

The countryside, with here and there small villages, was beautiful - with its stretches of woodland, open glades and apple tree lined roads. Here we used to enjoy our walks unhindered by guards for we had parole cards and all the Germans did was to send one interpreter out with us. Our parole they knew was our bond. However, I will mention more later.

On the top floor was a very large room which we used as a theater, and recreation room. Round the room were a number of maps drawn by our chaps at which we used to look keenly to follow the war for although names were shown we were not allowed to point our - knowing from our secret wireless the movements.

Our secret wireless was well hidden and only one man was allowed to listen in to Daventry each evening - Edward Ward a well known B.B.C. announcer and correspondent. He would then type out the news and come round to each room and gave us the latest gen. The Germans never entered our quarters at night but still we had chaps, night and day watching their movements and those of their alsatians - a dog I now hate. We had all the usual committees as well as the tin bashers, artists, tailors etc,

As our first floor was well above the ground it was a very long time before any plan of escape could be made. However, on the ground floor were our showers and here too was stored, from the ground right up to the ceiling, coal to last for months. It was while showering that our engineers made measurements and formulated a plan. The position of the coal heap was worked out in relation to our rooms and it was found that just outside my room, in the passage, were steps which apparently lead to the coal room below. It became necessary to drive a shaft through the top step of solid concrete. It was slow work and took nearly three months. Having got through this a tunnel was to be made through the coal and this was shored with some of our bed boards. Having got through the coal, tunneling started.

Actually it only took just under two months to get through the concrete. As soon as a worker entered the tunnel the tile or flag had to be placed over the hole and dust thrown over it. It was hard work and to get rid of the sand dug out it was carried up to the top floor and thrown down the lift shaft where it was lost to sight. The work went on for some time but the Germans had a listening device and knew that the work was being done but did not know where the tunnel started. However, as always happens, the chaps got a bit careless. One day after the worker had entered the tunnel the slab was placed over the hole but care was not taken to cover it with a bit of dust. On this day their security nosing around as usual looking for the tunnel spotted the clean tile which showed up against all the other discoloured ones. The Germans immediately became suspicious and tapped the flag and got the hollow sound. The flag was lifted and there was the entrance to the tunnel. They immediately shouted and told whoever was down there to come out. The Commandant was sent for and General Fortune too and when Oscar Borchers, a farmer from Cradock, eventually came up he was asked by the Commandant where his assistants were and on being told he was on his own, the Commandant just shook his head and sent him to join us in the grounds. General Fortune told the German that that was the first he had seen of the tunnel.

Yes, the real German soldier - the Wermacht - were real soldiers and not the S.S. Nazi type and looked upon it as your duty to try and escape. They filled in the tunnel and unlike the Italians did not charge us for doing so. The Nazis and S.S. of course were fanatics and looked upon themselves as the salt of the earth.

While I think of it, the Wermacht, as I have mentioned, were real soldiers, the type we met in the desert, too. In the small cemetery which we used to pass on some of our walks there was a very well kept grave and on the cross "To six unknown British airmen".