

FOURTH BOOK

Experiences of 1943 – starts on 2/11/43

I had been worried about my military situation, with its prospect of a court martial for cowardice, ever since 1940. In 1942, expecting the visit of the Sursis Legation delegates, I had prepared a statement of my case for them to submit to London: but the constitution of the camp changed in May and our committee was dissolved and it was thus impossible for me to meet them alone. So this opportunity was lost.

In January or February 1943, I got the impression that I was being talked about to my disadvantage in the room of some 60 odd men: although I had nothing to go upon. I thought that it might be because the news that I had been a week in the Army had come out; more likely, if talk there was, was that such talk was criticism of work done on the contact committee.

In February, I saw the camp captain, told him my story and asked him to apply for my recognition as an officer and for transfer to a military camp. He thought it unwise for the same reasons as those, which had kept me silent since 1940. On several occasions I asked in the room, both privately and publicly, whether there was anything against me: the reply was invariably the same – that "on the contrary, I was very highly respected by all.

Still, the same ideas continued and eventually on March 11th I was taken to see the doctor by the camp captain, so that he might judge of my state of health and as to whether I was suffering from hallucinations or not. He found me in a low condition and wanted me in hospital at once: I refused to go until I had put the question once more to the room publicly; my view was that honour was more important than health. The question was put by the camp captain and the reply was as on previous occasions. So I went to hospital and stayed there about six weeks.

After return to the room in camp, I again got the same idea and kept in touch with Dr Henderson. Eventually, towards the end of May, I declared my situation to the Germans and applied for transfer to a military camp. A week or so later, Dr Henderson got me sent to the military hospital attached to Stalag VIII at Lamsdorf.

Almost at once after my arrival there I heard the word "rat" used and this increased as days went by. I thought it was because of my having been interned instead of being a prisoner, and I made a verbal statement to two, Mr O's and a staff sergeant and a sergeant RAMC.

I also made a written statement, which I gave to Lt Col. Wilson.

Driven to desperation and feeling that my cowardice in May 1940 was the reason, I eventually walked into the German wire with the hope that a burst of machine gun fire would end things. But the sentry did not fire.

A few days later I was sent to a German civilian asylum at Loben and reached there on July 1st 1943.

Still pursued by the same word "rat", life here has been intolerable. Always willing to reply and to answer questions, such have not been put; instead, all kinds of innuendos have been made which I have been supposed to understand.

Such as:

Pfleige (nurse)
German
Belgian
Polish
French
Welsh



RAT

White Drake and black ducks. Water ... 5th Column. Spy. River. Sea. Fish. German ships. Gates. St Valery ... and very many more.

For six weeks I thought that it was a case of mistaken identity and that I was being accused of some treacherous action at St Valery, for there are several men here who were taken prisoners with the 51st Division.

I could get no further until what I call "muttering" began at night. In these, one man "snores" out, either a statement or a question, one or two words at the time, under his blankets.

From one of these I learned that men had been left behind wounded on 22/5/40. Enquiries the next morning brought no result except blank stares and the reply that I must have been dreaming or talking in my sleep.

So gradually I learned that everything here passes in that way, so that there is no official knowledge of what goes on.

Then a nigger) one Goodluck Johnson, turned up and he began in part English and part French, talking "petit nègre" to worry me a lot. It took weeks to eventually realise that he was accusing me of having murdered my wife and have stolen money.

Even now I cannot quite make out exactly what he is getting at, as he claims alternately to be my son or my brother. To be my son is impossible as he is about 41 or 42; to be my first wife's son is equally impossible as she was younger than I. To be my brother is impossible also. It would be possible for him to be a brother-in-law if my first wife's mother had ever been at Sierra Leone where he was born.

During all this period I was driven so frantic and felt so helpless to combat the incessant droning voice of this nigger and clear myself that on two occasions I tried to do myself in by running my head up against the wall: both were quite ineffectual - heads are hard.

Then I cut my left arm one night with a razor blade. I had managed to secrete but it was a vein and not an artery and I failed again.

Life cannot go on like this and I want my wife and boys to know that I am innocent of such charges. For this reason I now write that story of my first marriage...

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I have been driven just frantic and stupid by these accusations and by Johnson's "petit nègre", with strings of names, which mean nothing to me.

1940

On Friday May 10th, at about noon, I received a message from the vice-consul in Calais saying that I had to report as soon as possible. I went into Calais to see him after lunch and told him to tell the Embassy that I would report at lunchtime Wednesday 15th May at latest.

He could not find the detail of his phone talk with the Embassy, but said that I was to report to the RTO at Amiens as soon as possible and in civilian clothes if necessary. I ordered a uniform from a Calais tailor that afternoon and he promised to do all he could to have it ready by Wednesday.

I spent the next four days trying to put some of my affairs in order. I left on the Wednesday 15th May, with my own car, without uniform.

