

Volume 2 Section 354-13

Life as a Prisoner of War

9013 Cpl George Nutley

Introduction

Cpl George Nutley was with the 2nd Royal Berks when he was captured on the 10th May 1915 having been wounded and losing an eye. (see section 192) . He was a regular soldier who had joined the Royal Berks 19th October 1908 He had been with the 2nd Battalion in India and had gone to France with them on the 6th November 1914.

When he was captured at Fromelles on the 10th May 1915 (see section 192) he had lost his right eye. He spent some time in German hospitals and POW camps and was repatriated in 1917. He was interviewed by Captain E T R Carlyon of the Sherwood Foresters at Mürren in Switzerland 25th August 1917.

The Report

The report is filed at the National Archives under WO 161/99/135 Pages 1911 and 1912.

Statement of Corporal 9013 George Nutley 2nd Royal Berkshire Regiment. Donnington Hill, near Newbury, Berks. Present age 27¾ Occupation labourer. Date of capture 10th May 1915. Place of Capture, near Fromelles. Nature of wound loss of right eye

The Capture

I was captured on May 10th 1915 near Fromelles. After being wounded I was removed straight to the German first-line dressing station where I was well treated and my wounds dressed. After my wounds had been dressed I was taken to a fort in Lille and inspected by German doctors. I remained one night here.

Brussels

11th to 27th May 1915

The next day I was sent on to Brussels which I reached on May 11th 1915. I was in hospital here for three weeks and was well treated. We were allowed to write letters, but they were kept. I had of course no time to receive letters here.

The Journey

27th-28th May 1915

The journey to Germany took one day and a night. We were well treated by our military guard. Civilians

threatened to throw vitriol at us; this however did not occur. We travelled in third-class carriages and received coffee and bread from the German Red Cross

Nürnberg Hospital

28 May to 3rd June 1915

I arrived at the Artillery Kaserne, Nürnberg in Bavaria on May 28th 1915. This place was a hospital innwhich I remained till June 3rd 1915. There were about 50 prisoners in the hospital of which 28 were British.

In hospital at Nürnberg the treatment was good in every respect., the doctors were very good. I had no operation here but had two at Brussels for which I was under an anesthetic. I required no clothing from the Germans and so asked for none. Our bedclothing was normal. I was not in hospital long enough to see when the clothese were changed

Nürnberg Camp

3rd June 1915 to 30th May 1916

On June 3rd 1915 I went to Nürnberg Camp and remained there till 30th May 1916

The Commandant and second in command in the camp treated us well. I do not know their names. We slept in huts which were crowded in winter, but we had room in summer; we slept on straw mattresses with blankets. Washing and sanitary arrangements were satisfactory. Prisoners were employed on work in the camp, on farms; also in leather work; the payment for this was 4 pfennings per hour. There was no attempt to force prisoners to make munitions.

Food supplied to us was good till about August 1915; then it became very bad indeed. We had a good canteen which was run by the French, who had to hand a certain profit over to the Germans. The canteen however was not expensive: Soap 60 pfgs (about 1 lb); lemonade 15 pfgs; matches 5 pfgs; cigarettes 25 pfgs to 30 pfgs. Food from England arrived very well.

Here we could have clothing when asked for, For exercise we played football and gymnastics if we liked. Inside we had a theatre. Smoking was allowed, but was once stopped for a month when a prisoner was found smoking in the doorway of the barracks. There was no epidemic in the camp. Religious services took place every Sunday. I was never in the camp hospital

Mannheim

31st May 1915 to August 11th 1916

I left this camp on 30th May 1916 and reached Mannheim on 31st May. I know no names of Germans in this camp. Our treatment was very good. Accommodation was very bad, the huts were full of vermin and we were very crowded, otherwise conditions were normal. There was no employment in this camp

The food here was possible to live on and was better than Nürnberg in this respect. It was six weeks before we could have our food sent on to us here,

I required no clothing in this camp and did not ask for any. We had no recreation here. There was a room for theatricals, Smoking was permitted. There was no epidemic here. We had religious services once per fortnight.

I received letters and parcels regularly. The parcels were opened by the Germans, not in my presence; nothing was taken out of the parcels. Matches and spirits were prohibited. We were allowed to write four postcards per month and two letters. I have no complaints of my general treatment. I saw a case of cruelty to Russians, I do not know any names. The German guard fixed bayonets and charged them on the square at Nürnberg, the reason being that they were fighting with the French; one Russian was bayoneted. Up till August 1915 the French were the better treated; after this the French were worse treated than we were.

Prisoners were informed of the regulations. Smoking was prohibited in places and attempts to escape were considered offences. Punishments consisted in three to five days in a dark cell for smoking indoors and 14 days dark cell for attempted escape. I saw no ill effects resulting from these punishments.

The American Ambassador visited the camps about every three months; prisoners could speak to him alone. The camp was cleaned up usually before his arrival. There were certain improvements after his visits. We had our boots and clothing mended; the Germans also stopped painting numbers &c. on our clothes. I heard of nobody being asked to join the Irish Brigade. I saw no cases of insanity among the prisoners. I was never asked to assume German nationality. I noticed no improvement in the treatment of prisoners. I have heard of no camps where prisoners are not allowed to write or receive letters.

WO Questions

Comparative Statement of Rations - May 1915 to November 1915: two kilos of bread for five days. Meat twice per week (insufficient). Coffee in the morning, soup and potatoes midday.

November 1915 to May 1916: Rations remained the same for those who were working; the others had half

rations.

In May 1915 the prison guards were all old men. In February 1916 they changed to very young boys/

Statement of Corporal George Nutley, signed at Mürren, August 25th 1917.

Examined by E T R Carlyon, Captain, Sherwood Foresters

Opinion of Examiner

I consider this man intelligent and his statements may be relied on. [TX01153]

Postscript

Although nothing is mentioned in the report it would appear that Nutley was among those who were transferred to Switzerland for internment during hostilities. He evidently returned to England after the Armistice and was discharged as unfit for further military service on the 26th March 1919.

References

National Archives WO161/99//135

Reading Standard 26/8/1915

Reading Mercury 9/10/1915

Silver War Badge 266443

WO329/2465 1914 Star Roll