral Injury and PTSD: Often Co-Occurring Yet Mechanistically Different', p. 99.
[121] Neilsen, 'The role of complementary disciplines and companion studies', in Neilsen et al, Moral Injury: From Theory to Practice', p. 122; Barnes, Hurley, and Taber, 'Moral Injury and PTSD: Often Co-Occurring Yet Mechanistically Different', p. 99.
[122] Frame, 'Introduction', in Frame, (ed.), *Moral Injury*, p. 2; Neilsen, 'The role of complementary disciplines and companion studies', in Neilsen et al, Moral Injury: From Theory to Practice', p. 122; Barnes, Hurley, and Taber, 'Moral Injury and PTSD: Often Co-Occurring Yet Mechanistically Different', pp. 98–105; Frankfurt and Frazier, 'Review of research on Moral Injury in Combat Veterans', p. 325.
[123] Brett, Spitzer, and Williams, 'DSM-III-R Criteria for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder', p. 1233.

Moral troubling may well explain why some men experienced decades-long psychological disturbance. Eighteen of the DVA case files consulted for this thesis are included in the moral sample. All also numbered among the psychological sample. Fifteen of the moral sample suffering distressing symptoms had not been diagnosed with PTSD. Three were diagnosed with PTSD (one's condition was not recognised by DVA). The moral dimension of their war and captivity trauma suggests they had reached the end point of extreme, distressful unresolved moral troubling—moral injury. 'The aircraft broke in two with the starboard wing torn off', *Sean Hanrahan* wrote four years before his death. He had been trapped by a blade of the port engine airscrew. 'I could not help … I could hardly move. I heard my wireless operator and observer die and the rear gunner was in great pain [from a broken thigh], but I couldn't do a thing to help.'[124] *Winston Evans* attested in 1950, that 'every six months or so, I wake up in the middle of the night re-living the experience of being shot down, at which time four members of my crew were killed'.[125] Thirty years later he was still dreaming about that night. He stated that, '[t]hought of loss of crew still distressful. … Psychological effect most distressing'.[126] Two years later he explained, '[f]our of my crew were lost, whilst I, the Pilot/Captain escaped with my life. I get most upset and irate with people who think this has not affected me. How could it not affect me?' His anger at the unsympathetic is barely distinguished from his emotional anguish. 'I have lived with it for nearly 38 years. I don't even know how I got

[124] DVA NCX065122-02: personal statement, 17 January 1980.
[125] DVA VMX134018-01: application for acceptance of disability, medical treatment, and of surgical aid, 21 December 1950.
[126] DVA VMX134018-01: statement in support of a claim for medical treatment and pension, 8 October 1980.

out of my aircraft except that someone put me out and didn't live for me to thank him.'[127]

Alec Arnel's continuing moral struggle also suggests moral injury. Victoria Williamson and colleagues acknowledge that the majority of those who make morally challenging decisions 'are likely to act professionally, in line with occupational codes of conduct'.[128] In the case of airmen, they assiduously carried out their air force duty. Operational service validated Alec Arnel's rationale for overcoming his pacifist principles. He may have felt guilty about his killing role, but, paradoxically, he felt the only way to justify his decision to fight was to carry out his service duty as best he could. 'I felt satisfied that I was doing my job ... once I'd committed, I had this need to stick to my decision.' The remorse Arnel felt about the fatal consequences of his sorties lowered his respect for himself and his morality; he often 'had those periods of depression'. He, therefore, 'needed' to perform well for 'self-respect'.[129] Accordingly, while Arnel experienced a sense of relief when captured that he was finally out of the war, he was not relieved to have no further part in aerial operations. Captivity took away his rationalisation for putting aside his religious pacifism.

Capture exacerbated Arnel's moral turmoil. While his wartime correspondence indicates that he clung to the form of his religion, Arnel's spiritual estrangement grew worse. After liberation, he suffered a physical and psychological collapse, only partly explained by the privations of the last

[127] DVA VMX134018-01: letter to department, 2 August 1982.
[128] Williamson, Greenberg, and Murphy, 'Impact of moral injury on the lives of UK veterans: a pilot study', <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/jramc-2019-001243>.
[129] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 2 March 2017.

few months of captivity and forced marches, or, as he told his sweetheart, Margery, the 'delayed reaction from the earlier days of excitement after my release from Germany'.[130] Reflecting on that time (in the context of our interview focusing on his moral troubles) he was clearer about the origins of that collapse. 'But now what?', he wondered. 'An emptiness about it all. … It was all uncertainty. … I didn't know what I wanted to do with my life.' He had lost his 'motivating force which was associated with my faith. I somehow or other felt that I had turned my back on that … didn't have that to go back to. … So, who was I and where was I going?' Arnel had lost his Christian identity and self of sense. 'I didn't know who I was. I felt like a bit of flotsam and jetsam. I was just floating at that time and hoping.' Margery had been his lodestar to home during captivity. He wanted to marry her but, such was his sense of guilt and lack of self-worth, 'I didn't really know whether she'd look at this fellow who came back or if she'd want to look away again. I had all sorts of feelings. I had awful feelings of guilt … sense of waste. … Lost. I felt lost.' Despite doubts about his self-worth, Arnel proposed to Margery by letter before embarking for Australia. They married within weeks of his arrival. He did not know 'how much I should talk to her about my wartime experience and my sense of guilt and shame'. While his marriage was happy, Arnel's moral troubles continued. 'I think physically I wasn't too bad. Emotionally I was—I don't know. I suppose because I was focusing on the family, that held me together—but there were some difficult times.'[131]

Allaying moral troubles

[130] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 2 March 2017; letter to Margery Gray, 5 July 1945.
[131] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 2 March 2017.

Moral troubling is not necessarily permanent. Nor is moral injury. The emotional effects of moral troubling can be assuaged through one's own agency, the help of loved ones, or through faith. The first step is addressing the root cause of the troubling. This, as Tom Frame notes, is a natural act and a sign of 'human maturity'. It indicates that a person's moral compass is intact and signals a willingness to deal with moral ambiguity.[132] It also potentially leads to early resolution or, after moral injury, moral repair—a return to moral health.[133]

Attaining moral resolution or repair is an act of agency. Recent research indicates it can be achieved through rationalisation and 'exposure to corrective life experience' such as 'doing good deeds'.[134] This, in effect, is atonement through active goodness. Testimony from members of the moral sample reveals that some assuaged their moral troubles in these ways. They also achieved moral health through finding meaning in morally disturbing acts and sights. (Their sense-making is discussed in chapter twelve.)

Forgiveness, or at least a sense of absolution, is essential in allaying moral troubling.[135] Philosopher and ethicist Andrew Fiala argues that in a just war (or one which is believed to be just) 'transgressive acts can appear to be justified or they can be rationalised in a way that allows forgiveness and

---

[132] Frame, 'Introduction', in Frame, (ed.), *Moral Injury*, pp. 14–15.
[133] Litz et al., 'Moral Injury and moral repair in war veterans', p. 701; Drescher, Foy, Kelly, Leshner, Schutz, and Litz, 'An Exploration of the Viability and Usefulness of the Construct of Moral Injury in War Veterans', pp. 11–12.
[134] Rationalisation: Fiala, 'Moral Injury, *Jus Ad Bellum*, and Conscientious Refusal', p. 282; Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, p. 225. Meaning: Farnsworth, Drescher, Nieuwsma, Walser, and Currier, 'The Role of Moral Emotions in Military Trauma', pp. 256–257; Currier, Holland, and Malott, 'Moral Injury, Meaning Making, and Mental Health in Returning Veterans', pp. 229–240; Frame, (ed.), *Moral Injury*, p. 255. Meaning, good deeds, and quotes from Litz et al., 'Moral Injury and moral repair in war veterans', p. 701.
[135] Litz et al., 'Moral Injury and moral repair in war veterans', p. 699.

consolation'.[136] Cy Borsht was convinced of the rightness of area bombing—the Allies' only choice, as he saw it—and his part in the campaign.[137] Jack Morschel, however, was not sure of the validity of area bombing and his role in it. Conceding he could not make a fair assessment, he consulted those he saw as experts by viewing documentaries and reading accounts of the bomber campaign. His experts deemed Morschel's war just—the Allies were right to go to war—and considered area bombing a fitting strategy to prosecute it.[138] Accordingly, acknowledging the 'heavy sacrifices' of his fellows, Morschel concluded that aircrew 'made significant contributions to the final outcome'. The former airman essentially sought and gained forgiveness from his experts. At the same time, by distancing himself from the air campaign's strategic decision makers by accepting that he had done what was required of him as part of his air force duty, he also forgave himself. In addition, Morschel recognised, like moral injury experts, that difficult moral decisions are a part of war.[139] 'In summation in the heat of war it is inevitable that some unfortunate decisions are likely to be made.'[140] Errol Green received vicarious forgiveness for what he experienced as a consequence of his participation in the air war. He received a personal apology and empathetic recognition of his own personal war and captivity trauma from members of a

[136] Fiala, 'Moral Injury, *Jus Ad Bellum*, and Conscientious Refusal', p. 282.
[137] Alexander records: Jennifer Long, email 4 September 2019.
[138] Evans, 'A Commander's Perspective', in Frame, (ed.), *Moral Injury*, p. 50; Fiala, 'Moral Injury, *Jus Ad Bellum*, and Conscientious Refusal', pp. 281–294; Grayling, A.C., *Among the Dead Cities*, 2014.
[139] Farnsworth, Drescher, Nieuwsma, Walser, and Currier, 'The Role of Moral Emotions in Military Trauma', p. 250.
[140] Morschel, *A Lancaster's Participation in Normandy Invasion 1944*, p. 113.

German protestant religious order (to which his daughter belonged), whose mission is to apologise to those affected by Nazi atrocities.[141]

Where consciences were disturbed because senses of personal goodness or that of the world had been violated, some felt the need to redress the balance—to atone—through active goodness.[142] Studies particularly note the positive effect of volunteerism and altruistic acts.[143] Altruism, religious work, or charity is rarely raised or referred to in medical testimony or mentioned in memoir or post-war interview. The post-war charitable commitments of some of the cohort, however, is known. Bill Fordyce dedicated many years as executive director of Melbourne's Lord Mayor's Fund (now Charitable Foundation).[144] Patrick McDade worked with Legacy and the Returned and Services League.[145] Doug Hutchinson posted annual food parcels to the families of his former British crew members and to POW friends until their deaths, then to their widows and children.[146] Ken Carson, for a time, sent food parcels to his former prison camp friends, as well as blankets and food parcels to the Italian nursing sisters who cared for him after his capture.[147] Pat Shine, one of the Ex-Prisoners of War Association of Australia's earliest members, helped found the Queensland Branch. He worked tirelessly to build it up, was

[141] Alexander records: Helen Green, email 10 December 2019.
[142] Frankfurt and Frazier, 'Review of research on Moral Injury in Combat Veterans', p. 318.
[143] Farnsworth, Drescher, Nieuwsma, Walser, and Currier, 'The Role of Moral Emotions in Military Trauma', p. 258.
[144] NAA A9300 Fordyce, H.S.W.; Gerry Carman, 'Last survivor of epic break-out', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 February 2008.
[145] 'Fighter Pilot's Death', *Reveille*, Vol. 42, No. 8, 1 March 1969.
[146] Peter Lalor, 'OZ tucker: a POW and his dream', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 April 2002.
[147] Alexander records: John Carson, interview 28 January 2016 and email 11 January 2020.

a sometime member of the Federal Executive, and was awarded Honorary Life Membership in 1953.[148]

Some who were morally troubled also carried out altruistic acts. *Winston Evans* was awarded the Order of Australia Medal for service to community. Charles Lark and Colin Phelps visited the families of dead crew members.[149] Lark also met families to assure them of his former comrades' well-being, and lobbied for entitlements and assistance for ex-prisoners of war.[150] Sailing from Britain to Australia, recalling the joy of friendship and the beauty of God's natural world, Roy Nightingale committed to a life of goodness: 'My Covenant'—promise to God—'is my oath to live up to all that those persons & places gave to me & all mankind alike'.[151] *Brendan Thorne* suffered severe physical disability from wounds sustained on active service and during captivity, as well as subsequent psychological disturbance. In attempting to keep his physical and mental frailties as much as possible within the family, his wife *Amelia's* health and maternal dreams suffered. The moral consequence, for *Thorne*, was 'a deepseated sense of guilt' at *Amelia's* condition 'as I feel it has been brought on by sexual & other frustrations and disappointments and persistent pressures unwittingly placed on her by me through my disabilities over the years'. The 68-year-old disabled former

[148] 'Pat Shine', *Barbed Wire and Bamboo*, Vol. 36, No. 35, June 1985, p. 3.
[149] MHRC CPA: Colin Phelps, letter to parents, 17 May 1945; NAA A705, 166/24/597 Lark: minute, OIC Casualty Section to Secretary, 15 December 1943.
[150] NAA A705, 166/24/597 Lark: refer correspondence between Lark and Wing Commander Reid, Casualty Section; letter Lark to Wing Commander Reid, Casualty Section 25 December 1943 requesting address of Stalag Luft III prisoners (enclosure 88A) and list of addresses (enclosure 89B).
[151] Nightingale FA: Nightingale, wartime log book, p. 55.

airman also committed to atonement through goodness: 'I must try to make up for this by helping her all I can'.[152]

Those who had witnessed inhumane acts also sought expiation. *Rodney Patton* committed to volunteerism and active goodness. He started up and tirelessly ran a support service for his fellow veterans and their families.[153] Despite debilitating physical conditions which, by the age of seventy-seven, had resulted in a limited social life, *Hubert Atkinson* worked for Legacy, a charity which cares for the dependents of deceased servicemen and women.[154] Mervyn Fairclough devoted his short post-war life to being a good father and husband.[155] Perhaps his widow's charity work had an element of vicarious atonement.[156] *Ivan Haines*, another Buchenwald survivor, suffered decades of psychiatric disturbances emanating from captivity but he included no detail of the traumatic aspects of captivity in DVA testimony. He had, however, witnessed similar atrocities to others of the morally troubled who had been incarcerated in Buchenwald. In 1984, a medical examiner stated that *Haines* had no 'trouble with nerves now', and no longer required treatment as he had 'come to terms with them'. While *Haines* did not elaborate on how or why his war and captivity trauma had subsided, he did, however, note to the examiner that he was engaged in social work and 'church activities'.[157] Perhaps he, too, had atoned through active goodness.

---

[152] DVA QMX082505-01: lifestyle survey 9 October 1990.
[153] Newspaper article, 14 November 2000, pp. 1–2.
[154] DVA QMX126934-01; lifestyle questionnaire, 7 March 2001.
[155] Burgess RC: Elaine Fairclough, letter to Colin Burgess, 28 January [?].
[156] 'Elaine Fairclough (Nee Stott)', Lost Katanning, <https://lostkatanning.com/katanning-women/elaine-fairclough/#gallery-1>.
[157] DVA MX163729-01: review, 22 October 1984.

Tony Gordon perhaps tried to be a good father but, as his son recalls, his 'fathering skills were greatly lacking in many areas'. This, Drew believes, 'was due to his inability to eradicate his grief and guilt'.[158] It seems Gordon could find no meaning in his wartime experiences. Guilt, moral injury, and suicide are believed to be linked.[159] Five of the former airmen who considered, attempted, committed or possibly committed suicide suffered war or captivity trauma. Two were morally troubled; moral injury can perhaps be inferred in Tony Gordon's case. At interview, Gordon's son indicated that his father's post-war dwelling on the moral implications of his wartime experiences contributed to his decision to take his own life. He and his mother particularly credit Gordon's suicide to the trauma of captivity and his continuing grief over the death of James Catanach. He also felt guilty over the fate of his crew members and was disturbed by atrocities he had witnessed.[160] Gordon was an avid enthusiast of Japanese martial arts and culture which honours ritual suicide as an act of atonement. It is possible that suicide was his ultimate attempt to expiate survivor guilt and assuage his grief. Reflecting on Gordon's post-war difficulties and suicide despite his successful coping in captivity, Drew wrote: 'I grieve for what he could have made of his life in light of his proven resilience, bravery, leadership and other talents [in camp]. I think the words, "Liberated but never truly free" says it all'.[161]

---

[158] Alexander records: Drew Gordon, email 24 April 2020.
[159] Maguen and Litz, 'Moral Injury in Veterans of War', p. 2.
[160] Alexander records: Drew Gordon, interview 19 July 2016.
[161] Alexander records: Drew Gordon, email 24 April 2020. When questioned regarding the source of the phrase 'Liberated but never truly free' which, in email, he had rendered in quotation marks, Drew Gordon stated that 'I would like to claim this term as mine and recall that I created it some years ago when I was asked to present a talk about the POW experience to students visiting the Shrine of Remembrance. Whether or not I had heard/read it previously

Accepting help

Ron Mackenzie could not find resolution exclusively through his own agency. The 'fear and the disgust that that fear of oneself as belonging to an unhuman humanity can bring' remained.[162] Mackenzie knew he had to deal with his moral perturbations but 'facing [them] was another business. I was frightened'.[163] He tried, but they lingered, mingling with and exacerbated by professional and political problems. He could not do it alone. His wife, Enid, 'taught me to accept the humanity of other people, and my own, to dispel the fear, and much more'.[164] Seeking assistance was not a passive act. Considered choice also represents agency. In trying to resolve his moral troubles, recognising that he needed help and accepting it, Mackenzie continued to exert agency. So too did Roy Nightingale. 'Trying hard to see God's face', Nightingale drew on his faith as he expressed his wartime moral concerns—'This moral madness hate on hate'—through his poetry.[165] His poetry also recognises that there is hope beyond despair.[166]

Alec Arnel accepted help, too. Some of his 'healing came through a good marriage to begin with and a good family relationship'. With domestic stability, he was able to reflect on how he could make up for what he had lost during operational service and captivity. 'I now have time to live my life. I couldn't play the football I used to play, or the cricket, but I can do the other

---

and it resurfaced from the murky depths of my memory is also a possibility. I consider that it's a really accurate and powerful description of a post experience outcome'. Alexander records: Drew Gordon, email 30 April 2020.

[162] Mackenzie, *An Ordinary War 1940–1945*, p. 114.

[163] Mackenzie, *An Ordinary War 1940–1945*, p. 109.

[164] Mackenzie, *An Ordinary War 1940–1945*, pp. 114–115.

[165] Nightingale FA: Nightingale, wartime log book, 'Trying hard to see God's face' p. 49; 'moral madness', p. 30.

[166] Nightingale FA: Nightingale, Wartime log book, pp. 43 and 51.

things and I've got the opportunity now. I'm going to university.' With Margery's support, he upgraded his teaching qualifications and, later, sparked by an interest in human nature during his time in Stalag Luft III, studied psychology. He rejoined the RAAF and became a counsellor and educator. Despite the stability of a happy marriage and career, Arnel's estrangement from God continued. After a few years, he went back to church but 'I didn't really relate to it very much at all. I was cynical'. Like many, he wondered: '[t]his war—how did God allow this to happen … Why didn't He stop it?' It took some time to realise what was at the heart of his alienation from God. 'I was guilty. Behind it all was the guilt. I shouldn't feel like this. I shouldn't feel cynical about this.' Yet, there was a 'yearning' for what he had previously enjoyed. Helped by those who challenged his cynicism, he decided to try and 'find out what Christianity was all about'. 'And so I settled down to reading all the Bible. Just questioning concepts that I had … And when I read the book I began to believe. Really believe.' Arnel again found God. Following a career of military service, he took on a pastoral role in his church. He also cared for ill family members, and provided a haven for others. When asked if, through that life of service, there was any sense of atonement—a need to assuage his wartime guilt—he responded: 'I probably wasn't aware of it, but … as I've looked back, I realise that was my motivation to a very large extent. It was a way of cleansing myself of the sense of disgust that I had in some ways. Yes, it was a way of—yes—compensation'.[167] Through his acts of

[167] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 2 March 2017.

atonement and reinvigorated relationship with God, Arnel moved from the turmoil of long-term moral injury to moral serenity. He attained moral repair.

*****

Clinical psychologists and other health professionals have attempted to develop treatment models which rely on professional assistance and intervention to facilitate moral repair.[168] The moral sample, however, did not receive professional intervention. They attempted to manage their moral troubling on their own, or with the assistance of loved ones, or through faith and trust in God. Active goodness, for many, facilitated atonement. Moral troubling, however, was not always resolved. Sometimes it devolved into moral injury. Moral injury did not always give way to moral repair; of the moral sample, only Alec Arnel appears to have moved from moral injury to a calm resolution. Agency underpinned the former airmen's attempts to attain moral health. In actively managing the moral legacy of service and captivity, they were resilient. Some of the morally troubled also attained moral health by finding 'meaning and significance' in their traumatic experiences.[169] Many of the cohort, including those who indicated no psychological disturbance or moral troubling, also drew meaning from captivity. So too, did members of their families. Attaining composure through constructing meaning is the subject of chapter twelve.

---

[168] Litz et al., 'Moral Injury and moral repair in war veterans', pp. 695–706; Maguen and Litz, 'Moral Injury in Veterans of War', pp. 1–6.

[169] Farnsworth, Drescher, Nieuwsma, Walser, and Currier, 'The Role of Moral Emotions in Military Trauma', pp. 256–257; Currier, Holland, and Malott, 'Moral Injury, Meaning Making, and Mental Health in Returning Veterans', pp. 229–240; Frame, (ed.), *Moral Injury*, p. 255. Quote: Litz et al., 'Moral Injury and moral repair in war veterans', p. 701.

Chapter Eleven: Images

Some of the Australian airmen exhibited a degree of moral troubling. Len Netherway and Tony Gordon both assumed culpability for the fate of their crew members. Perhaps reflecting additional misplaced guilt, both grieved the loss of friends killed in the post-Great Escape reprisals. Both appeared to cope well with captivity but Netherway's guilt remained with him all his life. Gordon, who suffered much guilt, grief, and psychological disturbance after the war, committed suicide.

Image 111 represents, for Netherway's son, 'buried trauma'. Gordon largely hid his trauma from his family and medical professionals. His son only caught glimpses of it. Alec Arnel wrestled for many years with his moral dilemmas. He shared his moral anguish with his wife and members of his church. He is the only one of the cohort who seems to have moved from moral injury through to moral resolution.

Image 111: 'buried trauma'. Pencil sketch of Len Netherway by Gordon Brettell, December 1943. Netherway Family Archive.

Image 112: Tony Gordon, April 1942. Gordon Family Archive.

Image 113: Wing Commander Alec Arnel. Arnel Archive.

Chapter Twelve: Attaining Composure

It is a natural human response to seek meaning in difficult or traumatic experiences—in the 'face of meaninglessness'—to make sense of what has happened.[1] Finding meaning can facilitate recovery from trauma.[2] To not find it could result in greater distress.[3] This chapter argues that constructing meaning—attaining composure—is fundamental to resilience and ultimate coping with the legacy of captivity. It is also an act of agency.[4] This chapter discusses how many of the former airmen—particularly those who experienced war and captivity trauma or were morally troubled—composed meaning from their experiences through memoir, reflection, and faith. It also explores the transformative aspects of captivity and its legacy: blessings; personal growth; and, for the morally troubled, attainment of moral health. Wives and members of the second and third generations—the cohort's children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews—are also profoundly affected by captivity. This chapter discusses how some wives gained composure through love and accommodation. It explores how members of the second and third generations seek knowledge and create 'memories' of captivity; attempt to forge connections with their family's former prisoner of war through objects and pilgrimage; and make sense of captivity. It argues that they are agents in managing the intergenerational legacy of captivity. For ease

[1] Schok, Kleber, and Lensvelt-Mulders, 'A model of resilience and meaning after military deployment: Personal resources in making sense of war and peacekeeping experiences', pp. 328–338; Armour, 'Meaning Making in Survivorship: Application to Holocaust Survivors', pp. 440–468. Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* explores search for meaning after loss through a cultural lens. Quote: Garton, *The Cost of War*, p. x.
[2] Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, p. 126.
[3] Armour, 'Meaning Making in Survivorship', pp. 441–442.
[4] Ursano and Rundell, 'The Prisoner of War', in Jones, Sparacino, Wilcox, Rothberg, and Stokes, *War Psychiatry*, p. 444.

of reference, following the lead of authors William Strauss and Neil Howe who are credited with dubbing those who attained young adulthood in or near the year 2000 'millennials', members of the second and third generations are hereafter collectively referred to as 'intergenerationals'.

Composure

'Processing' experiences is a fundamental strategy for coping with trauma. Narrative is an important processing mechanism.[5] It allows the writer (or artist) to deal with difficult emotions as they arise—such as in the cohort's wartime diaries, poetry, log books, illustrations, and letters.[6] It is also a late-life method to reflect on events. Blending lived and recollected experience, report and reflection, late-life accounts provide insight into the long-term effects of past events; they convey emotions and affective responses.[7] Composure through narrative is an act of agency.[8] It is, as Michael Roper notes (drawing on Graham Dawson who coined the term, 'composure'), a 'means of actively managing painful experiences of the past'.[9] Composure creates meaningful order from the multitude of life events, experiences, memories, and emotions.[10]

Some of the cohort took a traditional path to composure by writing about their experiences. Jock Bryce compiled his account, based on his lost

[5] Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, pp. 78–79.
[6] Hunt and Robbins, Telling Stories of the War: Ageing Veterans Coping with their Memories through Narrative', p. 60.
[7] Houghton, *The Veterans' Tale*, 2019, pp. 4, 12–13.
[8] Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, p. 45.
[9] Roper, 'Re-Remembering the Soldier Hero: The Psychic and Social Construction of Memory in Personal Narratives of the Great War', p. 184.
[10] Houghton, *The Veterans' Tale*, p. 10.

diary, immediately after the war.[11] Most, like Jack Morschel and John Dack, wrote during their later years, when they had more time on their hands, 'as part of the process of resolution of life'.[12] Not all of the cohort became memoirists. Having reflected on their experiences, some presented well-rehearsed anecdotes to interviewers or audiences.[13] In doing so, whether by pen or with voice, they consciously broke their protective silence. Those who did so after the 'memory boom' of the 1990s, were part of the cultural and generational shifts from a post-war silence which related to 'getting on'. Their disclosures were embraced by a growing public interest in knowing about and acknowledging war service.[14] Earle Nelson self-published his late-life memoir because his grandchildren requested 'stories of the War'; their parents had not been interested and so he had kept silent.[15] Others, too, were encouraged by family. Ron Mackenzie began writing after his wife, Enid, pointed out that he had already started talking 'freely about the war', yet she did not know much about his 'particular war' and had not even read his diaries.[16] Death of a loved one prompted others to reflect on their past. Ronald Baines compiled various versions of his life, service, and captivity experiences after the death of Irene during an extended 'thinking of the past phase'.[17] Some, however, did not reveal anything other than small snippets,

---

[11] Bryce FA: 'Jock Bryce's POW Diary 1942–1945'.
[12] Morschel, *A Lancaster's Participation in Normandy Invasion 1944*; Dack, *So you Wanted Wings, Hey!*. Quote: Bomford, 'Fractured Lives', PhD thesis, p. 3.
[13] Including interviews in the Australians at War Film Archive, Australian War Memorial sound archives, the National Library of Australia's oral history collections, and the Imperial War Museum Sound Archive. See also NLA Justin O'Byrne, 'Reminiscential conversations', 29 August 1983–28 July 1984; AWM PR90/035: Ferres, 'A POW in Germany'; Bill Fordyce, after-dinner speech at the Melbourne All States Reunion, 13 April 1989.
[14] Winter, 'Thinking about Silence', in Ben-Ze'ev, Gino, and Winter (eds), *Shadows of War*, p. 23.
[15] Nelson, *If Winter Comes*, p. 1.
[16] Mackenzie, *An Ordinary War 1940–1945*, p. ix.
[17] Baines FA: Baines, 'Life Story Notes: Bits and Pieces Plus Remnants'.

or behavioural tics which the family members linked back to captivity. Donald Fraser savoured chocolate, and if any of his family ate a block all in one sitting, he would accuse them of 'doing a Comber', after Albert Comber who could never resist eating all of his ration at once.[18] Peter Todd recalled how his father, Ken, loved cheese: other than the abominable-smelling 'fish cheese' it was scarce in camp and a prized treat. Reacting against crowded close confinement, Ken Todd valued his privacy in civilian life. He liked his quiet time.[19] The snippets created a sense of knowing, but the gaps in true understanding resembled gulfs.

