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**The New Zealand prisoner of war
pamphlet: official pamphlet of the
Prisoners of War enquiry office of the Joint
Council of the Order of St. John and the
New Zealand Red Cross Society**

No.1

Acquarone Salonica (printer)

TĀMAKI PAENGA HIRA AUCKLAND WAR MEMORIAL MUSEUM

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**The Joint Council of the Order of St. John and The New Zealand
Red Cross Society**

SICK AND WOUNDED FUND

The Prisoners of War Enquiry Office intends to issue at short intervals a pamphlet similar to this. All the official information supplied is taken from the monthly bulletin issued by the International Committee of the Red Cross, Geneva.

ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE.

The essential functions of the International Committee are:—

- TO watch over the fundamental Red Cross principles and to accord recognition to newly formed Societies;
- TO promote the adhesion of all civilised States to the Geneva Convention;
- TO watch over the observance of the obligatory provisions of this instrument of international public law denouncing breaches of the Convention;
- TO create international agencies in war time for the relief of war sufferers, especially prisoners-of-war, providing information and means of communication between prisoners and their families, visiting prisoners' camps, etc.

Through the instrumentality of the International Red Cross the Prisoners-of-War Convention was brought into force on July 27th, 1929.

Next-of-kin are invited to send **copies** of letters to any of the below mentioned offices. It is intended to publish as many as possible, but naturally we cannot guarantee to publish all those that are received. Please do not send any letters posted from Prisoner of War Camps, dated **earlier than October.**

Also make sure that the date of the letter is given.

HEADQUARTERS AND WELLINGTON:

63 Dixon Street, Wellington.
P.O. Box 139, Te Aro Wellington.
Telegraphic Address: "JOINTCIL."

AUCKLAND PROVINCE:

Bank of New Zealand Chambers,
Swanson Street, Auckland.
P.O. Box 247, Auckland.

CANTERBURY & WESTLAND PROVINCES: OTAGO AND SOUTHLAND PROVINCES:

105A Cashel Street, Christchurch.
P.O. Box 1098, Christchurch.

2nd Floor, Queen's Buildings, Princes St., Dunedin
P.O. Box 456, Dunedin.

The work of the Central Agency of Prisoners of War is daily increasing as the war extends, the last figures we have show an employment of 3,650 workers, of whom 2,450 work in Geneva and 1,200 in auxiliary sections of the Central Agency which have been set up in 22 towns in Switzerland. Of these workers only 692 receive any remuneration, and that on a very modest scale.

It is difficult to envisage the enormous quantity of mail received and despatched daily, and the work required on the intricate filing systems.

The service of photocopy is an interesting branch.

In September, 1939, on the arrival of the first official lists of prisoners, the photocopy service undertook to make photographic impressions and the manifold reproductions of these original lists, in order to facilitate their transmission to the responsible authorities.

This service assures a photographic copy of the official German, English and Italian lists, as well as radio-grammes advising captures, the reproduction of the advice of deaths, etc.

The number of photographic proofs amounts to, on an average, 2,262 per day.

The photocopy laboratory installed at the Palais de Conseil General, itself, reproduces a daily total of 400 to 450 proofs. The other photocopies are prepared in five photographic workshops. The daily turnover of these workshops is from 200 to 1,000.

Actual statistics have only been kept since October, 1940, but it is estimated that, since the beginning of the war, approximately 800,000 photocopies have been delivered to the Central Agency of Prisoners of War.

A brief summary may prove interesting of the method by which clothing and food parcels are sent to Prisoners of War. They reach Lisbon from overseas and there are loaded into boats which have been chartered by the Red Cross. The boats have the emblem of the Red Cross painted on their sides and decks. A Delegate of the Red Cross travels on board who is responsible for the safe delivery of the goods.

These boats take the parcels either to Marseilles or Genoa where the goods are unloaded into wagons which go to the free port of Geneva. Most of the wagons are sent off at once into Germany after certain formalities have been carried out, others have to be unloaded and the goods reconditioned before sending further. If there are not sufficient British prisoners in a camp to warrant the despatch of a full van, parcels are sent by post to the homme de confiance, to be distributed by him to the most necessitous cases.

From the 1st February to the 15th May, 1941, the Service des Secours has been responsible for the reception at Geneva, via Lisbon-Marseilles, and the despatch from Geneva to the camps in Germany and Italy of the following quantities of parcels provided by the British, Canadian and American Red Cross for British Prisoners of War.

1. BRITISH RED CROSS.

	Food	Tonics	Tobacco	Total
Parcels received	499,170	1,001	11,593	511,764
Bundles of clothing (uniforms, woollen goods and under-clothing) received,	4,138.			
Cases of footwear and games received,	550.			

2. CANADIAN and AMERICAN RED CROSS.

	Canadian Red Cross	American Red Cross (U.S.A.) (For British Prisoners of War)
Received and despatched		
Food		Food
45,000		1,000

Parcels addressed by name and posted, either to prisoners, or to the homme de confiance at stated camps, and forwarded under our care are not included in these figures.

