

DOP/01/013

Hawtin Mundy
Born February 1894

004 Left off last tape after Hawtin captured, being ill-treated in Lille.

006 All prisoners had a wash before being taken to be registered.

015 Everyone then sent to a registered prisoner of war camp in Germany. Taken by train to big camp at Dortmund, Westphalia, That was the first really organised camp.

022 Each prisoner given a card as soon as they got there. H. thinks it was a red cross card so that you could send to your relatives and let them know you was a prisoner of war. No one was allowed to write home until they'd been registered. Then every particular was taken and a card was sent home. – about a month after they had been taken prisoner.

030 Many had died over that period. You were not officially a prisoner of war until you reached the camp. Many of the forts in which men were held previously so that was close to Allied Lines, and under heavy fire. Just a few died at Lille of ill-treatment – se previous tape.

040 When H's mother got his card, she sent it to the War Office. For them to see H. was a prisoner of war. Then they wrote back an official letter telling her that he had been taken prisoner H. doesn't know whether the German authorities made any attempt to notify British War Office of men taken prisoner.

047 H. remembers mother's first letter to him after captive, but thinks he destroyed most letter he got. Father wrote some letters, which someone read out to H. – Father couldn't write much.

054 Long time before any parcels came.

057 Given food and coffee when they got to camp. civvies got nothing at all. Regular daily food to prisoners as follows:-

Morning – bowl of coffee (not actual coffee but ground corn make black, with no milk or sugar in it.

Afternoons Prisoners had been given bowl and spoon to keep – had a bowl full or Sauerkraut – ground up vegetables no meat in, but sometimes some oil.

Nothing else till last thing at night, when two Germans would come into the huts with a blanket.

075 Breaks off to describe sleeping arrangements of hut – three tiers, arranged like trestling all along the walls, with netting, so that you layed on that.

080 As soon as they came in, you sat on your bunks they walked round and gave each one of you a slice of bread one slice that was supposed to be for your next day's food – your bread for the next day, not the day they gave it to you. H. never saved his.

092 Men very weak, began to die from starvation. H tells of one man in bunk next to him, bit bread under his pillow one night, saying that he was going to keep it till the next day. It'll give me strength to go through next day, H tried to wake him next morning, found him dead, and ate his slice of bread.

104 Sat outside most of time, getting weaker and weaker. H sitting in compound one day with another young man, leaning against hut wall. H said he didn't feel hungry, which meant he had nearly reached the point he had to push himself up with hands straight. This boy had some Iron Jelloids, Little Black tablets, which used to be sold in Chemists to improve appetite. Gave some of these to H., they helped him to start eating again.

123 Had to work at Dortmund camp. Collected in batches, made to wait at main gate.

128 Guards not bad there – not cruel – Quite normal decent chaps, not like them buggers at Lille.

130 Everyone lined up at gate, in groups of about forty.

134 Two or three guards would be there. On one occasion – one started talking to H. and the other, in good English. Told them he'd lived in Birmingham for years, Used to know a factory in Birmingham which made ammunition for sporting guns, and asked if it was still there. One prisoner, recognised the place, Oh I know, you mean Kinnox, don't you, down the Whitton Road then neighbour kicked him in the shins and he said nothing more. German went away, and the man told off by his friends, Don't you know what he's up to? He's trying to find out what Kinnox are doing. Kinnox by then one of biggest ammunition factories in Birmingham.

161 Would be marched down to big ploughed fields, made to put plants in across this field. You was all in a row across this field, putting these plants in H. was not sure what plants were. Had bulbs at the bottom, might have been Swede.

172 Lot of French man in the camp, and working with British in fields. Coming home one night, H. walked next to one of the Frenchies. This man kept putting his hand in his pocket told H. what he was doing. When he was planting the bulbs in the field, he would sabotage the crop by pulling the bulbs off the bottom of the plants, and just putting the leaves in. He then dropped all the bulbs on the way home, to avoid being found with them

188 No officers with them, not even an N.C.O. German officers were treated like gods – and considered British Officers their equals In separate camps. In the German army, a private soldier even had to salute a sergeant.

208 People in places like Colditz were all officers. Not even N.C.O's went there. H. doesn't know what happened to British officers taken prisoner, never saw one. Never saw an N.C.O in the work gangs – elite.

220 German civilians couldn't get new shoes or books. A German walking beside H. tried to get him to swap his boots for a pair of German Jackboots; and a chunk of black bread, a fish

and two marks. H. agreed, swapped the boots and wolfed bread and fish – but German jackboots rubbed his feet terribly.

