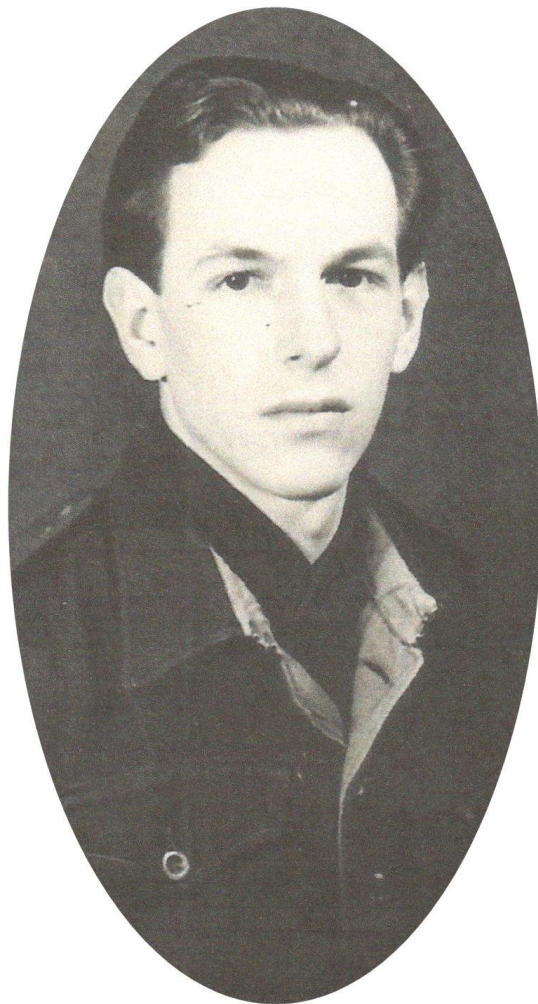


**A POW's STORY of
LIFE in BARBY
1946 - 1948**



**BARBY LOCAL
HISTORY GROUP
FEBRUARY
2023**



INTRODUCTION

Guenther Rosenkranz lived and worked in Barby as a prisoner of war (POW) from April 1946 until March 1948.

Following his return to Germany in 1948, he rejoined his old employer, an oil company. In 1952 he emigrated to Canada where he met his wife, Herta, an emigrant from Austria. In 1955 they married in Regina, Saskatchewan, and in 1956 they had one daughter. In 1959 they became Canadian citizens. Their two sons were born in 1960 and 1961.

Guenther kept in touch with friends in Barby and Rugby. One of his contacts was Mrs Renée Vigars, a niece of Mr Haddon, one of his employers in Barby. Peter Start, of Barby Local History Group, approached Mrs Vigars to ask if Guenther would write about his time in Barby as a POW. Guenther very kindly compiled the account related here, using the many letters he had sent home, which his father had preserved and which are now in his possession. The letters helped him to recollect all his memories and write an accurate account of his life in Barby.

When Guenther wrote this account in 2004, he and Herta had retired and were about to celebrate their Golden Wedding, together with their three children and seven grandchildren. He has since updated his story, after editing by Barby Local History Group to include some explanatory footnotes.

While stationed in Barby, Guenther worked for several local farming families, including the Haddons.

“I wrote to Mrs Haddon in Barby often and she always responded with letters giving news of Barby and district until her death. She was a wonderful lady and she lives on in my mind for ever, as well as some other nice people, like Renée from Rugby and people from other parts of England whom I call friends and with whom I am still in contact today.”

COVER PHOTO: This photo of Guenther Rosenkranz was taken on a visit to London in November 1947.

MY LIFE AS A POW IN BARBY

1946 - 1948

by Guenther Rosenkranz (1927-2019)¹

ARRIVAL IN ENGLAND

After capture in Holland in October 1944, we POWs were sent by lorry and then by rail to the Port of Ostend in Belgium. Here we transferred onto a large US landing craft and crossed the sea to England. On arrival in England in October 1944, all POWs had to go through Entrance Camp 9 at Kempton Park near London, where everyone was registered and received a medical. We also received a POW number - mine was B1532 - before being shipped two days later to other camps. I and many other German POWs were sent by rail to Camp 196 at Nuneaton in Warwickshire.



We were never placed together with German officers in any camps, as we were separated from them the day we were captured and they were held in officers' camps somewhere in England. The War was still on and, in November 1944, a few groups of twenty-five men each were selected for work outside and away from our camp, to pick potatoes on a farmer's field. We rode in nice red buses through the English countryside, escorted by four armed guards. Only members of the German Army and not of the German Navy or Airforce could leave the camp for work. The ranks of corporals and sergeants, who were living with us in the same barracks together, didn't have to do any manual work at that time; they were just used as group leaders and observers. Later this changed and there were no more differences made between ordinary soldiers, sergeants and corporals. They were melded into the workforce to do the same duties as all the others had to do. There were no more bosses and we all were workers of the same class. Everybody lost their army rank right there.

1944
Grenadier Guenther Rosenkranz
1. Zug/Platoon-4.SMG/
Schwer-Maschinengewehr-Kompanie/
Heavy-Machine-Gun Company
Regiment 22/180 Infanterie Division

To our great surprise, by the end of our first week they paid the working crews five Wild Woodbine cigarettes a day, some matches and just one razor blade. We felt just like kings because we had not received any cigarettes ever before, only our food rations. Here we spent our first Christmas and the New Year of 1945 as POWs together.

¹ This article may not be reproduced in whole or in part without the written permission of the author, Guenther Rosenkranz.

Camp 196 was a former US Invasion Camp, we were told, and the barracks (all Nissen huts with bunk beds for fifty men in each) were placed under trees and were well camouflaged, making this a very large camp, holding a total of one thousand men. When we arrived, there were no barbed wire fences or watchtowers and we had to build our wire cage and watchtowers under the supervision of the British Engineering Corps.

In April 1945 they shipped us by rail - about two hundred men - to Camp 186 near Colchester. This was a very large Transit Camp. Two days later our group went on our way by train to Byfield in Northamptonshire.

BYFIELD CAMP 87

In April 1945, I arrived in Byfield at Camp 87, where there were already some POWs. Now we were about four hundred men in this camp. Here were no watchtowers with guards and no searchlights going back and forth all night, as it was in Camps 9, 196 and 186. Also, no large rolls of barbed wire, seven rolls deep, stretched before a high barbed wire fence, and no dead zone, just a high barbed wire fence. Here guards were patrolling the outside path.

Byfield Camp was always our mother-camp and all mail incoming and outgoing went through Byfield. Our camp hospital was in Byfield and manned by a German Army doctor, a German dentist and some trained Army orderlies. All surgical operations and more serious sicknesses were transferred to an English Army hospital or to a civilian hospital, both during and after the War.

In Byfield we saw the end of the War, on 5 May 1945.



The photo ABOVE, dated late April/early May 1945, was taken at Camp 87, in front of the kitchen and dining room barracks. Guenther is on the right in the front row, next to his friend Paul, the only other one of this group who moved to Barby. Five men, including Guenther, are wearing their German army uniforms, though Guenther is wearing a blue shirt which he had traded with a navy man.

A friend and I worked together for the same farmer, who was right in the village of Byfield, for nearly nine months. Some others were working for different farmers in the village too and we all were walking to work. Every farmer in walking distance had some POWs working, while many men were driven by lorries away to nearby villages. Many men, in groups of between ten and twenty, were digging ditches. Others again worked on threshing crews. All larger groups had one or even two armed guards along and only we single or two-man crews had no more guards. After a short while, when the War had ended, guards were replaced by British civilians, who acted as foremen.

Our life in the camp was filled out with a theatre group, a musical band and games of cards, darts or chess in the evenings or on weekends in the dining barracks. Here in this camp we had no Nissen huts; all barracks were built from building blocks.