As Frances Houghton notes, memoirists are keen to 'retain the integrity' of their accounts.[20] They want to tell the truth as they know it or, as John Dack emphatically stated, 'as **I** remember it'.[21] Accordingly, some researched significant events and included bibliographies. They consulted their own contemporary records or those of their friends. Syd Wickham asked fellow ex-kriegies to edit and correct his manuscript, as well as to authenticate 'the many "tall stories"'.[22] Some even, as John Dack did, '[stole], unhesitatingly and quite without compunction' from those who were also there.[23] Despite this emphasis on truth, both Dack and Calton Younger included reconstructed dialogue in their memoirs.[24] Kriegie-memoirists often omitted the darker elements of their collective experience such as homosexuality, fractious

[18] Alexander records: Ian Fraser, interview 25 May 2016.
[19] Alexander records: Peter Todd, interview 13 October 2015.
[20] Houghton, *The Veterans' Tale*, p. 10.
[21] Dack, *So you Wanted Wings, Hey!*, p. iv. Dack's emphasis.
[22] Wickham, *We Wore Blue*, 4.
[23] Dack, *So you Wanted Wings, Hey!*, p. 97.
[24] Dack, *So you Wanted Wings, Hey!*; Younger, *No Flight From the Cage*.

relationships, and physical ordeals.[25] They emphasised humour, coping, endurance, stoicism, active resistance, and their own physicality, all of which reinforced their carefully constructed wartime fit and well composure. Some ex-kriegie authors, perhaps fearing their captivity had little merit, positioned their accounts within the 'escape' genre, regardless of whether or not they had actually attempted to escape.[26] In writing of escape and active resistance generally, they highlighted, as Ian Isherwood notes of Great War POW-memoirists, 'soldierly agency'.[27] In doing so, they reinforced their own active masculine and martial identities. The cohort's memoirs, however, did not have enough escape or unremitting trauma (such as in accounts by prisoners of Japan) to satisfy commercial publishers. As such, all but two of the cohort's memoirs were self-published or unpublished. The two exceptions were by niche military publishers.[28]

Composure is an emotive act; memoir is emotionally-laden.[29] The fear of final battles, shame of capture, and the affective bonds of air force and kriegie brotherhood, are evident. So too is the grief underpinning accounts of the deaths of crew members and the after-effects of the Great Escape. But not every memoir is an overt record of affect. Emotional silence is either an intentional authorial choice or a lingering consequence of controlling

[25] Houghton, *The Veterans' Tale*, p. 22. Ron Mackenzie is a rare exception regarding homosexuality. *An Ordinary War 1940–1945*. Jock Bryce was one of the few who admitted difficult relationships. 'Jock Bryce's POW Diary 1942–1945'.
[26] Cull, 'Great Escapes: "Englishness" and the Prisoner of War Genre', pp. 282–292; Pegram, *Surviving the Great War*, Chapter 6, 'Well fed and plenty of freedom: Autonomy and independence in German captivity', pp. 107–128.
[27] Isherwood, 'Writing the "ill-managed nursery"', p. 267.
[28] Younger, *No Flight From the Cage*; Kerr, *Shot Down*.
[29] Houghton, *The Veterans' Tale*, p. 12.

emotions in service and captivity.[30] As Ron Mackenzie advised his readers, airmen had been taught to keep their emotions under control in the interests of operational efficiency. '[D]efiance and self-discipline' in camp 'can produce a barrenness of emotion'.[31] Charles Lark's daughter, Jennifer, 'nagged him for years' to record his experiences for the family and 'posterity's sake' and was 'so thankful that he actually consented'. She worked with Lark on his memoir but was ultimately frustrated by his inability to reveal the affective dimension. 'He couldn't do it. He was brought up in such a strict household that it was just out of his sphere to describe his emotions. … I tried to dig it out of him … and I couldn't get anywhere.' Jennifer believed Lark's emotional silence in his memoir also related to his strenuous 'repressing the memories' to allay psychological disturbance.[32] Even omitted emotion reveals much about the writer's emotional state. Accordingly, even those accounts—including Lark's—as Barbara Rosenwein states, 'are as important as overtly emotional texts'.[33]

Rather than consistently stating how he felt, Lark's emotion is conveyed through the power of the language he used to describe his struggle for survival. After baling out, the seriously wounded man '*felt quite helpless* and cold'. (My emphasis here and following.) Before hitting the water, he inflated his Mae West life jacket. On landing, his parachute canopy covered him. 'It was some time before *I found strength* enough to get out from underneath it.'

---

[30] Authorial choice: Winter, 'Thinking about Silence', in Ben-Ze'ev, Gino, and Winter (eds), *Shadows of War*, pp. 4–11.
[31] Mackenzie, *An Ordinary War 1940–1945*, p. x.
[32] Alexander records: Jennifer Walsh, interview 29 April 2017.
[33] Rosenwein, 'Problems and Methods in the History of Emotions', [unpaginated. Section entitled 'Read the Silence'].

His 'next task called for *considerable effort*, as *I really struggled* with my "good" left hand to unclip the parachute from the harness'. He bobbed in the water, growing weaker. He had no feeling in his right arm, the pain of his wounds was intensifying, and he was shocked to realise that the thing that had been flopping about on his cheek was his right eye. Despite this, '*I just kicked* until I couldn't kick any more … There were many times when *I didn't care* if I drowned. But *fortunately*, somehow the *will to live* returned and I *managed to struggle on* a little further'. Lark made it to shore, collapsed with exhaustion, then climbed a canal bank and stumbled along until he found a Dutch householder to help him. Within hours, he was on his way to hospital and captivity. Despite his initial feelings of helplessness, Lark struggled to survive and, despite a seemingly powerless situation, defined himself as a man of action with considerable inner strength and fortitude.[34] Lark reframed his survival story from one of helplessness to one of power. It was not devoid of emotion but full of a fierce desire to live.

Paul Brickhill did not write a memoir. He did, however, compose influential narratives of captivity which constructed meaning from his experiences and those of his fellow prisoners. In *Escape to Danger*, an account of miraculous downings, Brickhill and co-author, Conrad Norton, turn loss of operational agency into astonishing fast-paced stories of survival rather than preludes to captivity. The co-authors present heroic and larger than life characters, including Brickhill himself ('Ted B—— who was a Sydney journalist').[35] B——'s valiant struggle to bale out of his stricken Spitfire

[34] Lark, *A Lark on the Wing*, pp. 62–63.
[35] Brickhill and Norton, *Escape to Danger*. Chapters include: '"By the Seat of his Pants"', 'The Luckiest Ever', 'Out of the Fire', and 'Mid-Air Miracle'. Ted B's story, pp. 166–170.

provides a stark contrast to the man felled by claustrophobia and post-war anguish (not mentioned in any of Brickhill's writings of life in Stalag Luft III) portrayed by his biographers.[36] Brickhill was later invited to expand *Escape to Danger*'s section on the 1944 mass breakout into a book which firmly shaped public perception of captivity in Stalag Luft III; it is the epitome of the 'escape' genre. It also firmly highlights the emotions of captivity—pride, defiance, brotherly love, and, after the deaths of the fifty airmen, grief. The breakout, for example, was not known as the 'Great Escape' until publication of Brickhill's *The Great Escape* in 1951. From that time, the book's title—chosen by Brickhill's publisher—entered the lexicon as participants, bystanders and the public all appropriated it.[37] While many of the Australian cohort were impressed with Brickhill's book, some were not pleased with John Sturges' 1963 film-of-the-book. They begrudge it the Americans, the motorbike, a fake Australian accent, and other factual inaccuracies inserted in the interests of 'good cinema'.[38] Len Netherway, in the words of his son, Mike, was one of many who considered it 'just a parody of what actually happened'.[39] Despite their discomfort, the film, along with Brickhill's book, compose captivity in Stalag Luft III as an action-packed success story and reinforce that camp's reputation as a bastion of near-universal escape-mindedness and participation in the escape organisation. The mass escape was not a tragic failure, it was 'Great'. Book and film

[36] ADB, Wilcox, 'Brickhill, Paul Chester (1916–1991)'; Dando-Collins, *The Hero Maker*, pp. 104–105, 124–125.
[37] Dando-Collins, *The Hero Maker*, p. 198.
[38] Alexander records: Cath McNamara, interview 18 July 2016; NLA Justin O'Byrne, 'Reminiscential conversations', 29 August 1983–28 July 1984; AAWFA: Righetti 0984, 16 September 2003.
[39] Alexander records: Mike Netherway, interview 28 September 2016.

reinforce and validate the kriegies' programme of active disruption in the barbed-wire battleground. They also highlight their collective fit and well composure. Indeed, despite the physical, psychological and human costs of captivity, the airmen revelled in their defiant acts: 'We were the "naughty boys"', *Sean Hanrahan* proudly declared four decades later, 'and never stopped fighting the Germans in every way we could'.[40]

Compiling medical testimony is also an act of composure. It was written to gain benefit and, as such, elided the positive aspects of captivity. *Antony Duffy*, who, in 1974 largely attested to the boredom of captivity, stated in 1982 that 'my general treatment was not better than would be expected of the Nazi war machine, and was in fact at times atrocious'.[41] Others drew on popular memory of Stalag Luft III's worst moments, indicating they were incarcerated in 'the notorious' Stalag Luft III, 'the scene of "The Great Escape"'.[42] In repeating their physical and psychological suffering for DVA and medical professionals, the authors adopted a new persona. They presented themselves as victims. Their testimonies were narratives of suffering and trauma. In asserting a victimhood which had been publicly overlooked in light of the experience of former prisoners of Japan, the former airmen seemingly undermined their independent masculinity as well as their fit and well composure. However, by fighting for recognition by DVA of war-caused physical ailments and psychological disturbance, and drawing on medical

[40] DVA NCX065122-02: personal statement, 17 January 1980.
[41] DVA QMX086167-02: supporting statement, 24 February 1982.
[42] 'Notorious': DVA NMSS04454-01: personal statement, [undated, date stamped 5 March 2002]; DVA NCX065122-02: personal statement, 17 January 1980; summary of case history 29 June 1982. Reference to 'notorious' was not limited to medical testimony. Refer AAWFA: Gaulton 1276, 3 February, 2004; IWMSA Younger: 23329, [no day] November 2002. 'The scene': DVA NMX293081-01: lifestyle questionnaire 27 April 1994.

precedents to claim new medical rights, many demonstrated a variation of their martial agency.[43] The enemy against which they battled was DVA. Accordingly, their new identity of 'victim' was not just a convenience for benefit. It was, as historian Craig Barrett argues, a 'matter of deliberate representation'.[44] But their victimhood was only a temporary guise—off the public record. It could not subsume their public narratives of fit and well if details of their physical and medical trials remained within closed DVA files. As such, the former kriegies failed to gain late-life public recognition of victimhood. The perception of the greater trauma of prisoners of Japan had not been dulled. Their wartime and post-war identity of fit and well active airmen remained intact.

Fortunate lives

The cohort's public accounts are not, as Samuel Hynes categorises POW memoirs, a genre which represents 'the *other* side of war, where human beings suffer but do not fight' as they endure soldierly humiliation.[45] They do, however, highlight one of Hynes' abiding literary interests: transformation, particularly, '*inner* change'.[46] They, as Stephen Garton points out, belong to the literary tradition of *Bildungsroman*—accounts of personal, moral, and psychological growth.[47] For many—not all—of the cohort's traumatised and morally troubled, and even those expressing little or no

[43] DVA QMX058112-02: letter 3 March 1983, referred to in Reasons for Decision, 1 March 1984; DVA VMX109327-01: claim, 8 July 1994; DVA MX231738-02: lifestyle questionnaire, 16 February 1987.
[44] Barrett, 'Remembering Captivity: Australian Prisoners of War of the Japanese', PhD thesis, p. 108.
[45] Hynes, *The Soldiers' Tales*, pp. 232–233.
[46] Hynes, *The Soldiers' Tales*, p. 3. Hynes' emphasis.
[47] Garton, *The Cost of War*, pp. 223–224.

psychological disturbance, captivity proved transformative in a positive way. They discerned the good points of their wartime incarceration and its legacy. Some perceived a positive change in themselves or learned something of themselves, others, and perhaps the world.[48] They spoke and wrote of these transformations. For many, improved mental well-being ensued.[49] Like Calton Younger, many did 'not regret those years'.[50]

Some of the cohort focused on the benefits of captivity; they composed 'blessings and growth' narratives. Some saw the benefits of captivity even before liberation. One unidentified kriegie told his mother in June 1944, shortly after D-Day when hopes of a speedy end to the war were high, that 'I naturally regret my four years in prison, but I have got such a lot of good out of it that I sometimes wonder if it was not a blessing in a very good disguise'. In the next breath he stepped back from wholeheartedly accepting that captivity was a blessing. Even so, he wrote, 'if I get home this year I will be well up on the credit side and I am sure I can make up such losses as there are'.[51] Huie Bowden recorded his increasing awareness of the benefits of his hugger-mugger life in early December 1944. 'I have gathered some very good experience in living with other people and I must put some of the lessons down.'[52] Shortly after homecoming, *Barry Bridges*, seemingly 'unaffected by

[48] Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, p. 83; Mackenzie, *An Ordinary War 1940–1945*, p. 115; Younger, *No Flight From the Cage*, p. 236; Borsht Archive: Borsht, 'A Life Well Lived', p. 120.
[49] Schok, Kleber, and Lensvelt-Mulders, 'A model of resilience and meaning after military deployment', p. 328.
[50] Younger, *No Flight From the Cage*, p. 236; AAWFA: Cornish 1388, 2 July 2004; AAWFA: Righetti 0984, 16 September 2003.
[51] NLA FERG/4550: *P.O.W.*, No. 36, 15 January 1945, unattributed letter, 30 June 1944, 14.
[52] Bowden FA: 'Diary of Huie Bowden July 1944–May 1945', 3 December 1944, p. 41.

his experiences … is of the opinion that in some ways he has been helped by the inforced [sic] idleness'.[53]

Most blessings and growth narratives arose from late-life reflection.[54] The emotional communities of captivity left a legacy for Les Harvey. 'As this peacetime future unfolded for me', he wrote, 'I came more and more to value my experience as a prisoner of war ... during that time, I learned a great deal about community relationships and a great deal about the way the personal resources of individuals can be identified and applied in the solution of problems'.[55] Alex Kerr felt that 'I had been lucky in many ways to have had the experience and to have lived through it. I had grown in self-confidence and assumed leadership roles in many activities in camp … expanded my general knowledge'.[56] Rather than awaken distressing recollections, transcribing his original diary and shaping it into a memoir 'proved to be a most rewarding exercise … [b]ecause it has brought back to me the vivid memories of a unique part of my life'.[57] Crucially, Kerr, and other memoirists, successfully processed their experiences. Recall was enjoyable. They were not reliving traumatic events.[58]

Luck and fortune feature in many accounts. Like Kerr, many 'gradually realised that being shot down was the best thing that could have happened'.[59] Each was 'one of the lucky ones'.[60] They drew meaning from the very fact of

---

[53] DVA MX167147-01: MRU medical board, 5 October 1945.
[54] McCarthy, *Last Call of Empire*, p. 131; AAWFA: Righetti 0984, 16 September 2003.
[55] Arnel archive: Harvey, 'Over, Down and Out', p. 28.
[56] Kerr, *Shot Down*, p. 191.
[57] Kerr, *Shot Down*, p. 193.
[58] Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, p. 154.
[59] Kerr, *Shot Down*, p. 191.
[60] Bill Fordyce in Billett, *Memories of War*, p. 199.

their survival and, like *Mark Derrett* who experienced considerable post-war psychological disturbance, because they had 'managed to gradually adjust back into civilian life' despite physical and mental scars.[61] Because they 'had been given a reprieve' and were, in a sense, 'living on borrowed time', life was a bonus. They recognised the blessings of life—the value in it—and made a commitment to living it to the fullest.[62] Cy Borsht made the most of his life, and, one of several who quoted Great War veteran Albert Facey (who became renowned for putting a positive spin on adversity—both real and made-up), would often tell his family that he had led 'a fortunate life'. Even taking into account captivity, his daughter relates, Borsht 'always insisted life had been good to him and he was a very lucky man'.[63] Others echoed Facey's sentiment. Grey-Smith gained composure through art. Wartime imprisonment, paradoxically, was 'a piece of luck', he asserted. It ended his operational career, precipitated mental trauma as well as the tuberculosis which contributed to his early death, but, he stated, '[w]ithout adversity I would not have become a painter'.[64] Without captivity, 'I'd have missed the thing that gives meaning to life': art.[65] 'I really do put on record that what seemed a terrible calamity' was actually 'one of the most fortunate things'.[66]

Recognising their own good fortune, some extended it to others.[67] Justin O'Byrne, Labor senator for Tasmania for thirty-four years, dedicated his life to the public good. Surviving combat as a Spitfire pilot and captivity, he was

---

[61] SLSA SRG 869 Series 14. Details not included to maintain DVA client confidentiality.
[62] Kerr, *Shot Down*, p. 191.
[63] Alexander records: Jennifer Long, email 5 July 2018.
[64] Hetherington, *Australian Painters*, p. 146.
[65] Hetherington, *Australian Painters*, p. 147.
[66] NLA HdBC: Guy Grey-Smith, 29 May 1965.
[67] *Barbed Wire and Bamboo*, Vol. 28, No. 3, June 1978, p. 20; Nightingale FA: Nightingale, Wartime log book, p. 55.

grateful 'to have experienced such contrasts in my life, of happiness and sorrow, of hunger and plenty, of confidence and depression'. Like others, he discovered much about his personal resilience, particularly his ability to adapt 'to any circumstances in which I found myself, whether it was … holding the esteem of my fellow pilots under pressure; coping with crises such as saving my life by parachute; coming through long years of prisoner of war life'. O'Byrne also experienced personal growth. His family and Catholic background, as well as his wartime experiences, 'allowed me to be outward-looking, to be sympathetic to my fellow men, capable of a sensitivity and tolerance'.[68] Consolidating his views on social justice in captivity, he was stimulated to make a lasting contribution to Australian society. He believed there had to be a better world.[69] A compassionate man, he endeavoured to make it so, including fighting for veterans' entitlements.[70] In particular, recalled Alec Arnel, he worked for 'a better deal for ex-prisoners of war'.[71]

Composure through spiritual sensibility

As Nigel Hunt argues, God, faith, or spiritual awareness can facilitate sense-making.[72] Despite losing any sense of faith during the war, looking back on his dark days in Buchenwald, Eric Johnston felt he had not been entirely alone. Before presenting his son with a copy of Colin Burgess' *Destination Buchenwald*, an account of the illegal incarceration there of 168 allied airmen,

---

[68] NLA Justin O'Byrne, 'Reminiscential conversations', 29 August 1983–28 July 1984, Tape 51.
[69] Alexander records: Anne O'Byrne, interview 26 May 2016.
[70] Alexander records: Anne O'Byrne, interview 26 May 2016; John Dainer, letter to the editor 'A man who will not be forgotten', *The Canberra Times*, 22 November 1993, p. 10; Alexander records: Arnel, interview 29 January 2015.
[71] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 23 June 2016.
[72] Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, pp. 88–89.

he inscribed it with the words: 'This was the time in my life when there was only one set of footprints'.[73] The allusion is to the final verse of 'Footprints in the Sand' where it appears as if God has abandoned his 'child' but that was not the case: 'When you see only one set of footprints, / it was then that I carried you'.[74] Despite latterly recognising God's presence during his ordeal—and in late-life continuing to acknowledge it—Johnston never regained his faith. His son, Colin, however, considered that, 'he had something': instead of believing in God, Johnston developed a humanist world view. While Johnston never forgave the *Gestapo* and concentration camp staff for what they had done to him and his fellows, he did not blame the German people, and bore them no animosity. According to his son, he 'believed that this was a most beautiful world with just a couple of bumps along the way'.[75] Johnston's composure came through accepting 'what had happened to him. He never dwelt on it'. He considered that 'life's too short. We've only got one'. So, even when he was assailed by nightmares, he would 'just get on with it', his wife Evelyn asserted.[76]

Bruce Lumsden believed God would see him through the 'ordeal' of captivity.[77] Prayer was his strength and solace during wartime confinement, and his post-war spiritual life was equally sustaining.[78]Although he experienced hard conditions, with little food and no heating during the severe winter months, Lumsden evidenced no signs of long-term trauma and, for

---

[73] Johnston FA: Inscribed copy of Burgess, *Destination Buchenwald*, 1995.
[74] The authorship of this poem is contested.
[75] Alexander records: Colin Johnston, email 9 September 2016.
[76] Alexander records: Evelyn Johnston, interview 18 October 2016.
[77] Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'The Complete Tour', Lumsden, letter 11 July 1988.
[78] 'With Christ Behind the Barbed Wire', *The Age*, 30 March 1946, p. 4; Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'The Complete Tour'; Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'Behind the Scenes'; Alexander records: Jaime Bradbeer, email 9 September 2016.

many years, did not feel 'any personal guilt' relating to his part in the bomber offensive.[79] Indeed, he thought the matter closed. Despite his guilt-free wartime conscience, Bruce Lumsden developed misgivings regarding his role in the bombing campaign after reading an account of his first bombing operation to Bremen. 'I found this report sombre reading.' He wondered if he could still regard his wartime questioning of his role in bombing operations as being finally closed. Four years before his death, he concluded that, 'I could not do so. I can only await the Judgement Day and commit my soul to Him who judges righteously'.[80] Lumsden had, according to his family, 'a graced existence', and was at peace as he awaited that judgement. He had nothing to reconcile.[81] In his last months of life, he wrote that, 'as I look back on my 86 years I cannot help thinking … of that ancient ascription of thanks, "Surely goodness and mercy has followed me all the days of my life"'.[82]

Recognition

For some suffering war or captivity trauma, recognition 'symbolise[s] acknowledgement and verification of emotional pain, and represent[s] the gratitude of the society' in which former prisoners of war live.[83] Lack of appreciation of experience and trauma from loved ones provoked affective pain and impeded composure. For many years, Rex Austin had no sense that his military service had been of value because his father had not considered it of merit. He ridiculed it. '"Your war service is very distinguished by virtue of the fact that it is so undistinguished"', Austin recalled him saying. 'And

[79] Conditions: DVA X215879-01: letter, 4 December 2003; 'personal guilt': Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'Behind the Scenes'.
[80] Lumsden FA: Bradbeer and Lumsden, 'Behind the Scenes', p. 95.
[81] Alexander records: Jaime Bradbeer, email 9 September 2016.
[82] DVA X215879-01: letter, 4 December 2003.
[83] Macleod, 'The reactivation of post-traumatic stress disorder in later life', p. 632.

that's a good kick in the pants for you.' Austin eventually saw the worth of his wartime experiences, particularly captivity, through talking with like-minded friends. Together, they breached their silence to compose a mutual narrative of comfort. 'I think perhaps being tied up with the Air Force Association … because a few of them are ex POWs has enabled me to talk about it more so than I used to. I feel more comfortable talking about it … I feel now that perhaps I did make some sort of contribution.'[84]

Others broke their silence as they sought recognition from DVA of war-related physical and mental debility. Their 'witnessing' was not to 'integrate the experience into their life history, autobiography, and personality', as Christina Twomey notes, or even exclusively for benefit, (although that was a consideration for some who had to retire early).[85] It was to elicit both a meaningful diagnosis and precipitate the bureaucratic and medical understanding which would, the former airmen hoped, facilitate healing. Where contribution or suffering was not officially recognised, psychological states worsened. 'I would have been relieved of many anxieties and acted differently at times of stress (domestic and financial) than I did had I been aware that in fact I did have a neurotic condition', *Martin Quinlan* attested. 'The knowledge of this … [and the ability] to secure medical assistance in the event of a complete breakdown would have assisted my mental outlook enormously.'[86] (Perhaps he would not have attempted to commit suicide 'by

[84] AAWFA: Austin 0382, 5 June 2003.
[85] Twomey, *Australia's Forgotten Prisoners*, p. 164; Macleod, 'The reactivation of post-traumatic stress disorder in later life', p. 632; Alexander records: Evelyn Johnston, interview 18 October 2016. Financial implications of early retirement: DVA NCPX25587-01: additional statement for appeal against pension decision, 18 July 1978; NAA B503 POW Trust fund application R746: Goldthorpe, 405849, 19 April 1952.
[86] DVA NMX188716-01: grounds of appeal, [undated, lodged 16 September 1966].

electricity'.[87]) 'The little thing I needed most was the knowledge (medical) that I was neurotic and that I could have had help.' This, *Quinlan* contended, 'was the crutch that would have helped me to my feet and allowed me to fight back better'.[88]

Recognition of physical and psychological debility, paradoxically, shored up masculinity. Although mental disturbance often led to early retirement, thus creating a blow to the manly imperative to provide financial security for their families, a war-caused pension meant they were still providing. 'For him', Albert Comber's daughter related, 'family was everything and he was the head of the family and his role was to look after the family so he's still doing that'.[89] This was particularly important for those who wanted to provide for their widows. All former prisoners of war may have been entitled to free medical treatment from 1974, but, if they were not receiving war-caused disability entitlements, a wife, until 1993, was not entitled to a widow's pension unless she could demonstrate that her husband's death was related to service. This caused great distress as women tried to describe events of which they had little knowledge or requested their husband's friends to provide details on their behalf, or raked over raw or traumatic memories to satisfy bureaucracy. *Madeleine Reed* was denied a war widow's pension on appeal in 1969 and on review in 1970. She was only granted it in 1993 after seeking the intercession of Bruce Ruxton, the RSL's Victorian State President.[90]

---

[87] DVA NMX188716-01: case summary, 6 December 1960.
[88] DVA NMX188716-01: grounds of appeal, [undated, lodged 16 September 1966].
[89] Alexander records: Cath McNamara, interview 18 July 2016.
[90] Family documents. Identity protected at request of family.

Attaining moral health

Composure could resolve moral troubling before it devolved into moral injury. It could also bring about moral repair after moral injury.[91] Some of the cohort's moral sample sought consolation, resolution, and composure by rationalising their actions. In doing so, they assuaged their guilt through self-forgiveness. Colin Phelps concluded that he could bear no blame for the fate of his crew because of his care in piloting. It was not his fault that his aircraft had collided with another in the over-crowded bomber stream. '[M]y conscience is quite clear … no-one kept a better look out for the other aircraft than I did, but it's almost impossible to see other machines in the great blackness.'[92] Bomber pilot Syd Wickham took consolation for the death of his close friend and navigator, and the fact that he and other crew members had been taken prisoner, by recognising that 'we … had made a good attack and with the rest of the flight can claim success [on that final operation]'.[93] Paul Royle and Geoff Cornish were pragmatic about their involvement in the Great Escape as well as its consequences. 'You couldn't foresee these things, you just wanted to get out, then what happens would happen', Royle stated.[94] Guilt may have niggled, but Cornish 'wasn't sorry, I couldn't honestly say that I had been because we were all fatalists'. Cornish argued that Charles Hall, who took his place in the Great Escape while he joined the medical staff

[91] Litz et al., 'Moral Injury and moral repair in war veterans', p. 701; Farnsworth, Drescher, Nieuwsma, Walser, and Currier, 'The Role of Moral Emotions in Military Trauma', pp. 256–257; Currier, Holland, and Malott, 'Moral Injury, Meaning Making, and Mental Health in Returning Veterans', pp. 229–240; Frame, (ed.), *Moral Injury*, p. 255.
[92] MHRC CPA: Colin Phelps, letter to parents, 17 May 1945.
[93] Wickham, *We Wore Blue*, pp. 121–122.
[94] SLWA: Royle, 4 March 2014.

in Belaria compound, would have felt little guilt if their situations had been reversed. 'Charles would have accepted it exactly the same way.'[95]

Elevating death in service—whether on operations or after the Great Escape—to a Christian sacrifice, as Stephen Garton notes, imposes obligations on survivors. Many feel they need to repay the debt of life freely given.[96] As they had done in captivity, some former airmen sought composure by keeping faith with their dead, and repaying the debt through acknowledgement and memorial.[97] They visited crash or grave sites, and the remnants of Stalag Luft III. Their pilgrimages and tributes were fraternal expressions of love and grief. Geoff Cornish prepared himself beforehand, hoping to steel himself against the 'steep psychological challenge'. 'However, when I walked up to the line of gravestones … the scenes came flooding back to me and the realisation that … all names of very great and very dear friends. … I was literally overwhelmed.'[98] Reg Giddey, who never forgot the emotional effect of hearing that fifty of his fellow prisoners had been killed in the post-Great Escape reprisals, went to Poland for the escape's 50th anniversary.[99] There, he laid flowers on his friends' graves.[100] Even more moving for him than the official commemorations and his personal act of remembrance was his return to the site of his Lancaster crash, where he had left behind his crew members. Giddey's emotions as he recollected that day during interview were striking. His head was bowed, his shoulders were

---

[95] IWMSA Cornish: 23327, 28 May 2003.
[96] Garton, *The Cost of War*, p. 72.
[97] Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, pp. 172–173.
[98] IWMSA Cornish: 27054, 9 June 2004.
[99] Giddey, in *Remembrance: a farewell to the generation now passing into history*, 2007. Directed by Larry McGrath.
[100] Preen FA: photograph; Giddey, in *Remembrance: a farewell to the generation now passing into history*, 2007. Directed by Larry McGrath.

hunched, and he did not look at the camera, whereas throughout the rest of the interview he candidly spoke direct to camera.[101]

Senator Justin O'Byrne travelled to Eastern Europe in 1975 as a guest of the Soviet, Polish, and East German governments. It was an official tour but he particularly wanted to visit the camps in which he had been incarcerated, and to 'retrace my footsteps along that long frozen trek' of the forced march. 'It was an intensely cold trek and I never forgot it.' He also wanted to show his wife, Anne, the route he and his friends had taken, as well as the POW camps.[102] The tour of Stalag Luft III was particularly moving for both of them. 'Oh, it was very emotional', recalled Anne. 'Where the camp was, it was all just trees until you went into this sort of glade where the little altar was and it was very, very touching and emotional and sad.'[103] O'Byrne had been involved with the mass-escape tunnel, had drawn lots for his place in the Great Escape, and had sewn a black cloth patch to his uniform to signify 'our deep mourning' for friends who had been killed in the reprisals. He had also helped construct the memorial cairn outside the camp.[104] Returning to that site was, for him an intensely affective experience. 'Very sad. Brought back lots of memories.'[105]

Some friends of those killed in the Great Escape reprisals made sense of their deaths by framing them as Christian sacrifices. Others, morally troubled, found similar meaning. Syd Wickham dedicated his memoir to his

---

[101] Giddey, in *Remembrance: a farewell to the generation now passing into history*, 2007. Directed by Larry McGrath.
[102] 'POW to retrace steps', *The Canberra Times*, 2 July 1975, p. 3.
[103] Alexander records: Anne O'Byrne, interview 26 May 2016.
[104] NLA Justin O'Byrne, 'Reminiscential conversations', 29 August 1983–28 July 1984, Tape 51.
[105] Alexander records: Anne O'Byrne, interview 26 May 2016.

navigator and other 'close friends who also made the supreme sacrifice'.[106] In doing so, Wickham not only gave noble meaning to their deaths, but placed them in an acceptable moral context. He also acknowledged the fraternal love shared by his intimate 'brotherhood of airmen'. So, too, did Jack Morschel. Standing at his friends' gravesides, trying to find an answer to his question, '*Was it worthwhile?*', Morschel concluded, '[m]y answer would be that the alternative to confronting Germany and Japan may have been too horrible for all our kith and kin to comprehend'. Accordingly, he 'wish[ed] to think that Alan, Reg, Jim and Alex, together with far too many others, paid the supreme sacrifice for the benefit of us all'.[107]

Alec Arnel, who had moved from moral injury to moral health, also constructed meaning from his experiences. After a lifetime of reflection, Arnel framed his extreme moral troubles within a blessings and growth narrative. They had been of value and he had grown from them. 'I had been tested', physically, psychologically, and emotionally. 'Yes. I'd faced fear [and had] doubts about my capacity to do things. But I came away with a confidence that I might not have had otherwise' and an ability to 'cope with life'. Importantly, despite the moral pain he suffered, Arnel was 'glad in the end' that he 'had been honest' in questioning his rationale for fighting. Ultimately, 'I think I dealt with the traumas in a way that made me a stronger person'.[108]

---

[106] Wickham, *We Wore Blue*, p. 5.
[107] Morschel, *A Lancaster's Participation in Normandy Invasion 1944*, p. 41. Morschel's emphasis.
[108] Alexander records: Arnel, interview 2 March 2017.