There, it appeared that they had expected to put me into battle-dress. But I weighed 17stone 10lbs and nothing would fit. I was taken round the French barrack rue Jules Barin and at St Rock, but there was no French stuff to fit me. I was arrested in Amiens for trying to buy French uniform in tailor's shop. Then I was sent up to the Q G (?) at GHQ near Arras, but on arrival there found that they were packing up and moving. So it was decided to send a motorcyclist to Calais on Saturday 18th to collect the uniform and arrangements were made by phone with the tailor to deliver the uniform to the RTO at Calais.

On Saturday/Sunday night we got orders to move to Beauvais and I was told I could take my own car. Actually I had two men in the car with me and probably there would have been no room for me otherwise.

We got to Beauvais at daylight and spent all day there waiting about. Then Capt. Morgan came back and we got orders to move to near Béthune. The same two men got into my car and when transports started moving ahead of me said that it was ours, so I followed. Actually it turned out that I had attached myself to the Pruvost Compagnie and that the road control group was behind. We went through Abbeville, Hesdin and St Pôl, particularly at Hesdin, was hellish - no lights, roads blocked with traffic is no relief driver as no one was keen on taking over a left hand drive car at night. About dawn we reached a chateau and I had 2 hours sleep on the floor of one of the downstairs rooms. Then a bath. This run up to the East had given me a fresh heart and I felt that it was a sign that things were going well again.

After breakfast we found that we should not have been here at all and the O. C. and another officer in 2 cars and self and C.SM in mine left as advance party for Montreuil.

Traffic hellish again: we got there in early morning, found a billet, had a meal and eventually got to billet and was just getting into bed when the O.C. rang the bell and told me that we were to move again to Desvres and that the German tanks had cut the Abbeville road. I had to ban a valise there for the O.C. had no petrol and I had to be prepared to travel as light as possible and take up as little room as possible also in some other car. Then the French section gave me some petrol; I got my car, which I had had to be prepared to abandon. It was too late to get the blue *valise*¹, so I just left it with a note of my name and my Calais' address.

I was told to lead the convoy and did so: we reached Desvres at dawn and the others soon arrived also.

I went out to the forest to pick out parking places for the transport but the OC decided to stay in Desvres. Then after breakfast, he sent me off in an Army car with a MP driver, to

¹ In French in the text : suitcase

visit G.H.Q at Boulogne.

We got down there and arranged for rations, etc. with the RASC found that the Paymaster had moved to Wimereux - no address given. GHQ was also there as the Imperial had been bombed the night before - I saw the bombing from Etaples-Neufchatel road. Fruitless hunt, after the Paymaster but saw the Movement Control Officer who sent a message to the OC by me that it would be best if he came fast to Boulogne.

Then having had permission from the OC, we ran on the village and on arrival there found that my wife had left 3 hours earlier for Dieppe by car with another French family. Returned to Wimereux, was pulled up there again on account to my uniform - I got this at Beauvais on the Sunday afternoon and it had no badges, button or indication of rank.

Had another arrest in Boulogne in the afternoon: but was cleared up again at the APM's office in the rue de la Lampe. Then back to Desvres. On arrival I told the OC about the suggestion of the Movement Control Officer but he said that the French Commandant was in command of this Anglo-French group and that we had to follow him and not split up.

We spent the night in a bare *château* outside Desvres and got a meal at a café near by. Capt. Morgan, Vermon, Aston turned up later. I saw the bombing of Montreuil and Samer in the evening and was miserable for the fate of my wife. Slept on floor for a few hours though disturbed by thoughts of her plights.

In the morning of 22nd, we moved off to go to Steenworde. Found the Théroouanne road was blocked by felled trees at Desvres level crossing; so we had to take the St Omer road. I was detached to stay with the Ambulance section of the group on account of my uniform

Eventually reached the Boulogne-St Omer road and we went on towards Lumbres. Then a halt- a long one- we got some bread and coffee in a cottage and opened a tin of bully. Eventually got the order to turn round. Drove back a few kms towards Boulogne; then turned left step down hill. Halt Officers called up to lead the column when OC said that he had been to Hazebrouck, that there were isolated German tanks and bands of infantry about, that we were to go on to join the Théroouanne road again and then turn left there to Steenworde. Personally I would have gone North and then East to Steenworde rather than South and East - particularly as the Germans were moving from the South, but opinions were not invited at all. Went on again.

Later a halt whilst a German reconnaissance plane flew over us. Then forward again. Eventually another halt in a village and sounds of bullets overhead. Saw Capt. Morgan's car turning round in the road ahead of me and he was leaning out shouting orders as the car came down the road. A sergeant with me in my car said the order was: "Disperse".

I told the men to take rifles and one bandoleer each, put on the antitheft device on my car and took a map. I did not bother about the column ahead of me for I knew that there were either 5 or 6 officers ahead of me of whom two had come back (Morgan and Vermon).