ASSISTANCE FOR STUDY.

This service of intellectual aid to prisoners is now a special department set up at Geneva. The problem of supplying prisoners with the necessary reading matter has become much more complicated than in the last war. The exigencies of military censorship and economic restrictions of all kinds have increased to such a point that the problem of supplying literature to prisoners demands a complicated organisation.

The demands for scientific works are dealt with by the International Bureau of Education and by the Student Aid Society. The Y.M.C.A. has a service specially organised for sending books. It employs 60 people and has undertaken to establish circulating libraries. Religious literature is supplied by a special organisation, Bibles, hymn books, etc., while the Catholic Mission sends books of a more Catholic trend.

The International Committee have a plan to establish a central catalogue of authorised books—which will simplify the censorship considerably—and the making up of packages of standard works. They plan to have catalogues of these packages which will be put at the disposal of all camps.

Many grateful letters are received, the following are a few extracts:

"... the lack of reading matter being the greatest deprivation of the prisoners it is with gratitude that the officer prisoners receive books. . . . To give you some indication of the scope of the books required I will tell you that we have here nearly 200 doctors, engineers, professional men and priests for whom serious literature would be welcome. We would also like light literature, novels and magazines. . . ."

"... The camp authorities have handed over to us the books and pamphlets out of your package of July 4th. It is impossible to tell you how welcome your parcel has been."

The prison camps in Germany and Italy are visited regularly by Delegates from the International Committee of the Red Cross. They have free access to the camps, have the opportunity of talk with the prisoners and with the homme de confiance, who is one of the prisoners, and is elected by the prisoners as a go-between themselves and the German authorities of the camp.

The present Delegates visiting the German prison camps are Dr. Exchaquet and Dr. Descoudres.

The following are extracts from their reports of visits to various camps in Germany.

STALAG VIII B.

The general aspect of the camp has not altered, except for new barracks, light grey in colour, well built in cemented brick. The new hospital, disinfection appliances and showers form part of this.

The food is good and sufficient.

The library is well stocked.

The Delegates visited the work squads, canalisation of rivers and paper factories, and also four gangs who work in the coal mines. The Delegates went down into one of the coal mines in which British prisoners work. All prisoners who work in the mines do so voluntarily.

Donor: Mr Ian Naudrey, 2004

OFLAG VII C.

This camp is reserved entirely for British Prisoners of War Officers. It is situated right in the middle of a little town in Southern Germany, in an old chateau, which is more like a barracks than a manor house.

The rooms, scattered in various buildings, all of three storeys, are of very different sizes and shapes. For example, one apartment is occupied by nine prisoners and in another there are 120. No space is wasted and each dormitory is well filled, the centre of the room is kept for tables, and pegs for clothes.

The officers are lodged according to rank; all officers of the same rank living together.

The lighting is electricity and the rooms are warmed by little stoves in the corner of each room. The food, though monotonous, leaves no room for complaint. It is improved by gifts sent by the British Red Cross. The cooks are English and are housed comfortably beside the kitchen.

The canteen is well stocked; one can still buy socks, razors, watches, etc. Daily 600 litres of beer is drunk there.

The prisoners have the use of large spaces with washing accommodation. Once a week they can have a hot bath.

The prisoners cannot go out of the camp, they can walk in five courtyards, three of which are interior and two are out of doors.

They have the use of a small study and reading room and a wireless set. There is also a little theatre where they put on two performances a week.

OFLAG VII D.

Installed in an old chateau, on a hill overlooking a town, this Oflag, at the time of the Delegate's visit, consisted of British Officers among whom were Doctors and Chaplains. The quarters consisted of dormitories arranged for groups of 15 to 90 prisoners. Please note that the dormitory with 90 beds was only temporary. The men's clothing was satisfactory, they were receiving a good diet and were living under hygienic conditions. The hospital was well equipped. Religious services were held regularly. The prisoners, who have varied intellectual distractions have asked to be allowed to organise cinematograph shows. Mail does not arrive very regularly.

This Oflag made a favourable impression on the Delegates. Relations being good between the authorities and the prisoners, the latter do not formulate any complaints but have expressed several wishes by the medium of the *homme de confiance*, which have been brought to the notice of the authorities.

STALAG XXI A.

This camp is made up of several buildings scattered in a town, an old factory, and an institute. The food is good and sufficient, the clothing satisfactory enough.

STALAGLUFT.

The Stalagluft is formed by an Oflag and a Stalag situated one beside the other. It is not far from the Baltic Sea.

Oflag is composed of wooden hutments of modest appearance, lit by electricity and heated by a small stove

in the centre of each room. In each barracks there are also stoves where the prisoners prepare the food bought at the canteen.

The canteen is run by the prisoners who buy fresh vegetables, potatoes, tomatoes, cabbages, etc., in bulk. Beer is plentiful and the prisoners have the right to a bottle of wine per week.

Hygiene leaves nothing to be desired.

A German dentist calls at the camp twice a week.

The prisoners have the use of a piano and several accordians; loud speakers are to be installed.