Then, in early April of 1946, on a morning roll call, the English Commandant Office announced that a few smaller camps, called hostels, which were now manned by Italian POWs who were to be repatriated, were to be staffed by men from our camp. Each hostel required fifty men and they were looking for volunteers. All of us desired to go to a small camp and I was lucky to be picked to go, with some close friends and others, to a hostel located in the village of Barby.

This was the beginning of my life in Barby.

ARRIVAL IN BARBY

We arrived in Barby by army lorries to replace the Italian POWs, who were still there and were now to be repatriated. They left on the lorries which brought us. To this day, it was the first and only contact we ever had with Italian POWs, and just for a few minutes.²

First we cleaned up the barracks, the dining room, kitchen, washrooms etc; not that the Italians had left the camp dirty, but it was our custom, before we would move in and use all the facilities. New mattress bags and pillowcases had to be filled with clean straw. A load was already lying behind the barracks and ready for use.

THE FIRST TWO MONTHS IN BARBY HOSTEL

We had no high barbed wire fences at all here in Barby, just a low picket fence along the street and a low metal gate with no locks on it. On both sides of the parcel of land were bush fences and at the back was a farmer's pasture, with a three-strand barbed wire fence.³

² One of the Italian POWs, Alfredo Aliberti, married a Rugby girl, Mary Austin, whose mother taught at the village school. After a brief stay in Italy, Alf and Mary settled in Rugby, where Mary is still (in 2021) an active member of Rugby Local History Group.

³ The hostel was situated on Ware Road, on the far side from Manor Farm Close, between Ashleigh Close and Kilsby Road.

The hostel consisted of two barracks, one facing the street and another in the form of a 'T' standing behind and facing the back. The front barracks had a build-on which was tightly connected with a hallway, two double doors as front entrance and two double doors to the back. This was our washroom, with toilets, hand-basins, two bathtubs and two shower stalls. A small shed built on behind had a water boiler.



ABOVE and LEFT: The POW camp in its reincarnation as a village hall, about 1972
When the buildings were demolished, many of the materials were used in the building of a pavilion at the village sports field (since also demolished).

The front barracks had three partitions on each side to make it look like smaller rooms. Between each partition on both sides were three army bunk beds. Also there was one room for our camp leader and one room for our orderly which was also used as a

canteen. Another room had a bunk bed for two men. Together we were thirty-four men in the front barracks. One wood and coal stove was positioned in the middle and had to heat the whole barracks.

The other barracks to the back had a large dining room, with tables and benches to hold all the men for a meal and there was one stove. The kitchen had a large cooking stove and there was a food storage room. There was a larger room for our two guards, with a telephone, a stove and a small washroom; for a shower or bath they had to use our wash barracks.

In the far back there was another room with bunk beds for the other sixteen men, including our cook; they had a stove in their room. To get to the washroom or out of the barracks, the men and guards had to go through the dining room and through the covered gangway to get to the other barracks.

Our daily routine was:

- 6 am Out of bed, wash and have breakfast
- 7 am Leave for work (later for some)
- 8 am Start work
- 12 noon to 1 pm Dinner
- 5 pm Finish work and return to hostel
- 6 pm Supper
- 10 pm Lights out

All the hostel staff were selected by the English camp office. Two guards stayed with us; they were a sergeant, who was with us from the beginning to the end, and a corporal, who was changed once because he had finished his army turn. Our cook prepared their meals too and they mostly ate in the kitchen and didn't bother us at all, except for instructions about our work and other main announcements and orders which they received from the main camp in Byfield and would relay to us in the evening in the dining room.

One of our men was a trained orderly and belonged to the Staff. He treated only light sicknesses or injuries with some pills or bandages; more serious cases were taken to the main camp hospital in Byfield. He also looked after the canteen, which was in his room, and he had to do some camp-work during the day when everyone had gone to work. He also had to look after the heating of the hot water boiler and the sewage-filtration system which was at the far end of our garden behind the barracks.

The cook, who mostly was a butcher or baker by trade and not very often a professional cook, did all the baking and cooking for us and was good at it.

Another, older, man was appointed camp leader. He had to look after the whole Barby Hostel organization, including some paper work, as he also was the go-between for us to the English commandant and his staff in Byfield, or handling things with our guards.

One man, also an older one, was responsible for the camp cleaning and looking after our garden in the summer time. We used our garden for planting potatoes and some vegetables and cabbage too, all for our own kitchen use. Some of our men who liked gardening were also very much involved with the upkeep of it.



The photo ABOVE was taken outside the Barby hostel in July 1946. Guenther is marked '1' and with an 'x'. His friend Paul is '2'. Karl-Heinz, '3', is another friend whom Guenther visited in Bochum in 1948; and '4' is the miner Horst. Number '5' is the cook, '6' the camp leader Erich, '7' the butcher and sausage maker and '8' is Walte,r 'our singer with his fabulous voice'.

WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

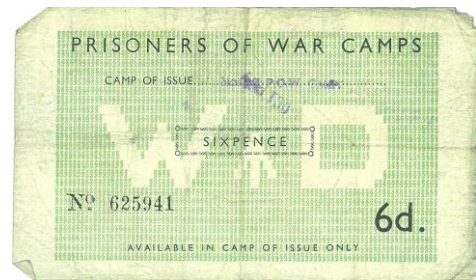
On the second day after our arrival we were put into working crews. Most of us were assigned one man to a farmer, but sometimes, if so requested by a farmer, two men went together. A few men remained in five or six men crews, working in Barby and district on threshing or fieldwork like hoeing and separating mangolds or cow cabbage plants, which was always done in the Spring.

A few of us had to work further away and we used bicycles to get there, while others just walked to their nearby farms. Every day we all received new worksheets, with our name, the name of the farmer and his address on it. The time when we started and finished work had to be filled in and signed by the farmer. After returning to camp we handed in our daily worksheet. The farmer was billed monthly by the Government. He had to pay four pounds and ten shillings per week for our forty -eight hours' service, the same wages he would pay for an English farm worker.

While we were working for the public on farms or in crews, we received one shilling and six pence per day for our work and were paid in camp money by the government.

This money we could then use in our little canteen to buy soap, toothpaste, razor blades etc and our weekly ration of cigarettes. Food wasn't available to buy. Payday was every two weeks. A few months later in 1946 they paid us

our weekly money half in camp money and half in real English money. A little later again, we got paid an extra six pence per day, but not in cash, it went into a savings account, to be paid when we were released and going home we were told.



The rule was: no work, no pay, as on rainy days for some men, they received no pay for those days.

We also received, free every week, five cigarettes per day as an extra ration. But these cigarettes were not in packages and had no brand name, and the tobacco was oriental tobacco, not Virginia tobacco. Most of us didn't like the taste of them, so we collected these cigarettes in tin cans to save them for our repatriation. With our English money, we could go into the local store in Barby to buy cigarettes or tobacco, as long as they were available, which was not every day.

FIRST JOB

After we had arrived in Barby, my first job was in Ashby. Four of us were sent by bicycle to Ashby and I was assigned to work for Mr King, who also operated the inn in town. Two other men were working at the castle in Ashby and another comrade worked for another farmer in the village. It was

about a four-mile ride by bicycle; we took the Kilsby Road and from there the Daventry Road to Ashby.

Mr King was a nice person to work for. He was friendly and he gave me some cigarettes every morning, as he did before when he had an Italian POW working for him he told me. Now, I had taken his place.

My weekly ration of tea, which I brought from the camp, I gave to Mrs King. In the morning after milking, she made me nice sandwiches and tea, and for dinner I had a warm meal, which I ate in the kitchen. Teatime was usually in the field and Mr King brought me tea and cake out.

As I worked for Mr King I learned how to milk cows and enjoyed it very much. I also enjoyed the field and yard work, after I learned his routine, with or without a tractor. He gave me daily work projects. Mr King was not a very bossy man and left me quite a free hand to do many things my way. Yes, he was a likeable boss to work for.