Went back about 50 yards and turned left at the Ambulance along a narrow lane with hedges both sides. Then left into a field. Other men were coming up from the rear of the column and turning right into this lane. Probably 40 men or so reached this lane and the fields.

The German reconnaissance plane began to lap round .at once and dived down using its machine guns. Also heard what I thought were bombs, but which were probably tank shells, which appeared to come from the village shut.

I took 2 shots at the plane, the first from its rear and the second to my left: the hedge was too thick to get a shot as he dived. Then the plane having done his job of keeping us in

order, whilst a tank was assembling prisoners, left us for good and I heard Germans shouting out "Schweinhunder Engländer". Went out of the field into the lane and found Lt Wilson wounded in throat – two men with him to the Ambulance but other said: " Lets all go; then we'll be together". I let it go at that, feeling helpless in the matter – had bestow any quality of leadership then, more men would have had a chance to run for freedom.

I did not order the men with me to fire at the plane because the CHS on the previous Saturday night when we were packing up to move from Amiens said to Morgan that many- or perhaps most – of the men had no rifle training at all.

I watched the tank, which was on the bank of the far side of the road, assemble his prisoners on the grass on the side of the road nearest to me; I saw also Morgan and Vermon standing close by; eventually the tank began to move; previously he had been keeping order by giving single shots over the prisoners' head from the turret and these shots were coming unpleasantly close to me. When he speeded up his engine and put the men to the double, I crossed the lane and got through a gap in the hedge held open for me by two men. There were 4 or 5 there. I had looked down the lane and saw a crowd of men at the corner where the Ambulance was but am quite certain that there were no wounded laying between me and the ambulance to my right or in the lane to my left.

We went through two fields and came to a third field about 40 yards square with a crop about 18 inches high. There we found the M.D., one wounded man (2 bullets in the ankle) and about 6 others.

I borrowed the stars from the MD for my tunic. He agreed with me that we could do nothing before dusk and insisted that we carry the wounded man.

Soon after I heard the tank moving - it was the first time I had heard a tank, on the move and it sounded to me as if it was in the field between us and the village and coming toward us. I signed to the men to go flat and did so myself: they just kept sitting and evidently knew better than I did what the tank was doing. When it stopped I said: "Let's go over to the far corner of the field" and did so, but only 4 or 5 men followed - those who had been with me in the lane. We went to that corner and sat down and I got the map out and began to study it.

I was about 2 yards from the men, head pointing toward the field we had come, through. I had realised my position and felt that if my uniform was such as to get me arrested by our own troops, as on the previous day, it would probably result in my being shot, at sight if taken prisoner by the Germans: I had an officer's pass but this had I think a note, at the bottom that I was temporarily in civilian clothes. And I was still more anxious and worried about my wife.

Later, looking through the bottom of the hedge about 40 yards away from me, I saw what I took for 2 Germans following each other. I signalled the men behind me to be silent and to lie down, but they took little notice or did not understand. I had seen that the 2 men were not Morgan, and Vermon who were both wearing trousers.

I just got scared stiff, turned round, back to the enemy and went flat with my head level with the men; I told them to get flat and to hide their faces, as I knew that pink faces show up more than anything else. I was definitely scared stiff and showed it - utter cowardice, which has no excuse. Though I think I should have behaved otherwise, if I had not had the fatigue of the time since Saturday and the anxiety about my wife and about my own uniform. The idea of our two boys being left in England helpless and homeless with their father and mother dead was terrifying me.

Nothing happened and either the two Germans cleared off, or it was a cow – I do not

think so; if it was, it only makes my position worse.

I ought to have posted the men as sentries round about instead of staying idling as a group. Continued to study the map, and to learn it by heart as much as possible.

The men told me, quite early on that men had been wounded I think in the village. I said that we could do nothing for them as they would be taken prisoners by the Germans at once and looked after by them. I jumped to this conclusion at once and did not think that anything else was possible.

Went on studying the map and also looking out through the hedges from time to time and I felt certain that there must be men in the village, who would come out, when the Germans were clear.

I decided that, as the German attack was apparently in the direction Arras - St Omer, we ought to follow such a direction towards the coast. The map shown that by going slightly west of north we would get the cover of the forest of Licques and Guines on the way to Calais. I decided on that and found that we would probably have to do 35kms during the night to be sure of being ahead of the Germans.

About dusk we moved back across the field to join the MO and the others. I ordered my men to leave their rifles as I felt that we should travel light as we had a wounded man, to carry. I did not like the men to smash them- another mistake.

We joined the others and I should talk about the direction to follow - 3 or 4 fingers left to the Pole star. I told the MD that we should have a job to carry the wounded man 35km but he insisted on it and it was of course agreed. I had previously counted up my cash with a view to leaving half of it with the RASC men to help out over the few days probably required before the situation straightened out again.