Marital composure

As Joy Damousi points out, some wives composed narratives of acceptance which attributed difficult behaviour, including domestic violence, to 'the war'.[109] Some of the cohort's spouses found composure through love and accommodation; some marriages became stronger as husbands and wives both made the most of their difficult lives. Even in the most challenging relationships, women found ways to accommodate their husband's behaviour.[110] *Cynthia Lane* 'was used to dealing with trauma' inside her marriage and often said to her daughter, 'just allow the pain to wash over you like water off a duck's back'. *Cynthia* 'suffered incredibly emotionally', and with little support, recalled her daughter, *Bethany*. She had no other family to turn to and 'in those days you never divorced'.[111] She put her children first, protecting them from *Gerard's* behaviour by trying to create a 'safe place'. 'In her quiet way Mum built … a small spark of hope in us by reading the Bible with us.'[112] While *Francine MacKinlay* repeatedly left her aggressive husband, she just as often came back. Her marriage was emotional and turbulent; her husband drank and developed cirrhosis of the liver. She kept in regular contact with his doctor, reporting his condition.[113] They were still married (she was the informant) when the relatively young *Matthew* died of a coronary occlusion. *Maggie Dexter*, who almost lost the family home through her husband's gambling, lived through his alcohol-fuelled failure of four businesses. She endured 'the tension' of his nervous condition [which]

---

[109] Damousi, *Living with the Aftermath*, pp. 110–126.
[110] Bomford, 'Fractured Lives', PhD thesis, p. 159.
[111] Alexander records: *Bethany Lane*, email 26 February 2020.
[112] Alexander records: *Bethany Lane*, email 27 February 2020.
[113] DVA QMX022543-02.

unfortunately affects [our] home life' and was, *Jonathan* attested in 1980, 'magnificent to bear with it'.[114] Gender norms may have been inverted, with women working to support their family, or supplement incomes (creating the paradox of traditional helpmeet and provider) but many did so willingly. *Glenda Quinlan* was deemed 'a sensible woman who is making great efforts to keep the family together' as she balanced work, home duties, and care of her husband.[115] After a fifty-seven- year marriage punctuated by recurring mental trauma, including what was later diagnosed as PTSD, Eric and Evelyn Johnston's love never faltered. They sat beside each other in their bedroom and cried together when Eric told Evelyn he only had six months to live. She later averred that, 'I've had a very good life. A brilliant life'. '[W]hen I look back on my whole life I'm very lucky.' Their strong connection remained after Johnston's death. 'The bond was so damned close—without that, without the memories and everything, well, I would be a shell.'[116] Marital happiness and pride also transcended pain for Helen and Brian Richards. 'I will always be proud of the way my late husband just got on with life', Helen attested. He 'possessed an indomitable spirit even in his final illness, we shared 43 years of very happy marriage and he has raised a family of whom he was so proud and who are so proud of him … I feel he made a great contribution to this country'.[117]

Transmission of captivity trauma

[114] DVA MX305007-01: claim for medical treatment and pension, 19 May 1980.
[115] DVA NMX188716-01: letter from C.H.M.M., psychiatrist to Dr S.R., 13 December 1960.
[116] Alexander records: Evelyn Johnston, interview 18 October 2016.
[117] SLSA SRG 869 Series 14: Helen T. Richards, item 44, 19 September 2001.

The cohort's well-practised selective silence was an effective protective mechanism on some levels but it had consequences. It precluded the intimacy of shared knowledge and understanding of experience. It left an affective void in family history narratives. For some intergenerationals, silence created a sense of estrangement. The intergenerationals belong to what scholar Marianne Hirsch (who has extensively researched memory and the Holocaust's second generation) terms the post-memory generation. They have no first-hand knowledge of the full extent of the former airmen's experiences—particularly incidents of trauma and subsequent traumatic memories.

There has been little scholarly attention to the transmission of captivity trauma.[118] Most Australian accounts relating to, or arising from, the effects of trauma on familial relationships are by family members of former prisoners of war. They were written specifically to address the knowledge gap, to create a sense of understanding of experience, or to resolve grief.[119] It was not possible to survey a large number of Stalag Luft III intergenerationals. Nevertheless, some of those who have spoken or written about their relationships with 'their' former POW suggest some degree of intergenerational transmission of captivity trauma. They also highlight the affective consequences of silence and the emotive importance of attempting to create intimacy and connection.

---

[118] As noted by Terry Smyth, whose research is a recent exception. Smyth, '"Your Father's in the Front Room": Interviewing the Children of Far East Prisoners of War', in Smith and Barkhof, *War, Experience and Memory in Global Cultures Since 1914*, p. 8.

[119] Newman, (ed.), *Legacies of Our Fathers: World War II prisoners of the Japanese—their sons and daughters tell their stories*; Braithwaite, Richard Wallace, *Fighting Monsters: An Intimate History of the Sandakan Tragedy*; Williams, *A True Story of the Great Escape*.

Some intergenerationals 'remember' experiences through stories heard and images seen; there is an element of imaginative reconstruction of events to create a personal connection to them. Some intergenerationals are touched more intimately. Children witnessed behaviours precipitated by their fathers' captivity trauma. The originating events, as Hirsch notes, 'happened in the past, but their effects continue into the present'.[120] Those young witnesses absorbed the residue of both the original experience and the memory of it. For Helen Green, her father's distress 'lingers on in the memories and affects the family members who mostly don't [know] how to process the pain passed on to them by osmosis'.[121] Louise Williams was burdened by her grandmother's '[u]nresolved grief' which is 'always carried with you ... passed … from one generation to the next'.[122] Mike Netherway suggests that his father's service and captivity trauma transmitted to him genetically—that something of his life-long behaviour was an 'inheritable trait'.[123] Drew Gordon has drawn a clear link between his father's captivity trauma and his own PTSD-like symptoms.[124]

Intergenerational composure

The intergenerationals have had varied success at attaining connection and understanding. 'It frustrated the hell out of me … that he wouldn't talk about the detail that I needed', Mike Netherway wrote of his father's glaring, intentional silence. More than that, Len Netherway was 'secretive'. Mike was

[120] Hirsch, 'The Generation of Postmemory', pp. 103–28. Quote p. 107.
[121] Alexander records: Helen Green, email 2 August 2019.
[122] Williams, *A True Story of the Great Escape*, p. 243. For grief not ending with the deaths of those most affected, refer Scates, *Return to Gallipoli*, p. xx.
[123] Alexander records: Mike Netherway, interview 28 September 2016.
[124] Alexander records: Drew Gordon, interview 31 May 2016.

unable to make sense of his father's experiences so read, researched, and turned to children of other former prisoners of war to develop a coherent—though gap-ridden—narrative of his father's captivity. He has gained a semblance of understanding but has not yet, perhaps, achieved unalloyed composure. Accounts of his attempts to discover details of his father's life as a POW suggest an underlying bitterness, especially when comparing his father with other former kriegies, such as Bill Fordyce and Alan Righetti, who were more open in telling their stories to families and others.[125] But his personal journey of discovery and connection continue.

The film *The Great Escape* provided an opportunity to open conversations with children eager to discover something of their fathers' experiences. When it was released, Helen Green recalled, 'Dad bee-lined for it with us in tow. He could now share some points'.[126] Ken Carson would rarely initiate a conversation about his POW experiences. When he did, he barely touched on the darker side of captivity. Even in the intimacy of near-death, with his son as his primary carer, he opened up not to set the record straight but because he had mellowed from an all-consuming business as well as a 'continual sense of urgency'.[127] If John asked questions, Carson would respond. But if John did not think to ask, his father would not volunteer anything extra.[128] When John and his father sat and watched a re-run of *The Great Escape* together, the former kriegie declared that he 'was disgusted by it being too much "American nonsense", especially the bit where the Steve

[125] Alexander records: Mike Netherway, interview 28 September 2016; emails 18 and 19 May 2020. Quotes from email 19 May 2020. Netherway spoke with both Fordyce and Righetti, who shared anecdotes and images of captivity with him.
[126] Alexander records: Helen Green, email 18 December 2017.
[127] Alexander records: John Carson, email 19 February 2016.
[128] Alexander records: John Carson, interview 8 April 2020.

McQueen character was sent to the Cooler after the big break out of March 1944'.[129] As for the punishment cell, Carson exclaimed that 'the cooler didn't look like that'. John was taken aback. When had his father been in the cooler?[130] Carson then told his son, for the first time, about how he had become drunk, scaled the wire to the American compound, and was thrown into the cooler.[131] John was astounded: his father had never told him that story. But Carson could offer no more details—he had forgotten them. The incident remained an ongoing curiosity for John. After his father's death, John trawled through records and made contact with other sons who could perhaps fill in the details of Carson's overall captivity experience. His research was an important facet of his journey of discovery into his father's life—part of an armchair pilgrimage in addition to his physical trek to sites important to Ken Carson's story.[132]

Deliberate silence and death engender a deep need to know what happened. Public celebrations of war service such as 'Australia Remembers' and war tourism have perhaps highlighted the intergenerationals' knowledge gap and exacerbated their need to address it. Culturally, along with the recent 'memory boom' which recognises how traumatic memory is often at the heart of family war stories, public commemoration and celebration make it easier for intergenerationals to break down barriers created by silence and establish new (imagined) identities as emotional confidantes.[133] Accordingly, the

---

[129] Carson, 'Brisbane's Ken Carson: Prisoner of the Axis. Part Eleven. The Daily Grind and Ken's Night on the Hooch', p. 16.
[130] Alexander records: John Carson, interview 8 April 2020.
[131] Carson, 'Brisbane's Ken Carson: Prisoner of the Axis. Part Eleven. The Daily Grind and Ken's Night on the Hooch', p. 16.
[132] Alexander records: John Carson, interviews 8 and 14 April 2020.
[133] They are not the only ones. Refer Scates, with McCosker, Reeves, Wheatley and Williams, *Anzac Journeys*, pp. 77–78; Scates, 'In Gallipoli's Shadow: Pilgrimage, memory, mourning

intergenerationals became what could be called, 'memory pilgrims', attempting to forge empathetic connections—and gain composure—through pilgrimage, artefact, and narrative.

Places evoke strong emotional responses.[134] Significant sites, and the imagined memory associated with them, bring the past into the present.[135] Gallipoli, the Western Front, and the Second World War's 'traumascapes' including sites of Japanese atrocities, have been transmuted into 'sacred sites'.[136] The memories and emotions associated with them belong to the 'collective memory' of the wartime bereaved—'joint memories held by a community about the past'.[137] Stalag Luft III also belongs to that emotional community of intergenerational mourners—whether or not their families were directly touched by the Great Escape. When John Carson visited Stalag Luft III in 2003, it was 'obvious that the old POW camp site had only just started to become a shrine for remaining POWs, their families and researchers'.[138]

Many of the cohort's intergenerationals made pilgrimages to places connected to 'their' prisoner of war. 'You need to stand somewhere to understand it', stated Drew Gordon. 'And hear the place.'[139] Drew, who paced the remains of Stalag Luft III in 1998 and, using compass and aerial map,

---

and the great war', pp. 1–21; Stanley, *A Stout Pair of Boots: A Guide to Exploring Australia's Battlefields*. 'Family stories': Winter, 'The Generation of Memory', p. 64.

[134] Boddice, *The History of Emotions*, pp. 38–39; Scates, *Return to Gallipoli*; Scates, with McCosker, Reeves, Wheatley and Williams, *Anzac Journeys*; Pedersen, 'The Ghosts of Anzac', pp. 34–42, especially pp. 38 and 42.

[135] Clark, *Private Lives: Public History*, pp. 129–130.

[136] Scates, *Return to Gallipoli*; Scates, with McCosker, Reeves, Wheatley and Williams, *Anzac Journeys*. Refer p. 3 for discussion of motivation of pilgrimages and 'traumascape'.

[137] Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, p. 97.

[138] Alexander records: John Carson, email 5 February 2020: 'A Son's Pilgrimage to Zagan in 2003'.

[139] Alexander records: Drew Gordon, interview 19 July 2016.

calculated the exact whereabouts of his father's hut, was driven to comprehend the site that had engendered Tony Gordon's captivity trauma and ultimate suicide, which had, in turn, precipitated his own PTSD-like symptoms.[140] John Carson also felt a visceral connection to the place of his father's wartime internment. He 'needed' to find the place which, during and after the war, 'was to make a massive impact on Ken's life. I needed to find Stalag Luft 3 [sic] and see it for myself'.[141] Walking the sites of battle—including the barbed-wire battleground of Stalag Luft III—is an emotive experience which enables intergenerationals to gain a sense of understanding, create familial identity, and make affective connections.[142] They gain solace from shared memory and grief.[143] The link was immediate and, for some, almost deliberately synchronous. Recording the moment he arrived at Sagan (now Żagań, west Poland), John wrote, '[i]t was here sixty years before, almost to the day, that Ken and his cohort had been de-trained'.[144]

The Great Escape's memory pilgrims have forged strong emotional bonds to their dead. Their motivations for pilgrimage, however, vary. Tom Leigh's nephew and nieces felt strongly that they should visit Stalag Luft III because of 'family' and their belief that Leigh's sister, Margaret, their mother,

---

[140] Alexander records: Drew Gordon, interview 19 July 2016; Gordon FA: Gordon, 'Record of a Visit to the Site of Stalag Luft III, Sagan, Poland, September 1998'.
[141] Alexander records: John Carson, email 5 February 2020: 'A Son's Pilgrimage to Zagan in 2003'.
[142] Pedersen, 'The Ghosts of Anzac', pp. 34–42; Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma*, p. 186.
[143] Noela Hake's nephew Max Preen, and his niece Chelsea Preen (Noela's great-niece) visited the site of Stalag Luft III. *The Search for the Compass Maker Albert Hake Poznan & Zagan, Poland 2013*. Peter Kierath, nephew of Reg Kierath has made three pilgrimages to sites significant to his uncle. Others in his family have also visited Poznan and Żagań. Alexander records: Peter Kierath, interview 2 May 2016. Margaret Leigh Bligh's children visited in 1999. Alexander records: Winifred Chevalier, Janie Miller, Trish Norman and Michael Bligh, interview 26 April 2017. Refer Williams, *A True Story of the Great Escape* for her journeys.
[144] Alexander records: John Carson, email 5 February 2020: 'A Son's Pilgrimage to Zagan in 2003'.

wanted them to make the journey.[145] For Max Preen, Noela Hake's nephew, impulse mixed with a long-term interest to discover more of Albert Hake's life and death.[146] Perhaps Preen also felt an urge to honour his aunt's constancy to her long-dead husband as he placed a photo of the couple in front of Hake's headstone.[147] Louise Williams grew up hearing stories about her uncle, John Williams, and the bitter mourning of his mother—her grandmother—Mildred. She felt compelled to resolve her family's intergenerational grief.[148] Tracing the footsteps of those who had died became a particularly emotional experience. Louise visited Stalag Luft III three times and also followed the imagined path of John Williams and his travelling companions, Reg Kierath, Leslie Bull, and Jerzy Mondschein, through the 'the same Czech mountain range the four had trekked across'. 'Sixty-eight years to the day after the Great Escape', she was 'stumbling around thigh deep in the soft spring snow', just as she believed her uncle had.[149] Louise's empathic imagining of her uncle's tragic journey provoked a potent affective experience, made even more so by the synchronicity of the commemorative act. 'I could *picture* them at the base of those mountains, looking up and I could *imagine* them saying "no we are not going to find another train we are going to push on"'.[150] (My emphasis.) Peter Kierath, nephew of Reg Kierath, was driven to make three pilgrimages to sites significant to his uncle because

[145] Alexander records: Winifred Chevalier, Janie Miller, Trish Norman and Michael Bligh interview 26 April 2017.
[146] Alexander records: Max Preen, email 15 June 2018.
[147] *The Search for the Compass Maker Albert Hake Poznan & Zagan, Poland 2013*.
[148] Williams, *A True Story of the Great Escape*, p. 243. For grief not ending with the deaths of those most affected, refer Scates, *Return to Gallipoli*, p. xx.
[149] Williams, *A True Story of the Great Escape*, p. 34.
[150] Louise Williams, interviewed by Coletta, *Daily Mail Australia*, 25 August 2015.

of their familial ties and wanting to fit his uncle into his family's history.[151] One of his pilgrimages, shared with Louise Williams, was the subject of an episode of the ABC TV programme, *Foreign Correspondent*. Their intergenerational grief and strong emotional ties to their uncles, made public through the camera lens, are clearly evident.[152] In following their uncles' footsteps, discovering as much as possible about their deaths, standing in front of memorials to them, participating in significant commemorative ceremonies alongside others emotionally bound to the Great Escape dead, Louise Williams and Peter Kierath felt that they had resolved what Bruce Scates terms the 'unfinished business of grieving'.[153]

Death is often a catalyst for family history research.[154] '[O]nce Dad died it was a case of I've got to do the pilgrimage eventually', Colin Johnston stated. He 'wanted to go where he went. See what he saw'. In following the footsteps of his father, Eric, to Buchenwald concentration camp and Stalag Luft III, Colin wanted to understand his father's wartime experiences. 'Because a lot of things I didn't understand … I knew about it but I didn't appreciate the full impact of what it was.' Rather than explore the facts behind the stories, Colin focused on the affective dimension of his father's captivity trauma. 'Where he would have been scared, he would have been hungry. He would have been desperate. *All* the emotions. … what he was feeling. … This was a thing I wanted to do just to find out what made him *him*. … And that's why doing the pilgrimage was so important.' Eric Johnston's stories provided

[151] Alexander records Peter Kierath, interview 2 May 2016.
[152] *Foreign Correspondent*, 'The Real Great Escape'.
[153] Williams, *A True Story of the Great Escape*, p. 243; Alexander records Peter Kierath, interview 2 May 2016; Scates, *Return to Gallipoli*, p. xxii.
[154] Clark, *Private Lives, Public History*, pp. 49–50.

a sense of connection for Colin when he visited Stalag Luft III. One was about the men whistling to the guard dogs, which would run up and down the compound, with the guards chasing them. He 'could imagine these bloody dogs going backwards and forwards'.[155]

Helen Green has not visited Stalag Luft III but she has constructed an emotional connection by visiting another site important to her father's psychological and moral pain. Feeling that her father, Errol, 'was unpredictable and too controlling of her life', Helen left Australia when she was twenty-six years old. She needed to put distance between them so she could 'understand who I was and what I should do in life without Dad interfering'.[156] Although her father did not 'share much, his reactions showed he was suffering from something' and, as a child, Helen was 'often fearful and terrified but didn't know why'.[157] Trying to resolve that intergenerational pain 'became an amazing journey'.[158] She found peace after joining the Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary, a protestant religious order based in Darmstadt, Germany, whose members apologise to those affected by Nazi atrocities, and, through, apology, bring healing and reconciliation.[159] In 2019, Helen visited Darmstadt for the seventy-fifth anniversary of that city's most devastating air raid in September 1944. She went 'with the express purpose of connecting with sisters who had [sat] in their cellar as the bombs dropped over top'. Sharing those stories and participating in commemorative ceremonies proved cathartic, 'a powerful way to find freedom from my pain'

[155] Alexander records: Colin Johnston, interview 18 October 2016. Original emphasis.
[156] Alexander records: Helen Green, email 14 July 2019.
[157] Alexander records: Helen Green, email 7 December 2019.
[158] Alexander records: Helen Green, email 14 July 2019.
[159] Alexander records: Helen Green, email 10 December 2019.

as well as Errol Green's pain which Helen had absorbed as a child. So strong was Helen's empathy with her father's moral anguish, that, as she carried a candle in a procession to a bombed-out church in Darmstadt which had never been restored, 'some pain lifted off and I feel as though I am walking also for my Dad'. Helen has 'worked through a lot of pain', and feels she is 'gaining clarity through delving deeper into what my Dad experienced' as she continues her journey of understanding, sense-making, and resolution.[160]

Objects uncovered from significant sites stimulate emotion. Drew Gordon 'wanted to feel some sand from there'. 'I wanted to pick up some sand.' Photographs illustrating his personal account of his Stalag Luft III pilgrimage record him scooping the sand up, a permanent, visual reminder of an affective moment. He brought a handful of grains home and preserved them, labelled, in a small glass jar. He also fossicked a piece of tile from the base of a stove in his father's hut—109—and a few other relics of camp life which create a tangible connection to Tony Gordon, the kriegie.[161] On his visit to Stalag Luft III, using measurements recorded by one of his father's roommates, John Carson was 'able to plot distances and directions' to his father's hut; Ken Carson, like Tony Gordon, had resided in Hut 109. Once orientated, John 'pace[d] off and [found] the demolished remains of the stove base in Ken's Room'. (A photo taken by his guide reveals his jubilation at '[s]tanding on the remains of the Hut 109, Room #7 stove base'.)[162] John claimed a soup spoon his father might well have used and, like Drew Gordon,

[160] Alexander records: Helen Green, email 7 December 2019.
[161] Alexander records: Drew Gordon, interview 19 July 2016; email 24 January 2020; Gordon FA: Gordon, 'Record of a Visit to the Site of Stalag Luft III, Sagan, Poland, September 1998'.
[162] Alexander records: John Carson, email 5 February 2020: 'A Son's Pilgrimage to Zagan in 2003'.

a piece of tile that might have been from the stove base in his father's room.[163] It is possible, Colin Johnston's guide told him, that the small piece of tin he fossicked might be 'out of one of those windows where your father might have looked out'.[164] Colin also took home a piece of blue porcelain. Those recovered objects precipitated poignant emotional responses. 'I sat down and had a moment or two of reflection', John Carson wrote. '[Yes], I was a bit tired and teary. The spoon had been a trigger to think of Ken. Had he once used this spoon?' Grief washed over him. 'Suddenly, the feeling of loss hit me.'[165] The soup spoon and other fossicked items have become for the bereaved treasured, permanent reminders of pilgrimage. They are also significant, yet imagined, emotive connections to their fathers.

Pilgrimages also provide impetus for memory pilgrims to record their predecessor's experiences. The cohort's family historians such as John Carson, Peter Mayo, Bob Nightingale, and Louise Williams turned to family archives and read military history. In writing their accounts, they accord 'their' prisoner of war a place in history. They are eager participants in 'memory-making' in the 'very democratic discipline' of history.[166] On Ken Carson's death, his son was compelled to discover more. John initially turned to his father's papers and military history library as well as family recollections for the answers to the questions he did not ask during his father's lifetime. He plotted a 'wartime journey' timeline. Then, in the year of his

[163] Alexander records: John Carson, interviews 28 January 2016 and 14 April 2020.
[164] Alexander records: Colin Johnston, interview 18 October 2016.
[165] Alexander records: John Carson, email 5 February 2020: 'A Son's Pilgrimage to Zagan in 2003'.
[166] 'memory-making': Clark, *Private Lives*, p. 137. 'democratic': Stanley, *A Stout Pair of Boots*, p. 25.

father's death, he undertook his first 'retrospective journey'.[167] On his return, he started writing about his father's wartime experiences in a 'saga' which includes details of his own life.[168] John Carson acknowledged the dual narrative was a means to connect to his father, and an attempt to answer the unasked questions.[169] He also hopes 'such an offering will have appeal to his grandchildren and others of their generation'.[170] John has not kept his research within the family. In 2017, he began contributing regular instalments to *Barbed Wire and Bamboo*, the magazine of the Ex-Prisoners of War Association of Australia.[171] Louise Williams has also publicly shared her cathartic research. In *A True Story of the Great Escape*, Williams revealed the uncle she discovered through research, as well as the personal story of her family's grief. Her pilgrimages were important, as was her attempt to resolve intergenerational grief, but her written account of John Williams' life was perhaps more meaningful because she was able to give substance to the young man her generation never knew. He lived again in the book's pages.

Other intergenerationals drew on their creative practice to interpret captivity, forge connection, and attain composure. Chelsea Preen, Noela Hake's great-niece, produced a YouTube video of her 2013 search for 'the compass maker'.[172] Ronald Baines' death prompted Rodney Ainsworth to reflect on his grandfather's experiences. Rodney read through Baines' biographical writings and viewed audio-visual material collected by the

---

[167] Alexander records: Carson FA: Carson, 'Retrospective Journey to Lybia/Egypt, Italy, Germany/Poland in Commemoration of the exploits of Kenneth Francis Carson'.
[168] Carson FA: Carson, 'The KFC Saga', 2016.
[169] Alexander records: John Carson, interview 28 January 2016
[170] Carson FA: Carson, 'Retrospective Journey to Lybia/Egypt, Italy, Germany/Poland in Commemoration of the exploits of Kenneth Francis Carson'.
[171] Carson, 'Brisbane's Ken Carson: Prisoner of the Axis'.
[172] *The Search for the Compass Maker Albert Hake Poznan & Zagan, Poland 2013*.

family.[173] The emerging playwright then wrote a play based on the former airman's wartime experiences.[174] In doing so, Rodney responded to Baines' sense of marginalisation as a former prisoner of Germany when he returned to Australia; built on his own long-held fascination with his grandfather's experiences; and made sense of his family history.[175] Screenwriter Kylie Garcelon, Alec Arnel's granddaughter, continues to develop a screenplay which helps her to 'get to know my Grandfather in a way I may not have if I didn't have the courage to write his story' and to solve 'some of the mystery of my Poppa'. Screenplay, for Kylie, is the most appropriate way to 'deeply connect' with Arnel and her grandmother, Margery. 'There is the beauty of the artistic medium.' Kylie's need to discover and connect was 'a force so great, I couldn't ignore it'. Delving into their 'deeply personal story' has also proved 'cathartic'.[176] Much of Jennifer Long's art has been inspired by the wartime experiences of her father, Cy Borsht, as well as his Jewish family's escape from the Rumanian pogroms in 1910 across Russia to Harbin in Manchuria, and thence to Australia. In her *Flight* series, the blue-eyed honeyeater 'became my symbol for Dad, his family and refugees, and their plight in general as well as a symbol for his plane'.[177] While the caged bird suggests captivity and the loss of freedom, the bird in flight denotes freedom and hope.[178]

*****

[173] Ainsworth, 'The Entrepreneurial Playwright', MA thesis, p. 28.
[174] Ainsworth, 'The Entrepreneurial Playwright', MA thesis. The play, *Sinking*, forms part of his MA thesis.
[175] Ainsworth, 'The Entrepreneurial Playwright', MA thesis, pp. 28 and 31.
[176] Alexander records: Kylie Garcelon, email 26 June 2016.
[177] Alexander records: Jennifer Long, email 1 February 2016.
[178] Email Alexander records: Jennifer Long, 1 February 2016; Long FA: Long, *Flight*, Exhibition Catalogue, Bosz Gallery, 25 October–12 November 2016.

Many wives achieved marital composure through accommodation or love. Pilgrimages to significant sites, written and artistic narratives, imagined recreations of 'their' prisoner of war's wartime travels, personal journeys of discovery, and attachment to material objects, elicit empathetic, imaginative understanding of experience. The intergenerationals' agency led to composure; the legacy of their efforts as writers, artists, and memory-makers are written and artistic records which contextualise 'their' former POW's wartime experiences and provide an important historical inheritance for successive generations. They have laid the foundations for multigenerational composure. In constructing an understanding of 'their' POW's experience, they have become agents of memory.

Composure reflects agency. Through their memoirs and oral accounts, some airmen attempted to manage the negative memories of captivity. They achieved recognition of medical condition, drew meaning from their wartime experiences, and attained moral health. In doing so, they have reconciled potentially traumatic events or effectively written them out of history. In eliding memories, they collectively 'engaged in a proprietorial form of myth-making' by foregrounding the positive facets of captivity such as fraternity, humour, the high points of communal life in the theatre and on sports fields, and kriegie agency and physicality.[179] Their composed narratives became acts of agency which reinforced the perception that masculine, active airmen involved in escape work and resistance enjoyed a generally benign captivity. Medical testimony seemingly contradicts the benign captivity myth but its

[179] Quote: Houghton, *The Veterans' Tale*, p. 3.

inherent victim narrative was contingent, a temporary guise to obtain veterans' benefits and recognition of war- and captivity-related psychological and physical damage. As it was off the public record, it did nothing to belie the carefully constructed wartime fit and well composure which emphasised the former airmen's identity as active agents, on duty, in the barbed-wire battleground. Both composed narrative and medical testimony are affective renditions which portray the emotions of captivity. Regardless of myth-making or victim portrayal, they enabled the former airmen to make sense of captivity. Emotional and psychological unease is balanced or allayed by the benefits of captivity and experience—blessings and growth. In civilian life, the cohort may have had to lay aside their identity as airmen but, by attempting to manage the long-term emotional, psychological, and moral consequences of captivity through composure, those who survived post-war trials demonstrated agency and resilience, just as they had done behind barbed wire.