On Sundays and holidays I would also go to Ashby, just for the milking in the morning and in the afternoon. Mr King, like many other farmers who had men for milking, paid us in cash, one shilling and six pence per hour for these chores, which made us happy. Remember, I also received my meals during my milking stay and this was right in my line.

As most farmers gave us dinner and, in the afternoon, cake and sandwiches, we did not have to take our camp sandwiches along any more. Also, farmers who gave us food and cigarettes were highly praised, we called them 'good farmers' and we tried our very best to please them with our work. Farmers who gave nothing to their POWs were called 'bad farmers' and we would only do the minimal amount of work and only what we absolutely had to.

It was forbidden by the English Government for English people to fraternize with POWs; they should only speak to them as needed for work and no more. It was also against the law to give them food or cigarettes or let them sit at mealtimes together at the same table. These laws were not followed by many farmers and people, as these regulations existed in every country during the war. Later these orders were relaxed and this was appreciated by both parties.

When the British Government proclaimed that farmers could now take POWs into their house to stay and provide them with board and lodging, one or two of our comrades took advantage of this offer. Their pay had still to be collected at the hostel and they came often for a visit and to see their friends.

In August 1946, at harvest time, our work hours were set from 8 am to 19.30 pm by the Government. These long working hours were cancelled by the end of September 1946.

LIFE GETS PLEASANTER

Until July 1946 we were allowed to go only one mile outside the camp, except when going to work. In the Fall our radius was expanded to fifteen miles from the hostel and we were allowed to visit a church and cinemas, mostly in Daventry, where we went by bicycle.

All of us in Germany belonged to the Lutheran or Catholic church, which was not present in Barby, where there was only an Anglican or United church. A bunch of us went to a church service on a Saturday night. One of our guards marched us over there and as we entered the church, the people all turned around and looked at us in disbelief and amazement. After this, a few of our men always went to church at the weekend and our guards were not needed any longer to escort them.

Finally, after many requests, we received two small radios for the camp. This was highly welcomed by all of us. Now we could get a German radio station, for news and music, sometimes very clearly. Later on, our little radio played all day long as we managed to get more and more German stations on it and it was never shut off. It gave us a good feeling away from home.

We had a dog and a cat in our hostel, taken over from the Italians, and both were very homely and playful with all of us. Another comrade raised a few tame rabbits in a cage at the far end of our garden and sold them later to our kitchen, and all of us paid our part for this delicious meat, which our cook so skilfully made into a nice and different meal for us. Also, someone brought a young crow home and she was quite tame, but didn't make it too long in the cage in the garden.

REPATRIATION ANNOUNCED

In September 1946 it was announced by the English Government that every month 15000 POWs would go home and be repatriated. There were about 400 000 POWs in England at that time. All prisoners were given a repatriation number corresponding to the month and year when they were taken prisoner. My number was 22, which meant October 1944. Some of these numbered groups were very large, as later war action involved larger captures. Until the end of November 1946, only sick POWs were sent home and that was when we lost our first cook, when he was sent home.

During the beginning of our captivity we were allowed to write one letter and one postcard per month only. As time progressed we were able to send two letters and two postcards a month away to our loved ones. After November 1946 we could write and send one letter and one postcard every week. We could also use ordinary writing paper, not only the one-page, POW stationery letters. Our mail never needed postage stamps and was marked 'Prisoner of War Post'. It was all censored and stamped, just as our incoming mail was, and they all had to go via Byfield Camp. Also in November 1946 we were allowed to send one parcel to our loved ones, but only to the British Occupation Zone

in Germany, which was in the north of Germany and included my home town, Hamburg, right up to the Danish border and some parts of Middle Germany like Hannover. Food, cigarettes, coffee, tea, cacao and any clothing were excluded; only toilet articles like soap, toothpaste and razor blades were allowed, which really amounted to nothing, to help our people in Germany, so I and most of us declined this 'opportunity' because it was a paradox.

MY NEXT JOBS

At the end of November 1946 I was sent to another farmer and had to say goodbye to Mr and Mrs King, a pair of nice people. This routine change of work place was done periodically and was not new, but we couldn't see the reason 'why'.

For a little while I worked with six other comrades for a threshing outfit and we went with this machine, because we were hired by the threshing machine operator, from farm to farm, to do the harvest threshing. Here too the majority of farmers where we did the threshing gave us extra cigarettes, tea and food, which made us into better workers and faster too. It cut down on their expenses for hiring this threshing machine and us as a crew. This work was nice for a change, but I missed that milking time and in the Spring when most farmers started hiring again, people with milking experience like myself were only needed by a few farmers who were in the milk-shipping business.

In December 1946 I was lucky and started working again just by myself for Mr Goodman in Barby. I got this job because I was able to milk cows. Mr Goodman was the manager of a small farm where they had a few Jersey cows and a few young heifers, which were all owned by the pastor or vicar of the local Barby church. Mr and Mrs Goodman were not so very young anymore, but they were very nice to me and I enjoyed working for them, because their former POW was repatriated and they needed a new milker. Every day, after the milking was done, they asked me in for breakfast and for tea in the afternoon. On weekends I also went milking because it was so close by and Mr Goodman paid me for my hours, always in cash. Twice a day Mr Goodman had to carry the two pails of milk, on a neck yoke, all the way over to the vicar's house, to a milk separator.

CHRISTMAS 1946 AND SPRING 1947

On 25 December it was Christmas Day and I had worked only for a while for Mr and Mrs Goodman, who invited me in for a nice Christmas dinner with them. I ate my first plum pudding which Mrs Goodman had made. It tasted very good and I enjoyed it very much and was thankful for their invitation on this holiday.

We also had a nice Christmas party at our hostel and a beautiful Christmas tree stood in the corner of the dining room. Our cook did his best to bake a few nice cakes and made us a nice meal too.

We sang some Christmas songs together and all our thoughts were with our families in Germany. Most of us were feeling a little homesick and we all wished to be home again after two years in captivity. A few of our comrades, who used to live in East Prussia, in Pomerania, in Silesia and in the Eastern part of Germany, which was now called 'Poland', 'Russia' or 'East Germany', so far had no word from any of their family members and didn't know if they were alive or dead. They hoped that they had fled in time to the West when the Russian hordes stampeded into their homeland from the East in 1945. Yes, for these comrades we all felt very sorry because they didn't know where they stood and where they would go if the day of freedom and repatriation should come for them. Every time any of us received a letter from home they just watched and we could see sadness in their eyes.

We celebrated 31 December, wishing for a hopeful New Year in 1947, which might bring us closer to our dream, to return home again. We were still celebrating this New Year after midnight in the camp dining room until the early hours of the morning. We had purchased a keg of beer, which was illegal, but we had it anyway and all of us had paid for it together. At midnight we listened to the ringing of the German church bells, which came over our radio, bringing in the New Year of 1947 in Germany and the hope for all of us here of a speedy return home and soon.

Also, a few weeks ago, all of us helped to purchase a large pig from a farmer, which we then fed a few more weeks, just to add some more pounds of weight to it, and now it was ready to be butchered. We kept the pig across the road, at Mr Haddon's farm; he was not involved in our pig business, he just gave us the shelter to use. Always some of us, in rotation, brought home a little bag of pig feed from our place of work, and then all our kitchen waste went too, for feeding our piggy. Mr Haddon didn't know and to his surprise the pig was gone when he looked into the empty pen one day.⁴

It was late one evening as our pig was herded across the street into our washroom, where our butcher, with the help of a few guys, did the job of butchering and preparing the pig, with lots of hot water for singeing, shaving and cleaning. When it was ready to be cut up, all of us were excited and some of us had a peek into the washroom, to see how our butcher crew was doing.

They worked all night through and made some nice sausages, after cleaning some intestines for it. A few good roasts and pork chops came out of it, as well as some hamburger meat which was put through the grinder. Headcheese was made and, naturally, some soup bones were left for our cook to use and for making his meals. One pig for so many men didn't last very long.