252 H. not sure how long they were in Dortmund for, but quite a long time – long enough that a few red cross parcels began to come through, Everyone thought that they would soon get one; very cheering prospect.

261 Then they were told they were going to be moved to Eelsberg, in East Prussia – very long way from Dortmund, A lot of the parcels didn't find their way there. Red Cross parcels would come from England through Berne in Switzerland and then to the camp you were supposed to be at, Dortmund. They also came through Copenhagen. They were moved just as the parcels began to com.

275 Prisoners – sent down from Eelsberg to all over that part of East Prussia, in gangs of a dozen or so – nine in his batch.

279 On the way to Eelsberg, very early in the morning, the train which they were all on pulled up in Berlin station. On the platform was one person only, a sailor, walking up and down, smoking. Stopped opposite H's compartment. H. beckoned to him to give him his fag-end when he finished it. When he finished it, he dropped it on the floor and put his foot on it, and walked away.

304 H and yorky together in hut at Dortmund. Yorky first one to get a parcel. Ate all the food he got at once – made him very ill – but he said he's enjoyed it if it had killed him. Was in Hawtin's group when hey got to East Prussia.

323 Came down from West Hartlepool – about 21,22, same age a H. short, chubby, round-faced. Always laughing.

328 Didn't go directly to Eelsberg, but went to another station called Insterberg – treated nearly as badly there as at Lille. H. sure they were first prisoners to be taken through there. They were put on exhibition, lined up outside the station in their rags, and marched through the town. People lined up along the streets to watch them – H thinks it was done in order to show populace that the British were starving like themselves.

351 Put in a prison in Instersberg That was a rough old do – Put in building, like barracks, lying on floor. A couple of men went down with dysentery during the night. They were taken out, didn't come back. when H and the others went down to the yard, they found a big trench at the end of it, which was used a toilet. They decided that these men had been knocked into it and killed but never could prove it.

366 No longer had the food bowls, had to go to a pile of empty tins in the corner next morning, and find one to eat their food out of. given Sauerkraut, watched by the elite of the town who had gathered round the camp, and who were throwing them cigar butts to smoke, Made us look like a lot of wild animals treated us just like, well, like a menagerie.

383 People didn't share Red Cross parcels. When you got one, you ate everything yourself. When the parcels eventually came, everybody got one – some got three or four. there had been an accumulation of several months. Delivery slowed down by the fact that many men

had died, they couldn't stick it out and parcels went on circulating through system. Also slowed by the fact that so many had to be re-addressed, to so many parts of East Prussia.

408 H. doesn't remember any men acting as informers for Germans in camps.

418 Sort of hospital next door to camp.

421 Conversation turns to British army life, in general – was in which men were required always to address each other as Corporal or Sergeant etc. H's best friend, Syd Carroll, had to call him Corporal if they were both on parade but dropped it as soon as they were off duty.

440 What drives men forward in battle? H. says that you were trained for battle, knew what was going to happen, and when told to go over the top of a trench you done it automatic you was just told No one ever dreamt of refusing to carry on.

517 Back on subject of hospital main camps had one usually one hut, but when out in work gangs however, prisoners had to rely on same facilities as civilians.

532 H. got stuff in his eye from a machine he'd been working on – had to go into nearby town to find a doctor.

538 Accommodation in camps – at Dortmund – large camp, rather like a British army base, such as Catterick, Each hut held at least fifty beds. Outside, wired in compound with guards walking round – about half a dozen huts in each group. guards walked along a perimeter path, separated by barbed wire from next group of huts. French prisoners next door to British in Dortmund.

574 Wrote letters home – in East Prussia could buy pen and paper in village nearby. once they had settled in, prisoners were allowed to go to the shops and buy whatever they wanted. Paid if you worked – 2d. per day – German money was exactly the same as ours.

588 Allowed to go on your own, without a guard.

590 Lodged in village whilst working, in some cellars.

612 No pay in Dortmund – couldn't get pen or paper never wrote home.

613 No entertainments put on by prisoners at Dortmund. all we done was simply have your bit of food, sleep, and all day you sat outside.

619 Didn't go out to fields every day. didn't happen all that often.

635 H. talks about the Remembrance Service after the war. H. had just got his great-niece to round to a neighbour, who was a member of the British Legion. And ask for a full account of what was said at the service. She wrote it down for him and his great nephew read it to him.

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