

Confidential.

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Home Address.

INTERVIEW WITH LIEUT. C. F. L. TEMPLER,
1ST BATTALION GLOUCESTER REGIMENT.
16, Avenue Charles Floquet, Paris, and c/o Mrs.
Buchanan, 23, Bryanston Square, W.
Givenchy, 21st December 1914.

Place and Date of Capture.

Nature of Wound, if any.

Knocked on the head by butt end of a rifle by the
Germans while reconnoitring.

I was captured by the Germans on 21st December
1914, after having been knocked on the head with the
butt end of a rifle. Previous to capture I did not
witness any infraction by the enemy of the ordinary
rules and usages of war. When I was taken prisoner
all my valuables were taken from me, but I received
them back after a few days.

I was taken to a dressing station where I was well
treated, and I was afterwards taken to La Bassée
where my head was bound up.

Lille Citadel, Dec. 22-24,
1914.

On the morning of the 22nd December I was
taken by train to Lille with four or five other officers.
The journey lasted one day and we travelled third class.

On arrival at Lille we were marched off to the
citadel where we remained for two days. Here we met
about five other British officers and a few French.
We had beds with straw, but got nothing to eat. The
Indian officers were cross-examined by a native in
mufti. The German Red Cross came and dressed my
head every day.

As we were being marched through Lille a girl
came up and tried to pass us some chocolate. A
German officer came up and reined his horse on top
of her, almost knocking her down, and when very
close to her he shouted at her in the most brutal
manner.

Journey. Dec. 24-27, 1914.

I left Lille on the 24th December with 45 men
of the North Lances, a few Ghurkas and four or five
officers. These were nearly all wounded, but we
travelled in cattle trucks, packed like sardines. We
were not allowed out for any purpose during two days,
so that the trucks became very dirty. As soon as the
guards spoke to us at all they were told off by an
officer and were afraid to behave in anything but a
brutal manner for the rest of the journey. In order
to inflame the guards the officers accused us of using
dum-dum bullets. We had no food or drink till we
got to Warburg, after being two days on the train.
The German Red Cross gave us nothing.

At Cologne we asked to be allowed out of the train.
I was marched to the lavatory with five other men.
There was one of the North Lances, who was badly
wounded in the arm, so he took some time in getting
ready to come out of the lavatory. For this a German
official kicked him and knocked him down, so that
he had to be carried to the train on a stretcher. On
our arrival at Cologne the doors of the train were
opened and a shower of stones was thrown at us by
the civilian population. At Brussels the doors were
opened and three Ghurkas were thrown bodily in
among all the wounded. At Warburg we were given
sausage and coffee.

Münden, Hanover. Dec. 27,
1914—April 7, 1915.

On the 27th December we arrived at Münden
camp in Hanover. The wounded were put in the
camp infirmary and I was taken there for four or five
days, when I asked to be sent to the camp so that I
might see the other English. There was practically
no medical treatment here as the doctor never came
round, but, as I was not very bad and only needed
quiet, I personally have no complaint to make.

The camp consisted of a factory and there were
from 15 to 20 in a room, the beds practically touching
each other. There were about 300 officers, mostly
Russians, but there were about 12 English. We had
straw mattresses and there was hardly any accommo-
dation at all. The rooms were very hot on account
of the overcrowding. The sanitary and washing
arrangements were very bad, being practically non-
existent. We were given blankets. The nationalities
were purposely mixed, in fact I was not allowed to
sleep next to a Frenchman because I understood
French. The Commandant was just a typical German,
and all the officers tried to break one in to German
discipline and did not treat us as officers at all, but
as men under their command.

We all messed together in one big dining-room.
In the morning we had a cup of coffee and received

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our bread ration for the day. At 12 o'clock we got a bowl of skilly, and in the evening, at 7 o'clock, we got some more coffee. In the canteen one could buy sugar and cheese only, the prices being exorbitant. We had to pay at least 40 marks a month for the mess. I got a few parcels here.

There was a court-yard, and we were allowed to buy a football which we kicked about. We were allowed to smoke at first, but afterwards, in March, an order came from Berlin stopping all smoking.

There was no religious service held while I was there.