Chapter Twelve: Images

Many women waited anxiously and patiently for their menfolk to return. Their weddings contributed to a post-war marital boom. While some of the former airmen's marriages failed, many—including those contracted in the heady days of joyous return—survived the strains of post-war life and the legacy of captivity.

Image 114: Charles and Beryl Fry, 22 September 1945. Fry Family Archive.

Image 115: Alec and Margery Arnel, 8 October 1945. Arnel Archive.

Image 116: 'A brilliant life.' Eric and Evelyn Johnston, 15 June 1946. Johnston Family Archive.

Many of the airmen attempted to seek composure by keeping faith with their dead. They made pilgrimages to significant sites and laid tributes to their friends. Some successfully processed their experiences and were ultimately comfortable in breaking their silence. Many came to terms with their experiences, seeing them in a positive light.

Image 117: Reg Giddey laying flowers on Albert Hake's headstone during the 50th Anniversary commemoration of the Great Escape, March 1994, Old Garrison Cemetery, Poznan, Poland. Preen Family Archive.

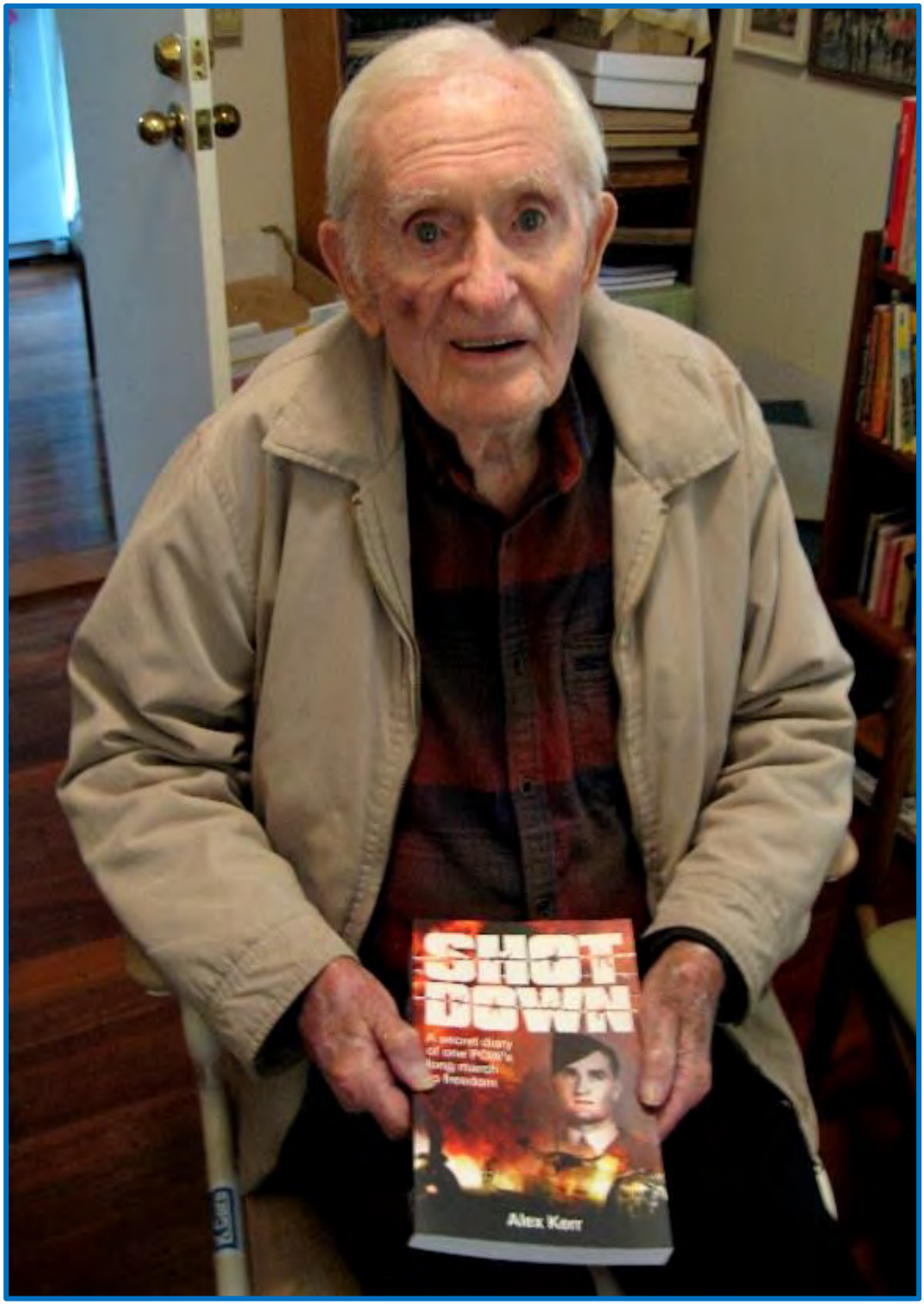


Image 118: Alex Kerr. Ninety-six-year-old Alex Kerr in 2017 with a copy of his recently published account of service and captivity.

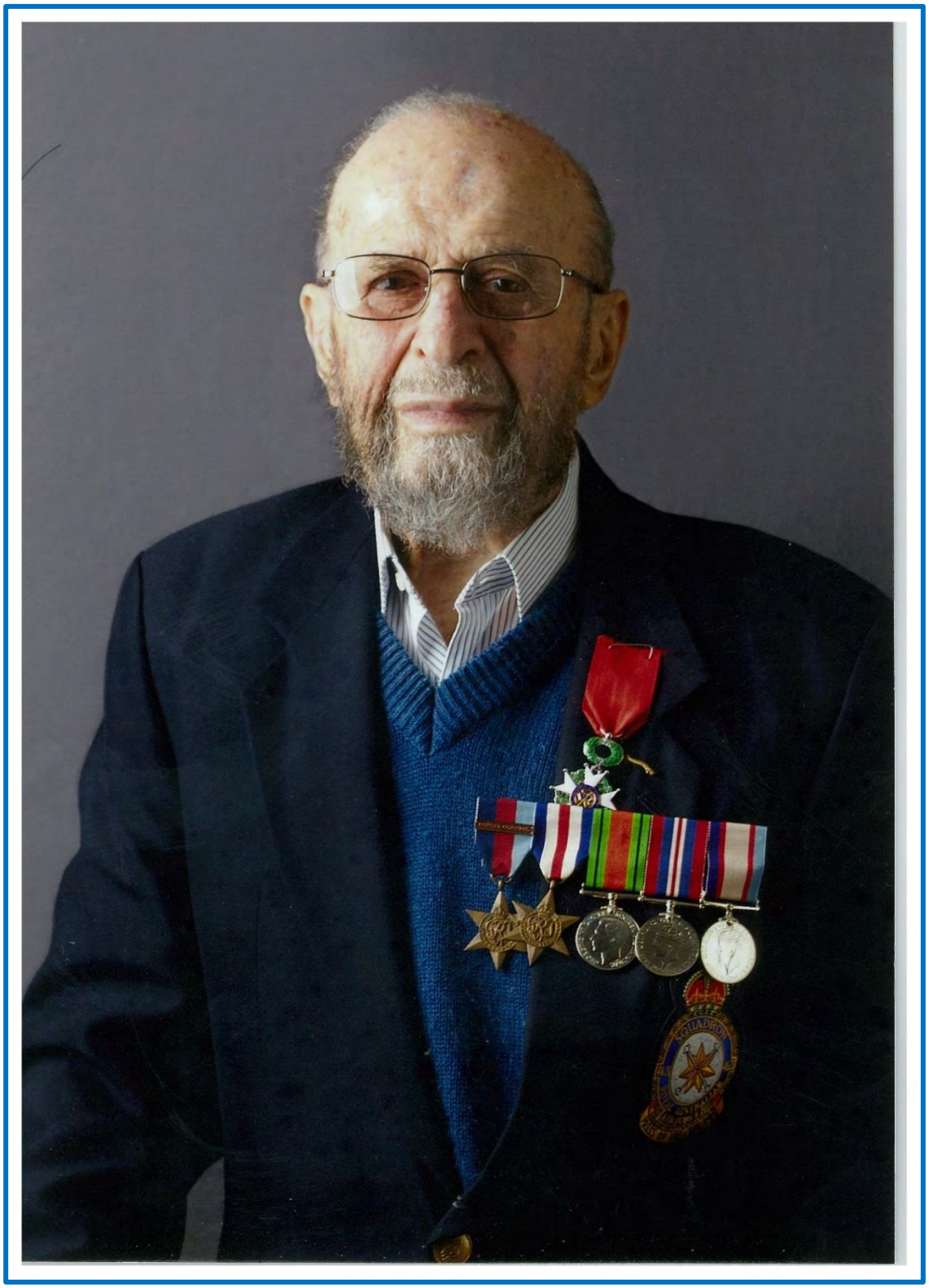
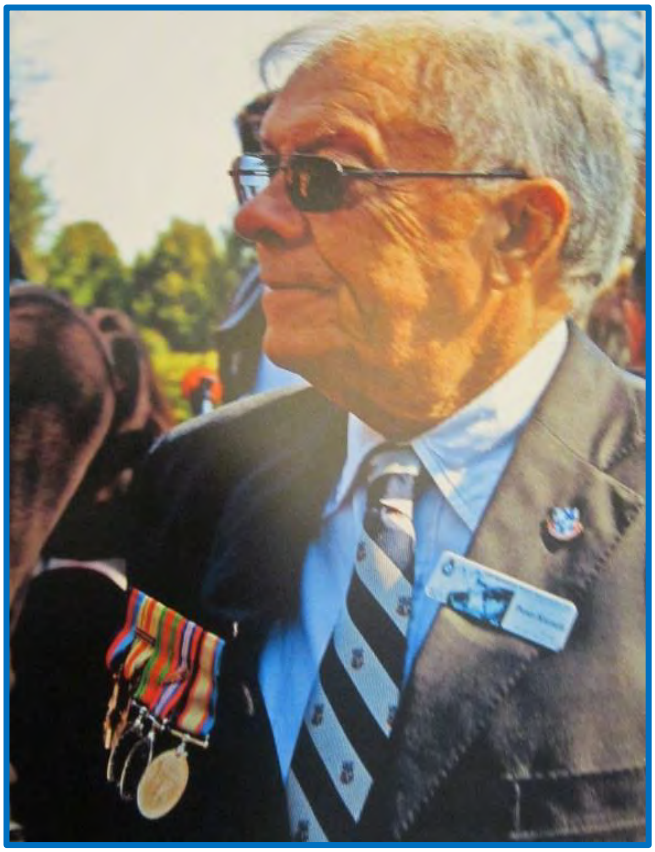


Image 119: Cy Borsht: 'A life well lived'. Ninety-four-year-old Borsht wearing his service medals as well as the recently awarded French Legion of Honour, in May 2016. Borsht Archive.

Families of those killed in the Great Escape sought composure through pilgrimage. They visited sites significant to their dead, including Stalag Luft III and the Old Garrison Cemetery, Poznan.

Images 120–122: Walking the length of Tunnel 'Harry': Chelsea Preen following the footsteps of Albert Hake, 25 September 2013. Preen Family Archive.



Images 123–124: Unveiling of memorial at Most: Peter Kierath, wearing the service medals of his uncle, Reg Kierath, at the unveiling of the memorial to Reg Kierath, John Williams, Leslie Bull and Jerzy Mondschein, 24 March 2012, at Most (formerly Brux) in the Czech Republic. (The four men were killed nearby in the post-Great Escape reprisals.) Kierath Family Archive.

Image 125: Peter Kierath and Louise Williams at memorial ceremony at Stalag Luft III, 25 March 2012, Kierath Family Archive.

Other families also made pilgrimages to Stalag Luft III seeking to make emotive and tangible connections to 'their' prisoner of war. 'I needed to find Stalag Luft 3 [sic] and see it for myself', said John Carson, son of Ken. Drew Gordon, son of Tony, 'wanted to pick up some sand'. Found objects, particularly, created affective links to captive experience.

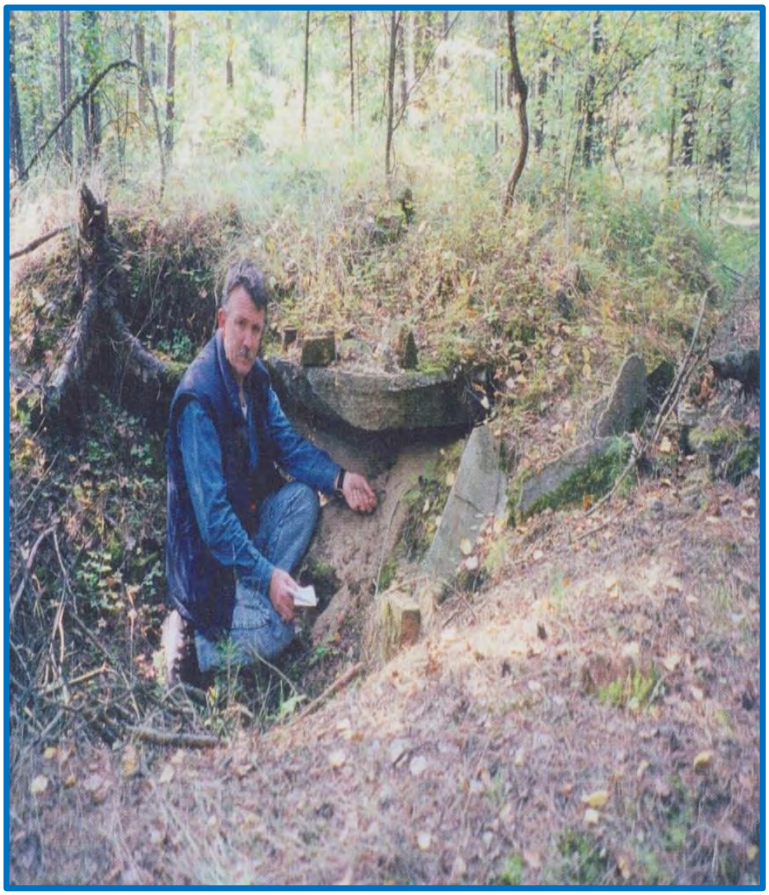


Image 126: 'me removing samples of sand, which I returned to Australia.' Drew Gordon, September 1998. Gordon Family Archive.

Image 127: 'I wanted to pick up some sand', September 1998. Gordon Family Archive.

Image 128: Objects from Stalag Luft III, found by Drew Gordon, September 1998. Piece of tiled base of stove located in Hut 109 (Tony Gordon's hut); small black flat brick/tile from the area of the camp hospital; Bakelite electrical fitting. Gordon Family Archive.

Memory pilgrims encountered many emotions as they attempted to connect to their loved ones: joy at making discoveries; sadness as their sense of loss washed over them. Some gained a lasting, tangible sense of understanding of experience through discovered artefacts.

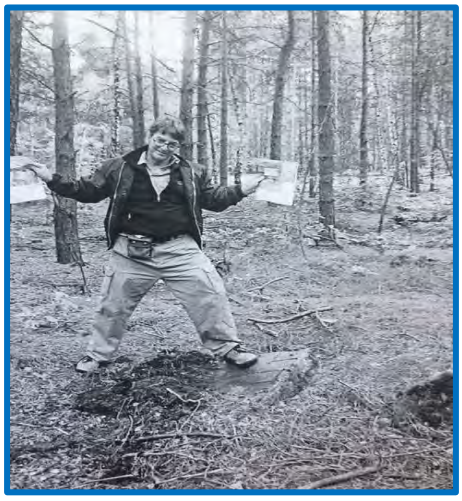


Image 129: Jubilation: John Carson 'Standing on the remains of the Hut 109, Room #7 stove base', October 2003. Carson Family Archive.

Image 130: Overwhelmed: 'I gathered my thoughts', October 2003. Carson Family Archive.

Image 131: 'My souvenirs from the pine forest below Room 7', October 2003, Carson Family Archive.

Attempting to find meaning in 'their' POW's captivity experiences, some intergenerationals drew on their artistic or creative skills. In Jennifer Long's *Flight* series, the blue-eyed honeyeater symbolises her father, Cy Borsht, his stricken aeroplane, his refugee family, and today's refugees. The nuanced, multi-layered symbolism highlights polar opposites: the caged bird represents captivity—curtailed freedom—and the bird in flight denotes freedom and hope.

Image 132: 'Adrift', *Flight* series, 2015–2016, by Jennifer Long. Courtesy of Jennifer Long.

Image 133: 'Oh What a Tangled Web', *Flight* series 2015–2016, by Jennifer Long. Courtesy of Jennifer Long.

Artist Jennifer Long continues to explore her father's experience beyond her original *Flight* series. This 2018 etching entitled 'In Full Flight' more overtly relates to captivity in Stalag Luft III. The watch tower, barbed-wire fence, and looming pine trees—so typical of kriegie wartime log book depictions—dominate the background. The birds trapped in the tunnel directly refer to Borsht's own visual anecdote of escape (see image 29 'Escape!', 1 March 1945). Here, however, there is no guard, and, while many birds remain trapped, symbolising those for whom captivity never ended, one bird emerges from the tunnel, representing actual rather than thwarted freedom and the life beyond captivity that Cy Borsht and others of his other contemporaries enjoyed.

Image 134: 'In Full Flight', *Flight* series 2018, by Jennifer Long. Courtesy of Jennifer Long.]

Conclusion

Conclusion: For You the War is Not Over

This thesis proposes, on the basis of a study of 351 men incarcerated in Stalag Luft III, that Australian airmen did not passively accept captivity. Their resilience and ability to manage challenges underpinned their successful adaptation to wartime imprisonment. RAF Station Sagan fostered personal and collective agency by reinforcing existing air force identity and solidarity enabling the Australians to remain active *air men* on duty in what they saw as a barbed-wire battleground.

Human experience cannot be analysed in the absence of emotions. Captivity provoked emotions such as fear, shame, love, and grief, as well as the affective elements of agency, altruism, fraternity, community, duty, identity, masculinity, domesticity, and faith. As men of emotion, the Australians enjoyed strong social and military cohesion as members of the 'brotherhood of airmen'. Fraternal relationships and kriegie domesticity within RAF Station Sagan's emotional community ameliorated the strains of incarceration but did not dampen the airmen's essential martial masculinity. While not all participated in escape or escape-related work, a significant minority demonstrated their commitment to disruptive agency. Faith consoled. Religious practice and social rituals deriving from diffused Christianity prompted strong emotive connections to home and loved ones.

While some succumbed to the pressures of captivity, most *air men* managed their mental health through discipline and disruptive agency,

including involvement in the escape organisation. Men of emotion drew strength from room crews and loved ones at home. As a consequence of their martial and emotive agency, they remained mentally robust and resilient.

Members of the cohort demonstrated romantic and sexual agency. For some, this mitigated the rigours of captivity and the distress of romantic separation. For others, deliberate reminders of loving relationships made confinement harder to endure. Although many feared it, the airmen were neither neglected nor forgotten. Loved ones and altruistic home-based communities of kindness worked tirelessly to make captive lives bearable. Those on the home front also benefited from the support and solace of emotional communities. The airmen's well-being may have been their main focus but wives, fiancées, and sweethearts were also agents in assuaging their own romantic and sexual needs.

Captivity did not end at liberation. The war was not over. For many, it never ended. There was an abiding legacy of unseen emotional, psychological, and moral wounds which blighted lives and relationships. In the absence of kriegie brotherhood, family proved sustaining for many and helped alleviate threats to mental health. Those without loving support suffered the most. The effects of wartime internment permeated to the hidden casualties of captivity—wives, children, and extended family members. Despite post-war personal, health, familial, moral, and social challenges, many of the cohort demonstrated a degree of post-war agency and resilience as they attempted to manage and live with physical and mental conditions and moral troublings; establish civilian identities, families, social connections, and work lives; and put captivity behind them. While nothing perhaps

exemplifies this better than the lived experience of Eric and Evelyn Johnston, many of those men and women from the stoic and resilient generation highlighted by Janet McCalman[1]—and reinforced by this thesis—also experienced simultaneous and seemingly paradoxical pain and joy, business success and personal breakdown, and trauma and love.

The Australian airmen and their loved ones, particularly the intergenerationals, actively attempted to make sense of wartime experiences and the legacy of captivity. Some former airmen grew to appreciate the benefits of captivity despite the privations; some were transformed by it.

The personal dimension of captivity is pre-eminent. The emotive responses of the cohort and their families is striking. Their voices, distinct and evocative, are 'heard' in autobiographical evidence, medical testimony, visual anecdotes, and artworks. Women, in their letters and interviews, also describe how captivity irrevocably touched their lives. Wartime log books in particular, a rarely examined source of individual and collective response to captivity, are central to this study. Archival oral histories have been supplemented by interviews conducted by the author in what will be the last opportunity to recover these men's testimonies; two interviewees died before the completion of this thesis. A series of ten discussions with one former airman dwelt on areas of enquiry such as motivation, religious belief, pacifism, moral injury, and emotional responses to captivity which generally receive scant attention. The most notable source of affective, psychological, and moral responses is the Department of Veterans' Affairs' case files. The

[1] McCalman, *Journeyings*.

eighty-three files consulted for this study contain medical, psychological, service, and social evidence from enlistment until death.

The cohort's experiences enrich our understanding of the human condition. This thesis examines their strong affective connections between fellow airmen and loved ones. It considers their ability to flourish or succumb when exposed to extremes of treatment. It also examines how the airmen reacted when deprived of liberty, security, and control over their own destiny. It is axiomatic of the human condition that adversity will bring out the best and worst of people. Even though individualism existed, particularly *in extremis*, fraternal and communal altruism was more characteristic of the cohort's experience. Their sense of human interconnectedness—no man is an island—explains the strong military, social, and personal morality which motivated their actions. It illuminates their moral troubling and profound guilt over perceived transgressions of brotherly ideals. The 'X' organisation may have been underpinned by a certain level of self-interested coercion but the emotional and martial community of RAF Station Sagan operated for the common good.

This thesis makes an original contribution to Australian and international scholarship. It is the first scholarly work to examine through a cultural lens, within the history of emotions, the responses to captivity of Australian prisoners of Germany and Italy during the Second World War. It is also the first to analyse the responses of Australian airmen to wartime imprisonment. Personal relationships with God, religious practice, and secular religious-based social rituals enacted in captivity, until now, have been examined only rarely. The cohort is the first group of Australian POWs

in which moral troubling has been investigated. This study's consideration of service- and captivity-related moral troubling and injury is therefore unique. Family cannot be divorced from captive lives. Accordingly, the emotions of family and loved ones, as well as their dedicated agency in attempting to ameliorate the stresses of captivity, are highlighted. So too are the emotional and sexual strains of separation experienced by wives, fiancées, and sweethearts. In doing so, this study addresses an obvious oversight in Australian home front, social history, and captivity historiography. No other scholarly work has examined both the wartime and lifetime affective, psychological, and moral consequences of captivity of former Australian prisoners of Germany and Italy. Such intense scrutiny contributes much to our understanding of captivity-related psychological disturbance and trauma. This study offers a major contribution to Australian and international captivity, repatriation, and medical scholarship.

The airmen's personal evidence precipitated two unexpected findings. The dominant Australian captivity narrative focuses on the greater physical and mental trauma of former prisoners of Japan. This is supported by considerable evidence of the medical and psychological legacy of Japanese internment. In contrast, the received wisdom is that those incarcerated by Germany and Italy enjoyed a relatively benign captivity with few, if any, hardships. The cohort's medical evidence contradicts the perceptions of an easy captivity with no psychological legacy. Almost two-thirds of the cohort's medical sample experienced post-war mental disturbance. Many suffered PTSD-like symptoms or captivity trauma. In this, Australia's prevailing trope of a benign captivity experienced by airmen prisoners of

Europe is a myth. Perhaps more surprisingly, the former kriegies unwittingly, but actively, created and perpetuated that myth by constructing and promoting a fit and well composure which reinforced masculine martial identity. Their post-war accounts embedded it. So too did their publicly-endorsed protective silence. The consequence, was that there is no place in that myth for their own wartime suffering and post-war trauma.

However productive analysis of the responses to captivity of the Stalag Luft III cohort and their families has been, this study suggests further research.

Because of the well-meaning desires to protect their privacy, former prisoners' DVA case files are an under-used resource. While Great War repatriation records have been digitised and some recent works have drawn on them to examine post-war lives and psychological states, only a handful of studies have consulted Second World War records.[2] Stephen Garton consulted 1,412 files for veterans of the two world wars and Vietnam, including some records of former prisoners of war.[3] The medical sample represents 1.5 per cent of former prisoners of Germany and Italy. Their medical and social evidence suggests that the extent of mental disturbance emanating from European captivity is substantial. Future large-scale examination of DVA's case files would give a deeper and more complex

[2] First World War: Ariotti and Pegram, 'Australian POWs of the First World War: responding to the challenges of captivity and return', pp. 72–89; Ariotti, *Captive Anzacs*; Pegram, *Surviving the Great War*; Scates and Oppenheimer, *The Last Battle*. Second World War: Bomford, 'Fractured Lives', PhD thesis; Raftery, '"Nothing New to Medical Science": the Construction of War Neurosis and the Life Course Outcomes of WW2 Veterans', PhD thesis.
[3] Garton, *The Cost of War*, p. 28 (note 51). Garton does not state the number of case files for each conflict. Nor does he indicate how many related to former POWs in total, or of prisoners of Europe or Japan.

understanding of the extent of emotional, psychological, and moral consequences of wartime incarceration. Comparative studies across conflicts and cohorts would delineate differences and commonalities. Forensic study of the 8,591 Australian prisoners of Europe as a group would perhaps determine if this study's air force cohort is exceptional or representative of wartime psychological coping and post-war psychological disturbance. So too would smaller studies of other *Luftwaffe* camps such as stalags Luft IV at Gross Tychow, VI at Heydekrug, and Luft VII, Bankau, which housed non-commissioned officers, or Stalag VIII-B, Lamsdorf, which interned army and air force prisoners.

Domestic aggression, abuse, violence, or coercive behaviour featured in some post-war lives. No study has yet gauged its pervasiveness in the immediate post-war decades, nor the extent to which captivity precipitated it. Much abuse was hidden in the privacy of the home, or if made public, was considered an unfortunate manifestation of difficult resettlement. Family violence is a social ill that haunts us still. Future scrutiny of DVA files of former prisoners of war and servicemen across conflicts and theatres will perhaps disclose more details of the historical prevalence of domestic violence, its traumatic triggers, and the familial and social cost.

This thesis only touches on the effects of silence on intergenerationals and the deep need of memory pilgrims to connect to 'their' POWs. More work, too, needs to be done to discover the extent to which deep captivity trauma has been transmitted to some members of the second generation, particularly where that transmission appears to contribute to intergenerational PTSD.

*****

As I write, the world attempts to manage a pandemic and its associated escalating social costs. Contagion and health management strategies aimed at the common good in some countries have been threatened by individualism and selfishness. Community welfare is often secondary to self-interest. But, as is typical of human nature, altruistic acts—concern, kindness, and self-sacrifice—prevail. These perhaps will be the Covid-19 pandemic's defining memories. RAF Station Sagan promoted and protected its air force community. Despite many challenges, its *air men* and men of emotions were bolstered by fraternal and home front care, concern, and altruism. This thesis demonstrates the effectiveness of personal, communal, and familial agency. It reveals wartime and post-war resilience. It shows, as Alec Arnel emphatically claims, that captivity was 'not about me'. '"I" wasn't just "me", "I" was "us"'. This pre-eminence of community despite adversity is a significant affective lesson that remains relevant in the twenty-first century.

Conclusion: Image

On Anzac Day 1944, the Australians gathered together as a sign of respect. Still in mourning for those killed in the post-Great Escape reprisals, they wore black patches on their sleeves.

This photograph which was taken that day—copies of which were held by many of the Australian airmen—is a permanent record of grief. As well as demonstrating national unity, it highlights that the uniformed men, many of whom were wearing 'wings', were members of the 'brotherhood of airmen'. It signals as well that the airmen belonged to the emotional community of RAF Station Sagan which sustained and supported them throughout captivity. United in grief and fraternity, this photograph more than anything signals that captivity was 'not about me'. '"I" wasn't just "me", "I" was "us"'.

Image 135: Australians on Anzac Day 1944, Stalag Luft III. Netherway Family Archive.

Appendix: Defining the Australian Cohort and Nominal Roll

Germany and Italy captured 142,319 members of British forces in the Second World War.[1] Most were soldiers, with airmen prisoners of war numbering only about 13,000.[2] At least 8,591 of those 142,319 were Australians, of whom 1,476 airmen—17% of Australian prisoners in Europe—served in the RAF and RAAF.[3]

A clearly defined cohort is essential to interrogate archival databases and search for evidence in private hands. Before this study, however, there was no exclusive list of the Australians imprisoned in Stalag Luft III. The RAAF does not know how many of its Second World War personnel were interned there, nor all their names. Compiling a definitive Australian nominal roll for this thesis presented a methodological challenge as there was no definitive Stalag Luft III roll. Prison camp populations changed constantly, with incoming and outgoing movements of prisoners, repatriations, and deaths. An extensive roll extracted from British records only records the last camp in which the men were resident. It does not include medical repatriates, men who died, or those who transferred from Stalag Luft III before the 1945 evacuation. Those Australians serving in the RAF are not readily identified as Australian.[4] Files containing post-liberation statements taken by RAAF

[1] Makepeace, *Captives of War*, p. 3.
[2] Gilbert, *POW*, p. 28.
[3] Beaumont, with Joshi, Bomford, Blair and Pratten, *The Australian Centenary History of Defence Volume VI, Australian Defence: Sources and Statistics*, p. 338.
[4] *Prisoners of War Naval and Air Forces of Great Britain and the Empire 1939–1945*.

staff at 11 PDRC, Brighton are incomplete.[5] They do not include statements by Australians serving in the RAF, medical repatriates, or those who died before liberation.