It was then, I think, that the CSM and other men from the village turned up; he reported X men killed and Y men wounded, saying that with our wounded men that made Z men wounded. He went on to say that my car had been taken and all the others, except perhaps one smashed up. I did not gather from his report that wounded men were still lying out. Then I think an ambulance turned up – the MD had sent a man down and the Germans had left one ambulance intact. The MD, two orderlies and the wounded men went off at once in it.

The CSM may have turned up after the ambulance had left: I cannot be sure of this. We went out of the fields on the open ground and there I gave the direction orders: my idea was to lead the party but to give them this direction in case we got split up.

In the middle of this, Capt. Aston turned up. The CSH reported to him again and I told him my idea. He agreed with the idea but said that the men must divide themselves into several groups of two or three and go for it like that. He sent such groups off at short intervals and eventually he and I were left.

Aston had a look round and then he and I left going straight across country. Later we found the men bunching up toward us but Aston said it did not matter, as he wanted to take their names. So later on, in a field on bright moonlight, he took names and sent the men off again.

Within a few hundred yards we came to a road, field on the other side and then a narrow brook. Many men were there. We crossed the brook but found that there was a wider stream fast deep and strong a bit further on with a road and houses just beyond it. Aston decided it was too risky to cross there and he took me upstream along the road; we struck off to our right toward and the straw again but touched marshy ground and also got a "Halt" from some sentry - probably German. Returned again to first field- several small groups still

about there and Aston told me to wait while he spoke to them. Then he took me downstream across fields and when we had gone some distance I said "What about those men in the stream? He replied, "I gave them their orders and in any case it is too late to go back now".

We went on and eventually crossed probably some 2 miles from the first place when we reached the stream.

Aston, who got through to England eventually, can tell our subsequent adventures and our plans.

I cannot believe it to be possible that about 22 men (of whom about 12 came from the village) would move off without a protest if they had realised that men were being left behind wounded and needing attention. Aston, I am sure, did not realise it, nor I either - we never even discussed the question during the three weeks or so we were together.

23/2/44

Since writing the foregoing, I have suffered untold misery for the accusation of murder and theft has been taken up by the white men also, who repeat it night after night. So on the 6th, I had an idea and wrote to my mother-in-law at Amiens telling her of this accusation and asking her to get into touch with Arthur Harstrich who would then make enquiries at the Société Générale to find out if there is anything against me. But I doubted if my letter would be allowed to go through by the English M.D.'s or the German censor at Lamsdorf, so I also asked the German doctor here - a lady doctor- if she could get an enquiry put on foot in order to ease my mind. This accusation, so false and unjust, is going to drive me mad. I am put to sleep nightly and then told not to worry about it, but it crops up again the next day from the nigger and again at night before I am put to sleep. I am given "talking medicine" and the details of all my life are so known to all however private they may be.

In January, I had another attempt at suicide by cutting my throat with a Gillette blade but that is not big enough to go as deep as the artery, so I just lost a lot of blood and that was all.

I shall not try again, for I have made three main tries and failed, and also failed twice when I ran my head against the wall- heads are hard to break.

If only I could be free of this accusation I would be a happier man.

For 1940, they will insist on saying that I told the Sgt Major that we would return to the stream. I can not remember even seeing him again after he followed us on our first reconnaissance to the left (upstream); if he also returned to the field, then he would have asked Aston and not me. But they will not accept this story.

There is also a story about Sergt Twizell, whose son is here.

It is said that I left him in the mud when he was wounded in the lung in June 1917 and that he got mustard gas half an hour later and eventually died on 11/11/1919 from it. I have already written to my wife about this at the end of January, for it is said that my father has recognized my responsibility and has paid £100 or £400 to young Twizell.

Questioning goes on nightly by snoring under blankets and they keep contradicting themselves, first of all accusing me of murder and robbery and then telling me they don't believe it. Then back again to the accusation, and so on all the time. I feel that they do

believe it against me and that my word is not taken and that they would even suspect the evidence of the doctors, nursing home staff and the police. It is so persistent all the time.

The address of this place is: Heil and Pflodge Anstalt LOBEN (Ober Silesia)

All my kit has arrived here from the Hag as they were moving to France, so I have a big wooden packing case here also.

Whatever happens to me, I want my family to know that I have a clear conscience about M.'s death and the settlement of her estate; I can also stand before God and men in all confidence and truth. My family must be told this, please and I would like them to have this book of notes.

They said last night that I had said in my own words and in my own writing that I had killed M. and robbed her family and that I had admitted this in my sleep. If I have been made to do this, they are just acting like criminals. I hope my family will learn how such a document was made if it comes into their possession or is shown to them as evidence.

