

One very good pastime was bridge. We played all sorts of competitions. One game my partner Rusty Rice of Beaumont and Rice cartage Agents played against another pair was 1000 rubbers. We did not finish. What made it very interesting was that we had two English International Bridge players and they taught us a lot. After my return I vowed that after three years of bridge I would never play again and it was only after 25 years that I have again taken up the game.

Well, the war dragged on and as the Allies got nearer Italy we looked forward to an early release. Instructions had been received by Colonel Shuttelworth - coded - from the war office and that all senior officers were to remain put, until the allies landed in Italy, so as to organise resistance movements, joining with other camps. We were to arm ourselves with enemy weapons at first - and then harry the enemy. We had for some time been organised into five regiments of which I was to command one. We learned many months later that the Allies knew that the Ites were going to make a separate peace and all had been organised for them to take over the Dromes near Rome and wait for the Allied landing on the Italian coast. The Germans knew where the landing was to take place, just south of Rome and were waiting for the invaders and the plan was a failure as the Germans had also taken over the dromes. The Italians, when they heard the news, entered the camp and fraternised. However, when Italy capitulated and we thought our P.O.W. days were over the Germans were quick in rushing in and taking over the camps. As senior officers we were obliged to obey instructions of our senior S.B.O. and the War Office. However, many of the chaps went over the wall and many got back to the Allied Lines. But one chap I could not understand was Colonel Ian White - a senior officer who had all the Escape Committee funds - who made a break - caught the last train out of Modena and was back in the Allied Lines in two days. I was asked by several groups to join them but had to turn down the offer. One group, Major Holdridge of the Kaff Rifles and Brits of the Police after a long time got through to Switzerland.

The Germans eventually took over and there were many attempts to get out. Those who had gone out were helped by the local Ites with clothing, guides etc and many got through to Switzerland. Others joined the resistance movement and two of our K.R. lads were shot by the Germans, one a local lad Bryant of a well-known family.

Those who had not got out of the camp tried all methods of hiding hoping not to be found and taken to Germany. Some hid in the ceilings but were advised that the Germans would use machine gun fire on all buildings. Some even tried the sewers but these were barricaded too well. I think that is enough of Italy and so will now tell of our transfer to Germany.

Three of the Italian officers, now dressed in mufti, had the cheek to come and have a look at us hoping, I suppose, that we would throw them some food.

After about three days we were divided into a number of parties, about ten, and the next day five groups were detailed, in one of which I was to be ready to march to the station to entrain for Germany. Each of us carried as many Red Cross parcels as possible; two was about the limit as they weighed ten pounds each (work that out in Kilos) besides our little bits of kit. Knowing that we should be or rather would be without reading matter for some time I picked up a book I had not read - "Gone with the Wind" which I shall mention later.

We were marched to the station a couple of miles escorted by a guard of real S.S. Nazi men. Fanatics. On arrival at the station we were held up for three hours waiting for our transport to arrive. On the station were any number of Italian Civilians who told us that the Allies had landed in Italy and that the Brenner pass, through which we would have to pass, was blocked.