A more comprehensive record of Australian airmen prisoners of war, *Wingless: A Biographical Index of Australian Airmen Detained in Wartime*, draws on British lists as well as other records.[6] While it is perhaps the most complete record of Australian airmen captives, it is not definitive. It omits at least thirty-two Australian prisoners of Stalag Luft III, and overlooks Stalag Luft III tenure for a number of others. Further compounding the difficulties in compiling an Australian nominal roll, the official history of Stalag Luft III, held by The National Archives in the United Kingdom, notes that one of the camp's rolls was lost after the 1945 evacuation.[7]

Determining Australian identity is also problematic in some cases. The term 'Australian citizen' did not exist until 1949. Accordingly, Australian-born members of the armed forces carried passports designating them British subjects and they were listed as British on service records.[8] This thesis defines 'Australianness' broadly. It includes those born in Australia; those of overseas birth with a strong pre-war connection such as parentage or employment which led to enlistment in the RAAF; and those whose pre-war Australian connections were severed by long-term post-war overseas

[5] Each of the 30 parts is identified on the National Archives of Australia's on-line Record Search as 'probably incomplete' and, indeed, some statements have gone missing. AWM 54 779/3/129: 11 PDRC post-liberation debriefs.
[6] Roberts, *Wingless*, pp. 7–8.
[7] NAUK AIR 40/1489: Stalag Luft III (North). The North Compound report does, however, include a list of those left behind in the hospital and should be read in conjunction with the roll contained in NAUK AIR 40/269: Stalag Luft III reports and nominal roll. This combined reading, the preamble states, 'should include all personnel'.
[8] Arnold, Spearritt, and Walker (eds), *Out of Empire*, pp. 10–11.

residency. Despite the inherent flaws of existing nominal lists, these were exhaustively consulted, along with compound and evacuation records, movement lists, Red Cross notifications found on RAAF service and casualty files held by the National Archives of Australia, and prisoners' wartime letters and diaries. Examination of these sources reveals that 351 Australian airmen were imprisoned in Stalag Luft III between April 1942, when the camp opened, and the January 1945 evacuation. Of those 351 airmen, 320 were Australian-born British subjects.[10] The nominal roll based on these sources appears below. It addresses a significant omission in international and Australian captivity studies, as well as RAAF history, and has provided the essential evidentiary basis for this thesis.

It should be noted that the airmen whose identities are protected by pseudonym by family request, to maintain the privacy of women and children who experienced family violence, or as a condition of DVA access, are included in this list under their actual names but it is not possible for any reader to connect the two.

[10] The birthplace of two men could not be identified.

Nominal Roll

Australians in Stalag Luft III April 42–January 45

	Name	Service No.	POW No.	Squadron	Date captured
1.	Adams, Denis Gordon	402335	9621	18	4 September 1941
2.	Agg, Cecil Edward Metcalfe	415211	8221	460	9 October 1944
3.	Alexandratos, Diomedes	419417	3338	460	23 January 1944
4.	Allen, Fredric William Robert	400362	42819	50	7 June 1942
5.	Allsopp, Bede Neville	402783	2603	158	27 September 1943
6.	Amos, Norman Newell	405514	813	140	8 November 1942
7.	Anderson, George Robert	400316	698	455	4 September 1942
8.	Andre, Robert Lewis	407923	634	103	28 August 1942
9.	Archer, George Alfred	402215	565	158	22 July 1942
10.	Armytage, Peter Charles Tustin	410431	5373	625	7 May 1944
11.	Arnel, Alexander Francis	401095	6492	451	29 June 1944
12.	Austin, Rex Alan	419153	5354	207	29 May 1944
13.	Baggie, William John Back	420848	3965	463	25 February 1944
14.	Baines, Ronald Prior	401096	814	213	18 November 1942
15.	Bastian, Charlton Orme	77925	2254	7	21 June 1943
16.	Bates, Colin Campbell	415391	1441	460	28 May 1943
17.	Bax, Thomas Albert	78742	1352	9	9 June 1941
18.	Baxter, Keith Abraham	401483	725	10 RAF	2 October 1942

19.	Beckingsale, Clayton Wallace	401484	967	680	1 April 1943
20.	Benn, Alistair Cecil	403180	392	50	30 May 1942
21.	Berry, Graham Royston	407281	870	460	26 November 1942
22.	Bertram, Ian Cedric	413817	4178	115	20/21April 1944
23.	Betts, Wesley Hirst	410209	5149	460	12 May 1944
24.	Betts, Wallace Hope	402563	220	158	29 April 1942
25.	Binnie, John Everard	414290	71	467	16 June 1943
26.	Birchley, Ernest	404166	66	42	17 May 1942
27.	Bjelke-Petersen, Harold Ridley	73021	1263	149	29 September 1940
28.	Black, John Arthur	425420	1766	75 NZ	5 November 1943
29.	Black, William Stowell	411864	1544	462	9 October 1944
30.	Boag, Leslie Richard	418336	3342	83	25 January 1944
31.	Borsht, Cyril	426416	8702	463	23 October 1944
32.	Bowden, Huie James Westland	47002	75	144	13 December 1942
33.	Bradford, Mervyn	414765	7893	614	23 August 1944
34.	Branson, Kenneth George	416538	2082	611	8 August 1943
35.	Breaden, Geoffrey Malcolm Drysdale	408323	3345	83	21 April 1944
36.	Breheny, Ross Thomas	404957	968	145	27 March 1943
37.	Brew, William Aubrey	402220	30	41	27 August 1941
38.	Brickhill, Paul Chester Jerome	403313	922	92	17 March 1943
39.	Brigden, Gordon Joseph	412102	6587	614	30 June 1944
40.	Brown, Bruce Oliver	403496	396	12	31 May 1942

41.	Bryce, John Magarey	121271	3151	227	14 October 1942
42.	Buchanan, Ronald Gibson	404646	486	50	7 June 1942
43.	Bull, Alan Lindsay	400219	99	41	12 August 1941
44.	Burbury, David John	250703	642	3 RAAF	14 September 1941
45.	Burcher, Anthony Fisher	403182	1341	617	17 May 1943
46.	Cahill, John Frederick	403633	1171	466	15 May 1943
47.	Cairns, Jack Dexter	403904	3483	466	16 February 1944
48.	Cameron, Cecil William Francis	404632	27134/ 1566	455	6 September 1942
49.	Campbell, Barton Jodrell	404054	2666	213	13 November 1942
50.	Campbell, Donald Robert	408346	5979	466	3 June 1944
51.	Carmody, Douglas Keith	420138	6279	455	14 June 1944
52.	Carson, Kenneth Francis	404233	2665	112	15 June 1942
53.	Catanach, James	400364	702	455	4 September 1942
54.	Clark, Lloyd Loris	400748	144	70	12 April 1942
55.	Clark, Raymond	403719	77	4 PRU	17 December 1942
56.	Clinch, Arthur Halford	403556	5980	33	28 June 1944
57.	Clohessy, Keith Francis	427295	4182	103	13 April 1944
58.	Collings, Leslie Ewart	214	3710	217	25 July 1941
59.	Collins, Edgar Felton	403720	42898	14 OTU	1 August 1942
60.	Comber, Albert Henry	402730	3216	39	20 August 1942
61.	Condon, Adrian John	407017	23634	218	19 August 1941
62.	Condon, Robert Lachlan	402850	2409	39	20 August 1942
63.	Connelly, Jack Francis	402566	146	107	12 April 1942
64.	Corcoran, Leonard George	4503	9658	10 RAAF	24 June 1941

65.	Cornish, Geoffrey James	43282	574	50	10 April 1941
66.	Coombes, Geoffrey Bernard	205836	1810	466	29 January 1944
67.	Coveny, Robert Charles	412914	8368	460	11 October 1944
68.	Craigie, Rex Ayrton	40210	1261	467	1 May 1943
69.	Crookston, Duncan Alexander	402770	1811	460	24 November 1943
70.	Crump, Hedley Lawrence	407027	167	37	18 March 1941
71.	Cull, Douglas Owen	421178	2609	76	22 September 1943
72.	Cullen, Christopher Robert	414205	4911	466	9 May 1944
73.	Cuthbertson, Guy Donald	404200	2660	203	23 January 1942
74.	Dack, Irwin John	418093	8704	463	23 October 1944
75.	Damman, Ronald Gustave	400051	592	9	27 April 1941
76.	Davies, Ronald Frank	400342	495	50	6 June 1942
77.	Dease, Maxwell	415073	3568	463	25 February 1944
78.	Delaney, Norman Lionel	420160	7728	253	6 July 1944
79.	Dennis, Stephen Penn	402734	1620	1	16 June 1943
80.	Denson, Malcolm Reginald	418358	5982	40	14 June 1944
81.	Devenish-Meares, Jack	405349	42673	115	23 November 1942
82.	Dicker, John Wilfred	402274	641	83	25 August 1941
83.	Dixon, Francis William	412923	2261	467	18/19 August 1943
84.	Dixon, Patrick Leslie	404074	3657	149	22 July 1941
85.	Docking, Gilbert Charles	419930	6280	455	14 June 1944
86.	Donald, Jack	402231	2528	3 RAAF	15 September 1942

87.	Dunn, Norman Maxwell	402050	1357	258	19 June 1941
88.	Earngey, Edward Joseph	402761	547	7	7 June 1942
89.	Eassie, Bruce	415894	6868	37	27 June 1944
90.	Edwards, Albert Mortley	250711	2526	3 RAAF	8 April 1941
91.	Edwards, William Henry	40045	326	107	12 May 1940
92.	Egan, Allan Ernest	411886	42781 & 1562	103	26 June 1943
93.	Egan, Richard	407525	222469	14	25 July 1943
94.	Ellis, Alan Eason	406474	25692	14	1 August 1942
95.	Every, Edwin Dan Pym	408293	1302	50	25/26 July 1943
96.	Fairclough, Mervyn James	427078	8087	51	27 July 1944
97.	Falkenmire, Francis James	411445	976	460	3 April 1943
98.	Falkiner, Fraser	400220	39540	72	27 October 1941
99.	Farrelly, William James	404628	81	50	18 December 1942
100.	Featherston, Robert Leslie	401428	27412	12	18 January 1943
101.	Ferres, Torres Davey	33506	2362	156	6 September 1943
102.	Ferry, Roderick Roland	406089	768	460	6 May 1942
103.	Fethers, Willard Noel	401279	2733	148	14 October 1942
104.	Finlason, Walton Douglas Scott	401280	2538	3 RAAF	21 December 1942
105.	Fordyce, Horace Spencer Wills	400396	2365	458	28 July 1942
106.	Fraser, Augustus Charles (born Charles Augustus Fraser)	6145	3251	102	29 December 1943
107.	Fraser, Donald Ian	402824	924	39	17 March 1943

108.	Fraser, William	404342	24450	218	7 November 1941
109.	Frisby, Haydon Bronte	416421	2266	158	24 August 1943
110.	Fry, Charles Horace	40047	715	112	6 June 1941
111.	Furphy, Donald Linden	402159	1316/3015	86	24 July 1942
112.	Galvin, Glenburne George	401208	2016	35	10/11 August 1943
113.	Gaulton, Kenneth James Frederick	404669	502	50	3 June 1942
114.	George, Percy Alexander	403509	1814	238	23 July 1943
115.	Giddey, Reginald	266157/6157	2364	467	8 August 1943
116.	Gilderthorp, Thomas Roberts.	43482	9979	207	31 August 1941
117.	Gillespie, Bert Clark	402117	24706	502	2 February 1942
118.	Given, Frederick Gordon	404624	821	460	25 November 1942
119.	Goldthorpe, Clarence	405849	1479	460	26/27 May 1943
120.	Gordon, James Anthony Cathcart	400367	672	455	7 November 1941
121.	Gould, Alexander Herbert	40692	1269	61	20 July 1940
122.	Graeme-Evans, Francis Raymond	40619	649	26	C. 2 August 1940
123.	Gray, Edward Noel Wallace	408989	1713	453	22 June 1943
124.	Green, Errol Edward	402795	317	7	25 June 1942
125.	Greenacre, Eric Ross	403217	8370	460	11 October 1944
126.	Greenaway, Lindsay Grafton	403601	2473	460	4 September 1943
127.	Grey-Smith, Guy	39460	5168	139	12 May 1940

128.	Grimbly, George Leslie Philip	415137	3254	57	2 January 1944
129.	Gunton, Geoffrey Ian	403583	83	455	11 December 1942
130.	Gurry, Anthony Bernard	401066	2497	459	11 July 1942
131.	Gwilliam, James Percival	432355	8093	78	Downed 23 June 1944
132.	Hake, Albert Horace	403218	6	72	4 April 1942
133.	Haley, Ambrose Anthony	408173	84	93	5 December 1942
134.	Hall, Clive Mayor	402002	3809	7	9 September 1941
135.	Harris, Keith Edwin	420189	8232	460	7 October 1944
136.	Harvey, Leslie Vincent	400239	619	158	6 August 1942
137.	Hawke, William Charles	422180	2618	27 OTU	24 September 1943
138.	Haydon, Jack Henry	408400	2366	75	1 September 1943
139.	Hayes, Brian John Francis	401378	8867	83	12 November 1944
140.	Hayman, Frederick William	401036	929	460	29 November 1942
141.	Healey, Frederick Charles William	412064	3363	156	22 January 1944
142.	Henry, Hector Jerese	47694	735	106	2 October 1942
143.	Herman, Joseph Barnard	425697	9005	466	9 November 1944
144.	Hines, Ronald Milton	402086	39156	39	15 June 1941
145.	Hockey, Gordon Brian	422183	7476	115	13 August 1944
146.	Hogarth, Alexander Archibald McDonald	404101	265332	267	13 December 1942
147.	Hogarth, Robert Douglas	425161	7737	180	9 August 1944
148.	Hogg, Wallace Daniel	420401	6283	3 RAAF	10 May 1944
149.	Holborow, Ian Grantley	402290	418	460	30 May 1942

150.	Holland, Allan James. Died 1988	43286	683	460	2 June 1942
151.	Holland, Henry Edward	411090	1072	50	16 April 1943
152.	Holliday, James Edward	404432	26895	458	23 August 1942
153.	Hooper, Richard Chandler	400144	3015	39	15 June 1942
154.	Horsley, William Alroy Hugh John	403829	3309	454	3 December 1943
155.	Howell-Price, John Frederick	411914	3775	3 RAAF	24 January 1944
156.	Hughes, Gordon William	417192	53775	83	12 November 1944
157.	Hurditch, Douglas David	402862	328	460	9 June 1942
158.	Hutchinson, Douglas Frank	403591	1941	454	22 July 1943
159.	Hynd, John Henry	426776	7480	218	13 August 1944
160.	Jackson, Leonard Ernest	403028	3609	463	29 February 1944
161.	James, Francis Alfred Phillip	977446	1446	124	25 April 1942
162.	Jeffries, Lionel John	414355	3134	15	28 August 1943
163.	Jennings, David Austin	408349	8936	83	11 November 1944
164.	Johns, Samuel	425021	7160	467	31 July 1944
165.	Johnston, Eric Lyle	418957	8098	78	29 July 1944
166.	Jones, Malcolm John	402240	2732	450	26 June 1942
167.	Jowett, Humphrey Arthur Cecil	401283	8043	450	21 March 1944
168.	Keen, Herbert Bruce	422570	5660	142	30 May 1944
169.	Kennedy, Alastair	403619	3370	460	28 January 1944
170.	Kerr, Alexander McBride	406012	182	115	11 May 1941
171.	Kerwin, Basil Virgil	42580	372	78	28 November 1940

172.	Keys, Ian Frederick	406180	777	460	7 May 1942
173.	Kierath, Reginald Victor	402364	1268	450	23 April 1943
174.	Kilvington, Leslie	413312	3314	156	21 January 1944
175.	King, Roland	415154	1865	83	21 January 1944
176.	Kingsford-Smith, Peter	402241	1720	138	13 March 1943
177.	Kloster, William Gordon	260560	702	3 RAAF	22 November 1941
178.	Koch, Louis Gordon	409058	1658	158	23 June 1943
179.	Lahey, Lawrence Edward Nicklin	405591	2370	35	24 August 1943
180.	Lake, James Gordon	404421	66	460	7 May 1942
181.	Lambie, Hugh Tannahill	401517	1223	458	24 March 1943
182.	Lark, Charles Roland	403409	655	460	2 July 1942
183.	Larkin, Howard Rennix	37048	1429	217	8 February 1942
184.	Lawler, Leslie John	419318	3373	460	20 January 1944
185.	Leigh, Thomas Barker	46462	63	76	5 August 1941
186.	Lethbridge, Francis Ernest D'Albedyhll	400861	6484	50	16 August 1942
187.	Leu, Rudolph Maurice	404178	3219	112	21 June 1942
188.	Lietke, John Rangwald	403058	249	467	12 March 1943
189.	Light, Kevin William	402447	8057	9	7 July 1944
190.	Lindsay, Gordon	400720	767	450	22 October 1942
191.	Lindsay, Robert Neil	404815	1026	106	12 March 1943
192.	Loane, Bruce Edward	421353	3263	466	21 December 1943
193.	Loder, Godfrey Hugh	404388	430	460	30 May 1942
194.	Longworth, Harold Leonard Edward	403620	117	460	23 January 1943

195.	Lumsden, Bruce Clyde	418753	8709	195	2 November 1944
196.	Lynch, Cyril Joseph	424270	8872	463	6 November 1944
197.	Macdonald, Ian Stewart Horatio	402383	6079	692	11 June 1944
198.	Mace, Aubrey Wilfred	404405	474	149	16 July 1942
199.	Mackay, Alexander	402019	228327	38	17 July 1941
200.	Mackenzie, Robert Duncan	406321	27457	69	25 January 1943
201.	Mackenzie, Ronald Charles	402465	73	11 OTU	7 August 1941
202.	Maguire, James Joseph	3358	1028	405	11 March 1943
203.	Mahady, Maxwell James	403003	225637	145	26 June 1942
204.	Main, Anthony Clifton	406049	225713	458	25 March 1943
205.	Malcolm, Thomas Alexander	418755	8929	463	19 July 1944
206.	Marchant, Geoffrey Norman	421814	7351	106	9 July 1944
207.	Martin, Philip Andrew	406441	27381	460	23 January 1943
208.	Mathers, Barcroft Melrose	44634	7742	582	13 August 1944
209.	Mayo, Timbury Alan	402968	20	12	25 March 1942
210.	Mayze, Roderick Richard	405215	33657	127	3 November 1942
211.	McCleery, James	415585	5152	460	13 May 1944
212.	McCormack, Alan Ower	375	3373	466	31 January 1944
213.	McDade, Patrick Vincent	403000	7620	453	26 July 1944
214.	McInnes, Alan Fithie	410702	873	83	21 January 1944
215.	McIntosh, Ian Alexander	40631	104	12	12 May 1940
216.	McKean, John	413881	8373	460	4 October 1944

217.	McKechnie, John Philip	400044	3729	242	19 August 1941
218.	McLeod, Colin William	403071	3375	460	31 January 1944
219.	McLeod, Douglas Burton	407905	623	102	11 August 1942
220.	McSweyn, Allan Frank	402005	1385	115	29 June 1941
221.	McVie, David Harper	414420	3376	76	21 January 1944
222.	Melin, Clement Elias	409846	3580	78	3 March 1944
223.	Mellor, Reginald White	407906	915	458	24 March 1943
224.	Miers, Vivian George	407987	741	44	6 October 1942
225.	Miller, George Eric	402248	3874	10 RAF	29 April 1942
226.	Mills, Keith Cyril	425954	8106	78	29 July 1944
227.	Mills, Robert Neil	417883	2058	78	29 July 1944
228.	Milne, Ian Arthur Lace	407078	9667	452	2 September 1941
229.	Miners, Clarence Alfred	406602	257	50	29 April 1942
230.	Mooney, Bernard Francis	115769/910604	22	252	11 March 1942
231.	Moore, Thomas Frederick	286942	2453	37	29 January 1944
232.	Morschel, John Robert Gordon	422627	80840	630	11 June 1944
233.	Mostran, Lawrence Cyril Albert	3844	225672	3 RAAF	6 April 1941
234.	Mulligan, Allen Roy	40058	166	83	12 August 1940
235.	Murdoch, Keith Alexander	406402	2971	450	26 June 1942
236.	Nelson, Earle Milton	401227	1084	101	10 April 1943
237.	Netherway, Leonard James	409580	2627	458	3 August 1943
238.	Newland, Ben Totham Jervois	42634	1617	82	13 August 1940
239.	Nightingale, Robert Roy	422003	6630	9	25 June 1944
240.	Norman, Robert Alexander	400102	3138	460	10 October 1943

241.	Norton, Charles Russell	24878	3139	156	5 September 1943
242.	Norton, Franklin Thomas	409850	4198	257	11 April 1944
243.	Nunn, Henry Keith	422976	6631	467	29 June 1944
244.	O'Brien, Geoffrey Vivian	422667	5126	166	5 May 1944
245.	O'Byrne, Justin Hilary	408022	3735	452	9 August 1941
246.	O'Connell, Conel	403033	1451	408	21 April 1943
247.	Officer, Terence Leslie William	400134	1378	274	21 June 1941
248.	Olsson, John Oxley Waugh	413093	5369	453	20 May 1944
249.	Orr, William Maitland Francis	415384	4066	460	23 April 1944
250.	Osborn, Richard Bentley	74686	19634	460	23 January 1943
251.	Osborne, John Carlisle	403369	582	450	10 July 1942
252.	Overy, Keith	421450	4199	467	15 April 1944
253.	Parker, Vincent	42356	476	234	15 August 1940
254.	Parnell, Roy Alexander	411514	1026	101	10 April 1943
255.	Pattearson, Geoffrey George	402392	2675	272	4 November 1942
256.	Payne, Stanley Wilfred	406537	3498	106	20 February 1944
257.	Pearce, Samuel Keith	400600	689	500	13 September 1942
258.	Pearson, Peter Alfred	428779	6288	619	23 June 1944
259.	Pender, Ronald Bowen Anzac	411517	1027	101	12 April 1943
260.	Penn, Frank Wallace	400233	39317	102	14 August 1941
261.	Perry, Arthur John	17335	3391	630	24 March 1944
262.	Perry, Raymond Walter	415738	8111	466	7 August 1944
263.	Phelps, Colin Gregory	416889	3456	166	29 January 1944

264.	Prichard, John Charles	411825	2483	156	6 September 1943
265.	Poulton, Warwick Brian	402752	207	122	1 May 1942
266.	Randall, Douglas Evans	403818	49	438	30/31 May 1942
267.	Ransome, Horace D'arcy	404486	1726	83	12 May 1943
268.	Raymond, Francis Oswald	405057	921	458	24 March 1943
269.	Redding, William Frank	412184	1159	425	16 April 1943
270.	Richards, Brian Ryman	426781	4201	466	19 April 1944
271.	Righetti, Alan	401151	32073	3 RAAF	22 January 1943
272.	Roberts, Harold George Herbert	406082	28605	3 RAAF	24 November 1941
273.	Roberts, Philip Roy	404116	172	464	3 February 1943
274.	Rosser, Thomas Farr	404794	8241	181	29 September 1944
275.	Royle, Paul Gordon	42152	2269	53	17 May 1940
276.	Russell, George Gray	402253	27	457	4 April 1942
277.	Rydings, John Alty	427356	3389	460	3 February 1944
278.	Sambell, Stanley William	410386	7624	102	19 August 1944
279.	Scanlan, Alan Frederick	402615	524	50	7 June 1942
280.	Schrock, Arthur Reginald Britton	404589	3391	460	29 January 1944
281.	Seamer, Frederick	402478	660	33	5 October 1941
282.	Searcy, Philip Roy	407082	683	99	12 November 1941
283.	Sergeant, Jack Colthurst	407593	3503	3 RAAF	14 February 1944
284.	Shanahan, Anthony	423908	1867	158	30 March 1943
285.	Shannon, Reginald Cyril	402983	356	49	1 June 1942
286.	Sherwood, Richard	108058	669	540	31 August 1942
287.	Shields, Charles William	408098	1037	101	9 April 1943

288.	Shierlaw, John Gow	416107	918	458	24 March 1943
289.	Shine, Patrick	414847	3506	466	16 February 1944
290.	Shipley, Donald Frederick	423184	3393	10 RAF	29 January 1944
291.	Simpson, Lorraine Joseph	401542	2587	460	1 February 1944
292.	Sinclair, Morris Mowat	411536	174	268	22 January 1943
293.	Skehill, Henry Aidan Thomas	41534	1253	144	16 August 1940
294.	Slater, Allen Bruce	402550	29	75	25 March 1942
295.	Smith, Alexander Henderson	404382	9638	12	7 September 1941
296.	Smith, Cyril Boyde	405886	1723	131	18 August 1943
297.	Smith, Donald Gilmour	428370	8940	463	8 November 1944
298.	Smith, Earl Rae	405894	2027	131	3 August 1943
299.	Smith, Geoffrey Joseph	414365	2926	467	4 October 1944
300.	Smith, Robert Darlow	403285	433	55	6 July 1943
301.	Smith, Ronald James	12060	8818	462	2 November 1944
302.	Spear, Reginald Sydney	406630	2465	204	14 July 1942
303.	Steele, Philip John Rupert	418986	6290	115	24 May 1944
304.	Steggles, John Bruce	423920	4471	406	27 April 1944
305.	Stephenson, Jack Mitchell	400762	94	460	7 May 1942
306.	Stevens, Peter Anderson	415190	7627	97	31 July 1944
307.	Stuart, Archibald Roger	402141	9693	452	18 September 1941
308.	Stubbs, Peter	580468	18818	218	11 May 1940
309.	Sweeny, Jack Raymond	432379	8941	463	2 November 1944
310.	Taylor, Howard Hamilton	36153	584	42	19 May 1940

311.	Taylor, Harold Cameron	5627	921	502	22 March 1943
312.	Tebbutt, Arthur Campbell	402472	531	50	8 June 1942
313.	Terry, Ronald Frederick	402418	3685	405	3 August 1941
314.	Thomas, Douglas Frederick	402779	27321	455	11 December 1942
315.	Thomas, Neil Osborne	400740	6311	127	22 May 1944
316.	Thompson, Charles Keith Teulon	404066	32	450	23 February 1942
317.	Thompson, Frank	402143	3675	15	30 July 1941
318.	Thomson, Stanley Edward	406604	2466	70	29 August 1942.
319.	Thwaites, Frederick Easton	400606	2654	252	28 June 1942
320.	Todd, Wemyss Wylton	82357	POW NO?	169	15 February 1944
321.	Todd, William Kenneth	424878	5661	142	30 May 1944
322.	Tonkin, Leonard Roy	407262	365	214	12 June 1942
323.	Train, Henry Roland	402913	782	460	8 May 1942
324.	Trappett, Philip George	404696	100	7	22 May 1942
325.	Trickett, William Alexander	400071	215	76	27 April 1942
326.	Try, Augustine Kenneth	402264	9700	452	18 September 1941
327.	Tucker, Clifton	414278	5127	175	15 March 1944
328.	Vaughan, James Douglas	420083	3397	460	20 January 1944
329.	Vivash, John Martin	432023	1266	466	9 November 1944
330.	Walch, Donald Curtis	404489	6635	HQ, 2nd TAF	25 June 1944
331.	Walker, Tom Leslie	404271	3774	25 OTU	10 September 1941
332.	Wardill, David Richard	400423	24765	12	26 February 1942

333.	Watkins, Douglas Alexander George	406542	452	21 OTU	1 June 1942
334.	Watson, Charles Bryce	400849	26821	174	19 August 1942
335.	Watts, Raymond Carson	401842	6969	467	28 April 1944
336.	Wawn, Robert David	41505	1255	50	26 August 1940
337.	Weatherburn, Leslie Joseph	405892	176	3 RAAF	14 January 1943
338.	Whellum, Leslie Keith	417545	8123	102	12 August 1944
339.	White, Douglas Bruce	400246	3591	463	29 February 1944
340.	White, Stanley	411835	2031	165	11 July 1943
341.	Whittaker, Ross Henry	417984	4863	104	5 April 1944
342.	Wickham, Sydney Thomas	402268	459	74	28 July 1942
343.	Williams, John Edwin Ashley	40652	838	450	31 October 1942
344.	Wilson, Douglas Ernest Lancelot	16	2293	76	4 August 1943
345.	Winn, Richard William	403776	206	450	24 January 1943
346.	Wood, Thomas Goddard	411423	2463	3 RAAF	20 October 1942
347.	Wood, Victor Thomas Lawrence	39921	1444	420 RCAF	21 January 1942
348.	Wright, Kenneth Lindsay	403176	26870	PRU	17 August 1942
349.	Wright, Norman Harry	401226	27179	35	23 September 1942
350.	Young, Digby Aretas	42456	336	61	14 November 1940
351.	Younger, Calton Hearn	400320	538	460	6 June 1942

Bibliography

Specific newspaper citations are listed separately in the Notes. Newspaper articles not provided by families were consulted via the National Library of Australia's Trove resource, <trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper>. All internet sources were verified on 10 June 2020.

Public archive collections

Australian War Memorial, Canberra, ACT (AWM)

AWM 54 779/3/126 part 1: [Prisoners of War and Internees—Examinations and Interrogations:] Statements by Royal Australian Air Force Personnel from Prisoner of War Camps in Germany and Italy]. [AWM 54 779/3/126 part 1: POW statement].

AWM 54 779/3/129: Prisoners of War and Internees—Examinations and Interrogations: Statements by repatriated or released Prisoners of War (RAAF) taken at No. 11 PDRC, Brighton, England, 1945 [AWM 54 779/3/129: 11 PDRC post-liberation debriefs].

AWM 54 81/4/135: [RAAF Historical Records Section Reports] MI9 Reports-Statements & interviews of RAAF members shot down over Europe. [AWM 54 81/4/135: MI9 reports].

Artworks of Albert Henry Comber:

AWM ART34781.001: drawing, 'In the cage at Bari, Italy', 1945.