I received my letters and parcels fairly regularly, the latter being opened in my presence and the cigarettes taken out. I was allowed to write two letters and four postcards a month.

I was never asked to join the Irish Brigade, but I was given the tip to say that I was Irish when I arrived, as the Germans were more polite to the Irish.

The American Ambassador did not come while I was at Münden.

Military Hospital. Jan.
1915.

About 10th January 1915, I had a return of concussion and was sent to the Military Hospital where I remained for about a fortnight. I hardly ever saw the doctor, the place being run by an N.C.O. The food was better than in camp. In this hospital there were two French soldiers, both badly wounded in the leg; one of these died through neglect, as gangrene set in in his leg and they would not take the trouble to operate. We offered money to get him eggs and wine, but this was not allowed and he was simply left to die. The other man got better slowly.

Escape. April 7-13, 1915.

On the 7th April 1915, I escaped with seven Russian officers from Münden, and we were out for six days when we were recaptured at Rheine on the Ems near the Dutch frontier. I was chased by the whole village and, because I hit the first man who reached me, I was nearly lynched, but was saved from the people by a policeman who came up.

Detmold Civil Prison.
April 13-15, 1915.

I was taken to Detmold Civil Prison. I was taken to the Barracks on the way, under escort, and the man here came out and tried to kick me. The food here was the same as that given to civilian prisoners and I was left alone.

Münden Military Prison.
April 15-29, 1915.

On the 15th April 1915, I was taken to the Military Prison at the Sapper Barracks at Münden. Here we slept on beds without mattresses or blankets, in the clothes in which we arrived. I was in a cell alone and was not allowed letters, parcels or smokes. The food here was the same as in the camp. I was not treated as an officer. I was allowed to write letters and also requests to the Commandant. I remained here for about a fortnight.

Bischofswerda. April 29—
May 14, 1915.

On the 29th April 1915, I was taken to Bischofswerda in company with about four or five other English officers and some French and Russians. This was the result of a visit by the American Ambassador, who found the camp was a bad one, and all the British and French were moved.

All this time I had had no court-martial, but simply a court of enquiry, when I was given a sentence of special supervision only. It seems to be the system in Germany that one is punished first and tried afterwards, so that, in case of acquittal, the punishment is always on the credit side of the Germans.

I remained at Bischofswerda about a fortnight. It was a good camp all through and I had nothing to complain of. The food there was good and one could buy wine. The accommodation and sanitary arrangements were good and the guards were polite. This was the first camp in which we were really treated as officers. There were about 300 officers here and the British were allowed to be together. I was in a room with three other English.

Torgau Camp Hospital.
May 14—June 15, 1915.

On the 14th May 1915, I was moved to Torgau with about 50 others who were considered undesirable. I was in the camp hospital all the time and have nothing to complain of. We were looked after by French doctors and had French orderlies. The French seemed to run the whole camp and only the guard was German. There were no other English in the camp hospital, being mostly Russians, including the six Russians who had escaped with me.

Torgau is situated in the 4th Army Corps, which is notoriously bad as regards its camps and prisons. These are Torgau, Burg, Halle and Magdeburg.

The camp consisted of wooden huts and there were about 500 officer prisoners here of all nationalities, only about 20 being British. The name of the Commandant was Braun and he was considered a mean kind of man, always working behind one's back. The nationalities were kept separate. The accommodation, food, &c., were very bad, though not so bad as Münden. We had facilities for exercise as it was a big camp. There was a concert room and we were allowed to smoke. There was no epidemic while I was there.

The American Ambassador did not come while I was there.

About the 15th June 1915, I had quite recovered and was sent with some French and Russians and two British officers, Harrison of the Royal Irish and Pereira of the Suffolks, to Burg bei Magdeburg. The journey took six or seven hours and we travelled in third-class carriages, otherwise I have no complaint to make about the journey.

Burg. June 15—Sept. 15,
1915.

