

DOP/01/005

Hawtin Mundy

Born February 1894

- 000 Why not? If he broke out, would have to go width of Russia to Serbia, doesn't think he could make. But Russian friend "a mad head" – Ukrainian Jew - keen to go. HM tried to fix it up. Each parcel had salt, pepper, etc. All saved pepper and spare food. French prisoner was chef pre-war. Man in village a Pole, asked them to help – got them map and compass. Then asked for revolver – he couldn't get it. Studied map together, worked out route. Going to wait till autumn when corn was up – would leave early Sunday morning. Wait in nearby forest, then would travel by night. Problem would be river, with guarded bridges.
- 064 Easter 1918 – Germans treated it like Christmas – parties, etc., same in Russia. Russian friend invited HM to farm outside Dommuu. Posten gave permission to go to party. Went on Easter Sunday. Barn full of 50-60 Russian POWs. Farmers gave permission for party. Hard boiled eggs to eat. Made fuss of Russian friend. HM in dress uniform. POWs scruffy. Friend introduced him, made a great fuss of him.
- 114 Six or seven concertinas. Had bottle of ginger beer and methylated spirits. Later in afternoon, started singing, playing and dancing and dishing out drink. Offered it to HM but he declined. Russian told him to have some or they'd get offended. HM sipped it, and tipped it on floor when they weren't looking. Carried on all afternoon. They began to get really drunk, some passed out. One pulled concertina to bits, then another. HM got worried, told friend they'd better go. Russian reassured him. Finally HM asked to leave. Another man calmed them all down. They lined up in two long lines in middle of barn. The two walked down. They all bowed down as if they were royalty. At end they waved and they cheered and screamed and waved. Just like slaves.
- 191 Worked on farm, haymaking. Four Russians and 4-5 girls too. As only Englishman was singled out by farmer. Farmer liked drink. HM drove him in horse and cart back to village pub. Drank there for a couple of hours. Always put it on the slate. Had a son in Army, an officer. Came home on leave. Didn't take to HM. Polished buckles and set them on railings outside house. HM saw belt buckle and he pinched it – still has it.
- 241 Pulled hankie out of pocket when working – very large, red with white spots. One of girls asked for one. HM at first refused, then he gave one – she wore it on her head. Rest asked for one. HM refused.
- 262 After farm job worked with cobbler repairing Army jackboots. HM went there with Frenchman, Jean Dumas, from Lille. Two girls from village worked in same room. Young officer's widow was overseer. A farthing per pair after so many. Boss wanted another Englishman – they sent Yorkie. At end of week queued up for pay of extra farthings. One of Russians argued, boss said it was correct. "There you are", Yorkie aid, "I told you he was skint". Yorkie had not done enough to earn bonus – argued and was sacked.
- 330 Woman inspector asked HM to chop firewood for her. Yorkie said he'd warm her up.

- 360 Boss had gammy foot – nicknamed “Hoppy”. Very happy working there. Transferred everybody to outhouse to work. 200 yards from the Laga. Boss asked if they’d like to sleep there. Very pleased. Locked in at night. Every night used to say; “Good night, Guten Nacht and bonne nuit”.
- 410 Minner, one of the girls, aged 19 – HM was 21-22. Paired up, hell of a risk, worried about Posten fining out. Any prisoner having affair was sent to labour camp, knocked about and parcels stopped, or shot.
- 438 On Easter Sunday morning brought wife, two girls and Inspector. Came in singing and dancing, waving palms. Had sing-song and a drink.
- 456 One night Hoppy had party in house. HM could hear it. They were in bed. At end of room was POW window. Rattle on window - there was Minner. Drunk. Asked to come in. HM said yes, Jean said no. Opened window. She tried to get in. HM tried to pull her in, Jean pushing them out. Jean pushed her out in end, and she broke window. Boss asked about broken window, but didn’t get into trouble, perhaps Minner told him.
- 510 When left camp Minner crying, asked to come back to England with him.
- 525 Hoppy’s leather hides came in bundles to railway station. Asked HM to go to station to collect them. Stood in waiting room talking. On wall was placard with map of world. All British colonies marked red. German said “That’s what we’re having to fight, look at little Germany and all of those other countries”. But said HM – Kaiser said “What that contemptible little army” when Britain joined the war.
- 580 At end of waiting room on other wall was map of British Isles. Around it were pictures of U boats, blockading England. HM said, “Have you noticed the parcels we got, our ships got through”. He knew.
- 616 Autumn 1918. Things not going well for Germans. Working at sawmill. Boss showed him daily papers. Way went on, think they were two mates. People in village didn’t seem to know anything.
- 645 After time began to show. Soldiers on leave. Wore red button hat, would cut it off – revolution had started in Germany. Villagers seemed ignorant.
- 676 At sawmill had little contact with Russians – in different lager.
- 700 Boss liked to chat with HM. Said the two should never have been fighting – both from Germany in early history.