AWM ART34781.008: drawing, 'Working in the tunnel, Sulmona', 1945.

AWM ART34781.009: drawing, 'Disposing of the earth from the tunnel, Sulmona', 1945.

AWM ART34781.010: drawing, 'Some played deck quoits while the tunnel progressed in the shadow in the corner', 1945.

AWM ART34781.012: drawing, 'It looked harmless enough until—Stalag Luft III, Sagan, Germany', 1945.

AWM ART34781.019: drawing, 'Flight Lieutenants (Mac) Jones and (Rusty) Kierath, RAAF at work, Stalag Luft III, Germany, 1945.

AWM ART34781.022: drawing, 'Monument to the 50 officers who were shot', 1945.

AWM: A.H. Comber, artist, letter, 16 December 1990.

AWM MSS1500: Peters, Betty, 'The lived experience of partners of ex-prisoners of war of the Japanese—a phenomenological study', 1994. [AWM MSS1500: Peters, 'The lived experience of partners'].

AWM PR03099: Brickhill, Paul Chester Jerome.

AWM PR04233: Docking, Gilbert.

AWM PRMF0039: Every, Edwin D.P.

AWM PR90/035: Ferres, Torres.

AWM PR05675: Grey-Smith, Guy.

AWM PR03211: Kingsford-Smith, Peter.

AWM PR84/139: Train, Henry Roland.

Keith Murdoch Sound Archive of Australia in the War of 1939–45 (KMSA):

AWM S00551 KMSA: Coombes, Geoffrey Bernard, 23 March 1989.

AWM S00952 KMSA: Donald, Jack, 4 July 1990.

AWM Sound Archive:

AWM S01656: Burcher, Tony [Anthony] 10 May 1993.

Australians at War Film Archive, UNSW Australia (AAWFA)

Austin, Rex: 0382, 5 June 2003.

Cornish, Geoff: 1388, 2 July 2004.

Falkiner, Fraser 'Jum': 0661, 17 March 2004.

Fordyce, Horace (Bill): 0523, 19 June 2003.

Gaulton, Kenneth: 1276, 3 February, 2004.

Hutchinson, Douglas: 0540, 17 June, 2003.

Jennings, David: 1704, 19 March 2004.

Kerr, Alexander: 1489, 3 March 2004.

Righetti, Alan: 0984, 16 September 2003.

Winn, Richard: 1508, 4 March 2004.

Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA)

Instrument No. 15 of 1994: 'Statement of Principles concerning Post Traumatic Stress Disorder'.

Special Access to Second World War repatriation case files under Section 56 (2) of the *Archives Act 1983*:[3527]

[3527] As required by DVA, names are omitted from these references. However, pseudonyms used in the text have been included.

DVA MX17774.

DVA MX167147. (*Barry Bridges*)

DVA MX290752.

DVA VMX144931. (*Morton Layton*)

DVA QMX148794.

DVA MX030250.

DVA MX076290. (*Mark Derrett*)

DVA QMX058112. (*Stewart Frost*)

DVA NCPX25587. (*Marcus Myatt; Hayley*)

DVA QMX082505. (*Brendan Thorne; Amelia*)

DVA MX008152. (*Michael Forster*)

DVA NMX293081. (*Julian Macpherson*)

DVA MX032771.

DVA QMX076796.

DVA VMX236479.

DVA MX032967.

DVA CX197292.

DVA MX187207.

DVA WMX020608.

DVA MX042756.

DVA MX078596.

DVA MX231738. (*Clarrie Hewson, Betty*)

DVA MX039658.

DVA MX138006.

DVA NCX061632.

DVA MX015221.

DVA QMX040367.

DVA VMX134018. (*Winston Evans*)

DVA MX193691.

DVA NCX067209.

DVA MX010057.

DVA MX211231.

DVA QMX045101.

DVA NMX292929.

DVA MX074694. (*Derek Sheppard*)

DVA CX26598. (*Roger Baird*)

DVA MX041391.

DVA MX067005.

DVA MX078429.

DVA VX158593.

DVA MX161399.

DVA MX182982. (*Dean Harrison*)

DVA VMX109327.

DVA NMX247300. (*Rodney Patton*)

DVA MX338303. (*Chester West*)

DVA NHX068219.

DVA NMSS04454. (*Gavin Brownlow*)

DVA QMX136151.

DVA VMX151620.

DVA MX305007. (*Jonathan Dexter*; *Maggie*)

DVA MX045167. (*Hubert Hunnicutt*)

DVA MX063770.

DVA VMX118518. (*Arnold Hibbert*)

DVA MX124472-01. (*Wilfred Mosse*)

DVA MX171449.

DVA QMX027506.

DVA NMX272113. (*Robin Sumner*)

DVA NMX188716. (*Martin Quinlan; Glenda*)

DVA X215879.

DVA QMX149896.

DVA MX163729. (*Ivan Haines*)

DVA MX143182-01.

DVA MX035229.

DVA NMX239853.

DVA MX211247. (*Daniel Weller*)

DVA MX003452.

DVA NMX057465. (*Fergus Bennett*)

DVA SMX021401. (*Gerald Boyce*)

DVA QMX126934. (*Hubert Atkinson*)

DVA NCX065122. (*Sean Hanrahan*)

DVA CX019404.

DVA QMX168374.

DVA XC026892. (*Warren Nash*)

DVA NMX233512. (*Benedict Shaw; Polly*)

DVA VMX211663.

DVA MX126226.

DVA QMX034497. (*Oliver Henderson*)

DVA QMX086167. (*Antony Duffy*)

DVA NMX280688. (*Simon McGrath; Sally*)

DVA MX035299.

DVA MX038694.

DVA CX090487. (*Mitchell Bonner*)

DVA QMX022543. (*Matthew MacKinlay; Francine*)

History and Heritage Branch–Air Force, Canberra, ACT (HAHB-AF)

RAAF Register of Prisoners of War or Internees, Part 1, 1–304.

Imperial War Museum Sound Archive (United Kingdom) (IWMSA)

Bernard, Dave, 26561, June 2004 [no date].

Bracken, Hugo, 11337, 4 May 1990.

Cornish, Geoffrey, 23327, 28 May 2003.

Cornish, Geoffrey, 27054, 9 June 2004.

Kerr, Alexander, 24826, 18 March 2003.

Royle, Paul, 26605, 2 December 2012.

Younger, Calton 'Cal', 23329, [no day] November 2002.

International Bomber Command Centre Digital Archive (IBCC Digital Archive):

Hemsworth Collection: 'A15 NCO's Arts & Crafts Exhib. Stalag Luft 3. Aug 42'.

Marion Heritage Research Centre, Adelaide, SA (MHRC CPA)

Colin Phelps' Archive, courtesy of the family of the late C.G. Phelps and the Marion Heritage Research Centre.

Narromine Aviation Museum, Narromine, NSW (NAM JOC)

John Osborne Collection.

National Archives of Australia, Canberra, ACT (NAA)

NAA B883: Second Australian Imperial Force Personnel Dossiers, 1939–1947 [service records].

NAA B884: Citizen Military Forces Personnel Dossiers, 1939–1947 [service records].

NAA B503: [Prisoners of War Trust Fund] Application forms for grants and associated documents [POW Trust fund applications].

NAA A9300: RAAF Officers Personnel files, 1921–1948 [service records].

NAA A9301: RAAF Personnel files of Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) and other ranks, 1921–1948 [service records].

NAA A12372: RAAF Personnel files—All Ranks [service files].

NAA A705: Correspondence files [RAAF casualty files].

NAA A13950: German Prisoner of War [POW] identification cards for captured RAAF officers.

National Library of Australia, Canberra, ACT (NLA)

NLA FERG/4552: *The Red Cross Prisoner of War Official Monthly Bulletin*, Melbourne: Australian Red Cross Society.

NLA FERG/4550: 'P.O.W. the Monthly Newsletter of the Australian Prisoners of War Relatives' Association', Sydney: The Association. (POWRA).

NLA Gilbert Docking interviewed by Alex Hood and Annette Hood in the Alex Hood folklore collection, BIB ID 6536081, 2014. [NLA AHFC].

NLA MS 8657, Acc04/138 instalment: Papers of Francis James, 1932–1992 [manuscript].

NLA Oral TRC 1/97 Guy Grey-Smith, interviewed by Hazel de Berg, for the Hazel de Berg Collection [sound recording], 29 May 1965, Bib ID 1755104. [NLA HdBC].

NLA Justin O'Byrne interviewed by John Meredith for the John Meredith folklore collection, BiB ID 2783443, recorded at Launceston, Tasmania on 31 October 1986. [NLA JMFC].

NLA 'Reminiscential conversations between the Hon. Justin O'Byrne and the Hon. Clyde Cameron' [sound recording], BiB 1244653, recorded 29 August 1983–28 July 1984. [NLA Justin O'Byrne, 'Reminiscential conversations'].

NSW State Archives (NSW SA)

Divorce and matrimonial cause case papers:[3528]

NRS-13495-22-110-4491/1953.

NRS-13495-25-153-668/1960.

NRS-13495-26-127-514/1962.

NRS-13495-19-118-4784/1947 (958/1949).

NRS-13495-21-365-4631/1952.

Shrine of Remembrance, Melbourne, VIC (SOR JCC)

James Catanach Collection.

State Library of South Australia, Adelaide, SA (SLSA)

Records of Ex-Prisoner of War Association of South Australia, SRG 869 Special List, Series 14. [SLSA SRG 869 Series 14].

Records of Ex-Prisoner of War Association of South Australia, SRG 869 Special List, Series 16. [SLSA SRG 869 Series 16].

[3528] Names omitted here and in text to protect identity.

State Library of Western Australia, Perth, WA (SLWA)

Paul Royle, interview with John Bannister, 4 March 2014 and continued on 19 March 2014 (for the Nedlands and South Perth oral history project).

State Records Office, Western Australia (SRO WA)

Supreme Court divorce register:[3529]

517/1952.

8/1948.

Town of Cambridge, Local Studies Oral History Collection, Perth, WA (TOC WA)

Town of Cambridge, Alex Kerr, interview, with Fiona Brown, 11 October 2015.

National Archives, United Kingdom (NAUK)

AIR 40/269: Milag–Marlag Nord–Oflag L (Ex Stalag Luft III): reports on forced evacuation and finance, submissions to protecting power and nominal roll. [NAUK AIR 40/269: Stalag Luft III reports and nominal roll.]

AIR 40/285: Stalag Luft III (Sagan): report 'X' compiled by members of escape organisations. [NAUK AIR 40/285: 'X' report.]

AIR 40/1490: Stalag Luft III (Belaria): nominal roll of prisoners of war and recommendations for meritorious work.

AIR 40/1488: Stalag Luft III (East): nominal rolls of prisoners of war and recommendations for meritorious work.

AIR 40/1489: Stalag Luft III (North): nominal roll of prisoners of war in Camp Hospital; reports on forced evacuation and general conditions in camp Apr. 1944–Jan. 1945.

WO 32/10757: Prisoners of War Repatriation (Code 91(F)) Re-habilitation of repatriated prisoners of war, Major G.B. Matthews RAMC, Report on the Mental Health of Prisoners of War by Senior British Medical Officer, Stalag Luft III, 17 February 1944. [NAUK WO 32/10757: Matthews' report, 17 February 1944.]

——, The Repatriate Prisoner of War from the Medical Aspect, Australian military Forces [Undated, c. mid 1944]. [NAUK WO 32/10757: Repatriate POW report.]

[3529] Names omitted here and in text to protect identity.

WO 208/3328 to 3335: MI9/SPG/LIB Liberation reports.

WO 208/3283: Camp History of Stalag Luft III (Sagan) Air Force Personnel, April 1942–January 1945, Part I East (Officers') Compound, Part II Centre (NCO's) Compound, Part III North (Officers') Compound, Part V Belaria (Officers') Compound [no date]. [NAUK WO 208/3283: SLIII Camp History.]

WO 224/63A: International Red Cross and Protecting Powers (Geneva): Reports concerning Prisoner of War Camps in Europe and the Far East. Unnumbered Reports. Stalag Luft III. [NAUK WO 224/63A: Red Cross and Protecting Powers reports.]

WO 310/9: PG 75 Bari, Italy: ill treatment of British personnel.

Private archive collections

Note: only manuscripts and recordings are listed separately here. Sources of photos, letters and other documents cited from private collections are recorded in the footnotes.

3 Squadron RAAF Association, NSW (3 Squadron RAAFA)

'Tom Wood Diary', unpublished manuscript.

Arnel Archive, courtesy of Alec Arnel (Arnel archive)

Harvey, Les, 'Over, Down and Out: Recollections of an Airman Captured by the Germans in 1942', unpublished manuscript.

Train, H.R., 'A Barbed-Wire World. The Diary of a Prisoner of War in Germany 1942–1945', unpublished manuscript.

Archer Family Archive, courtesy of David Archer (Archer FA)

Baines Family Archive, courtesy of the Baines Family (Baines FA)

Baines, Ronald, 'A Wartime Log', unpublished manuscript, undated and unpaginated. [retyped, rearranged wartime log book, with additional entries presented as a diary].

——, '1939 Experiences', undated, unpublished manuscript.

——, 'Life Story Notes: Bits and Pieces Plus Remnants', undated, unpublished manuscript.

——, ‘Memoirs’, undated, unpublished manuscript.

——, ‘Shock 1942’, undated, unpublished manuscript.

——, ‘Shot Down’, undated draft account, (later rewritten as ‘Shock 1942’), undated, unpublished manuscript.

——, ‘We are at War’, undated, unpublished manuscript.

Bligh Family Archive, courtesy of Winifred Chevalier (Blair FA)

Borsht Archive, courtesy of Cyril Borsht (Borsht Archive)

Borsht, Cyril, ‘A Life Well Lived. A Memoir’, unpublished manuscript, 2008.

Bowden Family Archive, courtesy of Bruce Bowden (Bowden FA)

‘Diary of Huie Bowden July 1944–May 1945’, transcribed and annotated wartime log book, unpublished manuscript.

Bryce Family Archive (Bryce FA), courtesy of Jane Bryce

‘Jock Bryce’s POW Diary 1942–1945. Written in 1946’, unpublished manuscript.

Colin Burgess Research Collection, (Burgess RC)

Carson Family Archive, courtesy of John Carson (Carson FA)

Carson, John, ‘Retrospective Journey to Lybia/Egypt, Italy, Germany/Poland in Commemoration of the exploits of Kenneth Francis Carson’, unpublished brochure, December 2003.

——, ‘The KFC Saga’, unpublished manuscript, January 2016.

Comber Family Archive, courtesy of Cath McNamara (Comber FA)

Fletcher Family Archive, courtesy of Kim Griffiths (Fletcher FA)

Fletcher, Ken, 'Snapshots of the Past: Brief Historical Records of Fletcher Family Relatives and Friends. Denis Adams, [unpublished family history], October 2005.

Fordyce Family Archive, courtesy of Lily Fordyce (Fordyce FA)

Bethell, Anthony, 'A Glimpse of Stalag Luft III (North Compound)', unpublished manuscript, [c. 1995].

Fraser Family Archive, courtesy of Ian Fraser (Fraser FA)

Fry Family Archive, courtesy of Pat Martin (Fry FA)

Gordon Family Archive, courtesy of Drew Gordon (Gordon FA)

Gordon, Drew, 'Photographs from the Collection of James Anthony (Tony) Gordon', unpublished booklet, [no date, unpaginated].

——, 'Record of a Visit to the Site of Stalag Luft III, Sagan, Poland, September 1998', [no date, unpaginated].

Green Family Archive, courtesy of Helen Green (Green FA)

Drew Harrison research collection, courtesy of Drew Harrison and with permission of Rex Breheny (Harrison RC)

Warrant Officer Ross Thomas Breheny, 404957, 145 Squadron RAF, captured 27 March 1943, undated [2008] recording.

Hutchinson Family Archive, courtesy of Robert Douglas Hutchinson (Hutchinson FA)

Johnston Family Archive, courtesy of the late Evelyn Johnston and Colin Johnston (Johnston FA)

Kerr Archive, courtesy of Alex Kerr (Kerr archive)

Kierath Family Archive, courtesy of Peter Kierath (Kierath FA)

Long Family Archive, courtesy of Jennifer Long (Long FA)

Lumsden Family Archive, courtesy of Margaret and Jaime Bradbeer (Lumsden FA)

Bradbeer, Jaime and Lumsden, Bruce, 'The Complete Tour: Letters of Jaime Bradbeer and Bruce Lumsden, April 1985–October 1990', unpublished manuscript. ['The Complete Tour.'].

Bradbeer, Jaime and Lumsden, Bruce, 'Behind the Scenes: Letters between BC Lumsden & JM Bradbeer, August 1997–August 2000', unpublished manuscript. ['Behind the Scenes.'].

Mayo Family Archive, courtesy of Peter Mayo (Mayo FA)

['Timbury Alan 'Tim' Mayo: Letters, artworks and photographs', collated with additional historical narrative by Peter Mayo], untitled, unpublished manuscript, 2015. (Individual letters from Tim Mayo and other family members cited in text are from those reproduced in this narrative.)

Keith Mills Family Archive, courtesy of Jan Smith (Keith Mills FA)

Netherway Family Archive, courtesy of Mike Netherway (Netherway FA)

Nightingale Family Archive (Nightingale FA)

Nightingale, Robert John (Bob), 'Wartime Records of Robert Roy Nightingale', unpublished manuscript, 2017.

O'Byrne Family Archive, courtesy of Anne O'Byrne (O'Byrne FA)

Justin O'Byrne, '*Mercury* Radio Roundsman' segment, Radio 7LA, Launceston, undated, [c. July 1947].

Justin O'Byrne, untitled, undated account beginning 'Nine o'clock above!'.

Preen Family Archive, courtesy of Ross and Jude Preen, and Max Preen (Preen FA)

Martyn Rees Archive (Martin Rees Archive)

Paul Royle Archive, courtesy of Paul Royle (Royle Archive)

Paul Royle, 'Stalag Luft III', unpublished manuscript, 1985.

Andrew R.B. Simpson Research Collection (Simpson RC)

Todd Family Archive, courtesy of Peter Todd (Todd FA)

Dick Wheeler Archive, courtesy of Tony Wheeler

Author's interviews and email correspondence (Alexander records)

Arnel, Alec, interviews 7 August 2014, 9 October 2014, 27 November 2014, 29 January 2015, 29 October 2015, 12 November 2015, 4 June 2016, 23 June 2016, 2 March 2017, 21 February 2018.

Baines, Stuart, interview 9 July 2015.

Bligh family (Winifred Chevalier, Janie Miller, Trish Norman and Michael Bligh), interview 26 April 2017.

Berry, Graham, interview 7 June 2016.

Borsht, Cyril, interview 28 January 2016.

Bradbeer, Jamie and Margaret, interview 20 July 2016.

Bradbeer, Jamie, email 9 September 2016.

Bryce, Jane, email 24 February 2017.

Carson, John, interviews 28 January 2016, 8 April 2020, 14 April 2020; emails 19 February 2016, 11 January 2020, 5 February 2020, 25 March 2020.

Fraser, Ian, interview 25 May 2016.

Fordyce, Lily, interview 19 October 2016.

Fotheringham, Barbara, interview 26 June 2016; undated letter, received 4 July 2016.

Garcelon, Kylie, email 26 June 2016.

Gordon, Drew, interviews 31 May 2016, 19 July 2016, email 24 January 2020, 24 April 2020, 30 April 2020.

Green, Helen, emails 18 December 2017, 28 April 2018, 2 June 2018, 14 July 2019, 2 August 2019, 5 September 2019, 7 December 2019, 10 December 2019.

Hutchinson, Robert Douglas, interview 19 December 2016.

Johnston, Colin, interview 18 October 2016; email 9 September 2016.

Johnston, Evelyn, interview 18 October 2016.

Kierath, Peter, interview 2 May 2016.

Lane, Bethany, emails 26, 27 February 2020.

Laugesen, Amanda, Director, Australian National Dictionary Centre, email 24 October 2018.

Long, Jennifer, interview 27 January 2016, emails 1 February 2016, 4 September 2019.

Martin, Pat, interview 27 September 2016; emails 11 March 2017, 5 August 2019.

Mayo, Peter, emails 13 July 2015, 4 May 2020, 5 May 2020.

McCormack, Michele, email 28 July 2019.

McKernan, Michael email 25 September 2019.

McLeod, Greg, interview 15 January 2016.

McNamara, Cath, interview 18 July 2016.

Neal, Mark, Assistant Director Records Management, Department of Veterans' Affairs, 5 September 2017.

Netherway, Mike, interview 28 September 2016; emails 6 July 2015, 1 January 2020, 18 May 2020, 19 May 2020, 20 May 2020.

O'Byrne, Anne, interview 26 May 2016.

Preen, Max, emails 4 September 2015, 15 June 2018.

Scifleet, Carlene, interview 9 June 2016.

Simpson, Andrew R.B., email 21 March 2016.

Smith, Jan, emails 26 March 2018, 3 October 2019.

Todd, Peter, interview 13 October 2015.

Walsh, Jennifer, interview 29 April 2017.

Official reports/publications

Air Publication 1548: Instructions and Guide to all Officers and Airmen of the Royal Air Force regarding Precautions to be taken in the event of falling into the hands of an Enemy, [no publication details], March 1936.

Air Publication 1548: Instructions and Guide to All Officers and Airmen of the Royal Air Force regarding Precautions to be taken in the Event of Falling into the Hands of an Enemy, [no publication details], 2nd Edition, June 1941.

Air Publication 1548: The Responsibilities of a Prisoner of War, [no publication details], 3rd Edition, April 1944.

Symonds, C.P. and Williams, D.J., *Air Publication 3139: Psychological Disorders in Flying Personnel of the Air Force Investigated During the War*. London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, London, 1947.

Australia Remembers Task Force, *Australia Remembers 1945–1995: Background Information*. Woden: Department of Veterans' Affairs, 1994.

The King's Regulations and Air Council Instructions for the Royal Air Force with Appendices and Index 1942. London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1942.

Neilsen, Rhiannon, Macdonald, Anne, Scarr, Edward, Smith, Hugh, Frame, Tom (with Roberts, Chris, Richardson, Tom, Hall, Bob, and Ross, Andrew) [Neilsen et al.], 'Moral Injury: From Theory to Practice', Australian Centre of the Study of Armed Conflicts and Society, UNSW Canberra, 2016.

Books

(NOTE: details of chapters cited are included in footnotes.)

Alexander, Kristen, *Clive Caldwell Air Ace*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2006.

——, *Jack Davenport: Beaufighter Leader*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2009.

——, *Australia's Few and the Battle of Britain*. Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2014.

Allport, Alan, *Demobbed: Coming Home after the Second World War*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010.

Anders, Gunther and Eatherly, Claude, *Burning Conscience: the Case of the Hiroshima pilot, Claude Eatherly. told in his letters to Gunther Anders.* New York: Monthly Review Press, 1962.

Anderson, Robert and Westmacott, David, *Handle with Care: A Book of Prison Camp Sketches Drawn and Written in Prison Camps in Germany*. Cookham: privately published, 1946.

Ariotti, Kate, *Captive Anzacs: Australian POWs of the Ottomans during the First World War*. Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Arnold, John, Spearritt, Peter, and Walker, David, (eds), *Out of Empire. The British Dominion of Australia*. Port Melbourne: Mandarin Australia, 1993.

Auslander, Leora and Zahra, Tara (eds), *The Material Culture of Conflict and Displacement*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018.

Baldino, Daniel and Brennan, Mike (eds), *1915: Australians at War and on the Home Front*. [No place]: Big Sky Publishing, 2016.

Barker, A.J. *Behind Barbed Wire*. London: B.T. Batsford, 1974.

Barker, Tony, *Keith Carmody: Keith Miller's Favourite Captain*. Cardiff: Association of Cricket Statisticians and Historians, 2012.

Barkhof, Sandra and Smith, Angela K. (eds), *War and Displacement in the Twentieth Century: Global Conflicts*, London: Taylor and Francis, 2014.

Barrett, John, *We Were There: Australian Soldiers of World War II*. Ringwood: Viking Penguin Books Australia Ltd, 1987.

Barris, Ted, *The Great Escape: A Canadian Story*. Toronto: Thomas Allen Publishers, 2013.

Beaumont, Joan, with Joshi, Vijaya, Bomford, Janette, Blair, Dale and Pratten, Garth, *The Australian Centenary History of Defence, Volume VI, Australian Defence: Sources and Statistics*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Beaumont, Joan, Grant, Lachlan, and Pegram, Aaron (eds), *Beyond Surrender: Australian Prisoners of War in the Twentieth Century*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2015.

Beaumont, Joan, *Gull Force: Survival and Leadership in Captivity, 1941–1945*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988.

Beltrone, Art and Lee, *A Wartime Log*. Charlottesville: Howell Press, 1994.

Ben-Ze'ev, Efrat, Gino, Ruth, and Winter, Jay (eds), *Shadows of War: A Social History of Silence in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Billett, Janet Roberts, *Memories of War: Members of the Naval and Military Club recall World War II. Fifty Interviews*. Melbourne: The Naval and Military Club, 2004.

Bishop, Patrick, *Bomber Boys Fighting Back 1940–1945*. London: HarperPress, 2007.

Boddice, Rob, *Pain: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

——, *The History of Emotions*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018.

——, *The History of Feelings.* London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2019.

Bongiorno, Frank, *The Sex Lives of Australians: A History*. Collingwood: Black Inc., 2012.

Bourke, Joanna, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War*. London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 1996.

——, *An Intimate History of Killing: Face-to-face Killing in Twentieth Century Warfare*. London: Granta Books, 1999.

Bourke, Roger, *Prisoners of the Japanese: Literary imagination and the prisoner-of-war experience*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2006.

Bourne, Stephen, *Fighting Proud: The Untold Story of the Gay Men who Served in Two World Wars*. London: I.B. Taurus & Co Ltd, 2017.

Braithwaite, Richard Wallace, *Fighting Monsters: An Intimate History of the Sandakan Tragedy*. North Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2016.

Brickhill, Paul, *The Great Escape.* London: Faber and Faber, 1951.

Brickhill, Paul and Norton, Conrad, *Escape to Danger*. London: Faber and Faber, 1954.

Brown, Kingsley, *Bonds of Wire: A Memoir*. Toronto: Collins Publishers, 1989.

Buckham, Robert, *Forced March to Freedom: An Illustrated Diary of Two Forced Marches and the Interval Between January to May 1945*. London: Sentinel Publishing, 1995.

Burgess, Alan, *The Longest Tunnel: The True Story of the Great Escape*. London: Bloomsbury, 1990.

Burgess, Colin, *Destination Buchenwald*. Kenthurst: Kangaroo Press, 1995.

——, *'Bush' Parker: An Australian Battle of Britain Pilot in Colditz*. Loftus: Australian Military History Publications, 2007.

Burke, Peter, *What is Cultural History?* Cambridge: Polity, 2018.

Campion, Garry, *The Good Fight: Battle of Britain Propaganda and The Few*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

Calnan, T.D., *Free as a Running Fox*. London: Macdonald & Co. (Publishers) Ltd, 1970.

Carr, Gilly, and Mytum, Harold, *Cultural Heritage and Prisoners of War: Creativity Behind War*. New York: Routledge, 2012.

Carroll, Tim, *The Great Escapers: The Full Story of the Second World War's Most Remarkable Mass Escape.* Prahran: Hardie Grant Books, 2004.

Churchill, Winston, *My Early Life: A Roving Commission.* London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd, 1944.

Clark, Anna, *Private Lives: Public History*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2016.

Clark, H.P., *Wirebound World: Stalag Luft III*. London: Alfred H. Cooper & Sons Ltd, 1946.

Colman, Mike, *Crew: The Story of the Men who Flew RAAF Lancaster J for Jig*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2018.

Costello, John, *Love Sex & War: Changing Values 1939–45*. London: Collins, 1985.

Coulthard-Clark, Chris, *The Third Brother: The Royal Australian Air Force 1921–39*. North Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991.

Cousens, Bryce (ed), *The Log: Stalag Luft III Belaria–Sagan 1939–1945*. Cheltenham: the author, [1947].

Craske, Basil, *Kites & Kriegies*. Norwich: the author, [no date].

[Crawley, Aidan], *Escape from Germany: True Stories of POW Escapes in WWII*. Kew: The National Archives, 2009.

Crotty, Martin and Larsson, Marina (eds), *Anzac Legacies: Australians and the Aftermath of War.* North Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing Pty Ltd, 2010.

Cullingford, Cedric and Husseman, Harald (eds), *Anglo-German Attitudes*. Aldershot: Avebury, 1995.

Curthoys, Ann, Martin, A.W., Rowse, Tim, (eds), *Australians: A Historical Library. Australians from 1939*. Broadway: Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, 1987.

Dack, Irwin John, *So, You Wanted Wings, Hey! An Autobiography. Part One*. Moorabbin: The author, 1993.

Damousi, Joy, *The Labour of Loss: Mourning, Memory and Wartime Bereavement in Australia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

——, *Living with the Aftermath: Trauma, Nostalgia and Grief in Post-War Australia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Damousi, Joy and Lake, Marilyn (eds), *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Dando-Collins, Stephen, *The Hero Maker: A Biography of Paul Brickhill*. North Sydney: Penguin Random House Australia, 2016.

Darian-Smith, Kate and Hamilton, Paula (eds), *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Davidson, Jane W. and Damousi, Joy (eds), *A Cultural History of the Emotions. Volume 6. In the Modern and Post-Modern Age*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019.

Dawson, Graham, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities*. London: Routledge, 1994.

Dobos, Ned, *Ethics, Security, and the War-Machine: The True Cost of the Military*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.

Donnelly, Peter (ed.), *Mrs Milburn's Diaries: An Englishwoman's Day-to-Day Reflections 1939–45*. London: George G. Harrap & Co Ltd, 1979.