This all made our festivity perfect. Even our guards were invited, but they had no idea what was going on and where the sausages, the meat and beer came from, and celebrated the New Year with us in a jolly good time. As pork and beef were not very often delivered and on our menu, this pork

⁴ Alf Aliberti reported that the Italian POWs had also raised a pig; they fed it on macaroni.

sure was a delight. Mostly our meat rations consisted of Australian or New Zealand frozen lamb and a lot of frozen liver, which we received weekly in our food ration, which came from Byfield, our mother-camp.

On 12 January our music band from the main camp came to play for us in the dining room. Too bad I couldn't be present for the whole programme because I had to go milking the cows at Mr Goodman's farm. I wasn't sorry about it because I enjoyed working with cows and doing the milking.

Also, beginning in January 1947 we were presented with the news of seeing a movie in our dining room every two weeks. The lorry and the German projector operator came from Byfield and we had to pay three pence for every show. They alternated some older German films and English films. It was a nice entertainment for us and they should have done this already years ago, when they showed us a movie once in a blue moon and outside, when it was dark, just like a drive-in theatre, because we had no room inside for four hundred men. In good weather it was new and exciting for all of us and we enjoyed it when it came to us once in a while.

In February the winter was very cold and we received a lot of snow, which was unusual for England. We had difficulty in getting wood and coal for our stove, for the kitchen and for the boiler. So we gathered all the wood around we could find to keep the fires going and to keep us warm. Still, in March, we had lots of snow and the supply lorry couldn't get to our camp to deliver food and mail from Byfield. A bunch of our men went to the Daventry-Dunchurch highway to meet the lorry and carry the food on their backs, in blankets and boxes used like sleds, for miles back to our hostel. Most of our men couldn't go to work for a while on account of the bad weather and consequently didn't get paid for the lost days. No work, no pay. That month I went to our Byfield camp hospital with fever. They took me after the show in the movie lorry. I was alright again after a few days and I returned to Barby and went back to work the next day.

A NEW JOB

In April Mr Goodman told me that he was retiring and couldn't do the farm work any longer because of his health and age. I was sorry to say goodbye to both Mr and Mrs Goodman but still dropped in a few times for a short visit.

Now I was assigned to a new work place again. My new farmer was Mr Evans, who had three sons, all around my age and a little older. The Evans were Welsh and very nice and friendly people. They operated a larger farm and were milking a good herd of Holstein cows. The milking was done with a machine, but still some hand milking had to be done too.

It happened here too – an exchange was done by the Government and their other man, who had worked here for a while, had to go to another job. Now I was sent there because I knew how to milk cows. It was not very far to go to the Evans' farm, but I went by bicycle to get there.

I received a good meal from Mrs Evans every day and tea and cake in the afternoon. So it was nice to work for them as the boys gave me some cigarettes daily because they smoked too.



**Idris Evans, one of the Welsh 'boys',
photographed in 2004**



Barby Wood Farmhouse, home to the Evans family, now a Grade II listed building

I experienced a funny thing, as they called their cows in from the field in their Welsh language and I had to learn these words so I could get the cows home too. These cows did not react to the usual call of 'come on, come on'. But this was the only Welsh I learned and sometimes, when they were talking to each other in Welsh, I couldn't understand a word.

On Sundays and holidays they didn't need me for milking because, with their own boys at home, they had all the help they needed.

When I was working alone in the field I could see the London, Midland & Scottish Railway going not far from the field. It was a very busy railroad and had several tracks. I got used to the trains and their timetable. One train went around noon and another one around quitting time. Because I had no watch of my own I had to rely on the trains and the Evans boys had told me about it. All their land lay a little higher up, so I could see the railway very well when they were whistling by.⁵

One day I saw, in a newspaper ad, watches for sale in Liverpool and how to order them. I asked the boys if they would order me one of those watches, as I had the money saved for that. They sent away the mail order for the watch I had picked out and it didn't take a week and I received my wrist-watch, which was water- and shock-proofed and good to wear for work all around. I was very happy now to have a watch again after mine was taken away when I was captured. This wristwatch lasted

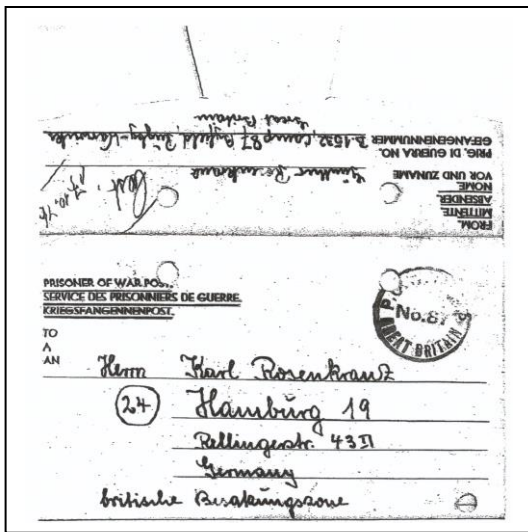
⁵ The Great Central line running past Barby Wood Farm was closed in September 1966. Today (2021) the LMS line from Rugby to Euston remains as part of the West Coast Mainline.

me for many years after my return to Germany and it gave me good and accurate service for the one pound ten shillings I had paid for it.

As the growing season was a little late this year, because of the wet winter and spring, the seedlings of mangolds and cow cabbage were coming out and had to be hoed immediately. In the evening, in groups, we went out to help other farmers where I and other comrades were working in the daytime, to do this hoeing job and, with a bunch of men, it was faster this way. All the farmers we did this evening work for were pleased with the progress and always paid us in cash, which was good for us to have a little headway with money, specially now when repatriation was going on and we needed some cash to buy things which we were allowed to take home.

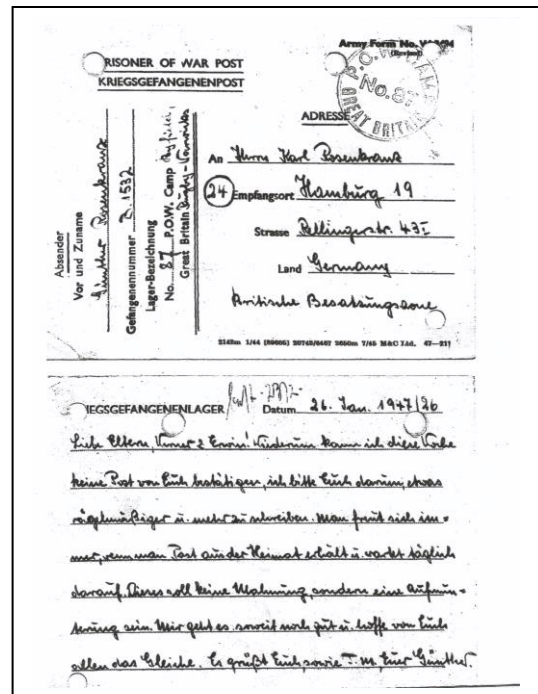
BACK IN THE HOSTEL

By May of 1947 we could write six additional letters and four postcards home a month. There was no restriction on the numbers of letters we could receive from Germany.



ABOVE and RIGHT: An unsealed letter (posted 29 September 1946, received 17 October 1946) and a postcard (written 26 January 1947) sent by Guenther to his family

His first letter, posted in October 1944, arrived over a year later.



June 1947 was very hot every day and sometimes the temperature reached plus 35 Celsius and we were working without a shirt on in the fields and still it was too warm to do the daily chores. All the crops made good progress in growing, because there was sufficient moisture in the ground. Often we went after work to the Oxford Canal for a swim and to cool off and had lots of fun doing this.

Now we had a new dog in the camp. He was white and had a little black on him too. He was a collie-terrier type. We gave him the name 'Pao' (POW). He was cute and loved by everyone. Our other dog had died: he was a good soul.