Stalag is also composed of wooden hutments. They are of an old type, which differ from those usually constructed in the prison camps, in that they are not divided into two big rooms, each accommodating 150 men. Each hutment is made up of many rooms able to take four to six men.

The hospital, which serves both camps, is well equipped with instruments and has all the necessary medicines.

There are 30 work detachments in connection with Stalagluft. The men are taken to work in motor lorries and return the same evening. They work at forestry, in the fish industry, sugar mills, flour mills or on the unloading of coal.

The men were well dressed and shod with German boots in good condition.

Religious services are held each week.

The men work eight to nine hours a day. Sunday being a day of rest.

DULAGLUFT.

Dulagluft is situated on the outskirts of a forest, near one of the big towns of Southern Germany. It consists of wooden hutments, large and comfortable and has a garden and a big playing field. *The prisoners are moved on to Stalagluft as necessity arises, some, however, stay a long time in the camp. The arrivals are very variable. The aviator prisoners who are wounded are cared for in the hospital nearest to where they crash. When they are cured they are evacuated to Dulagluft, which only takes men in perfect health.*

The barracks are well aired, warmed and supplied with hot and cold running water. The rooms have proper beds, a table and chairs. From all points of view the aviator prisoners are as well treated as it is possible for them to be. They have good rooms, sitting room with easy chairs, room for games with ping pong, a piano, chess, cards, radio.

PRISON CAMP IN ITALY.

SULMONA.

Sulmona is a small town in the Abruzzi, about 100 miles due east of Rome. It is a healthy spot and has a bracing climate. The Camp Commandant is reported to be a humane man and to appreciate the needs of prisoners of war. The men live in hutments which were built in the 1914-1918 war for Austrian prisoners. The hutments are heated by stoves. There is a small hospital in the camp.

The British parachutists who made the raid on Southern Italy are detained there. There seems to be delay in the receipt of mail which was being investigated.

GERMAN UTILISATION OF THE WORK OF PRISONERS OF WAR.

We think it will interest our readers if we give a translation here of an article which appeared in a German paper in the middle of last year. It gives fresh information about the work of prisoners in Germany.

Prisoners of War play a very important part in the German economic system. Offsetting the many difficulties involved in the feeding and treatment of Prisoners of War for their utilisation, the fact emerges that they can be very easily moved about. They are most generally used in agriculture; they are, however, also used during winter as much as possible as artisans and in industry.

At the beginning of 1940 practically all the Prisoners of War were engaged in agriculture and in the forestry service. Up to the middle of 1940 two-thirds were thus occupied; at the beginning more than the half, in spring, when work begins in the fields, two-thirds will again be drafted into agriculture. The number of prisoners actually working in Germany would be about a million and a half, out of which agriculture absorbs, roughly, a million. A year ago there were only 650,000. Of the 350,000 new prisoners, about half are Serbs and half French, who have been transferred from French prison camps into Germany. According to a German paper, French liberated for economic, legal or humanitarian reasons are always replaced by prisoners transferred from France into the German camps.

With a view to exploiting the work of prisoners as rationally as possible a card index of prisoners, indicating the professional knowledge of each, has been set up with great care. The declarations for this were particularly difficult to achieve because of the lack of interpreters. Working from this record the prisoners can be drafted into the activity where they will give the best results. Generally, agriculture always has preference. Specialised workmen are only taken away when they can conveniently be replaced. In order to utilise the work of the prisoners to the best advantage they are placed simultaneously at the disposal of several enterprises. Artisanal undertakings are even combined that they may be able to use the prisoners in common workshops. For the special needs of agriculture flying columns have been set up and the men are sent wherever particularly pressing work needs to be done.

In this regard, one should call to mind that, according to the League of Nations, Prisoners of War are not employed in armament works.

Following up this information we give the following additional facts which were published later.

In the card index system special note has been taken of workmen trained in building construction, metal work, chemistry, agriculture, forestry work, and workers in pits and quarries, especially those belonging to the most important professional groups where there is lack of trained personnel. In the winter of 1940-1941 most of these were employed in the trades they had learnt.

The Prisoners of War in the South-east work, almost without exception in agriculture.
Mission to Rome.

Two Delegates from the International Committees were in Rome about the middle of the year in order to investigate with the Italian Red Cross various questions, among them many problems arising from the development of military operations in Africa and in the Mediterranean. These conversations have contributed to making the work done between the Italian Red Cross and Geneva more speedy and efficacious.

The Italian authorities have fixed the rate of Prisoners of War's pay on the following basis:

	per month
General of the Army, or designate	Lira 3,500
General of Army Corps	" 3,000
General of Division	" 2,600
General of Brigade	" 2,000
Colonel	" 1,600
Lieut. Colonel	" 1,400
Major	" 1,300
Captain	" 1,100
Lieutenant	" 950
2nd Lieutenant	" 750

The rate of exchange at the outbreak of war was 60 lira to the New Zealand pound.