The same conditions prevailed at Burg as at Torgau. The name of the Commandant was Cheesemann and he was about the biggest brute I met in Germany. He was very keen on being saluted, and if one did not see him in the distance he would rush up and shout and have one marched off to prison. He had us drilled at roll-call and was very annoyed if his orders were not carried out. He said the British officers were the most unmilitary he had seen anywhere. One day he ordered a sort of Levee at which we all had to stand in four ranks while he passed down the middles, when each officer had to spring to attention and give his name, rank and regiment, and then stand easy. Those who did not do this to his liking were marched off to prison for three or four days. After I left, some Russians were found escaping by a tunnel, when a hose was turned on to them while still in the tunnel, and they were dragged out in a half-drowned condition and knocked about with sticks in the presence of the whole camp.

Some Russians made a tunnel while I was first there which was given away by a German spy dressed as a Russian. The Russians tried him by court-martial, and as he was proved to have been a spy they sentenced him to death by hanging. They were about to carry out this sentence when the man asked for two minutes in which to say his prayers, and jumped through the window, escaping with a broken leg.

The second in command here was a man called Oelemann, and he was a very double-dealing fellow. He used to make elaborate plans to catch one out in small things. When our tunnel was discovered by the Germans on the 15th September 1915, we were taken off to the guard-room and stripped by the orders of Oelemann.

Civil Prison. Sept. 15,
1915—Jan. 1916.

We were then taken to the civil prison which was very dirty indeed. I had a straw mattress in a very small cell, which also contained a stool. The heating was very bad, as the pipes which were supposed to warm the place were only tepid and the ventilation was bad. The food was very bad and we were waited on by a German civilian criminal. This was our only privilege. I was allowed to write letters and to smoke, except at Christmas time. About the 20th December the Germans came round and told me and another Russian officer that there had been a reconsideration of our case, and the court at Cassel had decided that our sentence should be 10 days' special confinement instead of only the special supervision as had previously been announced. During this 10 days my parcels were also stopped.

During the first three weeks we were in Burg Prison, the parcels, smokes, and exercise were stopped, but I managed to smuggle through a note to another British officer, and he saw the American Ambassador when he came round, and this was stopped.

When I was at Burg, about 12 hours before Mr. Gerard was to arrive, the Germans started to plant a lot of trees in the garden for his benefit.

The only case of insanity I know of was at Burg, when a man named Conran became insane and was sent by the Germans to a nerve place, and I heard

Escape. Jan. 1916.
Magdeburg Prison. Jan.—
May 1, 1916.

later that he had been sent to Switzerland, but this I do not know. As regards my experience of the effects of long confinement on British prisoners of war, it seems to affect different natures in different ways. Some men become absolutely callous and nothing that may happen to them seems to have any effect, while others become nervous and over-sensitive, so that the slightest thing upsets them.

While I was at Burg I tried to escape, and was therefore sent to Magdeburg Prison on 10th January 1916. This was the worst prison in Germany and was an ordinary civilian prison. The cells were 1 yard 4 inches, and the furniture consisted of a bed, a stool, and a shelf. The sanitary arrangements were inside the cell and were only emptied once a day. We had two hours' exercise every day in the prison yard.

Here I met Captain Harrison, who came later, and he has already described the conditions.

While here I was tried by court-martial, and was given one year for assisting in making a tunnel at Burg in June 1915. Here there was a court of about eight, and as I understood German I did not need an interpreter. The court asked me to say what I had done, but I refused, when they became furious and started to cross-question me. I made no defence, but denied nothing, except that I admitted having helped to make a tunnel with a view to escape. I was given a sentence of six months for damage to Government property and an extra month for the theft of a plank. Captain Allistone and I were asked if we wished to appeal, and we said "No," but the General appealed for us and got our sentence increased to one year and one month. I was told that my sentence was to begin then, but to my surprise I was let out of prison in the October of the year in which I was originally arrested.

Wesel Fortress. May 1—
Nov. 2, 1916.