In June 1947 we were asked to stay on, as civilian farm workers, for another year. We would live with a farmer and would receive the going farm labourer wages. I thought about it, because I liked the farm work, but wanted to go home first for four to six weeks to see my family and return after this. The Government did not agree to this and the condition was to stay on without going home first, which was not acceptable for me and some others. One or two of our comrades signed up because they had no word from their family yet and used to live in the eastern part of Germany, which was now Polish- or Russian-occupied.

We could go for movies to our main camp in Byfield and were picked up and brought back by an army lorry, as no more films were to be shown in our hostel. This was every two weeks.

All camp army lorries were driven by German POWs for the last year or more, just having an English soldier along without a rifle, and they did all the deliveries to all the hostels and also the movie-van as the operators were German POWs. The army ambulance from Byfield was driven by an army girl and so was the camp commander's car; he was an English colonel.

On one nice summer evening in July we were all sitting and standing around the front entrance of our hostel and were singing nice, old German folk songs, as we did a few times a year. Singing made us feel good and thinking of our home. A few local people were standing close by, on the other side of the street and were listening to our songs. Finally, as it was close to 10 pm, our new guard, who had just arrived less than a week ago, came out, just dressed in shirtsleeves, and started shouting to us: "Stop that singing, get inside, go to bed" and then he walked over and closed our double gate, which had no lock or latch on it. We didn't say anything and went inside. This soldier was just a young guy, had no rank and was alone at the time at the hostel. Most often only one of the guards was present and another soldier was on furlough or had other things to do; we didn't know and didn't care. Nearly all our guards were older soldiers, sergeants or corporals and living with us. Next morning we all agreed not to leave for work until that gate was opened. We were standing ready to go to work, some, like me, with a bicycle in their hand and waiting inside the gate. Mr Haddon came over to see what had happened to his man and why he was not coming to work. We explained the situation to him, that the guard had closed the gate and that we have no right to open it and the guard should come out and do so. A few more farmers arrived with their cars and wanted to see what was going on, because their man hadn't shown up for work. The telephone must have rung in the guard's room, with questions from farmers, why their working man had not arrived yet and it was already 8.30 am. Our soldier, I think, didn't know what to say and came running out, just barely dressed and sleepy, and saw us standing inside the gate. There was his shouting again: "Go to work. Open that gate."

We did not move and our camp leader just told him that he, who closed the gate, had to open it again, because we had no authority to do so. There was more shouting and shouting but nothing made us move. He saw a few cars parked there with farmers inside and decided to open that gate, with more shouting. As the gate was opened we all left for work and most of us had to tell our employers why we arrived so late for work.

Anyway, when we returned from work that good soldier was gone. Now we heard the whole story, that around 10 am a jeep with two British MPs came and took him away in a hurry. A new guard came around noon, a sergeant, and took over the camp duty again. As we heard, that soldier did not come back to Byfield and we assume that he was taken somewhere by the MP for punishment. The commandant in Byfield had apparently several phone calls from farmers, as we heard from them later, who complained about the behaviour of that guard in our hostel and our lateness. Yes, every military is the same: discipline and orders given had to be followed by all parties without question.

As long as we were kept in England, in any camp, front line soldiers were always the best men suitable for guards, because most of them were comradely with us. Young recruits were too jumpy and no good for this type of duty.

By August 1947 we could take the Barby bus to go to Rugby. We could visit the cinema there and do some shopping, mostly at the Woolworth Store. I think that is what it was called? We enjoyed buying fish and chips from a street vendor and it tasted great, even if served in traditional ordinary newspaper. Now we went more often to Rugby for shopping, as it was bigger than Daventry, where we only went to the movies in the evenings or on Sundays.

With the cinema in Rugby we had an incident in the beginning, because the owner of this theatre wouldn't allow any German POWs into his cinema. As the new rule that POWs could visit a cinema came from the British Parliament, and after a call from our Byfield Camp Commandant, the owner had to obey this new regulation. We had no further trouble after this. The people of Rugby and Daventry, as all over in the villages, were very friendly and nice to our presence on the streets and in the stores.

Our German camp tailor, who was in Byfield, was busy mending our clothes, because new pants and jackets were not so easy to get and we had to turn in our old worn-out pieces before getting new ones. Since our old German uniforms were used up we were issued English army uniforms, but they were dyed in black and until the end of 1946 had patches sown on the back of the jacket and on the pants' legs in a red and ochre colour, to ID us as POWs. Later they did not cut patches any more and no more colour patches were used. We just had the black dyed jackets and pants.

We had to do our own washing and everyone did this in his own time, in the evening or at the weekend, and the clothes lines outside were always full in summer, but during the winter, or on rainy days,

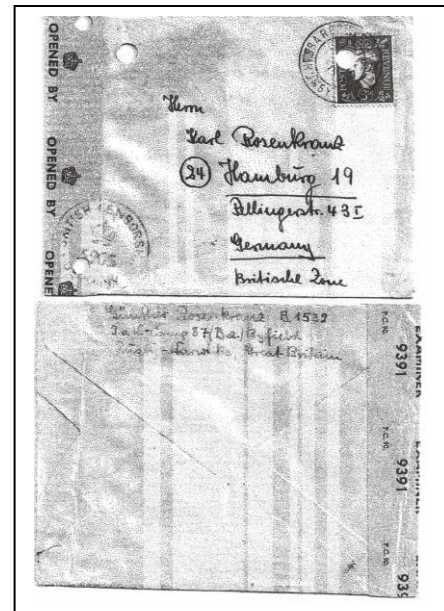
we had to hang our washing up inside, where we had some clothes lines strung all over, but mostly close to the stove.

Now we could send letters by English mail for 3d postage to Germany. But we noticed that this mail was not faster than the letters we sent through our camp, where we had no postage to pay for them.

RIGHT: A censored letter posted in Barby with a 3d stamp

WORK CONTINUES

In August, as the harvest was in full swing and very good, we had a lot of work and overtime to do, which the farmers paid us for in cash, because we had no intention of filling in the Government's time sheet. That little cut they gave us out of the overtime money which was charged to the farmers was not worth our effort and cost the farmer more than paying us in cash.



By the middle of the month it was very hot and dry and more than half of the grain, wheat and oats sheaves were in stacks, and all the farmers were hoping for a little more of this nice weather to get the rest of the grain in too. Only a very few farmers had or used a combine yet; this was just coming in, in England.

By the end of August we had finished the harvest and our working time was getting shorter again. There had been no rain for the last six weeks and it was hard on the pasture grass and for the cattle to find green feed. The mangolds and cow cabbage were suffering and were not very big, while the grain was just on time and very good.

By October I was no longer needed at the Evans' farm because the harvest was done and their own manpower was sufficient. We said goodbye to each other by shaking hands and they told me to drop in again. I was sorry to leave now because the Evans were nice to me and it was a good place for me to work. Many other farmers were cutting their help down too.

One day the oldest son of Mr Evans came in and hired me for four days to do some custom ploughing for a Barby farmer. It was a nice change for me again, to work with his brand new David Brown tractor and get paid in cash for it.

Also in October, with a crew of thirteen men, we went to pick potatoes for three days for a farmer. Each man had to pick thirty steps, which was measured out by us and nicely divided. It was hard on the back because we were not used to this work, specially on the first day. After this we went to

several farms to do the potato harvest, which was good this year on account of the dry weather for finishing and the early moisture for growing. This work was done for the Government and for only one shilling and six pence a day and not for cash. All the farmers gave us good food and extra cigarettes.