29/2/44

They have been talking of a pardon and wanted me to attack one man to show I had some physical courage. I did so twice and have attacked other men, but they still go on and have broken their word twice. I have offered to stand up against any man here for as long as I can, but they will not have it. I have come to the conclusion that it is all spooof and that they have decided on my death and are working up towards it, either here or in Lamsdorf or they want me to commit suicide. I am called all the vilest names from behind beds and corners and life is a greater misery than ever. What form death will take I don't know- it will be an unpleasant one I'm sure, of the torture kind; I'll try and stand up to it bravely when it comes. These last 8 months I have just lived hell. Death is the best thing for my wife and boys, for I could never live down this shame or take it back to them to share; perhaps they will forgive me or at least have some pity on these last sufferings. They will do best to change their names and adopt my mother's maiden name or my wife's.

7/3/44

If Twizell's story is true then, in the event of my death, he should receive, subject to legacy duty, one quarter of my net estate after payment of death duties; I estimate my present financial situation at about £2000 (two thousand) plus £1000 reserve for legacy duty which I shall owe on my father's death or account of my mother's legacy and £514 due to my wife on the basis of five thousand Francs a year since our marriage.

As regards Twizell's story it is that he was wounded in the lung on the same day as myself in 1917 (probably in June) when he was: a) either my section sergeant in the 98th Field Co. R2 or b) was in the KOYLI and attached to me that night, I am told that my neglect caused his lung to heal badly and that, gassed later in 1918, he eventually died at Blackburn on 11/11/19.

The story needs checking as regards the date of wounding, the man's rank and regiment and as regards his medical, report on his lung wound.

If this is true, then this statement signed, by me should be taken as authority by my wife and sons to give one third part each of their inheritance from me to Thomas Lightfoot Twizell. Owing to the conditions of my will, it will not be possible for any of them to make an immediate cash settlement, but my executors can be requested through my advisor friends to put the requisite amounts on one side in a special account or can be asked to pay Twizell if they will accept this as authority.

Given and signed in the British Ward at the German Civil hospital: Heil und Pflodge Anstalt, Loben, on the seventh of March 1944.

GA Gregson

P.S. Whatever may be the legal aspect of this case, it should be considered by my family as a debt of honour, if the story is proved to be true.

P.P.S. The night in question was one when I laid out direction tapes from the front line for an attack to be made about dawn by the Northumberland fusiliers.

17/3/44

I now feel that I know just where I stand and that these men have just dangled the bait of pardon in front of me to give me still greater torture. Perhaps I am going back to Lamsdorf camp tomorrow and if so then my birthday on Sunday may well be my death day.

Why I don't know, but these men do not want me to clear myself of these accusations of murder and robbery or to stand trial by Court martial.

I cannot fathom their ideas any further than I have done so far.

I hope that I am sent back to Lamsdorf the end will come quickly there and it is just shell misery waiting for it here.

3/4/44

Still no news from Arthur Harstrich about his enquiry at the Sûreté Générale. Talk of a big repatriation on the 20th of this month.

11/4/44

Last night, under cover of question and answer by snoring, I gave to Twizell a letter to himself and one to John Oldham, written one after the other on eight pages of this notebook, taken from the middle of it.

Life still hell: the men have their minds made up, do not believe my story of 1940, my ideas regarding Twizell and they still seem to believe in Johnson's story of murder and robbery of M. and her family. Still waiting for Harstrich's letter regarding M. and for Gisele's regarding my father and Twizell.

Tommy has just returned my letter to him, saying that it is of no use to him, as people would think he had been persecuting me. So I have added another letter to John and shall give him the lot again today or tonight.

12/4/44

Tommy read the second letter during the day but would not take it offered again at night in bed; he still did not take it.

17/4/44

The men seem to have made a definite decision against me on 3 counts:

- That I caused M.'s death by murder and then robbed her family in the settlement of her estate.
- That by inclination and by my advice to Aston, we abandoned the men at the stream. They do not believe in my conversation later with Aston.
- That I have no intention of doing anything for Tommy Twizell if it is proved that the story about his father is true

Life is HELL

25/4/44

Still HELL. New orderlies have come, evidently with orders to intensify the campaign and the accusation of murder of M. goes on steadily and with increased force.

Now last night I was accused of being a rat for:

1. Not attending to the wounded in the village. I admit a bad mistake there but I honestly assumed that the Germans would take then all prisoners. .
2. That I never had any intention of helping to carry the wounded man. Untrue again, because the M.D. was insistent and I was ready to and had to obey his orders. I was against trying it for I knew the impossibility of carrying a man 35km at night across country even if a stretcher was available.
3. For being glad to finally get away from the stream with Aston and to go ahead. I was, but was glad too that the responsibility was his: he seemed to know his job and was very categoric when he told me he had given the men their orders.
4. For not going back to Aston and letting myself being arrested. Aston evidently understands or he would not be so friendly with my family: he had my message. Had I known that Gisele was safe in England I would have taken the risk of accompanying him as a civilian with papers in order although it would have got me shot if caught for helping a soldier to escape.