Concerning medical personnel and chaplains the Italian Government has agreed with the British Government, that these, in application of the right given to belligerents by Article 12 of the Geneva Convention, will be kept by the State which has captured these prisoners, in order that they may be employed in assisting their compatriot prisoners.

Medical Corps.

The International Committee has been officially informed that members of the Medical Corps employed in the prison camps and quarantine stations, will, in future, receive a supplementary food ration.

Merchant Marine.

About the middle of the year Geneva was informed that monthly payments would be made to sailor prisoners of the Merchant Marine, that officers and quartermasters would receive £2, and that members of the crew would be paid according to race, white men, £1 and men of colour 10/- per month.

Postal Connections.

An arrangement is under discussion between the British Government and the Reich, by which all correspondence of British Prisoners of War and British interned civilians in Germany, and the German Prisoners of War and interned civilians in the British Empire, will henceforth be carried by Air Mail from Lisbon to Berlin, and vice-versa.

This has been officially confirmed and all mail for Prisoners of War in Germany is sent free, by Air Mail, between Portugal and Germany.

Some months ago the International Committee was officially informed that it was not possible to allow Prisoners of War to send telegrams to their families. Only in exceptional cases can family telegrams be sent, and their urgent nature must be vouched for by the Camp Commandant.

Religious Services.

In the middle of last year an ordinance was issued by the German authorities laying down the following general rules governing ecclesiastical prisoners.

Religious services in prison camps may only be celebrated by ecclesiastical prisoners who have declined the right they have of being repatriated. (Articles 9 and 12, Geneva Convention.)

In each camp the direction of religious services is entrusted to a single chaplain, even if there are several in the camp.

Religious services shall be celebrated in an enclosed space, which shall be kept for this use, or in the open air.

In the work detachments religious services are only organised at the express desire of the prisoners. Chaplains who are not employed in the principal camps are detailed for this service. They are not compelled to work.

Wine for Mass and Holy Communion, wafers, candles, etc., shall be supplied by the camp authorities. Sermons must first be submitted to censorship.

Newspaper Edited at a Camp in Germany.

A second edition has been received of "Lumignon" (it means candle end or wick) which is published bi-monthly at Stalag VII A.

Its set out and its choice of subject matter are of excellent standard. The editorial is on the subject of the "Commandos." There is a personal column, a story, a theatre page, sport, a competition and crosswords.

It advertises a mutual aid service. The following is taken from the paper:

"A service for helping one another functions in the camp. It is not a question of *selling*, nor even of exchanging articles, but of *giving* in all brotherliness to comrades who do not have the happiness to receive parcels and who lack something; shirt, pullover, footwear, tobacco, food and articles of all sorts. Given by the fortunate ones, many articles have already made others happy.

Those who wish to benefit their comrades by goods of which they have a surplus are asked to bring them to hutment 28B on Wednesday from 8 to 11 o'clock. Distribution to comrades who need them will take place the same day between 11 and 4 o'clock."

We are given to understand that the Camp Commandant considers this publication valuable for the effect it has on the morale of the prisoners and for the contact it maintains between the camp and the work detachments.

MEDICAL DEPOT OF THE RED CROSS INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE.

The International Committee proposes to equip a Medical Depot at the free port of Geneva to enable them to despatch medicines, instruments, surgical dressings, etc., without delay wherever these commodities are lacking.

They have obtained a similar dispensation for merchandise and it will obviate the delay of having to ask for exportation permits.

The national organisations of the Red Cross, the Industrial Unions and the big commercial firms would be asked to equip the Medical Depot with the necessary supplies, and the reserves thus accumulated would be used to equip countries suffering from lack of such supplies.

Actually, already, in many places important medications are lacking, and this shortage will, no doubt, in crease (call to mind the influenza epidemic of 1918).

STALAG VIII B.

From Gnr. JAMES KEITH BARCLAY.

Sept. 14th, 1941—Writing of the Blitz: "We had a terrible time of it . . . In a way I am glad to be out of it. Have just returned from Church. A prisoners' orchestra supplied really good music. The camp is well run and quite comfortable, food good. Red Cross supply a useful parcel of food once a week, details later. The German guards are good chaps and give us a fair go. May go out on a work party next week."

Oct. 5th—"Feeling much fitter after two weeks' work. We get little news but every week we receive a prison camp paper issued by the Germans which gives us an idea how things are going. It does not look as though I will be away from this country for some time. Have just had an hour's nap after Sunday dinner and am having a cup of cocoa for afternoon tea while writing this letter."

The weather has been wonderful, slight frost in the morning with beautiful days."

STALAG VIII B.

From R. R. SPRAGUE.

A letter was received by his mother, Mrs. M. Sprague, 47, Ryehill Street, Carlton Hill, Caversham, Dunedin, say-

ing that he had received Red Cross parcels regularly. He also received from his mother an Air Mail letter written 29/10/41.

STALAG VIII B.

I am writing to let you know I have received word from my son, Herbert George, who is a Prisoner of War at Stalag VIII B, that he is receiving parcels every week from your Society and is well pleased with same and wishes me to convey his thanks to you.

