

Witness to the Wooden Horse

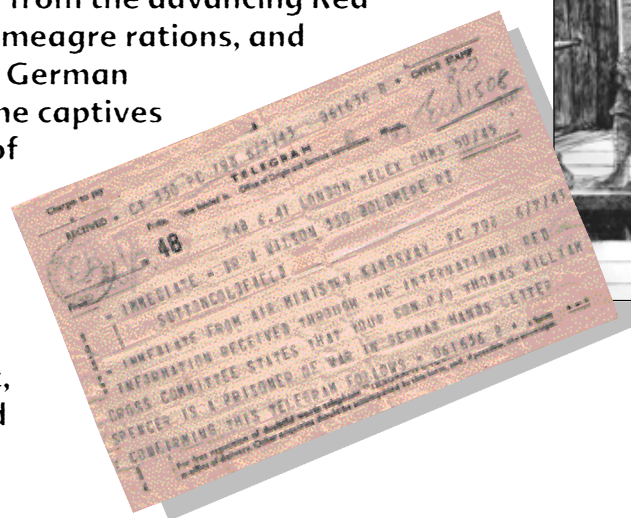
During World War Two Tom Wilson was an R.A.F. navigator flying in Beaufighter night fighters and Wellington and Mosquito reconnaissance aircraft on special duties. He was shot down over Holland in 1943 and became a prisoner of War in Stalag Luft Three. He immediately found himself amongst the team of helpers in the “Wooden Horse Escape” in which three Officers tunnelled their way to freedom.



Tunnellers were concealed in the vaulting horse which Tom and his fellow officers carried to a spot near the perimeter of the camp. While the prisoners practised their daily gymnastics, the escapers worked on a tunnel from which they eventually dug their way out of the camp and made the first “home run” from the “Luft Three” to Britain via neutral Sweden. In the last

months of the project, the sand excavated was hidden below the floor boards of a practice room and Tom played his violin during this process with the team joining in a sing-song on the approach of any guards.

In his book Tom describes the background to this escape and others from the camp, including “the Great Escape” which took place from an adjoining compound in Stalag Luft Three. He also gives his impressions of everyday life in the camp, and a vivid account of the final months of captivity. In the closing months of the war, the Allied P.O.W.’s were marched away from the advancing Red Army, and had to survive on meagre rations, and what they could barter from German civilians. He describes how the captives had to endure the brutality of the S.S., and found themselves underneath RAF Heavy Bomber raids on Dresden and Nuremberg, as well as “friendly fire” from Allied ground attack aircraft, before finally being liberated by US troops.



Enclosed are two short extracts from the book. Should you be interested in publishing this memoir please write to Peter Wilson at the enclosed address or phone 01675 - 465236.