I am told that I am to be sent back to Lamsdorf camp for s solitary confinement until I admit that I am a rat.

Whatever happens to me, this accusation of murder and robbery must be cleared up. If anyone has decent feeling after reading this notebook, the reader will see that it is sent to my wife.

Another thing they say is that I am a Twizell rat and that I have no intention of helping Tommy Twizell if the story about his father is proved to be true. They say that I have no intention of helping him at all and that I intend to rat him if I get home.

5/5/44

The last few days cannot be described. All I want is to stand up to a Court Martial: I am guilty of cowardice on 22/5/40 but if I made mistakes there was no question of ratting or deserting men by intention. I left Aston I agree, but he understood my position with regard to my wife, evidently, for he has become a friend of my family. Yesterday, in daytime a man named Wells snored: "If you don't do something for Tommy Twizell today, you will be f...d at Lamsdorf and arrangements have been made to send you there tomorrow. You are a fool to throw away your life for a question of four hundred pounds for your wife and sons

will be lost without you". And in the afternoon the murder accusation was much stronger. Abuse is always indirect: "He married a whore and murdered her"; "whore rat"; "rat whore", etc. I have fought this for months but shall never get justice here, I know; and in these wretched ineffectual physical struggles I have no chance of avenging myself and am just sick of the pretence, afterwards, that it was my imagination! I seek no back door exit from this situation, such as being repatriated on the basis of suffering from delusions, and I shall probably die a miserable death and a painful one too.

And suicide will stop the insurance people paying for Denis' education till he is 18 and will deny Gisele a pension also I think. No man here and no orderly will give me help - any request for it and to cut out the delusion stuff just result in nothing at all. May God help my wife and boys.

6/5/44

The M.D. came from Lamsdorf today: I asked him to get me back there so that I could face up to a court martial, but he can not or will not. He told me I am to go back to the internment camp at Kreuzburg and be repatriated from there, in the next fortnight. I do not see how these men will allow me to live to leave here and reach England.

7/5/44

I was told yesterday that I was going to Kreuzburg today, but later yesterday it was cancelled though all my kit has been sent down to the ward. I may be leaving for there tomorrow with Johnson, the nigger and the author of the murder story.

8/5/44

For some nights now they have been reading my thoughts. Even if I think in French, the words of my thoughts are repeated one by one; I seem to be able to read theirs also.

Thus they can snore out a question and then I can answer without actually having to speak and just by thinking and they repeat my words. What drugs are used and how they are administered, I don't know or it may be by hypnotism

The principal accusations last night were:

1. Murder, but not so insistent this time
2. That I never had any intention of helping to carry the wounded man in 1940.
3. That I ratted Aston by leaving him and being interned instead of going back to him.

I was told that I am going to a working camp at Bluehammer and also to Kreuzburg. Always talk of killing me - though someone else is to do it apparently.

I was told that the reason I had had no mail since March was because my family knew about me and my disgrace. I have already thought that myself. May God help them and not me; I have brought this on them and they are loving and innocent all three.

These men are not blackmailers but soldiers, yet they seem to be insistent on this four hundred pounds, as if they know it is due to someone certainly. I will do nothing without that certainty and proof; nor will I purchase silence and so try and buy back honour, which cannot be bought at any price.

15/5/44

Four years today since I left Gisele.

The last week cannot be described. I have now been accused of firing a shot at the German tank Commander in the tunnel and of killing one of our own men who were lined up as prisoners.

I did not fire any shot at all- fool enough to think of it, I was not fool enough to do it.

27/6/44

I left Loben yesterday for Kreuzburg with Johnson the nigger. I am in a separate room in the camp hospital and apparently under guard.

The last month has been indescribable, with this lying and unqualified abuse growing each day. And eventually I decided to ignore it and told them so, for I have not joined one shred of information of any kind and I feel that it is levelled at me either:

1. To force me to some action immediately for Twizell
2. To make me make some admission or confession - I know not what as my conscience is clear, having been cleared here.
3. Blackmail by Johnson the nigger: for months ago, right at the beginning, he said he would keep his mouth shut if I looked after him after the war;

Yet I doubt this, for these soldiers would not support such an idea - they are men, white men, and white.

Here at Kreuzburg, shouting is going on outside - "rat", "Marguerite", "he married a whore" and so on - all the usual filth. And the thought reading and snoring continued again last night, so will accompany me evidently.

Tomorrow I am supposed to be leaving for repatriation via Vittel.

I don't know whether to believe in it or not

If I go and reach England safely, what will happen? I shall send a full report of 1940 to the War Office for I want to have it out and to face the music and get things straight somehow.

But if I am sent to a hospital in England and Gisele visits me then, it will be hell for her to realise that her husband has sunk so low in the estimation of his fellow men.