LAST MONTHS OF 1947

In September of 1947, seven of our men, from Group 19, were told they would be going home. Group 19 was a large one and so were Groups 21 and 22, which was mine. We predicted it might take until Easter 1948 before we would all be going home. We were getting nervous and we could hardly wait for this day to come. Our hostel was getting smaller on manpower every time some men left because they were not being replaced any more. In October they announced that repatriation of Group 21 would begin on 15 February 1948 and they predicted that the last of all the POWs in England would be home by 31 December 1948. We had to add 'Ba' to our former camp address: POW Camp 87 (Ba) Byfield/Rugby Warwicks, to make it easier for mail sorting at the main camp, because the group of English personnel there was getting smaller and smaller.

Cigarette prices went up. We were now paying 1s 3d for 10 Wild Woodbines in the stores. Players cigarettes now cost 1s 8d. As we were still getting only, officially, 1s 6d per day for our work by the English Government this made our buying power only 10 cigarettes per day. It was good that we had been paid cash, 1s 6d per hour for our overtime, by the farmers.

In camp we played a lot of cards in our free time. Also the dartboard in the dining room was used often for tournaments, which made life a little easier to take.

In November we chartered a bus from the Rugby Line, which was operated by the proprietor of the Barby Inn, just down the street of our hostel, and booked it for a trip to London.⁶ The fare was 10s for each passenger, which was reasonable. We had permission from the Byfield office that we could go there. It was quite a sensation at the time for us POWs, that we were blessed to do this journey without any interference by the British authorities!

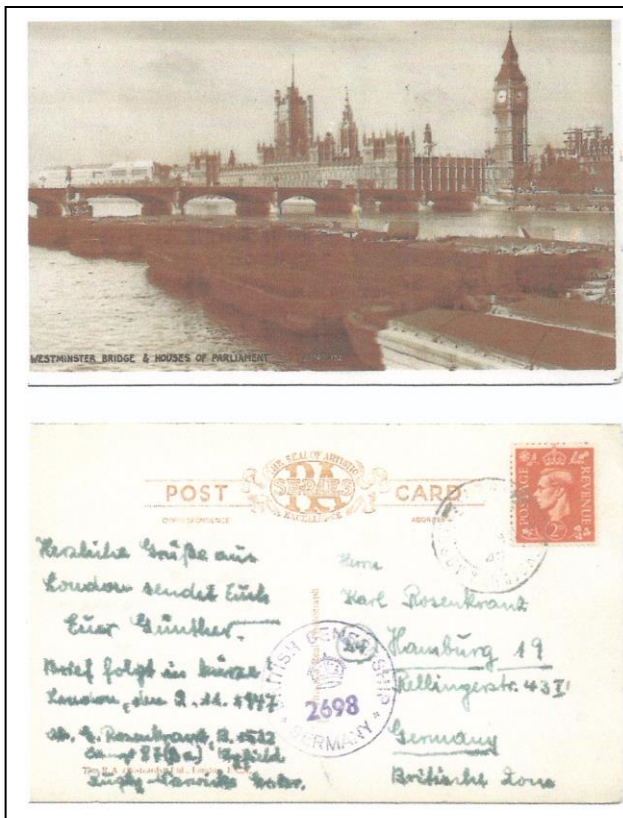
The bus picked us up at the gate of our hostel and we left Barby at 8 am with thirty-two men on board and we got to London by 11.15 am. It was a nice drive and we saw a little more of the English countryside. Our driver let us off in the middle of the city not far from Piccadilly Circus. We had to be back at the bus by 8 pm.

We left in groups of friends, each going their own way. Everybody took along as much money as possible. After we had purchased a street map of London from a newsstand we found our main

⁶ The Batchelor family, who ran the village bus service, were landlords of *The Arnold Arms*.

objects to visit. We saw Buckingham Palace with its guards. We took the subway to get to the Tower and to London Bridge, the Thames River and harbour. London is very big. I myself came from a large city, Hamburg, in Germany, but many other guys had never seen a large city like London before.

The people we asked for directions were all friendly. After we got tired on our feet from all the walking we went to see a movie and paid 1s 9d. All they showed was a newsreel, which was good to see, and two short films which were nothing special and we were very disappointed with it and it lasted only one hour. As we toured around a photographer stopped us to take an instant picture and we paid him 1s 6d for each photo, which turned out fairly good for an instant picture and it went into our collection of mementos. Earlier we stopped in at a fish and chip store and had a nice meal for 2s, which filled us up again.



To get back to our bus we took a transit bus but found out after a while that we were going in the wrong direction. So we had to take another bus back again which brought us to the right place where our bus was parked and, time-wise, we just made it. A few guys came very late because they were lost too. Now, while we were cruising home again, we ate our sandwiches which we brought from the camp and had left in the bus for our return journey. Everybody was tired from all that walking and, basically, we had seen all the same attractions and were very pleased with our trip. At 11.30 pm we arrived back in Barby in front of our hostel.

LEFT: the postcard Guenther sent to his family from London on 2 November 1947

I had no steady farmer to go to at that moment and there were only twenty men left working on farms and twelve digging ditches; five men were without work. This was a situation we never had before, even when we were at full staff, but most farmers were cutting down now, after the harvest was done and inside, and as winter was coming. We had the first snow shower on 23 November, but it didn't stay very long and melted again. Just a sign that winter was coming soon. By December there were only thirty-five men left in Barby Hostel and only seventeen were still working for a farmer, while the other eighteen went threshing, but not every day. In the main camp in Byfield there were one hundred men without work now. What a difference from before, when everyone was working. A lot of

British soldiers came home from the War and the Army, and many were taking their farm jobs again, which made the farm worker shortage disappear and we POWs had to move over.

At this time all my letters sent through the regular English mail were being opened and censored, my father told me. Nothing from our camp mail had been opened for a while so I and others decided to send all letters again by POW mail through Byfield and we would save the postage too.

On 12 December I received my birthday cake, made by our cook, early because he was busy getting ready for Christmas, with baking and other preparations. I was very happy and with a few good friends we celebrated my birthday, which was 23 December, with coffee and this nice decorated cake. This tradition, of receiving a cake for birthdays from our cook, had been going on for quite a while.

I was working again, just for a while, for a local farmer (I can't remember his name), with a horse and wagon. I cleaned out some stables and took out the manure to the field and spread the load after each dumping.

On Christmas Eve – our last one in England, we thought so anyway – we celebrated with a nice Christmas tree standing in the corner of our dining room and with a keg of 'illegal' beer and some bottled beer, which was paid for from the surplus in our hostel cashbox, and naturally some nice food, prepared by our cook, which he made from saved rations. It was a nice festival amongst old comrades and even our dog Pao had a lick of beer from the basin which was standing under the lightly-dripping tap.

On 26 December the lorry from Byfield picked us up, whoever wanted to go, to a theatre performance by some camp members. The play was nice and we had a few laughs and gave them a good applause for their performance. Before we drove home late in the evening we had some coffee and cake, served by the camp kitchen.

On 30 December we had a light snowfall but it was not very cold and we knew it would not stay.

On 31 December we listened to a German radio station and celebrated the New Year with tea and sandwiches and played darts, while some men played card games. We were all happy and knew that this was our last New Year's celebration in England. Some of us would go very soon and others would follow along, all in time this spring and early summer. In January we learned that another thirteen men, from Group 21, would be leaving for home in the next three weeks. Everyone was happy for them and we hoped for our own departure very soon too.

It happened in the early evening of 19 January 1948 that a lorry from Byfield came and the German driver walked in to our barracks and shouted: "Is the miner ready to go, whom I came to pick up?" As

we were all sitting around, looking at each other, we didn't know what he was talking about and what to make of it. The driver pulled out a piece of paper and said a name – Horst. This comrade was sitting amongst us and he asked the driver what the name was and had a look at the paper himself. It was his name and he was a young miner from Silesia and they lived close to the Polish border where all these coalmines were on both sides of the border. Our camp leader came, because no-one had any knowledge of this and he went to get the guard from his room. Oh, this corporal, who had a phone call from Byfield in the morning, forgot to tell our camp leader about this and naturally he could not tell Horst to get ready for pickup and repatriation to Germany tonight. Miners were needed badly in Germany, in mines all along the Ruhr. He also was one of the men who had no word from his parents or family since before the War ended and didn't know where to go when he returned back to Germany. This way now they would send him to West Germany, into the coalmines where miners were needed. So Horst packed his belongings fast; he was very mad but what could he do. He said goodbye to his closest friends and to everybody around and left with the driver and lorry for Byfield.

