

The country outside the perimeter we knew was lousy with Germans and Italians so in making a break one had to take a chance as we had no transport. It would mean footslogging.

Apart from the chaps mentioned above which also included Nat Elliot, who got through, two others, Bailie and Norton got through but it took them nearly two weeks. These two joined the Hampshire Regiment and fought in Italy where Norton was awarded the Victoria Cross and Bailie the M.C.

Col Page had his sedan car and with a few others made a break but they struck a mine later and after being free for two days were taken. He advised all our chaps what had happened and telling them that they were at liberty to make a break but it would mean footslogging as we had no transport.

I, after seeing that the chaps all knew what was happening and could do no more to help them, with Norman Harvey, Douglas the Sgt Major, Oelofse the Adjutant and one or two others set off in shorts and shirts. I regretted having left my overcoat with some of our chaps at Div Headquarters for it was later going to prove cold.

We walked about ten miles before we were picked up by German armour, that was cruising about looking for escapees. These Afrika Korps men were good clean fighters and these chaps treated us very well for the short time we were with them. However, we were shortly afterwards handed over to an Italian Unit much to our disgust. I believe there was an agreement that the Germans would hand all prisoners over to the Italians. There were about ten of us and the Italians later took us by truck to one of their P.O.W. assembly centres where there were about a hundred of us - a few officers but mostly other ranks and Indians. I noticed a couple of Ites, miserable looking men with the seat of their pants hanging round their knees, going from man to man demanding the surrender of their watches etc so I looked around and spotted a German N.C.O. and drew his attention to what was going on. Boy! did he go off the handle at these Ites and those German N.C.Os have terrific voices. The Italians immediately ceased their activities and were made to hand back the items they had demanded. I then told the German that the Italians refused to give us and the Indians water. He made them pull their water cart into our area and we got all the water we wanted. I had fortunately been lucky in picking up an old military overcoat and thankful to have it in spite of it being very short and covered with the poor chaps blood.

From here we were moved on to Derna where we were cooped up in a small building well wired. It was here that we had the experience of the trigger happy Italians for, during the night, one of the chaps got up to stretch himself, the sentry got the wind up and shot him and there was nothing we could do about it but kick up a shindig. This really got the Ites on the hop and any minute I expected another shot.

From there we were taken to another camp half way to Bengazi, Baci. The commandant there was a fairly reasonable chap and asked me as the senior officer if there were any items required by the chaps - toilet items paste, blades, etc. These and a few other items he managed to purchase from a local store. In talking to him I learned that his son was a P.O.W. in South Africa. He had feeling.

A couple of days later we were taken by truck to Bengazi from where we were to be taken to Italy. There was a small camp at Bengazi and here again the Ites tried to collect watches etc. but a German Officer - a reasonable Wehrmacht (regular soldier) not a Nazi spotted them and gave them hell.

After a few days, I with a few others were flown across the Med. to Bari where there was a very large P.O.W. camp where we were billeted in fairly decent buildings.

Here one felt hopeless and lost and wondering for how long we were to be herded behind barbed wire.