So if I don't get there safely and get rid of myself on the way, may she and our boys forgive me: for if I do it, it will be because I have decided that it is the best thing for them.

5/7/44

We arrived at Vittel this morning after a week in the train.

The journey has been terrible for me, for the cries of "rat", "married a whore", "Marguerite". "murdered her", etc., have gone on steadily and have been taken up by German troops on the same train and at all stops and stations all the way. I have ignored it as before whether I am right or not in doing so, I don't know. I seem to be almost a prisoner and am evidently up against some terrible accusation, which I cannot fathom, and which these indirect insults (which have been avowed to be known to be untrue but are used to spin me to a voluntary confession of some kind) are supposed to make me aware of, I suppose.

I spoke to Col. Gibbs yesterday about it; and he just said that he has heard nothing about me at all, at any time, even on this journey. The only man who has avowed it is Capt.

Haine RAMC who accompanied our group.

Here at Vittel it is the same thing: again virtually a prisoner I am in the hospital of a camp.

This abuse has broken me down completely: beginning in September last year occasionally in its present form, it has steadily increased and all hand to hand combats - and there have been many of them - have just resulted in the delusion story again and no man I have attacked has ever really fought back except the nigger who split my head open once - no great damage though, only a vein cut, but a sore that kept breaking out for some months. At Kreuzburg, on the morning of 28/6, the day we left, I had a letter from Amiens with the *Extrait de Casier Judiciaire*- naturally marked "néant". No letter from Aston yet about the stream incident.

6/7/44

Here the abuse, with use of the words "cunt", "bastard", "fucking", "bloody", "whore", "rat", etc. are even used by the nun sisters who are nursing at the hospital.

What I am up against I do not know - I feel that my end must be near and that I have been guilty of some action or inaction, known to everyone except myself, which has had some ghastly result. Whether I shall ever know is doubtful, but my family can believe my story about 1940 entirely, and it is as much as I know.

Yesterday I was in a bedroom alone for some time: I appreciated the solitude but was moved in the afternoon to another room of two other men and next door to the dining room. They even pretend to intone their prayers to the time of the words stated above and gabble away, two or three talking at a time as a rule and bringing in these words time after time.

As usual, enquiry of one of my roommates brought the statement that he knew nothing about it at all. To hear such words from the lips of women, and even nuns, is terrible. To remain in ignorance of the cause of it all is the worst; the only other explanation is that there is some terrible mistake in identity.

Accusations are: rat for deserting wounded and others at the stream; murder of M. and of shooting soldiers or leaving them to die; robbery of M.'S family; spy; 5th columnist crook; jew, rogue. Many more there are - in fact I get every name possible, no doubt, and my name must be execrated by all.

Yet everyone addresses me politely at all times and all this talk goes on within leaning, but in other rooms and corridors, etc., my name not being used, but always the pronoun "He"- a disgusting way of talking and not straight. And I know now that if I attack or express indignation I shall be talked to again about delusions!

That has broken me down completely. Many times I have thought that all these people are trying to force me to suicide: in January, at Loben, they certainly did so, for, reading up my thoughts, they knew when I had the razor blade in my hand and snored out "kill yourself", "do it now", etc.

I think it will come to a choice of that eventually for I feel that I can never clear myself. With my death, perhaps all talk would cease and Gisele and the boys could live, if not happily, then without shame. The idea of their having to share and to bear this name is terrible to me; yet whilst there is any chance at all of clearing myself, I will hold on. The worst will be if they are still made to suffer after my death.

Today Capt. Haine came to see me, but said he could not help me any more in my appreciation of my own situation- that means that he could but will not for some reason or

other I had hoped that his frankness would supply me with the missing link. He told me yesterday that he wondered for a moment whether I was sprucing and had worked the delusion theory myself in order to get repatriated, but he believes me when I tell him that such is entirely untrue and that, on the contrary, I have continually tried to get men to stop the rot about delusions and so get down to reality and fact.

Probably no one realises that after 12 months of this, I have a brain which is just incapable of functioning normally on this matter: accused of so many crimes so persistently, this persistence has made me try and seek out and remember every moment of my life. For the line taken has always been: "you are a spy" or something else: "now prove you are not". No indication of evidence against me at all, so I don't know what I have to fight against? And when I have attacked men to fight their indirect insults, I have always come up to a lack of resistance and the delusion talk.

Capt. Haine told me that I am to go with the first repat group and that it will probably go on the 12th or so. It has just occurred to me that I have been put in this room with two other men, either to be talked at from other rooms and by the nuns or to prevent any attempt at suicide. Funny idea that. For it means - " goad him to try it, but stop him doing it". The room is hardly ever vacant - I have had about 5mn alone only in it today.

20/7/44

It still goes on, the nuns with their abominable language as usual. I have been tolerant all my life of religions other than my own, but now realise the hypocrisy of the Roman Catholic religion, which does not know the meaning of the word charity. For here I am, ready to face up to a court martial and am judged before it comes off by these cats and bitches. If Gisèle ever owns a cat or a bitch, she could well christen it "Vittel"! Tongues of women? No! Vipers.