Side Two

- 000 October 1918 – but warm in his room. Boss said war would end soon. Villagers and other POWs seemed to know nothing. Came in one day and said, “You can say it’s finished”. Told him to go and look at telegram in village Post Office. It said “The war is finished in the shooting trenches” – didn’t say it was completely over.

- 023 Told chaps back in lager. Lot of shouting. Posten never told them for some time.
- 030 After few days all called back to lagers – told war was over. Posten sent for HM, said British would go first to main camp. Allowed to have night out at pub. All went and had hell of night. Had lots of money, from black market trading of parcel items.
- 050 Villagers came in and had sing-song. Next day HM went to sawmill to collect his gear. Boss took him into house and asked him to go to Brazil with him. HM said he wanted to go home. Boss said he wouldn't come.
- 079 Seventeen months prisoner. Went from tramp to king. Average German would have been glad to have changed place. Does not believe such a thing as hero or coward.
- 090 In war from first week to finish, trench warfare, Somme, Arras, POW, three lots of wounds. Not really soldiers, just civilians with guns in hand. Under very strict discipline. Early April 1915 – Flogestreet Wood – trenches. So close – 100 yards between lines. Nose above parapet – lost hat.
- 115 Trench warfare – describes – two hours on guard, four off. Two hours on watch on fire step. To have look bobbed up head, or used periscopes, but not good – shot at if too far above parapet.
- 131 Medals won. Ordered to find out who regt. was opposite. Raiding party to capture prisoner at night. Got prisoner and when rations came medals there for, say, "Bill Brown" – realised he had uncle who was Sgt. Major. All others did same, but no medal.
- 151 Bradwell chap. Sunday quiet. He was in machine gun section in trenches not far from HM. Cleaned gun, put ammunition in, set sights on church behind German lines. Loosed off belt of ammunition. Fortnight later awarded DCM. Didn't know why. Artillery sent up observation balloon behind lines and reported that when gun had hit church had scattered population. Laughs about it.
- 191 Easy to get in front of firing squad. If quiet night 2.00 a.m. – 4.00 a.m. difficult to keep awake. If you sat down on guard, court-martialled. If asleep on guard, decent officer would wake you, nasty one would slip rifle off shoulder, take it away. When you woke, had to go to get it. Reported to Captain, court-martialled. In early days meant firing squad.
- 228 If your turn on sentry, shells lobbed and got nervous, drop in dug-out. If officer found you – certain firing squad.
- 240 After war converted ambulance coaches into brake van – each had padded cell – for man suffering shell shock. Outcry in England when heard how many facing firing squad – called it shell shock, not cowardice.
- 263 Local paper would say "Local lad gets DCM", another week, "Local lad died in action" – yet stuck up against wall and shot for cowardice.

- 283 At Plogsteeert, Fatty Odell wrote letter home. Allowed green envelope for private correspondence. Occasionally checked. Fatty told girlfriend where he was, his mates, etc. Got court martial – sentenced to being tied to wheel. Every day tied to wheels for hours each day. Gives name of person who tied him, he didn't like doing it.
- 318 Fatty stretcher bearer got MM. He should have had VC, but because he'd had court martial didn't get it. Later on got Italian Croix de Guerre.
- 335 Shell shock comes and goes. One day feel a treat, next day feel opposite. Can't help it. Called cowardice.
- 350 HM close to being court-martialled. Behind lines and "Plugstreet" old farm. In cellar was platoon, another in cottage cellar nearby. HM a lance-corporal with this platoon. One day Germans opened fire. HM crawled out and went behind farm wall. Shell hit wall of farm. Heard shout and squeal. Called "Who is it?" "Your mate Sid". HM ran across. Person called "Go back". Laid behind wall. Shelling stopped. That night Sergeant and Corporal arrested him, took him to Captain. Charged with "Cowardice and desertion under shell-fire". Should have been firing squad. Explained to Captain. Captain saw him run. HM explained why. Captain dressed him down for leaving men. At end said, one small thing in favour, HM was running towards the Germans and not away from them.
- 440 Doesn't believe in heroes and cowards. In war you're not human. Heroes were two million who lined up outside recruiting office. Cowards were dead, and POWs – because no further use to war effort.
- 467 When older, had ticket to Albert Hall Remembrance Service. Poppies dropped. Voice ... "We will remember them". But remember who?
- 484 Orders came through to go back to Heilsburg. Can't remember how got back. Must have marched as got horse and cart to carry boxes and parcels. HM stayed behind, came along later.
- 540 Part of compound for British POWs from different parts of East Prussia. Several who'd been captured late were in poor state. Locked after them and helped them. Allowed to go down into town. HM heard singing in pub, English sing-song. German police came and rounded them up. Had been trouble. British had seen British underclothes in tailors, very expensive, from Red Cross parcels. Pilfering by other POWs.
- 628 After two or three days Serbian came to see him, asked HM if he wanted anything. HM wanted kit bag made. Next day had one. Stole material from a German.
- 668 German came to him and told him some British in camp hospital – suffering from starvation. HM and rest of group got food together to feed them.
- 695 Lot of freedom, not interfered with.

722 Told two English dead – four went to bury them.