

We had a film show once a week but very poor films and anyway we could not follow the dialogue. The Italians loved Laurel and Hardy and of these two we saw quite a number. Here again we could not follow the dialogue for the sound track was in Italian. Can you imagine these two talking that language.

After some time the Italians decided to concentrate most of the South African, New Zealand, and Australian and other colonial Officers in one camp. We were told the day we were to move and I must say the old lags were very generous to us. We were loaded with clothing and a number of Red Cross Parcels to tide us over until the new Camp at Modena was established and getting regular supplies of parcels.

I was sorry to leave Pia Chenso, it was so peaceful and quiet and that wonderful view down to the River Po valley and the mountains in the far distance covered in eternal snow. The playground for those many skiers from all parts of the world. I believe it is a very fine sport but I have never had the funds to go to those grounds.

Well we set off on our three mile march to Pia Chenso station where we entrained and some time later arrived at Modena.

Here, as we marched through the large very well-barbed wired gate we were met by Colonel Page who was the senior Officer in the camp and therefor called the S.B.O. (Senior British Officer).

I was very pleased to meet him again as the last time I had seen him was when he saw me off at Bari when on my way to Rome. I remember him saying "Well Geoff, I wonder what they are going to do with you?" In fun I said "Perhaps shoot me. These chaps are so trigger happy".

The camp had been built as a Military Depot - inside very high walls, which now, in addition, had strong barbed wire fencing on top.

Inside the very large grounds were six very large barrack buildings, each containing two single rooms for senior officers and N.C.Os, four double rooms and several large dormitories. A hospital building, store rooms, kitchen with very fine stoves etc. also a large room used as dining room and recreation room. Just inside the main gate were the Italian Administration offices etc. and also another large barrack room which housed the Guards. These latter buildings were separated from our portion of the camp by a very strong barbed wire fence which ran from one wall to the other side. I hope the reader can follow all this.

Outside the wall were posted sentries at short intervals in what we called pigeon hocks from where, armed with rifle and machine gun, they could look down on us. Well, I can follow all the above but to you I suppose it is as clear as mud.

Well, we all settled in and I was fortunate in sharing a room with Page - single rooms were used as double otherwise we should have been short of accomodation.

The Italians held a roll call every morning on the large parade ground. This parade was taken by Colonel Page who duly received the Italian Officer and walked round with him as they counted the heads. It was bitterly cold with occasional heavy falls of snow. It must be remembered that apart from the chaps who had come from Pia Chenso, most of the men were still in shorts and Page looked amusing marching round with his lappy legs, as the troops called them, encased in a pair of long pants, I had given him, under his shorts. The Colonels for some reason did not go on parade but gathered in a group which was known as an udder of Colonels. Those a bit off colour were counted in their rooms and so it was quite easy to fake a roll call - and this we did occasionally to the annoyance of the lites - by chaps who had already been counted in their room would, as the lites went to the next room, slip out into another room and be counted, unbeknown to the lites, twice.