The use of the word "f...d" by these women is just awful, but they find it perfectly natural- that is quite clear and their bad language equals, if it does not surpass, that of men.

My course seems clear now: I am up against something which I cannot fathom and I am not to be allowed to fathom it either: if I live, it will follow me and just kill Gisele and the boys; so the only alternative open to me is death.

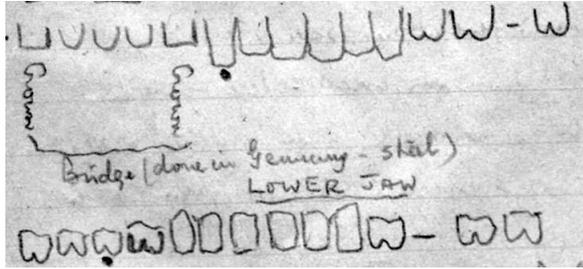
There I have to be careful: I am sure that if I do away with myself whilst in German hands, none of my notes will ever get through to my family that means that I must chance this one being taken by them and write another when (or if) lever reach neutral territory, say on board ship: then I can lock up my valise and go over board with the key. That way there may be a chance of my writing reaching Gisele. They do not want her or anyone else to hear my side of the story.

In case my death causes trouble and to help in identification, Gisele should note the following:

- Height about 1,85m
- Weight about 70kg
- Fourth finger left hand missing.
- Anchor tattooed on outside of left forearm.
- A commencement of a Maltese cross tattooed on inside of left forearm.
- All finger nails very badly bitten.
- Marks and scars of skin eruptions on back shoulders.
- Beard grey- still plentiful.
- Mark of bullet wound right elbow.

- Mark of shrapnel wound in back, right.
- Teeth

Top jaw



Lower jaw

Total 27 teeth of which 3 false in bridge.

- teeth in need repair

What I fear is that my wife and boys will never know the truth and that my notes will never reach them. Why has everyone - RAMC officers, orderlies, patients, etc.- always been prepared to swear, on the Bible, that I am suffering from delusions? That is the riddle I cannot solve.

I have thought also of the possibility of leaving these notes with the Embassy in Lisbon or with the branch of an English bank there, to be sent to Gisele after the war is over. But I may not get a chance to do so and so may have to have them on board ship in my valise.

I have toyed the idea of seeing Gisele once, to tell her all: far I fear that if she is there to meet the boat and learns of my death it may kill her.

Since July 1st at Loben, I seem to have had fights almost daily, with one or other of the following men:

Johnson (nigger)	120		249
Kadova (arab)	30	Evans	3
Fridge	1	Rankin	1
Twizell	2	Spratt	12
Ray Powell(Austr.)	15	Toussie;nant(Canada)	1
Longstaff	15	Morrison	1
Harmse(S. Africa)	4	Davidson	5
Gertsberg(Palest.)	8		
Philips	1		272
Sullivan	6		
Bonner	3	<u>Orderlies</u>	
Gower(USA)	7	Williams(N .Z.)	10
Henderson	15	Snowy	2
Ducknorth	4	Stryn(S.A)	15
Crump	4	Micky	1
Wells	6	Thompsons	5
Harrison	2	Dave	2
Chadwick	1	Vanzytt	4
Kazimuza (Pole)	3		

There may be others I have forgotten. All these scraps have been arrested almost at once with the usual swearing that nothing was said against me and with the delusion story always.

29/7/44

I am writing in the moving train. I started the other book for Gisele and the boys but can not get on with it as the Persecution goes on all the time. I think that the "rat" accusation is made up of:

1. That one of my shots at the plane killed a man. That is impossible.
2. That I voluntarily deserted wounded by not going back to the village. They do not believe that I honestly thought the wounded would be taken prisoners automatically by the Germans.
3. That I refused to give a cigarette to the wounded man in the field. Another lie- I had none, though apparently some man has snore that I gave one to Sergt Carpentier later.
4. That I am responsible for the death of 9 other men at the stream they being shot the next morning by the Germans. They do not believe that I spoke to Aston about the men and that he replied that he had given them their orders.

If I could only confront the men who have given such evidence if they have really given it- I should be happier: for it is all untrue.

The idea is perhaps to shelter someone else by making me the scapegoat? Who? Morgan? And why?

I realise that if I confessed or admitted these charges, that the persecution would cease - I have been told an endless number of times that a voluntary confession is required. I cannot admit such falsehoods for any reason.

What to do for the best for Gisele and the boys? To get away from the train at night would be easy - I explored last night; but as this persecution has been made public and has been participated in by all French and Germans along the line, it would be known to the and I could not get in there. It looks too as if we are going to reach the frontier today.

I wish I could think clearly!