About the 1st May 1916, through the exertions of the other British prisoners at Magdeburg Camp, a doctor was sent down from the camp to see me, and he advised that, on medical grounds, I should be sent to Wesel Fortress. I travelled all day and was well treated on the journey. I was put into the place where the German officers do their fortressing, where I shared a room with Barry of the H.L.I. The food at Wesel was extraordinarily good for Germany. We were under the immediate charge of a sergeant who lived in the fortress. We got two hours' exercise a day and were allowed to write four letters and two postcards a month. There were actually in this fortress some German officers who were undergoing punishment for various offences. I was really very fortunate to be sent to Wesel, as very few British were sent there at all. I was there with Evans of the S.L.I., and Captain Montgomery, of the 4th D.G.'s, and Bath, of the Canadians, where we were also joined by Collier, of the R.F.C., Bleckley and Smith, of the Wilts, and Rawson Shaw. Barry was there undergoing a sentence of 10 years for having been hit by a German whom he was supposed to have struck. Barry has since been released and I met him at Ströhen. There was a retired Belgian at Wesel who had been dragged out of Belgium though he was 75 and an invalid.

Burg. Nov. 2-9, 1916.

On the 2nd November, when to my surprise I found that my sentence was finished, I was taken to Burg Camp, which I found had been greatly improved owing to the efforts of the English there. The same objectionable Commandant was still there, but the English were now allowed a hut to themselves. The bathing and sanitary arrangements had been improved.

Magdeburg Prison. Nov. 9,
1916—Jan. 1, 1917.

On the 9th November I was sentenced to imprisonment for having tried to escape from Wesel Fortress. I was sent to Magdeburg Prison. The only improvement I found here was that the sanitary arrangements, instead of being actually in the cell, were outside. I got my parcels during the six weeks I was here.

I was given a sentence of "very close arrest" and was allowed no exercise, no parcels and no smokes. I afterwards discovered that this was contrary to the German regulation which says that after a fortnight of this "very close arrest" the prisoner must be allowed out for at least one hour every day. Major Ewart put down my complaint to be lodged with the American Ambassador. I did, however, carry out my "very close arrest" for six weeks.

Camp. Jan. 1—March 1,
1917.

On 1st January 1917, I was sent back to Magdeburg Camp where I remained till about 1st March. This is the worst camp in the 4th Army Corps which is the worst in Germany. It does not admit of improvement, being situated between railway lines with trains passing all day and much smoke and dirt. It consists of a factory and a cavalry barracks, and has only a very small court-yard where there is just room for two tennis courts, and this leaves no room for walking. There were 20 in a room, very close together, and the food is so bad that one lives entirely on one's parcels. There were about 400 prisoners here, of whom 20 were British. About three or four English were allowed to be together in a room, the rest being mostly Belgians. Our food was cooked by British orderlies and there was one orderly to about 12 officers. We received our letters and parcels regularly. We could not buy food at the canteen. We were allowed to smoke. The British messed together.

The Commandant's name was Kunst, and I had no dealings with him except when he came down once to the prison and insulted Harrison and wanted me to translate his insults into English. His adjutant was Liedker. One could get no redress or improvement from them.

There was no epidemic while I was there.

We had religious services, as Mr. Williams of the Berlin Embassy came down occasionally.

The American Ambassador came while I was there.

I left Magdeburg on 1st March 1917, and was sent to Augustabad with all the other British officers. The whole of the 4th Army Corps was cleared of British prisoners at this time. We travelled in second-class carriages and passed through Berlin on the journey.

Augustabad Camp. March
1—April 26, 1917.

Augustabad Camp is really a summer hotel and the conditions there were very good. It is a very pretty place, being situated by the side of a lake, and is a German health resort. There were about 300 British there nearly all of them had been captured in 1914. Both the Commandant and his second in command were very good fellows. An officer was allowed to go down to Neu Brandenburg to buy what we needed, as there were no shops at Augustabad itself. We were allowed to go for walks, and to be out all day if we wished, after handing in our parole cards at the gate. We had British orderlies to cook for us, the German cook supplying us with the food. The charge for messing was moderate, though of course the food had to be supplemented by our parcels which we received regularly and in good condition. The tins were collected and opened in our presence, the contents being given to us as we needed them, and the Germans kept the tins. This camp was just like being in an hotel and we were very comfortable.

There were no religious services.

The American Ambassador did not come while I was there.

Prison. April 20—26, 1917.

On the 20th April 1917, I was sent to Augustabad prison for a week for having attempted to escape from Magdeburg Camp. The prison was a room next to the guard-room. I was well treated, being merely confined and was only allowed two hours' exercise a day.