Downes, Stephanie, Holloway, Sally, and Randles, Sarah (eds), *Feeling Things: Objects and Emotions through History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Dudink, Stefan, Hagemann, Karen, and Tosh, John (eds), *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004.

Duggan, Margaret (ed.), *Padre in Colditz: The Diary of J. Ellison Platt M.B.E.* London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1978.

Dunn, Norman Maxwell, *Poems of Norman Maxwell Dunn: Composed 1942–1946*. [Privately published; no publication details], 1981.

Durand, Arthur A, *Stalag Luft III: The Secret Story*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999.

Dyrenfurth, Nick, *Mateship: A Very Australian History*. North Brunswick: Scribe Publications, 2015.

Earle, Rebecca (ed.), *Epistolary Selves: letters and letter-writers, 1600–1945*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 1999.

Fallows, Carol, *Love & War: Stories of War Brides from the Great War to Vietnam*. Sydney: Bantam Books, 2002.

Feltman, Brian K, *The Stigma of Surrender: German Prisoners, British Captors, and Manhood in the Great War and Beyond*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015.

Foot and Langley, *MI 9: The British Secret Service that Fostered Escape and Evasion 1939–1945 and its American Counterpart.* London: Book Club Associates, 1979.

Frame, Tom (ed.), *Moral Injury: Unseen Wounds in an Age of Barbarism*. Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2015.

——, (ed.), *Anzac Day Then & Now*. Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2016.

Francis, Martin, *The Flyer: British Culture and the Royal Air Force 1939–1945*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Gammage, Bill, The Broken Years: Australian Soldiers in the Great War. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2010.

Garton, Stephen, *The Cost of War: War, Return and the Re-shaping of Australian Culture*. Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2020.

Gaynor, Andrew, *Guy Grey-Smith: Life Force*. Crawley: UWA Publishing, 2012.

Gell, Alfred, *Art and Agency: A New Anthropological Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Gilbert, Adrian, *POW: Allied Prisoners in Europe 1939–1945*. London: John Murray (Publishers), 2007.

Gill, Anton, *The Great Escape: The Full Dramatic Story with Contributions from Survivors and their Families*. London: Review/Headline Book Publishing, 2001.

Gillies, Midge, *The Barbed-wire University: The Real Lives of Prisoners of War in the Second World War*. London: Aurum Press, 2011.

Gladwin, Michael, *Captains of the Soul: A History of Australian Army Chaplains*. Newport: Big Sky Publishing, 2013.

Grayling, A.C., *Among the Dead Cities: Is the Targeting of Civilians in War Ever Justified?*. Bloomsbury Academic: London, 2014.

——, *War: An Enquiry*. London: Yale University Press, 2017.

Hall, Roger, *Spitfire Pilot: An extraordinary true story of combat in the Battle of Britain*. Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2012.

Hallam, Robert Kay, *The Scarecrow Said and other poems*. London: Press of Villiers Publications Ltd, 1961.

Hannaford, Dudley, *Mission Incomplete*. Harrington Park: the author, 2000.

Harrisson, Tom, *Living Through the Blitz*. London: William Collins & Sons, 1976.

Harsh, George, *Lonesome Road*. London: Longman Group Limited, 1972.

Hasluck, Paul, *Australia in the War of 1939–1945, Series Four, Volume I: The Government and the People 1939–1941*. Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1965.

Hately-Broad, Barbara, *War and welfare: British POW families, 1939–45*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009.

Hayes, Helen, *Beyond the Great Escape. Geoff Cornish: The One Who Got Away*. Elanora: Possum Publishing, 2004.

Hetherington, John, *Australian Painters: Forty Profiles*. Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire, 1967.

Herington, John, *Australia in the War of 1939–1945. Series Three. Air. Volume IV: Air Power Over Europe, 1944–1945*. Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1963.

Holbrook, Carolyn and Reeves, Keir (eds), *The Great War: Aftermath and Commemoration*. Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2019.

Horn, Karen, *In Enemy Hands: South Africa's POWs in World War II*. Jeppestown: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2015.

Houghton Frances, *The Veterans' Tale: British Military Memoirs of the Second World War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.

Hunt, Nigel C., *Memory, War and Trauma*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Hynes, Samuel, *The Soldiers' Tales: Bearing Witness to Modern War*. New York: Penguin Group, 1998.

——, *On War and Writing*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018.

Inglis, K.S. (assisted by Brazier, Jan), *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape*. Carlton South: The Miegunyah Press (Melbourne University Press), 1998.

Inglis, Ken, Spark, Seumus, Winter, Jay, with Bunyan, Carol, *Dunera Lives: A Visual History*. Clayton: Monash University Publishing, 2018.

Jalland, Pat, *Changing Ways of Death in twentieth-century Australia: War, Medicine and the Funeral Business*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Ltd, 2006.

——, *Death in War and Peace: Loss and Grief in England 1914–1970*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

James, B.A. (Jimmy), *Moonless Night: The World War Two Escape Epic*. Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, 2008.

James, John, *The Paladins: A Social History of the RAF up to the Outbreak of World War* II. London: Macdonald & Co, 1990.

Johnes, Martin, *Christmas and the British*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016.

Johnston, Mark, *Fighting the Enemy: Australian Soldiers and their Adversaries in World War II*. Oakleigh: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

——, *Whispering Death: Australian Airmen in the Pacific War*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2011.

Jones, Franklin D., Sparacino, Linette R., Wilcox, Victoria L., Rothberg, Joseph M., and Stokes, James W., *War Psychiatry.* Falls Church: Office of the Surgeon General, 1995

Jones, Heather, *Violence against Prisoners of War in the First World War: Britain, France and Germany*, 1914–1920. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Kerr, Alex, *Shot Down: A Secret Diary of one POW's Long March to Freedom*. Newport: Big Sky Publishing, 2015.

King, Col, *War Gave Us Wings: Australia's Contribution to the Empire Air Training Scheme 1940–1945*. [No place]: Meteor (Col King Publications), [2010].

Kittel, Katrina, *Shooting Through: Campo 106 escaped POWs after the Italian armistice*. West Geelong: Echo Books, 2019.

Kochavi, Arieh J., *Confronting Captivity: Britain and the United States and their POWs in Nazi Germany*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005.

Laplander, Robert J., *The True Story of the Wooden Horse*. Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books Ltd, 2014.

Lark, Charles R, *A Lark on the Wing: Memoirs World War II and 460 Squadron*. [No publication details].

Larkins, John, and Howard, Bruce, *Great Australian Book of Nostalgia*. Adelaide: Rigby Limited, 1975.

Larsson, Marina, *Shattered Anzacs: Living with the Scars of War*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2009.

Leese, Peter, and Crouthamel, Jason, (eds), *Traumatic Memories of the Second World War and After*. [No place]: palgrave macmillan, 2016.

Lloyd, Clem and Rees, Jacquie, *The Last Shilling: A History of Repatriation in Australia*, Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1994.

Laugesen, Amanda, *Boredom is the Enemy: the Intellectual and Imaginative Lives of Australian Soldiers in the Great War and Beyond*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2012.

Lawless, Jennifer, *Kismet: the story of the Gallipoli prisoners of war*. North Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2015.

Levine, Alan J., *Captivity, Flight and Survival in World War II*. Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2000.

Longworth, Philip, *The Unending Vigil: A History of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission 1917–1967.* London: Constable & Company Ltd, 1967.

Macintyre, Stuart, *Australia's Boldest Experiment: War and Reconstruction in the 1940s*. Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2015.

Mackenzie, Ron, *An Ordinary War 1940–1945*. Wangaratta: Shoestring Press, 1995.

MacKenzie, S.P., *The Colditz Myth: British and Commonwealth Prisoners of War in Nazi Germany*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

——, *Flying Against Fate: Superstition and Allied Aircrews in World War II*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2017.

Magnússon, Sigurður Gylfi and Szijártó, István, *What is Microhistory? Theory and Practice*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2013.

Makepeace, Clare, *Captives of War: British Prisoners of War in Europe in the Second World War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

Mason, W. Wynne, *Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War 1939–45*, Uckfield: The Naval & Military Press Ltd, no date.

Matt, Susan J. and Stearns, Peter N., (eds), *Doing Emotions History*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014.

McCalman, Janet, *Journeyings: The Biography of a Middle-Class Generation 1920–1990*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1993.

McCarthy, John, *Last Call of Empire: Australian Aircrew, Britain and the Empire Air Training Scheme*. Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1988.

McKernan, Michael, *All In! Australia during the Second World War*. Melbourne: Thomas Nelson Australia, 1983.

——, *This War Never Ends: The Pain of Separation and Return. Australian Prisoners of Wars and Their Families*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2001.

——, *The Strength of a Nation: Six Years of Australians Fighting for the Nation and Defending the Homefront in WWII*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2006.

McKernan, M. and Brown, M. (eds), *Australia: Two Centuries of War and Peace*. Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1988.

Metford, J.C.J., *Dictionary of Christian Lore and Legend*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1983.

Monteath, Peter, *P.O.W. Australian Prisoners of War in Hitler's Reich*. Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 2011.

Moore, Bob and Fedorowich, Kent, (eds), *Prisoners of War and their Captors in World War II*. Oxford: Berg, 1996.

Moore, Bob and Hately-Broad, Barbara, (eds), *Prisoners of War, Prisoners of Peace: Captivity, Homecoming and Memory in World War II*. Oxford: Berg, 2005.

Morschel, J.R.G (Jack), *A Lancaster's Participation in Normandy Invasion 1944.* [No imprint details; private publication], 1999.

Nelson, Earle M, *If Winter Comes: RAAF Service 1939–1945*. Lovely Banks: Earle M. Nelson, 1989.

Nelson, Hank, *Chased by the Sun*. Sydney: Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2002.

Newman, Carolyn, (ed.), *Legacies of Our Fathers: World War II prisoners of the Japanese—their sons and daughters tell their stories.* South Melbourne: Thomas C. Lothian, 2005.

Nichol, John and Rennel, Tony, *The Last Escape: The Untold Story of Allied Prisoners of War in Germany 1944–45. London*: Penguin Group, 2002.

Noakes, Lucy, *Dying for the Nation: Death, Grief and Bereavement in Second World War Britain*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020.

Oppenheimer, Melanie, *The Power of Humanity: 100 Years of Australian Red Cross 1914–2014*. Sydney: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2014.

Osborn, R.B., *Circuits and Bumps*. Berwick: R. Osborn, 1996.

Partridge, Eric, *A Dictionary of RAF Slang*. London: Michael Joseph, 1945.

Pathé, Anne-Marie and Théofilakis, Fabien (eds), *Wartime Captivity in the Twentieth Century: Archives, Stories, Memories*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2016.

Pearson, Ross A., *Australians at War in the Air 1939–1945, Volume One: Going to War, Training, Bomber Command, Prisoners of War*. Kenthurst: Kangaroo Press, 1995.

Pearson, Simon, *The Great Escaper: The Life and Death of Roger Bushell—Love, Betrayal. Big X and The Great Escape*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2013.

Pegram, Aaron, *Surviving the Great War: Australian Prisoners of War on the Western Front, 1916–18*. Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2020.

Plamper, Jan, *The History of Emotions: An Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Prisoners of War Naval and Air Forces of Great Britain and the Empire 1939–1945: Alphabetical Nominal Registers. Polstead: J.B. Haywood & Son, 1990.

Rae, Jack, *Kiwi Spitfire Ace: A Gripping World War II Story of Action*, Captivity and Freedom. London: Grub Street, 2001.

Raftery, John, *Marks of War: War Neurosis and the Legacy of Kokoda*, Adelaide: Lythrum Press, 2003.

Raftery, John, and Schubert, Sandra, *A Very Changed Man: Families of World War Two Veterans Fifty Years after War*. [No place]: University of South Australia: [c. 1995].

Ramsland, John, *Flying into Danger: The Story of Paul Brickhill RAAF*. Melbourne: Brolga Publishing Pty Ltd, 2017.

Return to Civil Life: A Handbook of Information for Members of the Forces on the Road Back to Civil Life. Canberra: Ministry of Post-War Reconstruction, 1945.

Read, Simon, *Human Game: Hunting the Great Escape Murderers*. London: Constable & Robinson, 2013.

Raphael, Beverley, *The Anatomy of Bereavement*. Lanham: Roman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001.

Reed, Liz, *Bigger Than Gallipoli: War, History and Memory in Australia*. Crawley: University of Western Australia Press, 2004.

Rees, Peter, *Lancaster Men: The Aussie Heroes of Bomber Command*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2013.

Reid, Richard, *In Captivity: Australian Prisoners of War in the 20th Century*. Canberra: Commonwealth Department of Veterans' Affairs, 1999.

Reiss, Matthias, *Controlling Sex in Captivity: POWs and Sexual Desire in the United States during the Second World War*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018.

Reynaud, Daniel, *Anzac Spirituality: The First AIF Soldiers Speak*. North Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2018.

Riseman, Noah, Robinson, Shirleene, Willett, Graham, *Serving in Silence? Australian LGBT Servicemen and Women*. Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2019.

Rivett, Rohan, D., *Behind Bamboo: An Inside Story of the Japanese Prison Camps.* Sydney: Angus and Robertson Ltd, 1946.

Robb, Linsey and Pattinson, Juliette (eds), *Men, Masculinities and Male Culture in the Second World War*. London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018.

Roberts, T.V., *Wingless: A Biographical Index of Australian Airmen Detained in Wartime*. Ballarat: Thomas V. Roberts, 2011.

Robinson, Alan, *Chaplains at War: The Role of Clergymen During World War II*. London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2008.

Roe, Charles (ed.), *The Bill Amos Story: Being a Brief Account of his Life, Including his Experiences as an RAAF Pilot, with Particular Attention to his Time as a Prisoner of War in Germany in World War II*. [No publication details].

Rolf, David, *Prisoners of the Reich: Germany's Captives 1939–1945*. London: Leo Cooper, 1988.

Rolland, Derrick (ed.), *Airmen I have Met: Their Stories*. Bright: The author, 1999.

Rollings, Charles, *Prisoner of War: Voices from Captivity during the Second World War*. London: Ebury Press, 2007.

Roper, Michael, *The Secret Battle: Emotional Survival in the Great War*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009.

Rosenwein, Barbara H., *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006.

Sabey, Ian, *Stalag Scrapbook*. Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire Pty Ltd, 1947.

Saunders, Nicholas J., *Trench Art: Materialities and Memories of War*. Oxford: Berg, 2003.

——, (ed.), *Matters of Conflict: Material Culture, Memory, and the First World War*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2004.

'Scangriff', (Winston, M.S. ed.), *Spotlight on Stalag Luft III*. Consett: Ramsden Williams [1946].

Scates, Bruce, *Return to Gallipoli: Walking the Battlefields of the Great War*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Scates, Bruce, with McCosker, Alexandra, Reeves, Keir, Wheatley, Rebecca, and Williams, Damien, *Anzac Journeys: Returning to the Battlefields of World War II*. Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Scates, Bruce and Oppenheimer, Melanie, *The Last Battle: Soldier Settlement in Australia 1916–1939*. Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Scott, Douglas, Babits, Lawrence, and Haecker, Charles (eds), *Fields of Conflict: Battlefield Archaeology from the Roman Empire to the Korean War*. Washington DC: Potomac Books, 2009.

Shay, Jonathan *Odysseus in America: Combat trauma and the trials of homecoming*. New York: Scribner, 2002.

Shephard, Ben, *A War of Nerves: Soldiers and Psychiatrists 1914–1994*. London: Pimlico, 2002.

Sheridan, Dorothy (ed.), *Wartime Women: An Anthology of Women's Wartime Writing for Mass-Observation 1937–45*. London: Heinemann, 1990.

Shores, Christopher and Williams, Clive, *Aces High: A Tribute to the Most Notable Fighter Pilots of the British and Commonwealth Forces in WWII*. London: Grub Street, 1994.

Sichel, Marion, *History of Men's Costume*. London: Batsford Academic and Educational Ltd, 1984.

Simpson, Andrew R.B., *'OPS' Victory at all Costs: On Operations over Hitler's Reich with the Crews of Bomber Command. Their War – Their Words*. Pulborough: Tattered Flag Press, 2012.

Smaal, Yorick, *Sex, Soldiers and the South Pacific, 1939–45: Queer Identities in the Second World War*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

Smith, Angela K. and Barkhof, Sandra, *War, Experience and Memory in Global Cultures Since 1914*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2018.

Smith, Sydney, *Wings Day: The Man who led the RAF's Epic Battle in German Captivity*. London: Collins, 1968.

Snape, Michael, *God and the British Soldier: Religion and the British Army in the First and Second World Wars*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2005.

Snell, Ted, *Howard Taylor: Forest Figure*. South Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1995.

Spurling, Kathryn, *A Grave Too Far Away: A Tribute to Australians in Bomber Command Europe*. Sydney: New Holland Publishers (Australia) Pty Ltd, 2012.

Stalag Luft I: An Official Account of the PoW Camp for Air Force Personnel 1940–1945. Barnsley: Frontline Books, 2018.

Stanley, Peter, *A Stout Pair of Boots: A Guide to Exploring Australia's Battlefields*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2008.

——, *Men of Mont Quentin: Between Victory and Death*. Carlton North: Scribe Publications, 2009.

——, *Commando to Colditz: Micky Burn's Journey to the Far Side of Tears—The Raid on St Nazaire*. Millers Point: Murdoch Books Australia, 2009.

Steinberg, Mark and Sobol, Valeria (eds), *Interpreting Emotions in Russia and Eastern Europe*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois Press, 2011.

Stephens, Alan, *The Australian Centenary of Defence Volume II: The Royal Australian Air Force*. South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Stephenson, Eric, *Three Passions and a Lucky Penny*. Canberra: Air Power Development Centre, 2008.

Summerfield, Penny, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives: Discourse and subjectivity in oral histories of the Second World War*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998.

Sweanor, George, *It's All Pensionable Time: 25 Years in the Royal Canadian Air Force*. Colorado Springs: Adman Publishers, 1981.

Thompson, Douglas, *Captives to Freedom*. London: The Epworth Press, 1955.

Thompson, Roger C., *Religion in Australia: A History*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Thomson, Alistair, *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend*. Clayton: Monash University Publishing, 2013.

Tunstall, Peter, *The Last Escaper*. London: Duckworth Overlook, 2014.

Twomey, Christina, *Australia's Forgotten Prisoners: Civilians Interned by the Japanese in World War Two*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

——, Twomey, *The Battle Within: POWs in Postwar Australia*. Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2018.

Vance, Jonathan F., *Objects of Concern: Canadian Prisoners of War through the Twentieth Century*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1994.

——, *A Gallant Company: The Men of the Great Escape*. Pacifica: Pacifica Military History, 2000.

——, (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Prisoners of War and Internment.* Millerton: Grey House Publishing, 2006.

Veitch, Michael, *Heroes of the Skies*. Melbourne: Penguin Group (Australia), 2015.

Vickers, Emma, *Queen and Country: Same-Sex Desire in the British Armed Forces, 1939–45*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013.

Vines, Lorraine, *The Heart That Has Truly Loved: The Memoirs of Lorraine Vines*. [No place]: Lulu.com, 2009.

Vischer, A.L., *Barbed-Wire Disease: A Psychological Study of the Prisoner of War*. London: John Bales, Sons & Danielsson Ltd, 1919.

Walley, Brian, (ed.), *Silk and Barbed Wire*. Perth: The Royal Air Forces ex Prisoners of War Association (Australian Division), 2000.

Walters, Guy, *The Real Great Escape*. London: Bantam Press, 2013.

Walton, Marilyn Jeffers, and Eberhardt, Michael C., *From Interrogation to Liberation: A Photographic Journey. Stalag Luft III—The Road to Freedom*. Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2014.

——, *From Commandant to Captive: The Memoirs of Stalag Luft III Commandant Col. Friedrich Wilhelm von Lindeiner gennant von Wildau with Postwar Interviews, Letters and Testimony.* Lulu Publishing Services [no other imprint details] 2015.

Watson, Alexander, *Enduring the Great War: Combat, Morale and Collapse in the German and British Armies, 1914–1918*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Webber, Horace, *Years May Pass On: Caulfield Grammar School 1881–1981.* East St Kilda: The Centenary Committee, Caulfield Grammar School, 1981.

Wells, Mark K, *Courage and Air Warfare: The Allied Aircrew Experience in the Second World War*. London: Frank Cass, 1995.

Wellum, Geoffrey, *First Light*. London: Penguin Group, 2009.

While you were Away: A Digest of Happenings in Australia 1940–1945. Melbourne: The Argus, [no date, c. 1945].

Wickham, Syd, *We Wore Blue: A Diary of RAAF Service*. Castlecrag: S. Wickham, 2000.

Wilkinson, Oliver, *British Prisoners of War in First World War Germany*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

Williams, Eric, *The Wooden Horse*. Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2005.

Williams, Louise, *A True Story of the Great Escape*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2015.

Wilson, David Sloan, *Does Altruism Exist? Culture, Genes, and the Welfare of Others*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015.

Winn, Richard, *A Fighter Pilot's Diary of World War 2*. Sydney: the author, 2003.

Winter, Jay, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Winter, Jay and Sivan, Emmanuel (eds), *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Wotherspoon, Garry, *'City of the Plain': History of a Gay Sub-Culture*. Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1991.

Wylie, Neville, *Barbed Wire Diplomacy: Britain, Germany, and the Politics of War, 1939–1945.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Younger, Cal, *Get a Load of this: A Cartoon Record of Active and Inactive Service*. Middle Park: C.H. Younger, [c. 1947].

Younger, Calton, *No Flight From the Cage: The Compelling Memoir of a Bomber Command Prisoner of War during the Second World War*. [No place]: Fighting High, 2013.

Articles

Absalom, Roger, '"Another crack at Jerry"?: Australian Prisoners of War in Italy 1941–45', *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, No. 14, April 1989, pp. 24–32.

Ackerknecht, Erwin H., 'The History of Psychosomatic Medicine', *Psychological Medicine*, No. 12, 1982, pp. 17–24.

Alexander, Kristen, 'Australian Knights of the Air and their Little Touches of Chivalry', *Sabretache: the Journal of the Military Historical Society of Australia*, Vol. 53, No. 4, December 2012, pp. 4–14.

——, 'Miss Celia Macdonald of the Isles "who has been a particularly good friend"', *Sabretache: the Journal of the Military Historical Society of Australia*, Vol. LIV, No. 3, September 2013, pp. 15–25.

——, '"Remember Me": Australians in the Great Escape', *Sabretache: the Journal of the Military Historical Society of Australia,* Vol. LV, No. 2, June 2014, pp. 4–10.

——, '"For you the war is (not) over": Active Disruption in the Barbed Wire Battleground', *Balloons to Drones*, December 2017, <https://balloonstodrones.com/2017/12/18/for-you-the-war-is-not-over-active-disruption-in-the-barbed-wire-battleground/>.

Ariotti, Kate and Pegram, Aaron, 'Australian POWs of the First World War: responding to the challenges of captivity and return', *History Australia*, Vol. 16, No. 1, March 2019, pp. 72–89.

Arkin, William and Dobrofsky, Lynne R, 'Military Socialization and Masculinity', *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 34, No. 1, 1978, pp. 151–168.

Armour, Marilyn, 'Meaning Making in Survivorship: Application to Holocaust Survivors', *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, Vol. 20, No. 4, 2010, pp. 440–468.

Arnott, D.W.H., 'Psychiatric Aspects of Dyspepsia in Soldiers', *The Medical Journal of Australia*, 4 February 1950, pp. 143–145.

Aro, Pertti, Talley, Nicholas J., Johansson, Sven-Erik, Agréus, Lars and Ronkainen, Jukka, 'Anxiety Is Linked to New-Onset Dyspepsia in the Swedish Population: A 10-Year Follow-up Study', *Gastroenterology*, Vol. 148, No. 5, May 2015, pp. 928–937.

Baines, Ronald, 'An Aussie in Stalag Luft 111', *Wings. Official Publication of the RAAF Association*, Vol. 43, No. 4, Summer, December 1991, pp. 15–17.

Barnes, Haleigh A., Hurley, Robin A., and Taber, Katherine H., 'Moral Injury and PTSD: Often Co-Occurring Yet Mechanistically Different', *The Journal of Neuropsychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences*, Vol. 31, No 2, Spring 2019, pp. 98–105.

Barraclough, B., Bunch, J., Nelson, B., and Sainsbury, P., 'A Hundred Cases of Suicide: Clinical Aspects', *British Journal of Psychiatry*, Vol. 125, 1974, pp. 355–373.

Bavin, Margaret G., 'A Contribution Towards the Understanding of the Repatriated Prisoner of War', *British Journal of Psychiatric Social Work*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1947–1950, pp. 29–35.

Beaumont, Joan, 'Rank, Privilege and Prisoners of War', *War & Society*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1983, pp. 67–94.

——, 'Gull Force comes home: The aftermath of captivity', *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, No. 14, April 1989, pp. 43–52.

Beebe, Gilbert W., 'Follow-up Studies of World War II and Korean War Prisoners: II. Morbidity, Disability, and Maladjustments', *American Journal of Epidemiology*, Vol. 101, No. 5, pp. 400–422.

Bennett, G.M.R, 'The Value of Faith to Prisoners of War', *Journal of the Royal Army Chaplains' Department*, Vol. XXI, November 1967, pp. 26–31.

Berlin, Irving N., 'Guilt as an Etiologic Factor in War Neurosis', *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, Vol. 111, No. 3, March 1950, pp. 239–245.

Bourke, Joanna, 'Fear and Anxiety: Writing about Emotion in Modern History', *History Workshop Journal*, No. 55, Spring 2003, pp. 111–133.

Brett, Elizabeth A., Spitzer, Robert L., and Williams, Janet B.W., 'DSM-III-R Criteria for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder', *American Journal of Psychiatry*, Vol. 145, No. 10, October 1988, pp. 1232–1236.

Burges Watson, Ian P., 'Post-traumatic Stress Disorder in Australian Prisoners of the Japanese: A Clinical Study', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, Vol. 27, No. 1, March 1993, pp. 20–29.

Burges Watson, Paddy, and Daniels, Brett, 'Post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms in the files of Australian servicemen hospitalized in 1942–1952', *Australasian Psychiatry*, Vol. 16, No. 1, February 2008, pp. 13–17.

——, 'Follow up of post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms in Australian servicemen hospitalized in 1942–1952', *Australasian Psychiatry*, Vol. 16, No. 1, February 2008, pp. 18–21.

Carson, John, 'Brisbane's Ken Carson: Prisoner of the Axis. Part Two. From Alexandria to Tobruk', *Barbed Wire and Bamboo. Official Organ Ex-Prisoners of War Association of Australia*, Vol. 69, No. 3, June 2017, pp. 19–22.

——, 'Brisbane's Ken Carson: Prisoner of the Axis. Part Four. From Sulmona as an Italian POW to Ford Bismarck as a German POW', *Barbed Wire and Bamboo. Official Organ Ex-Prisoners of War Association of Australia*, Vol. 69, No. 6, December 2017, pp. 24–29.

——, 'Brisbane's Ken Carson: Prisoner of the Axis. Part Nine. Induction and Orientation, Stalag Luft 3 Style', *Barbed Wire and Bamboo. Official Organ Ex-Prisoners of War Association of Australia*, Vol. 71, No. 3, June 2019, pp. 21–25.

——, 'Brisbane's Ken Carson: Prisoner of the Axis. Part Ten. Kriegies Didn't Live for Food Alone', *Barbed Wire and Bamboo. Official Organ Ex-Prisoners of War Association of Australia*, Vol. 71, No. 4, August 2019, pp. 19–23.

——, 'Brisbane's Ken Carson: Prisoner of the Axis. Part Eleven. The Daily Grind and Ken's Night on the Hooch', *Barbed Wire and Bamboo. Official Organ Ex-Prisoners of War Association of Australia*, Vol. 71, No. 5, October 2019, pp. 15–18.

Cochrane, A.L., 'Notes on the Psychology of Prisoners of War', *The British Medical Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 4442, 23 February 1946, pp. 282–284.

Cohen, Pamela, 'Behind Barbed Wire: Sport and Australian Prisoners of War', *Sporting Traditions*, Vol. 23, No. 1, November 2006.

Coleman, 'The Group Factor in Military Psychiatry', *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, Vol. 16, No. 2, April 1946, pp. 222–226.

Collie, George F., 'Returned Prisoners of War: A Suggested Scheme for Rehabilitation', *The Fortnightly*, Vol. 153, June 1943, pp. 407–411.

Cuomo, Alessandro, Giordano, Nicola, Goracci, Arianna, and Fagiolini, Andrea, 'Depression and Vitamin D Deficiency: Causality, Assessment, and Clinical Practice Implications', *Neuropsychiatry (London)*, Vol. 7, No. 5, 2017, pp. 606–614.

Cull, Nicholas J, 'Great Escapes: "Englishness" and the Prisoner of War Genre', *Film History*, Vol. 14, No. 3/4, 2002, pp. 282–295.

Currier, Joseph M., Holland, Jason M., and Malott, Jesse, 'Moral Injury, Meaning Making, and Mental Health in Returning Veterans', *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, Vol. 71, No. 3, 2015, pp. 229–240.

Dearlove, A.R., 'Enforced Leisure: A Study of the Activities of Officer Prisoners of War', *British Medical Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 4394, 24 March 1945, pp. 406–409.

Dent, Owen, F., Tennant, Christopher C., and Goulston, Kerry, J., 'Precursors of Depression in World War II Veterans 40 years after the War', *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, Vol. 175, No. 8, 1987, pp. 486–198.

Drescher, Kent D., Foy, David W., Kelly, Caroline, Leshner, Anna, Schutz, Kerrie, and Litz, Brett, 'An Exploration of the Viability and Usefulness of the Construct of Moral Injury in War Veterans', *Traumatology*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 2011, pp. 8–13.

Drewett, John, 'Diffused Christianity: Asset or Liability?', *Theology*, Vol. 45, No. 266, August 1942, pp. 82–92.