ANOTHER JOB

The next morning the farmer across the street from our hostel, Mr Haddon, came over to the camp, to see where his man, Horst, was and found out about his rushed departure last night. He had worked for him for a while, but as Horst had not time to say goodbye to Mr and Mrs Haddon in the evening, they didn't know about this. Now Mr Haddon needed a man with milking experience right away and this is how I was sent over to him, because there were not many milkers left among us any more. I had seen Mr Haddon visually a few times before and as I now worked for him I found he was very easy-going and friendly.⁷

After we had finished the morning chores on this first day, on account of the happenings with Horst, we were a little late and Mrs Haddon called us in for breakfast. This was done every morning from here on as I worked for them. For dinner, I mostly went across the street to our camp and ate my sandwich and then lay down on my bed for a few minutes. At quitting time Mrs Haddon always gave me a bottle of milk and sometimes even a few eggs, which I shared with my closest friends and our cook, who boiled or fried these eggs in the evening for us. Naturally I did not exclude our cook from this rare food, which we never got with our food rations, as he was nice to prepare them for us.

All the time I was in England and in any camp we never received fresh eggs, only powdered eggs. Fresh milk was never served but powdered milk and, sometimes, canned milk was used for our porridge and other foods. Also we never ever received any real butter, just margarine in our daily diet.

⁷ The Haddons lived at Manor Farm on Ware Road. The farmhouse was demolished in the 1970s to make way for a residential development, Manor Farm Close.

I went to work always early in the morning at 7 am, in time for milking and we had to hurry to get finished by 8.30 am when the milk lorry came. As Mr Haddon was very talkative and nice we got along very well and I enjoyed working for him and Mrs Haddon from the first moment. On Saturday evenings, and on Sunday mornings and nights, I went over for milking and after we were finished Mrs Haddon always had a nice breakfast or lunch ready for me. For my extra time Mr Haddon paid me in cash, as he had done before for Horst.

Our camp music band came again to Barby one afternoon to play for us in the dining room. A few civilians from the village came too, to listen to the music. But at 4 pm I had to go milking and could not stay for the full programme, which didn't matter to me very much. Over the last few days we had had a lot of rain and water puddles were standing all over. It was not very cold and didn't freeze.

In the middle of February Mr Haddon was taken to hospital at night. He had pain and needed an operation I was told. I did all the work by myself except in the morning when a man from the village came to help me finish the milking on time.

On 27 February the bad news came that Mr Haddon had died after the operation. I was very sad because it came so unexpectedly, as he never seemed to be sick before. Many of those in our hostel, like our camp leader and others who had contact with Mr Haddon, were shocked when they heard the news of Mr Haddon's sudden passing.

I went to work on the Haddon farm as usual and did my best to keep everything going. I felt so sorry for Mrs Haddon and for the tragic and unexpected loss of her husband, my boss.

LEAVING BARBY

Towards the end of January two more comrades left us, from Group 21, to go to Byfield and home from there. The hostel was getting smaller again. On 29 February the big news came from Byfield that we were all returning to the main camp and our hostel was going to be closed on 9 March. My group, number 22, was going to be repatriated and leaving Byfield on 19 March and my hope was to be home by Easter. All this came a little faster than we had anticipated but it was good news for all of us. The last group number for all the POWs was 29, which was May 1945, the end of the War. A few of our hostel comrades had this number, while others had numbers in between 22 and 29 and they were next to go home very soon.

I wrote to my parents to stop writing to me and that I would be coming home very soon. It was high time for me to get this letter off and I had faith it would get there before I walked through their door.

As I mentioned before, in Byfield camp and Barby hostel we were a mixture of men from all the German armed forces. Most were from the army, some from the airforce - but not pilots, mostly airforce personnel such as anti-aircraft gunners, some from the navy – here, too, only army personnel such as men from coastal batteries. A few men from our camp had been stationed on the British islands of Jersey and Guernsey, just off the French coast. These islands were never bombed or even attacked by British ship-fire and they said the contact with the island people was friendly and excellent. After the Allied invasion of France and their later deeper advances into France and away from the coast, the German commanders of Jersey and Guernsey surrendered and the British troops came ashore without a shot being fired. These mariners came to England as POWs and were distributed into many camps in England, and a few of them were with us in Byfield and Barby.

I had to bring this news, of my home-going and the closure of the hostel, to Mrs Haddon, who was very nice to me and said that I had deserved to go home after this long time. She would see about finding a reliable help in the village after I was gone. On 8 March I did my last chores for Mrs Haddon and my last farm work in England that evening, because we all had some packing to do and to clean up our camp.

The next day three army lorries came from Byfield and we started loading our belongings on to them. Mrs Haddon came over and we said goodbye to each other. I promised her to write when I got back home. A few other farmers were at our gates too and so were a few local people, all to say goodbye to us. All of us were close to tears. As the lorries were leaving we all waved a last goodbye and they all waved back until we went around the corner and couldn't see our hostel any more – it had become home for us for quite a while.

One or two of our comrades stayed on as farm labourers and were living with their farmers. Our beloved dog Pao went with one man and our cat too, to a farm so they were in good hands again. One comrade may have got married around there, to an English farm girl the rumour went. About this I am not quite sure, but maybe some Barby people know about them and it would be fun to hear one day if this is true or not. **Kamerad wo bist Du? Comrade where are you?**

We may have come here as enemies, but I believe we left Barby and England as friends.

LEAVING ENGLAND

In Byfield we had a lot of preparation to do. Papers were filled out by the English camp office for each of us. We had to pack our bags with all the saved items which we wanted to take home.

It sure was different to live here in Byfield camp again rather than our little cozy hostel in Barby. Here at the main camp, 87, there was still barbed wire all around, but no more guards walking round the

outside with their rifles any more. The big gate was open even at night and an English soldier just sat in the guardhouse. We still had morning roll call and everything was very formal between the German and English camp commanders. The days went by fast and we, about seventy men in total, who were to go home, had, as the saying goes, 'ants in the pants'.

On 19 March the big day was here for all men from camp 87 and group 22 to be repatriated. We were all wearing our best clothes (the dyed English uniform) and stood in line outside the gate and at the camp office with our kit bags ready to be inspected.

The rules said that we could take home two hundred cigarettes, one pound of coffee and one pound of tea. Other things were not specified but some were restricted. All of us had more cigarettes, coffee and tea than was allowed, which was nicely packed on the bottom of our kit bags, with the other stuff, like some extra clothing etc put on top of it. The unwritten rule was that we all put fifty cigarettes right on top of our open kit bag. These were meant for the searching soldier to put away at once for himself. The kit bag was then okayed and sealed right in front of us, with a name tag put on it. We were happy and the soldiers were happy too with their gift and reward for their inspection.

A very few guys, mostly non-smokers and greedy ones, didn't want to give anything away and did not display any cigarettes for the inspecting soldier. As they all knew this game too well, these men had to empty their whole kit bags and everything over the allowed limit was removed. All their crying and begging didn't help them because it was the law. All our advice to them beforehand was not followed and now they had their results. This trick, using cigarettes, was handed down from other POWs who went through the same inspection drill long before us when they went home. This was the custom at repatriation.

Around 11 am six army lorries stood there and we had to hand in our kit bags to one of the lorries and were told that we would see them again when we got to Germany, at the discharge camp. Naturally this made us worried because all our collected possessions were in there. We had to hope for the best to see them again.