Escape. April 26—30, 1917.

About the 26th April I escaped from the prison and was out for four days, when I was recaptured and put back into Augustabad prison.

Prison. April 30—May 10,
1917.
Cüstrin. May 10—June 10,
1917.

On the 10th of May six or seven of us who had attempted to escape from Augustabad were sent to Cüstrin, which was supposed to be impregnable. The camp consists of a fortress and the accommodation is rather primitive, but we were allowed to do what we could for ourselves. There were orderlies, but not enough to go round, so that we had to do a good deal of cooking for ourselves. There were 10 in a room and the rooms were not very comfortable. The Commandant was not unpopular and I have no reason to complain of my treatment. The camp held about 30 officers, of whom about 20 were British and most of them had attempted to escape. The fortress was built in the side of a hill and was practically underground. There was no electric light and in the winter we had to go to bed as soon as it got dark.

I received my letters and parcels here, and there was the same system as regards the tins.

The American Ambassador did not come while I was there.

On the 10th June I was sent to Ströhen. The Germans told us that every prisoner who had attempted to escape after 15th February 1917 was to be given five months' imprisonment, as a reprisal for the imprisonment of a German officer in England who had attempted to escape and had been given a big sentence.

Ströhen. June 10—Aug. 20,
1917.

Ströhen, without exception, was the worst camp I was in in Germany from every point of view. The sanitary arrangements were very bad and the food impossible to eat. The rooms were very much overcrowded. The treatment reminded one of that in 1914. In the prison those who were under close arrest had small dark cells and were allowed no smokes or parcels. The system of punishment there was summary; there was no question of court-martial or of appeal. If one was supposed to have committed a crime one was sent off to the cells by the Commandant on the evidence of the sentries or of an unter-offizier. For instance, if a prisoner failed to produce his towel at the end of the week, or to write his name over the door, or to comply with any other regulation, he was sent off to prison for a week. Any prisoner who failed to understand an order given in German or to salute an officer was sent to prison. The guards and unter-offiziers were encouraged to be as brutal as possible, and prisoners had no means of getting redress. There was absolutely no inducement to run straight. The officers seemed to be doing their best to incite a mutiny, and the Commandant had orders to keep the prison full. There was a waiting list of 100. I saw Colonel Gilbert, the senior officer of the camp, do 15 days' imprisonment for having formulated the requests of the other prisoners and handed them in. He was charged with mutiny. About 200 people went through the prison in a month, out of a total of 150 officers in the camp.

There were four cases of distinct provocation to mutiny which took place inside the camp, and in three of these cases officers were bayoneted. In the first case Knight was given an order in German when he first arrived which he did not understand, so he was bayoneted in the leg and had to be taken to Hanover Hospital, where he remained for two months.

One day about six other officers arrived from another camp, and were waiting outside the barbed wire waiting to be led into the camp, and the officers inside the camp, about 30 in number, went to the wire to see who they were. The Commandant himself was outside the wire and was heard to give an order telling the sentries to clear these officers away, and to use their weapons in doing so. This they did and Downes was bayoneted through the lung from behind, and was taken to Hanover Hospital dangerously ill. I did not see either of these cases. In the third case about 600 bottles of bad sherry were sent into the canteen and was drunk freely by the prisoners. That night sentries were sent in with fixed bayonets, practically challenging resistance. They used to make drives down the camp, and one was expected to clear out of the way. One man was chased on this occasion, but he managed to get away and no harm was done.

On another occasion the Germans discovered a tunnel and were digging a big hole, which was being watched by a crowd of officers. Suddenly an unter-offizier gave an order to clear the camp, and four sentries turned round and simply charged the crowd with their bayonets. One man, Wilson, of the 10th Hussars, was cornered and bayoneted, but managed to parry the blow and was only slightly wounded.

On the day we escaped, while we were waiting for the night, we heard during the afternoon a howl of rage from the Commandant, followed by a rush of feet and howls and hoots as if there had been another bayonet charge.

The Commandants were changed while I was there, but one was as bad as another, and they had evidently been given *carte blanche* to break the spirit of the prisoners in any way they chose. As a reason for their brutality they said that an attempt at escape on a large scale was expected at Crefeld.

