

ESCAPE

of

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ESCAPED FROM GERMAN PARTY AT TOST, ATTACHED TO STALAG VIII B (LANSBORG).

In May, 1942, I exchanged identities with a New Zealand Army private at Stalag VIII B, (Lansdorf), in order to get on working parties detached from the main camp as Air Force personnel were not allowed to become members of such working parties. It was generally recognised that it was easier to make an escape from a working party than from the main camp.

On 10th November, 1942, I was sent to work in a saw-mill at Tost. I was accompanied by Sergeant Duncan, J., Gordon Highlanders, and we planned to escape from the working party together. On our arrival we were warned by a German sergeant that he knew Sergeant Duncan, myself and five others were planning to escape and if we attempted to do so, we would be shot. As a result of this we were specially watched.

About 10th January, 1943, there was some trouble with the saw-mill overseer and most of the prisoners of war went on strike, with the result that fourteen were sent back to Lansdorf, and were replaced by fourteen others. Sergeant Duncan was put in charge of the party, and I got myself a job as a lorry driver. I left the mill daily delivering lumber to places in the vicinity; this enabled me to get a good idea of the geography of the district and to make contact with a few Poles. I managed the latter by putting dirt in the carburettor and each time the engine stalled, which was quite frequently, I told the guard that I would get help from Polish civilians to start the lorry again. About this time I was warned again not to attempt an escape.

As a result of my numerous breakdowns with the lorry I managed to get and conceal two large maps of Europe and four quarter-inch maps of the Tost district. We also accumulated a good supply of biscuits, chocolate, etc., a hacksaw blade, and some spare clothing which we stole from the camp store.

DEPARTED WITH IRONS UNTIL THE ARRIVAL OF RUSSIAN TROOPS.

On 12th May, 1943, with our escape kit made up into two bundles, Sergeant Duncan and I sawed the bars off the window of our room and got away. We travelled by night, walking along the highway, and slept by day. We went to Langendorf, Lublitz, Herby, and from there to Gostochow. On arrival there we made contact with a man whose name had been given to us by a Polish citizen before we left Stalag VIII B. This man was a member of the Polish Underground Army and we remained with the partisans until the arrival of Russian troops in January, 1945. We arrived at Moscow at the beginning of March and were repatriated to England.