I also wish to thank the Society for their kindness to my boy, also for the prompt and courteous way you have answered any enquiry I have made to you. I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

I have not yet heard from my other son who is P.O.W. but am sure he appreciates all that is done for him.

My third son is still well and fit in Libya and is at present resting after the big campaign, but is so far safe and well.—Yours faithfully, (signed) ELSIE WILLIAMS, 13 Preston Road, Christchurch.

STALAG VIII B., dated 1st September, 1941.

From KEN ROIGARD.

Dear Mother—At last we are able to write our first letter home, but even in this I can't write all that I would wish to owing to the lack of space. The treatment here is excellent and our sleeping quarters dry and warm. Each week we receive one Red Cross Parcel and 50 cigarettes per man, so one hasn't anything to growl about. When sending parcels please don't forget my favourite chocolates, also plenty of warm clothes. Give my love to all the family and tell them all to write. We are allowed to write one post-card one week and one letter card the next, these of course will be to you and the news, if any, can be passed on. The weather here is much colder than what we have been used to and they say the snow in winter comes up to the windows so now you can judge better the clothes needed. Keep your chin up little lady.—Love (signed) KEN.

STALAG VIII B.

From Dvr. GEORGE PERCIVAL BRAGG.

Dear Mother and Family—I am very pleased to be able to write to you again, and to say that I am in good health and being well looked after; the Red Cross issue one parcel of foodstuffs per man per week, so that helps a lot. However, at the moment I hardly realize I am a prisoner, as we are in good stone barracks and have bunks, blankets, etc., and plenty of warm drinks during the day also food. Well I am very glad to say you can all write to me as often as you like by Air Mail. However, we will have a very cold winter here with 6 feet of snow, so woollen underwear, pullovers, etc., would be helpful. You can send chocolate and clothing but no cake or foodstuffs. One 10 lb. parcel every three months. Well I conclude with love.

Sept. 9th, 1941.—I am pleased to be able to write to you all again saying that I am in the best of health and hope you are all the same. We are being well fed and clothed, and the Red Cross look after our interests, so don't worry as we are not ill-treated. I send my love.

STALAG VIII B.

From SGT. R. L. PARK.

September 14th, 1941.—Well another week has passed and still the same. My only address now Sgt. R. L. Park, 22037, British Prisoner of War, Stalag VIII B, Germany. The weather is now very cold. I am quite well. If you send me any parcels see the Red Cross first. Tell all the friends I can only write one letter that is to my Next of

Kin. I wish that I was back home. We get one Red Cross parcel of food every week and they are very good. Well now I will say good luck and lots of love.

STALAG VIII B.

From DVR. R. S. AGNEW,

28th Sept., 1941.—To-day I am feeling in great fettle and have improved in health one hundred per cent. since I came to this camp. The weather over the last week has been beautiful also; cold, slightly hazy mornings with a lovely sunny day to follow. When I woke up the other morning and heard an early train whistling half a mile away I thought I was back home again. When we were coming here I spent the time looking at the country and believe me we passed through some of the most beautiful places I have ever seen. The houses in their settings of trees and green paddocks were just what you see in pictures. A lot of the crops looked strange to me but I saw them leading in at one place with the frame on the dray and with three horses just as we used to do so often.

STALAG VIII B.

From L/Cpl. WALTER BERRY,

12th Sept., 1941.—Only a card to let you know I am quite well and in good health. I am a Prisoner of War in a camp in Germany. Receive one Red Cross parcel a week. Was wounded in right foot. Lost two toes. Foot O.K. Weather cold like New Zealand winter time.

14th Sept., 1941.—The weather here is very cold and I guess it won't be long before we have snow. However have some warm clothes so guess I will be O.K. You can send one parcel of clothing and chocolate every three months. I have some good friends here and we share our Red Cross parcels between us. Meals quite fair. My toes are nearly O.K. again so there is no need to worry as I am O.K. Enjoyed my birthday in Germany. The country itself is very similar to most of our own country in New Zealand and the men I have met have treated us very decently. Climate is much different from Greece and we are getting used to the cold. May go out to work as soon as I am fit as it will be much better than doing nothing. Think of the good times to come when I come back . . . and chins up . . .

STALAG VIII B.

From Cpl. M. B. SHAW, dated 13/9/41.

Dear Mum and Dad—Here we are again with a few lines to let you know that everything is O.K. with me. Conditions here are very good, we have clean and comfortable barrack rooms, bunks to sleep in with a wood wool mattress and ample water and good washing facilities. We receive a Red Cross parcel every week and with this on top of our rations we live pretty well. The Red Cross also give us a cigarette issue of 50 a week, very acceptable I assure you. I want you to send 25 out of my allotment to the Red Cross as a mark of appreciation for what they are doing for Prisoners of War.

STALAG VIII B.