We got our parcels at Ströhen, but there were very few British orderlies, and we had to do our own

cooking. Just before we escaped from Ströhen the Commandant announced that 200 parcels had been damaged in transit through Holland, and were too bad to be given out, as the names were in many cases obliterated, and they were therefore to be distributed in one of the men's camps.

The Dutch Ambassador came while I was there, and Major Toogood showed him the list of complaints of the camp which he had collected. Major Toogood told us afterwards that he was very dissatisfied with what the Dutch Ambassador had said he could do for us. He practically said that we must remember that we were prisoners of war and could not expect to live in luxury. There was no improvement after he left.

It was possible to get a fair amount of exercise because the camp was large.

There was a hospital in the camp, but I was never in it. One officer, Lieut. Condon, of the Northumberland Fusiliers, died while I was there. Serious cases were taken to the hospital at Hanover.

A German Protestant parson came, and we were allowed to attend the services he held if we liked.

There is no room in the camp for a football field, but there would be room for tennis courts. We were allowed to smoke.

Escape. Aug. 20, 1917.

On the 1st August I was released from prison on account of the order made at The Hague, and I was put into the camp from which I escaped on the 20th August with Captain Harrison and Lieut. Insall. Captain Harrison has already described our escape.

During the three years that I was imprisoned in Germany the treatment greatly improved. I attribute this change to the fact that the prisoners showed that they had a will of their own and bullied the Germans into getting things better. The American Ambassador also did a very great deal. Another reason was that the Germans thought that we might take reprisals on their prisoners in England.

When I got to Ströhen, however, I found the conditions worse than they had ever been anywhere else. This, I think, was because the Germans got wind of something that was supposed to be going to happen at Crefeld. They broke up the camp there and sent the officers to Ströhen and Schwarmstedt. There were plenty of British at Ströhen, who admitted that something was to be done on a large scale at Crefeld.

Colonel Gilbert, who was at Ströhen, tried to send letters to the Dutch Minister, but found that the letters went no further than the Commandant's office. He thought the best plan was to have a letter boycott, so that there might be an enquiry in England. This boycott was carried out for one or two months. At the end of the first month letters began to arrive from England showing that people were beginning to get anxious about Ströhen, and by this time some officers had escaped, so that we knew about the conditions at Ströhen, and the boycott was removed. We found, however, that the Germans would not allow us to write letters, and this state of things lasted for a fortnight.

At Magdeburg, when I was sentenced to one week's imprisonment, I was also sentenced to receive no letters for six weeks. I wrote to the Dutch Ambassador and, about three or four months afterwards, I got a reply stating that the War Office had been informed, and that the stoppage of correspondence was irregular. I found that my letters had got through to England during this time.

In this connection I heard also from a flying officer named Marshall, who had flown over the German lines and was shot down behind the Russian front, that he had been taken to what is called a "sleeping camp" where nobody at all was allowed to write letters. There were no British there, but some Russians, and he thought that they were regarded as military "suspects."

As regards the food, the worst time of year there was when we got black potatoes and not a scrap of meat. Last spring they could not even give us potatoes, but substituted turnips. Things were at their worst in May, June, and July, before the harvest was gathered in.

The guards were taken from the Landsturm class, and there was not much difference during the whole time I was there.

At Magdeburg they told us that there had been big strikes over the food, and there had been fighting between the police and the mob, in which quite a lot of people had been killed. This was in the spring of last year and also in the winter. The same thing happened in Berlin. In Magdeburg also the factories went on strike for three or four days. I heard of quite a few cases of death from starvation and cold among the civilian population. Communication was cut off because the river froze and food could not be got down to the town.

The people seemed to be sick of the war, but they will carry on and will not give in, I think.

While I was at Wesel I used to see a German regiment drilling. My impression was that they were a mixed lot, but the drafts that were actually sent to the front were more or less passable.

In cases where the prisoners have been caught in attempting to escape, the Germans have not made the rest suffer more inconvenience than was necessary as a precautionary measure. There were more roll-calls and searches, during which officers were made to strip. I have heard of parcels being stopped.

I received my pay regularly.

B. L. ANSTREUTHER,
Colonel.

17th September 1917.