Duffett, 'A Taste of Army Life: Food, Identity and the Rankers of the First', *Cultural and Social History*, Vol. 9, No. 2, pp. 251–269.

Duncan, Ian L., 'Life in a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp', *The Medical Journal of Australia*, 3 April 1982, pp. 302–306.

Dusselier, Jane, 'Does Food Make Place? Food Protests in Japanese American Concentration Camps', *Food and Foodways: Explorations in the History of Culture of Human Nourishment*, Vol. 10, No. 3, pp. 137–165.

Edlington, David, 'The Great Escape Recalled: 60 years on, survivors tell of famous breakout', *Air Force News: The Official Newspaper of the Royal Australian Air Force*, Vol. 46, No. 4, 25 March 2004, p. 15.

Edmonds, Leigh, 'How Australians were made airminded', *Continuum*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1993, pp. 183–206.

Elliott, Peter, 'Maps (and more) for the Chaps—Escape Aids and Training', *Royal Air Force Historical Society Journal 56*, 2013, pp. 24–40.

Eustace, Nicole, Lean, Eugenia, Livingston, Julie, Plamper, Jan, Reddy, William M, and Rosenwein, Barbara H., 'AHR Conversation: The Historical Study of Emotions', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 117, No. 5, 1 December 2012, pp. 1487–1531.

Farber, Leslie H. and Micon, Leonard, 'Gastric Neurosis in a Military Service', *Psychiatry Interpersonal and Biological Processes*, Vol. 8, No. 3, 1945, pp. 343–361.

Farnsworth, Jacob K., Drescher, Kent D., Nieuwsma, Jason A., Walser, Robyn B., and Currier, Joseph M., 'The Role of Moral Emotions in Military Trauma: Implications for the Study and Treatment of Moral Injury', *Review of General Psychology*, Vol. 18, No. 4, 2014, pp. 249–262.

Fiala, Andrew, 'Moral Injury, *Jus Ad Bellum*, and Conscientious Refusal', *War and Moral Psychology*, Vol. 18, Issue 2, 2017, pp. 281–294.

Frankfurt, Sheila and Frazier, Patricia, 'Review of research on Moral Injury in Combat Veterans', *Military Psychology*, Vol. 28, No. 5, 2016, pp. 318–330.

Garton, Stephen, 'War and Masculinity in Twentieth century Australia', *Journal of Australian Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 56, 1998, pp. 86–95.

——, '"Fit only for the Scrap Heap": Rebuilding Returned Soldier Manhood in Australia after 1945', *Gender & History*, Vol. 20, No. 1, April 2008, pp. 48–67.

Gimbel, Cynthia and Booth, Alan, 'Why Does Military Combat Experience Adversely Affect Marital Relations?', *Journal of Marriage and Family*, Vol. 56, No. 3, August 1994, pp. 691–703.

Gould, A.H., 'Those Icarian Rustics: Reminiscence of an "Old Boy" A.H. Gould', *HAC Journal*, December 1998, pp. 10–11.

Greengage, Michael, Kulaksizoglu, Burak, Cilingiroglu, Mehmet, and Ali, Rizwan, 'The Role of Anxiety and Emotional Stress as a Risk Factor in Treatment-Resistant Hypertension', *Current Atherosclerosis Reports*, Vol. 13, 2011, pp. 109–129.

G.S., 'Padre's Work with Prisoners-of-War', *The Methodist Recorder*, 19 October 1944, p. 5.

Gunderson, Brian S., 'Pilot Officer Prune, Royal Air Force: "Dutiful but Dumb"', *Air Power History*, Winter 1990, pp. 23–29.

Hall, Kevin T., 'Luftgangster over Germany: The Lynching of American Airmen in the Shadow of the Air War', *Historical Social Research*, Vol. 43, No. 2, 2018, pp. 277–312.

Haygood, Tamara Miner, 'Malingering and Escape: Anglo-American Prisoners of War in World War II Europe', *War, Literature & the Arts—*

on-line [no date], pp. 1–30, <http://wlajournal.com/webcontent/malingering/malingering.pdf>.

Hilton, Claire, 'Case Report: Media Triggers of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder 50 Years After the Second World War', *International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*, 12, 1977, pp. 862–867.

Hirsch, Marianne, 'The Generation of Postmemory', *Poetics Today*, Vol. 29, No. 1, 2008, pp. 103–28.

Hobbins, Peter Graeme, '"Living in Hell but Still Smiling": Australian Psychiatric Casualties of War during the Malaya–Singapore Campaign, 1941–42', *Health and History*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 2007, pp. 28–55.

Hodgson, Timothy J., and Carey, Lindsay B., 'Moral Injury and Definitional Clarity: Betrayal, Spirituality and the Role of Chaplains', *Journal of Religious Health*, Vol. 56, 2017, pp. 1212–1228.

Horn, Karen, '"Stalag Happy": South African Prisoners of War during World War Two (1939–1945) and their Experiences and Use of Humour', *South African Historical Journal*, Vol. 63, No. 4, December 2011, pp. 537–552.

Hunt, Nigel and Robbins, Ian, 'Telling Stories of the War: Ageing Veterans Coping with their Memories through Narrative', *Oral History*, Vol. 26, No. 2, (Memory, Trauma and Ethics Volume) Autumn 1998, pp. 57–64.

—— 'World War II veterans, social support, and veterans' associations', *Aging & Mental Health*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2001, pp. 175–182.

Huxford, Grace, Alcalde Ángel, Baines, Gary, Burtin, Olivier, and Edele, Mark, 'Writing Veterans' History: A Conversation on the Twentieth Century', *War & Society*, Vol. 38, No. 2, May 2019, pp. 115–138.

Inglis, K.S., 'The Anzac Tradition', *Meanjin Quarterly*, Vol. 24, No. 1, 1965, pp. 25–44.

Isherwood, Ian, 'Writing the "ill-managed nursery": British POW memoirs of the First World War', *First World War Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 3, 2014, pp. 267–286.

Jacobs, Eugene C., 'Effects of Starvation on Sex Hormones in the Male', *The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology*, Vol. 8, 1948, pp. 227–232.

Jeffrey, Manfred, and Bradford, E.J.G. 'Neurosis in Escaped Prisoners of War', *The British Journal of Medical Psychology*, Vol. 20, No. 4, 1946, pp. 422–435.

Jones, Edgar, '"LMF": The use of Psychiatric Stigma in the Royal Air Force during the Second World War', *The Journal of Military History*, 70, April 2006, pp. 439–458.

——, 'Moral injury in time of war', *The Lancet*, Vol. 391, 5 May 2018, pp. 1766–1767.

Jones, Edgar and Wessely, Simon, 'British Prisoners-of-War: From Resilience to Psychological Vulnerability: Reality or Perception', *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 2010, pp. 163–183.

Jones, Priscilla Dale, 'Nazi Atrocities against Allied Airmen: Stalag Luft III and the End of British War Crimes Trials', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 41, No. 2, June 1998, pp. 543–565.

Jowett, Stephanie, Carpenter, Belinda, and Tait, Gordon, 'Determining a Suicide under Australian Law', *University of New South Wales Law Journal*, Vol. 41 No. 2, 2018, pp. 355–379.

Karageorgos, Effie, 'The Bushman at War: Gendered Medical Responses to Combat Breakdown in South Africa, 1899–1902', *Journal of Australian Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 1, 2020, pp. 18–32.

Kidson, Malcolm A., Douglas, John C., and Holwill, Brendan J., 'Post-traumatic stress disorder in Australian World War II Veterans attending a psychiatric outpatient clinic', *The Medical Journal of Australia*, Vol. 158, 1993, pp. 563–566.

Kingdon, Christopher, 'Behind Closed Doors: Revisiting Air Command's "Lack of Moral Fiber and Waverer Disposal Policy" and its "Treatment" of Neurotic Cases, 1941–1945', *Chicago Journal of History*, No. 2, Autumn 2013, pp. 14–33.

Kittel, Katrina, 'Hymns and hints: A prisoner of war's notebook in Italy', *Sabretache: the Journal of the Military Historical Society of Australia*, Vol. 54, No. 4, December 2013, pp. 4–12.

Kivimäki, Ville and Tepora, Tuomas, 'War of Hearts: Love and Collective Attachment as Integrating Factors in Finland during World War II', *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 43, No. 2, Winter 2009, pp. 285–305.

Lake, Marilyn, 'Female desires: The meaning of World War II', *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 95, October 1990, pp. 267–284.

Larsson, Marina, 'A Disenfranchised Grief: Post-war Death and Memorialisation in Australia after the First World War', *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 1, 2009, pp. 79–95.

Litz, Brett T., Stein, Nathan, Delaney, Eileen, Lebowitz, Leslie, Nash, William P., Silva, and Maguen, Shira [Litz et al.], 'Moral Injury and moral repair in war veterans: a preliminary model and intervention strategy', *Clinical Psychology Review*, Vol. 29, 2009, pp. 695–706.

Lyons, Martyn, 'Love Letters and Writing Practices: On *Écritures Intimes* in the Nineteenth Century', *Journal of Family History*, Vol. 24, No. 2, April 1999, pp. 232–239.

Lunden, Walter A., 'Captivity Psychoses Among Prisoners of War', *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, Vol. 39, No. 6, 1949, pp. 721–733.

MacKenzie, S.P., 'The Shackling Crisis: A Case-Study in the Dynamics of Prisoner-of-War Diplomacy in the Second World War', *The International History Review*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 1995, pp. 78–98.

——, 'British Prisoners of War in Nazi Germany', *Archives: The Journal of the British Record Association*, Vol. 28, No. 109, 2003, pp. 183–187.

——, 'The Ethics of Escape: British Officer POWs in the First World War', *War in History*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 2008, pp. 1–16.

——, 'Sensory Stress and Personal Agency: Emotional Casualty Rates amongst USAAF Heavy Bomber Crews over Europe during the Second World War', *War & Society*, Vol. 37, No. 2, 2018, pp. 107–128.

Macleod, A.D., 'The reactivation of post-traumatic stress disorder in later life', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, Vol. 28, 1994, pp. 625–634.

Maguen, Shira and Litz, Brett, 'Moral Injury in Veterans of War', *PTSD Research Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 1, 2012, pp. 1–6.

Mahoney, Ross, 'Trenchard's Doctrine: Organisational Culture, the "Air Force Spirit" and the Foundation of the Royal Air Force in the Interwar Years', *British Journal for Military History*, Vol. 4, No. 2, February 2018, pp. 143–177.

Main, T.F., 'Clinical Problems of Repatriates', *Journal of Mental Science*, Vol. 93, No. 391 April 1947, pp. 354–363.

Makepeace, Clare, 'Living Beyond the Barbed Wire: the Familial Ties of British Prisoners of War held in Europe during the Second World War', *Historical Research*, Vol. 86, No. 231, 2013, pp. 158–177.

——, 'For "ALL Who were Captured"? The Evolution of National Ex-prisoner of War Associations in Britain after the Second World War', *Journal of War and Culture Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 3, August 2014, pp. 253–268.

Marin, Peter, 'Living in Moral Pain', *Psychology Today*, November 1981, pp. 68–80.

Matt, Susan J., Current Emotion Research in History: Or, Doing History from the Inside Out', *Emotion Review*, Vol. 3, No. 1, January 2011, pp. 117–124.

McCarthy, John, 'Aircrew and "Lack of Moral Fibre"', *War & Society*, Vol. 2, No. 2, September 1984, pp. 87–101.

Meziab, Omar, Kirby, Katharine A., Williams, Brie, Yaffe, Kristine, Byers, Amy L., and Barnes, Deborah E., 'Prisoner of war status, posttraumatic stress disorder, and dementia in older veterans, *Alzheimer's & Dementia*, Vol. 10, 2014, s236–s241.

Miller, Godrey F., 'Prisoner of War', *The Baptist Quarterly*, April 1946, pp. 9–16.

Miller, Ian, 'The Mind and Stomach at War: Stress and Abdominal Illness in Britain c.1939–1945', *Medical History*, Vol. 54, 2010, pp. 95–110.

Monteath, Peter, 'Australian POW in German Captivity in the Second World War', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 54, No. 3, 2008, pp. 421–433.

Moore, Bob and Hately, Barbara, 'Captive Audience: Camp Entertainment and British Prisoners-of-War in German Captivity, 1939–1945', *Popular Entertainment Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1, pp. 58–73.

Moriarty, Catherine, 'Christian Iconography and the First World War', *Imperial War Museum Review*, Vol. vi, 1991, pp. 63–75.

Muir, Kirsty, '"Idiots, imbeciles and moral defectives": Military and government treatment of mentally ill service personnel and veterans', *Journal of Australian Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 73, 2002, pp. 41–47.

Newman, P.H., 'The Prisoner-of-War Mentality: Its Effect After Repatriation', *The British Medical Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 4330, 1 January 1944, pp. 8–10.

Pairman, J.G., 'In Which we Serve', *Outrage*, No. 67, December 1988, pp. 36–41.

Plamper, Jan, 'The History of Emotions: An interview with Willian Reddy, Barbara Rosenwein, and Peter Stearns', *History and Theory*, Vol. 49, May 2010, pp. 237–265.

Paris, Michael, 'The Rise of the Airmen: The Origins of Air Force Elitism, c. 1890–1918', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 28, 1998, pp. 123–141.

Pedersen, Peter, 'The Ghosts of Anzac', *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, No. 2, April 1983, pp. 34–42.

Pether, G.C., 'The Returned Prisoner-of-War', *The Lancet*, 5 May 1945, pp. 571–572.

Pitchfork, Graham, 'The Organisation of Escape and Evasion', *Royal Air Force Historical Society Journal 56*, 2013, pp. 8–23.

Pringle, JK, Doyle, P, and Babits, LE, 'Multidisciplinary Investigations at Stalag Luft III Allied Prisoner-of-war Camp: The Site of the 1944 "Great Escape", Zagan, Western Poland', *Geoarchaeology: An International Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 7, 2007, pp. 729–746.

[No author], 'The Psychiatry of Wartime Flying', *British Medical Journal*, 21 June 1947, pp. 891–892.

Rachamimov, Alon, 'Disruptive Comforts of Drag: (Trans)Gender Performances among Prisoners of War in Russia, 1914–1920', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 111, No. 2, 1 April 2006, pp. 362–382.

Radford, R.A., 'The Economic Organisation of a P.O.W. Camp', *Economica*, New Series, Vol. 12, No. 48 (Nov., 1945), pp. 189–201.

Reiss, Matthias, 'Bronzed Bodies behind barbed Wire: Masculinity and the Treatment of German Prisoners of War in the United States during World War II', *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 69, April 2005, pp. 475–504.

——, 'The Importance of Being Men: The Afrika-Korps in American Captivity', *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 46, No. 1, Fall, 2012, pp. 23–47.

Roberts-Pedersen, Elizabeth, 'Damage', *History Australia*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 2014, pp. 82–101.

Roland, Charles G., 'Homosexuality', Jonathan Vance (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Prisoners of War and Internment.* Millerton: Grey House Publishing, 2006, pp. 182–183.

Rollings, Charles, 'Dulag Luft', *After the Battle*, No. 106, 1999, pp. 3–27.

Roper, Michael, 'Re-Remembering the Soldier Hero: The Psychic and Social Construction of Memory in Personal Narratives of the Great War', *History Workshop Journal*, No. 50, Autumn 2005, pp. 181–204.

——, 'Slipping out of View: Subjectivity and Emotion in Gender History', *History Workshop Journal*, No. 59, Spring 2005, pp. 57–72

——, 'Nostalgia as an emotional experience in the Great War', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 54, No. 2, 2011, pp. 421–451.

Rosenthal, Carolyn J. and Marshall, Victor W., 'Generational Transmission of Family Ritual', *The American Behavioural Scientist*, Vol. 31, No. 6, July/August 1988, pp. 669–684.

Rosenwein, Barbara H., 'Worrying About Emotions in History', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 107, No. 3, June 2002, pp. 821–845.

——, 'Problems and Methods in the History of Emotions', *Passions in Context I: International Journal for the History and Theory of Emotions*. Vol. 1, 2010 [unpaginated. Section entitled 'Read the Silence']. <https://www.passionsincontext.de/index.php/?id=557>.

Rozanov, Vsevolod and Carli, Vladimir, 'Suicide Among War Veterans', *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, Vol. 9, 2012, pp. 2504–2519.

Scates, Bruce, 'In Gallipoli's Shadow: Pilgrimage, memory, mourning and the great war', *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 119, 2002, pp. 1–21.

——, 'How war came home: reflections on the digitisation of Australia's repatriation files', *History Australia*, Vol. 16, No. 1, March 2019, pp. 190–209.

Schok, Michaela L., Kleber, Rolf J., and Lensvelt-Mulders, Gerty, J.L.M., 'A model of resilience and meaning after military deployment: Personal resources in making sense of war and peacekeeping experiences', *Aging & Mental Health*, Vol. 3, No, 3, 2010, pp. 328–338.

Schnitt, Jerome M. and Nocks, James J., 'Alcoholism Treatment of Vietnam Veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder', *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*, Vol. 1, 1984, pp. 179–189.

Schumm, Jeremiah A., and Chard, Kathleen M., 'Alcohol and Stress in the Military', *Alcohol Research*, Vol. 34, No. 4, 2012, pp. 401–407.

Schweitzer, Rich, 'The Cross and the Trenches: Religious Faith and Doubt Among Some British Soldiers on the Western Front', *War & Society*, Vol. 16, No. 2, October 1998, pp. 33–57.

Segovia, Francine, Moore, Jeffrey L., Linnville, Steven E, Hoyt, Robert E, and Hain, Robert E., 'Optimism Predicts Resilience in Repatriated Prisoners of War: A 37-Year Longitudinal Study', *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, Vol. 25, June 2012, pp. 330–336.

Shay, Jonathan, 'Moral Injury', *Intertexts*, Vol. 16, No. 1, Spring 2012, pp. 57–66.

Shehan, Constance, L., 'Spouse Support and Vietnam Veterans' Adjustment to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder', *Family Relations*, Vol. 36, No. 1, January 1987, pp. 55–60.

Smart, Julia, 'It would be impossible to describe our feelings': the recovery and demobilisation of Australian prisoners of war after the First World War', *History Australia*, Vol. 16, No. 1, March 2019, pp. 90–108.

Smith, Joshua P. and Randall, Carrie L., 'Anxiety and Alcohol Use Disorders: Comorbidity and Treatment Considerations', *Alcohol Research*, Vol. 34, No. 4, 2012, pp. 414–431.

Stafford-Clark, D., 'Morale and Flying Experience: Results of a Wartime Study', *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, Vol. 95, 1949, pp. 10–50.

Stearns, Peter N., 'Shame, and a Challenge for Emotions History', *Emotion Review*, Vol. 8, No. 3, July 2015, pp. 197–206.

Stearns, Peter N. and Stearns, Carol Z., 'Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards', *The American History Review*, Vol. 90, No. 4, October 1985, pp. 813–836.

Stephenson, Eric, 'Experiences of a Prisoner of War: World War 2 in Germany', *Journal of Military and Veterans' Health*, Vol. 18, No. 2, April 2010, pp. 27–34 (reprinted from *Australian Military Medicine*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 2000, pp. 42–50).

Sweanor, George, 'Arsenic and Old Lace: Stalag Luft III: While the war continued on all fronts, allied airmen being held prisoner in Luftwaffe camps innovatively fought off boredom', *Esprit de Corps*, Vol. 19, No. 9, October 2012, [unpaginated].

Tharakan, Tharu, 'Nutrition in Warfare: a Retrospective Evaluation of Undernourishment in RAF Prisoners of War during World War II', *Medical Humanities*, 36, 2010, pp. 52–56.

Thomson, Alistair, 'Anzac Stories: Using Personal testimony in War History', *War & Society*, Vol. 25, No. 2, October 2006, pp. 1–21.

——, '*Anzac Memories* Revisited: Trauma, Memory and Oral History', *The Oral History Review*, Vol. 42, No. 1, 2015, pp. 1–29.

Toivo, Raisa Maria, 'Religion and emotion', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, Vol. 41, No. 3, pp. 289–305.

Twomey, Christina, 'Emaciation or Emasculation: Photographic Images, White Masculinity and Captivity by the Japanese in World War Two', *Journal of Men's Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 3, Fall 2007, pp. 295–310.

Ursano, Robert and Rundell, James, 'The Prisoner of War', *Military Medicine*, Vol. 155, No. 4, April 1990, pp. 176–180.

Vance, Jonathan F, 'The War Behind the Wire: The Battle to Escape from a German Prison Camp', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 28, No. 4, October 1993, pp. 675–693.

Walzer, Michael, 'Prisoners of War: Does the Fight Continue after the Battle?', *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 63, 1969, pp. 777–786.

Wang, Wei-Feng, Guo, Xiao-Xu and Yang, Yun-Sheng, 'Gastrointestinal problems in modern wars: clinical features and possible mechanisms', *Military Medical Research*, Vol. 2, No. 15, 2015, DOI 10.1186/s40779-015-0042-5.

Watts, Fraser, 'Emotion and Religion Revisited: A Response to O'Connor and Averill', *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, Vol. 6, No. 36, pp. 175–179.

Werden, Meghan Rieu, 'Is it All in Your Mind? Gastrointestinal Problems, Anxiety and Depression', *Undergraduate Review*, 5, 2009, pp. 113–118.

Wessely, Simon, 'Twentieth-century theories on combat motivation and breakdown', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 41, No. 2, April 2006, pp. 269–286.

Whiles, W.H., 'A Study of Neurosis among Repatriated Prisoners of War', *The British Medical Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 4428, 17 November 1945, pp. 697–698.

Wilcox, Craig, 'Paul Brickhill's War of Nerves', *State Library of New South Wales Magazine*, Winter 2012, pp. 30–31.

Willett, Graham and Smaal, Yorick, '"A Homosexual Institution": Same-sex Desire in the Army During World War II', *Australian Army Journal*, Culture edition, Vol. X, No. 3, 2013, pp. 23–40.

Williamson, Victoria, Greenberg, N., and Murphy, D., 'Impact of moral injury on the lives of UK veterans: a pilot study', *Journal of the Royal Army Medical Corps*, 2019 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/jramc-2019-001243>.

Winter, Jay, 'The Generation of Memory: Reflections on the "Memory Boom" in Contemporary Historical Studies', *Canadian Military History*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 2001, pp. 57–66.

Wisco, Blair E, Marx, Brian P, Wolf, Erika J, Miller, Mark W, Southwick, Steven M, and Pietrzak, Robert H, 'Posttraumatic stress disorder in the US veteran population: results from the National Health and Resilience in Veterans Study', *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, Vol. 75, No. 12, 2014, pp. 1338–1346.

Yao, Bo-chen, Meng, Ling-bing, Hao, Meng-lei, Zhang, Yuan-meng, Gong, Tao, and Guo, Zhi-gang, 'Chronic stress: a critical risk factor for atherosclerosis', *Journal of International Medical Research*, Vol. 47, No. 4, April 2019, pp. 1429–1440.

Ziino, Bart, 'A Kind of Round Trip: Australian Soldiers and the Tourist Analogy, 1914–1918', *War & Society*, Vol. 25, No. 2, October 2006, pp. 39–52.

Theses and Unpublished Reports

Ainsworth, Rodney, 'The Entrepreneurial Playwright: A Relational Approach to Marketing Plays in the Region'. MA thesis, Queensland University of Technology, 2008.

Ariotti, Kate, 'Coping with Captivity: Australian POWs of the Turks and the Impact of Imprisonment during the First World War', PhD thesis, University of Queensland, 2014.

Barrett, Craig Anthony, 'Remembering Captivity: Australian Prisoners of War of the Japanese', PhD thesis, University of Queensland, 2011.

Bomford, Janette, 'Fractured Lives: Australian Prisoners of War of the Japanese and their Families', PhD thesis, Deakin University, 2001.

Broom, John, 'Faith in the Furnace: British Christians in the Armed Services, 1939–1945', PhD thesis, University of Durham, 2018.

Davison, Bradley J, 'Forechecking in Captivity: Sport in the Lives of Canadian Prisoners of War at Three German Camps during the Second World War', MA thesis, University of Windsor, 2006.

Duncan, I.L., Greenwood, J.H., Johnson, T.L.B, Mosher, K.G., and Robertson, S.E.J., 'Morbidity in Ex-prisoners of War'. Sydney: The POW Association of Australia, 1985.

Gann, 'Correspondence, Camaraderie, and Community: The Second World War for a Mother and Son', MA thesis, Carleton University, Ottawa, 2012.

Gibbens, Trevor C.N., 'The Psychology and Psychopathology of the Prisoner-of-War', MD thesis, University of Cambridge, 1947. [With permission from Dr Mary Gibbens.]

Johnson, Matthew, 'Resisting Captivity: An Analysis of the New Zealand POW Experience During World War Two', PhD thesis, University of Waikato, 2018.

Makepeace, Clare, '"A Pseudo-soldier's Cross": The Subjectivities of British Prisoners of War Held in Germany and Italy during the Second World War', PhD thesis, University of London, 2013.

Meale, Katie, 'Leadership of Australian POWs in the Second World War', PhD thesis, University of Wollongong, 2015.

Raftery, John, '"Nothing New to Medical Science": the Construction of War Neurosis and the Life Course Outcomes of WW2 Veterans', PhD thesis, University of Adelaide, 2000.

Whitehead, Eileen, 'World War II Prisoner of War Visual Art: Investigating its Significance in Contemporary Society', Honours thesis, Edith Cowan University, 2009.

Film/TV/Documentary

Enemy Interrogation of Prisoners, 1940, produced by Gee Films Ltd, directed by Aveling Ginever. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KoXQIcgMEhs>.

Foreign Correspondent, 'The Real Great Escape', ABC TV. Reporter Eric Campbell, 29 May 2012. <http://www.abc.net.au/foreign/content/2012/s3513370.htm>.

The Great Escape, 1963. Directed by John Sturges.

Hogan's Heroes, 1965–1971. Alfran Productions.

Lost Airmen of Buchenwald, 2011. Directed by Michael Dorsey.

The Lucky Ones: Allied Airmen and Buchenwald, 1994. Directed by Michael Allder.

Remembrance: a farewell to the generation now passing into history, 2007. Directed by Larry McGrath.

The Search for the Compass Maker Albert Hake Poznan & Zagan, Poland 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GaFwU7FI-cU>.

The Wooden Horse, 1950. Directed by Jack Lee.

Internet sources

458 Squadron—Royal Australian Air Force, Bill Fordyce, after-dinner speech at the 458 Squadron Melbourne All States Reunion, 13 April 1989, <http://www.458raafsquadron.org/about-us/postwar-reunions-conferences>.

Alexander, Kristen, 'Australian compass makers and more', <http://australiansinsliii.blogspot.com/2016/08/australian-compass-makers.html>.

—— , '"Every Night About This Time"', <http://australiansinsliii.blogspot.com.au/2017/04/every-night-about-this-time-kriegies.html>.

—— , '43 Years. Albert Hake: An Australian in the Great Escape', <https://australiansinsliii.blogspot.com/2016/05/43-years-albert-hake-australian-in.html>.

—— , '"How deeply we feel his loss": Condolences to William Mercer Catanach, on the death of his son, Jimmy', <http://australiansinsliii.blogspot.com.au/2016/11/how-deeply-we-feel-his-loss-condolences.html>.

——, '"I Wanted Wings": Donald Duck, Prisoner of War', <https://australiansinsliii.blogspot.com/2017/12/i-wanted-wings-donald-duck-prisoner-of.html>.

—— , 'Paul Gordon Royle: A Fortunate Life', <http://australiansinsliii.blogspot.com.au/2015/08/paul-gordon-royle-fortunate-life.html>.

Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1301.0—Year Book Australia, 2006, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/46d1bc47ac9d0c7bca256c470025ff87/bfdda1ca506d6cfaca2570de0014496e!OpenDocument>.

Australian Dictionary of Biography (ADB):

- Garton, Stephen, 'Winn, Roy Coupland (1890–1963)', <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/winn-roy-coupland-9153>.
- Rickard, John, 'White, Sir Thomas Walter (1888–1957)', <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/white-sir-thomas-walter-12013>.
- Wilcox, Craig, 'Brickhill, Paul Chester (1916–1991)', <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/brickhill-paul-chester-14647>.

Coletta, Frank, *Daily Mail Australia*, 25 August 2015, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3201814/Surfboard-maker-built-Great-Escape-tunnel.html>.

Commonwealth War Graves Commission, <https://www.cwgc.org/learn/horticulture-and-works/architecture>.

Fairclough, Elaine, 'Elaine Fairclough (Nee Stott)', Lost Katanning, <https://lostkatanning.com/katanning-women/elaine-fairclough/#gallery-1>.

Institute of Health and Welfare, 'Premature mortality in Australia 1997–2012', <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/life-expectancy-death/premature-mortality-in-australia-1997-2012/data>.

Jeffries, Lionel, 'The Great Escape Caused Maximum Disruption', <https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/stories-service/australians-war-stories/great-escape-caused-maximum-disruption>.

Johnson, Bob, 'From Choirboy to Dogfighter', <https://www.smh.com.au/national/from-choirboy-to-dogfighter-20070929-gdr816.html>.

McKernan, Michael, *Remembrance Day: the effects of war on Australian society*, <https://www.naa.gov.au/about-us/media-and-publications/audio-recordings-and-papers/remembrance-day-effects-war-australian-society>.

Reserve Bank of Australia, Pre-Decimal Inflation Calculator. <https://www.rba.gov.au/calculator/annualPreDecimal.html>.

The US Militaria Forum, 'Stalag Luft III "I Wanted Wings"', <http://www.usmilitariaforum.com/forums/index.php?/topic/6728-stalag-luft-iii-i-wanted-wings/>.

Wheeler, Donelle, 'Talented pilot who soared', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 September 2012, <https://www.smh.com.au/national/talented-pilot-who-soared-20120920-269bz.html>.