From Driver HOUSTON,

12th Oct., 1941.—Well you can stop all your worrying about me now. We have shifted to a permanent camp and it's heaven compared to what we've been through. Good food, a Red Cross Parcel every week, 50 State Express cigarettes a week, new battle dress, O.C. boots, 2 shirts, bunks, mattress and blanket. We get an issue of margarine, jam, meat paste, 1/5th loaf bread and 5-6 boiled spuds each day. They have a jazz band, brass band, string band, church, picture theatre and a concert every night here. You can send 1 clothing parcel in 3 months. The Red Cross, Geneva, will notify you about that. Honestly it's as good a life as the Army. You can get all the medical and dental treatment you want. It snowed here to-day but the barracks are quite warm.

STALAG VIII B.

From Corporal B. H. LANG, dated 21st Sept., 1941.

Dear Mum and Dad—I'm at a loss as what to say as there is not much happens here to write about. Don't send the balaclava, scarf, gloves, as they will be issued next month. We have been issued with new battle dress, woollen singlet, underpants and sox, also new boots and a great-coat; so we are fairly well clothed.

STALAG XVIII A.

A letter has been received from Pte. George Taylor, from Stalag XVIII A, written 16th August, 1941, by his wife, Mrs. N. Taylor, 44 Normanby Street, St. Kilda, Dunedin. "We have had a pretty hard time, but now we are settled in this camp and I would not have believed it about the food; we get plenty to eat and the Red Cross has got in touch with us and we have received a food parcel and cigarettes."

STALAG XVIII D.

From NEVILLE WILLIAM ALLEN:

"Here goes. I have just had dinner of green peas, spuds and stewed veal which came in one of our Red Cross parcels, and I am feeling O.K. A batch of us have settled down in a village and are doing any sort of jobs which require doing, so are keeping fit."

STALAG 306 XVIII D.

From J. B. F. WHITEHORN, dated 28/9/41.

There are 14 of us here and we all live in a house by ourselves, with 2 guards. During the day we go out to different farms and work and come back at night. I work for a very nice old lady, whose husband died two years ago. We get on famously, especially as I have picked up quite a bit of German. She feeds me very well, plenty of milk, vegetables, bread and things and although I work 12 to 14 hours a day it is doing me a lot of good. The Red Cross have been sending some great parcels and on Sundays we cook some great concoctions of tinned stuff, fritters, etc. We are really very lucky to be here and we have much more freedom than I imagined we would have.

STALAG VIII B.

From Cpl. HERBERT K. MAY, dated 3/10/41.

Dear Mother—From now on I should be able to write you each week now that we have been registered. We are now in Germany and find it very cold after the hot climates, however we have been issued with some warm clothes so are feeling better. Here we get a Red Cross food parcel each week which helps a lot. Have caught up with a lot of my mates here and have seen quite a lot of countries in my travels. You will have to give the folks the news as we can only write to our next of kin, etc. I hope that this finds you all in the best of health as it leaves me here. Am expecting to go out to work any time now. Please give my love to all and I hope that you're having decent weather. Cheerio, love—BERT.

STALAG VIII B.

From E. W. LEEDER, dated 9/9/41.

We are in a lovely camp here, really a model one, everything is clean and comfortable and we are well fed. We get a Red Cross parcel once a week and 50 cigarettes. The parcels contain tinned fruit, meat, cocoa, ovaltine, tea, sugar, chocolate, cheese and margarine, about 19 things in each usually. We can get clothing and shoes from home now and again, but it would be best to get in touch with the local Red Cross.

14th Sept., 1941.—I have no complaints to offer. I have volunteered to go out working in N.C.O. party as I have been a bombardier since the 26th of last May. I don't know when we go, but I hope it is a good job. The boys are all cooking, heating up food. We get our Red

Cross parcel to-day. I had mine on Thursday. I have just eaten a chocolate paste that I made with sugar, cocoa and milk powder. I made half a cup full. We live quite well here; also get plenty of ovaline, marmite in the parcels. We have had quite a bit of rain lately and the ground is very wet and muddy. I will be going to another concert to-morrow night if I am lucky. There are 100 going out of the barrack room. The concerts are very good, too. I believe one of the chaps must be a professional entertainer.

DULAG, F.P., VII B.

From Leslie William Houston. Dated 21/9/41.

A letter at last. I am sure missing yours. I am quite well and still happy, although it would be much nicer to be free. The food is quite good and every Tuesday and Friday we get tomatoes and grapes from the Red Cross. Sometimes bread and cigarettes. Each day we get quarter loaf of bread besides our stew. I am working in a car garage in town. The Germans there treat us very well and we don't do much work. It is just like working at home.

OFLAG VI B.

From 2nd Lt. WILLIAM HALES REID. Dated Sept., 1941.

Dear Mum,—Great kicks to-day. Received your letters dated 29/5/41 and 11/6/41; very pleased to get them. If you are not, send letters Pan American Airways, get here much quicker. My weight now 14st., so quite O.K.

STALAG XVIII A.

From Pte. BARWELL.