We boarded the other lorries and, after a last wave goodbye to the friends and comrades we had to leave behind, we made our trip to the railway station at Daventry, from where the train would take us to Colchester, Camp 186.

When we arrived in Colchester we were put into tents to stay overnight. It was a very large camp and had many barracks and many tents too. As it was a transit camp we had no contact with the other POWs staying there. All the transports of Group 22 from other POW camps all over England and Scotland were collected there and bunched up to take the next step to the Port of Harwich on the coast of England. They served us supper that night and breakfast in the morning before we left for

our last train ride in England. A small escort of our soldiers from Camp 87, naturally without rifles, had taken the trip to Colchester with us.

On 20 March our railway trip continued to Harwich, which was not too far away from Colchester. Around 11 am our special train, with about three hundred men in total, arrived close to the pier at Harwich, where the ferry was taking on passengers, cars, and now all of us, on board and would then take us to Hook van Holland.

It was a pleasant day and the sea was quite calm and only the temperature made it chilly to stand on deck. It was good that we were wearing our army overcoats, also dyed in black, which kept us warm.

The ferry left and soon the open sea was all around us. Nobody was seasick because the ferry was not bouncing around in this quiet sea and it was a large ship. Many other people were standing all around us but no-one paid any special or unfriendly attention to us POWs. By 5 pm we saw the coast of Holland coming nearer, but it still took quite a while before we reached the landing dock.

We left the ferry and said goodbye to our soldier escort from Colchester. A special train was standing there on the pier and we embarked the coaches and before we entered they handed us some sandwiches and coffee. Sorry to say, these coaches were not as nice and comfortable as the English coaches. They had all wooden benches, like all third class coaches. It was a German train which was waiting for us to take us back into Germany.

Finally the train started moving. We had new English guards with us, who were stationed in Germany, and they came with this train to pick us up here. These soldiers were very talkative and friendly while sitting with us in some of the compartments, not in every one. Although it was dark outside by now we could still see quite well as the Dutch landscape went by with many scars of the War visible from our window.

ARRIVAL IN GERMANY

After midnight we arrived at Minden, near Osnabrueck, and we had to leave the train again. The German Red Cross gave us a cup of hot soup, some sandwiches and coffee, which we could take with us into our train compartment. We also received a printed postcard from the Red Cross where we just had to fill in the address of our family and the date '21 March 1948'. It said that I had arrived in Germany and was now on the way to Munsterlager for discharge.

Everywhere, when we looked through our train window, we could see the destruction which the War had left behind.

Early in the morning we got to Munsterlager, which was an old army training field near Munster which was already in existence in the Kaiser era before WWI. There were lots of barracks here and the train went right into the camp. It took a while before we all had our kit bags back, all unloaded from the baggage car. Our worries were over now because everyone had been scared that his luggage might get lost on the way.

They placed us into barracks with friends; we stayed together so we all could keep an eye on each other's belongings. Here at this camp there were at least two thousand men gathered, coming from not only England but also from France, Italy etc from US POW camps.

Also there was a bunch of men in poor physical condition; all were sick, some had water in their legs or in their whole body. They came from POW camps in Russia and they were put in quarantine and under medical observation for three weeks before they could go home into any of the four occupation zones. Naturally these men had no kit bags or anything to take home as we had; they had just their lives. Poor comrades!

On 23 March the British Army handed out our discharge papers and we had to go for a medical and mine and most of the others' papers were stamped 'fit for military service'. What a surprise – we had just finished our turn in the military and now they put these words onto our discharge papers?

Also we received our meagre discharge money. Our deducted money in English pounds which they had kept back from us each payday to be paid out on this occasion was now given to us. I had figured out that I would have about seventy pounds in the kitty outstanding, but they never showed us the figures on their papers and now our hard-earned money was paid to us in worthless German marks. What the British Government did to us was highway robbery, but what could we do? We were all very mad about this but they told us they could not pay us in English pounds and our money had been changed into German marks.

We received meals here at the army camp which were very poor in quality and in calories, but we came here to go home and not to eat.

HOME AT LAST

In the morning we stepped onto our train to take us to Hamburg, which was my destination. Other men had to transfer there, to go home in all directions with the railway ticket which we had all received. As we looked out of the window of our moving train we couldn't believe all the destruction along the way. The War had left its mark everywhere. At the main railroad station in Hamburg I got off with a bunch of other comrades. Of this nice huge station only the steel skeleton was left; it had

no windows left in the skylights. It looked gruesome. Now we said goodbye to each other and went each on our own way home.

Streetcar number 33, just like it always did, was going in the direction where I lived. As it was a Saturday the streetcars were all full of people, but I found a place in the front of the car, a standing place. We drove along the familiar streets but not too many houses were standing here any more. I know when I left in 1944 there was a lot of bombing damage but now it was much worse, because Hamburg received endless more bombings which had taken its toll all over our once so beautiful city.

As I had no way of notifying my parents when I would be coming home, I walked the familiar streets after I got off the streetcar without meeting a familiar face. The streets everywhere were in ruins, block after block. A few houses were standing here and there, or just some empty façade looking like a skeleton. When I arrived at our street there were children playing and people walking everywhere as I approached our apartment house.

I rang our doorbell from downstairs and walked the steps up to the second floor where our apartment was. My mother, father and brother were looking down and saw me coming. Somehow they were waiting, because my postcard from Minden had arrived. What a 'Wiedersehen' after four years. Mom was holding me tight and Father and my brother, everyone, had tears in their eyes when we greeted each other again. My other brother had married in 1947 and was living with his wife at her parents' place and would come round later, as usual, because he too was waiting for me to come back home any day now.

Now we, our whole family, were all together again. The War was finally over for us. Oh, what a feeling, to be home again.



HERTA



and

GUENTHER

On the occasion of their 57th Wedding Anniversary, 13 August 2012

Obituary from the Regina Leader-Post 13.08.2019

ROSENKRANZ, Otto August Guenther

December 23, 1927 - August 6, 2019

Otto August Guenther Rosenkranz, known to most as George, passed away peacefully in Regina, SK, with family at his side, on August 6, 2019, at the age of 91. Guenther was born on December 23, 1927 in Hamburg, Germany. He was predeceased by his parents Karl and Martha and his brother Erwin (Rita) in Hamburg, Germany, as well as in-laws Margaret and Leonard Pelzer in Canada.

Guenther is survived by his loving wife of 64 years, Herta, their children Heidi (Ralph) Colville, Rick (Joanne) and Erwin (Kathryn), as well as grandchildren Becki (Chad) Walcer, Heather Colville (Peter), Kelsey Rosenkranz (Lawren), Katie Rosenkranz, Riley Rosenkranz (Teagan), Dan Rosenkranz and Ben (Tara) Rosenkranz.

He is also survived by his brother Werner (Erika) Rosenkranz in Hamburg, Germany and in-laws Adolf and Paula Traweger of Regina and many nephews and nieces in Canada, Germany and Austria.

Guenther was a loving husband, family man and a hard worker. He led by example and would achieve anything that he put his mind to. He owned the Arlington Hotel in Rouleau, SK in the early 1960s, then went on to painting, establishing Western Painters and Decorators, which is still in business today and then a farmed for many years.

Guenther was also the family historian and a lover of all animals.

R.I.P. wonderful Husband, Father and Opa. We love you and will never forget you.

As was Guenther's wish, there will be no funeral. A private family service was held on August 12, 2019 at Riverside Memorial Park Cemetery in Regina.

The family thanks the many doctors, nurses and staff at the General Hospital for their love and care. Special thanks to the staff of Grace Hospice at the William Booth Home for their excellent care and thank you to all friends and family for their condolences and well wishes. In lieu of flowers, donations to the Salvation Army or Grace Hospice are encouraged.

[Following Guenther's death on 6.08.2019, his son, Erwin, wrote from Canada: 'His appreciation of the way he was treated while a POW [in Barby] stayed with him to the end'.]