Aug. 17th, 1941.—I am still fit and doing well. I received a parcel from the Red Cross. It contained 4 tin cocoa, tin milk powder, tin marmalade, tin N.Z. honey, tin salmon, tin pilchards, tin sardines, tin meat, tin salmon and shrimp paste, tin fruit salad, tin peas, tin margarine, pkt. cheese, 1 pkt. dates, 1lb. chocolate, pkt. biscuits and a cake of soap. Rather wonderful. We expect to get one every week or ten days. I will be glad to be back in N.Z. again. There is no country like it. One thing I miss is fruit cake. We get plenty of potatoes here. They are much appreciated after being three months without them. We also get vegetables, fish and some meat. Sourcrout is not bad. When we received our first parcel we were like kids opening a Christmas stocking. The weather is much better now—quite hot. I am learning the German language. A German kindly offered to teach anyone who was interested. I have seen a good part of the world.

Aug. 22nd, 1941.—I am quite fit. Am well fed and decently treated. The Red Cross have a few privileges. The scenery is beautiful. Some of the scenes very much like N.Z. One piece exactly like that at Monawai bridge. The forest is similar to our silver beech. There are quite a number of fine homes and beautiful gardens. It has been cold here for the last few days. There was some snow on the hills, but it has gone now. As I am a member of the Red Cross I expect to be repatriated in a few months. I am very glad to be at a permanent camp. I have made a large number of friends. It is the middle of August and the days are like those of May in New Zealand. I saw a plant of Lotus Major and felt quite homesick.

Sept. 21st, 1941.—I am still keeping well and hope you are also. The weather is very good but will get colder soon. Some of our chaps have had letters from New Zealand. We have a library now. We were issued with a new British battledress, great coat and pair of boots through the Red Cross. We have talks, definition tests, general knowledge tests and spelling bees in the evenings during the week and a very good concert every Saturday night. Last week the Doctors challenged us and

we beat them. One night the Medical Corps was challenged by the others to a general knowledge test; I was in our team, and we won the test. There is a canteen where we can buy a few articles such as razor blades, note books, ink and pencils. I have bought a few souvenirs here to take home. I am almost sure to see England on the way home. I will go to Scotland too.

STALAG XVIII A.

From Pte. FREDERICK J. McCONCHIE.

Sept. 1st, 1941.—Well here I am dropping these few lines from a working camp out in the forest. We came in at mid-day because of rain and have been here a week now and plenty of rain. I don't want you to worry, just keep the home fires burning as I am doing all right. We get a Red Cross parcel and fags each week which is a godsend so don't you send anything, wait till the homecoming then for a spree and blow out which won't be long let's hope. This country is fine with Baltic pines and green fields but will be very cold in winter, but they supply us with clothing according to climate. We have five blankets but only one at present for cover. There are twenty to a room in double deckers and a good stove in centre of room.

OFLAG VI B.

I thought I would drop you a note and let you know that I had received a letter from my boy who is a prisoner in Oflag VI B, Germany. In the course of his remarks he said how thrilled they were to be receiving Red Cross parcels which at the time of writing, Sept. 14th, were arriving weekly, and ever so grateful for the help; in his own words he says the boys will support the Red Cross for the rest of their lives when they return home.

In conclusion may I offer you my humble thanks for all the Society is doing for our prisoners. I was fortunate enough to be invited by the Pimmerton Red Cross to assist them on their day with the packing of food parcels for our boys and so was able to see for myself something of the help that is being given and the wonderful organisation of the Society.—I remain, yours sincerely, MAY MACKENZIE, Levin.

CAMPO CONCENTRAMENTO, CAPUA, ITALY.

From P. G. FORDHAM, dated Sept. 9th, 1941.

We are now in an official prison camp, and are being well looked after by the Red Cross Society. Once a week the prisoners receive a parcel, containing food of all sorts, mostly tinned, and the one I received had a small tin of Imperial Bee honey. With what we get from the parcel and the food supplied by the Italians we are being quite well fed. We have been here nearly a week now and the climate is like at home, totally different from being in the desert in Libya. I am quite well and have not been wounded.

Sept. 21st, 1941.—It was July 5th when I arrived in Libya and was taken prisoner, but I expect it was a long time before you were notified. However some of the boys from England in the camp are receiving mail from home by Air Mail, so if I am lucky I might get a letter by Christmas. I understand it is very expensive to send letters from New Zealand by Air Mail, so I am not expecting one every week, but I will pay for you to send one a fortnight, so I will know how you are all getting on. The camp here is well organised and we are being well treated. At present we are living in tents, but by the winter we will be moved into huts.

Sept. 28th, 1941.—There has been quite a lot of yellow jaundice going around the camp since we arrived, apparently due to the change of diet lately, and now

yours truly has got it. It sounds as though I must have aged a lot when I say I am an inmate of the "Infirmary," but this is really their word for the Camp Hospital. It is certainly some time since I had sheets on my bed and a wire mattress to sleep on, so no doubt it is appreciated. I suppose I will be here a week or more be longer, but it is really having the right diet to cure it.

The Camp here is in quite good surroundings. It is in the middle of a farming district, although we cannot see much on account of the country being flat. A river flows not far from the Camp, and a few miles away the land rises into hills and mountains. Mt. Vesulvius is thirty or forty miles away, and looks a rare sight at night with flames belching from it continually. During the day all that is visible is a cloud of steam or smoke issuing from it.

CRETE.

Since last writing to you about my son 9619 Driver C. M. Murdoch who is still officially missing since the battle of Crete, I am pleased to say I have had another letter from him from Crete. It was written on August 15th, 1941 and bears the postmark of September 8th. His address is given as "Prisoner of War Camp, Crete," and he expects to be able to write a weekly letter and says I will be able to write to him at that address. He, with others, is conveyed each morning by lorry to a German camp, where he helps cook the food and is taken back to their own camp again at night. The treatment is good, food the same as the Germans receive and a daily ration of six cigarettes.

Now I hope with this definite information to guide you that we may soon have him officially located as a Prisoner of War and not merely "missing."

GREECE.

A PADRE WRITES:

20th August, 1941.

I'm trying to get in my weekly word to you before the wind comes up and starts blowing things all over the place. Greece continues to give us regular time-table climate. We were told that August would be windy, and it is. Great gales of wind blow up through the daytime and things fly about all over the place. But late at night it dies down, keeps quiet in the early morning, and in spite of the wind the days are still warm and cloudless. Next month we are told to expect rain. Well, this has been quite an eventful week. Then the next item of moment was a general post. Our convalescent camp was changed to a straight out prison camp for men who have pretty well recovered from their wounds and all the medical people and chaplains were shifted to the hospital except for a staff required to look after the camp. This consists of two doctors, one dentist, 50 medical orderlies, a quarter-master and a chaplain. I am the chaplain and my colleagues are all Englishmen. So on Saturday afternoon I saw my friends depart and began my work as official and lone camp chaplain. The first step was a move from the tent to a room of my own in the officers' hut. A big airy room it is, furnished with a bed, table, chair and bookcase—a fine comfortable home, with quiet for work when I want it and any amount of room for interviews and classes. And work is now delightfully plentiful. In addition to having all the worship—two services and Communion every Sunday morning and evening, prayers every day and two Bible classes a week—I have all the comforts to look after—paying the men the pocket money provided by the Red Cross and another small payment which I collect from officers and paid orderlies; collecting,

begging, scrounging, or stealing, and then distributing such things as cigarettes, soap, writing paper, toilet paper, or anything I can get for the men's comfort. Then I have charge of all recreation and have got a good committee on the go to make things as interesting as we can for the men. We've put out what seems a good programme to fill part of every morning and evening. In the evenings we'll have lectures and debates and in the mornings cricket matches, athletic meetings, concerts, community sings and so on. And then for the off times we're trying to make available card, chess and draught competitions, ping-pong, deck tennis, darts and courses of instruction in any subjects for which we can get a class and a teacher. So far I haven't had a minute to myself since I started the job and I'm enjoying it. The men are all jolly decent chaps and I have a good strong body of Christian lads round me that give me hopes for big things. And after all this upheaval comes another that had given me a touch of real joy. Yesterday I was up at the hospital to say good-bye to and watch the departure of a hundred badly wounded men who are being sent back home. I could have cried as I saw their child-like joy and excitement. It was a beautiful thing and to know that the poor beggars are getting home and they are only the forerunner of other like parties was a great happiness. John Hiddlestone and McConchie went with them as chaplains and that was another source of great satisfaction. They are both good chaps, but too old for this game and it was good to see them on their way back home. You won't build up any hopes on this, will you? I'd like better than anything in the world to get back to you, you know, or at least to be able to keep in regular touch with you, but I've quite decided that there is a work for me to do here and I've elected to stick it out with the men as long as I can work with them. It wasn't an easy decision to make because I think I could have regained my repatriation if I'd sought it, but I was able to make up my mind through being quite sure that this is what you would want me to do under the circumstances. My love to everybody.

GERMANY.

8th September, 1941.

I hope my earlier letters have been getting through to let you know that from the day I was captured I've had no worries and have been able to go about my work in different Prisoner of War hospitals in Greece. Three weeks ago I was shifted with a big party to this established camp in Germany. I am hoping that I may get work here or in some other men's camp, but that isn't settled yet. Meanwhile, life here is fine. It is a huge camp in the quiet of the country, very well laid out with lawns, trees, flowers, tidy paths and new buildings. Our barracks are warm and clean and meals are quite adequate. Each week we get 50 cigarettes from the Red Cross and a magnificent food parcel with 16 different articles of food and cake of soap. I expect you have already been notified about what you can send us. Notice my new number and address, won't you, and put it in anything you send. I am just as fit and well as could be. You have nothing at all to worry about. We are being shown every possible consideration and our conditions are really good. When your mail begins to arrive I'll be on top of the world.

16th October, 1941.

Dearest Family,

My hopes of being kept with the men here as their chaplain look as if they are to be realised. The other officers have been shifted, but Hiddlestone and I were left and there is plenty to do. Winter has begun, but we are comfortable enough not to be troubled by the cold. I shall be sending a photo with my next letter.