

NARRABRI WELCOME RETURN OF PRISONER OF WAR
Life in a German Prison Camp
February 1944
Pte. N. Lloyd - NX22427

One of the largest crowds to attend an informal welcome home assembled to show their appreciation to the members of the Fighting Forces at the Digger's Club Rooms on Monday night.

“Although no special reference is ever made to any one young Digger, in our midst to-night is Pte. Norman Lloyd, who has just returned from a German prison camp where he has been interned for two years.”

The speaker, Pte. Lloyd said that he, with others, was captured in Greece in 1941, 10 miles from Athens. They were transferred from there to Salonika where they remained for six weeks, thence to Poland, passing through Bulgaria, Yugo -Slavia, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Berlin in Germany.

In Poland they were quartered underground in an old fort where they remained except when allowed to come up for sports. The temperature often fell to 60 degrees below zero. They were given plenty of cigarettes and tobacco. The food consisted of soup twice a day, bread, a little cabbage and potatoes, barley about once a fortnight and mint tea. A little horseflesh was also available if one could eat it.

The speaker said many would probably have starved only for parcels received through the Red Cross.

Pte. Lloyd said that there were some talented artists in the camp and good shows were put on.

Referring to the campaign in Crete, the speaker said the Germans were complaining for six months after, claiming they lost 60.000 killed.

News was hard to get but they eventually constructed a wireless by trading socks, chocolate, cigarettes or articles of any description for wireless parts. When the radio was completed about 20 men could be accommodated at each session.

News of their release was received with great joy said Pte Lloyd and preparations were made. On their way out they travelled through the Ruhr Valley and at one place had to wait for more repatriated wounded to join them for home. The air raid sirens, declared the speaker, were going all day and at a distance of about two miles, they were treated to the spectacle of an air raid. Searchlights, flares and exploding bombs turned night into day for the 30 or 40 minutes the raid lasted.

Leaving the Ruhr Valley they travelled down through France to Marseilles, where they embarked. On reaching Barcelona they met up with the Germans who were being repatriated in an exchange. “ The Germans marched off one side of the wharf saying they would win the war. We marched off the other side saying we would win the war.” The speaker said that the Germans got the best of the exchange – about 9 000 for 5 000.

In Barcelona a gift of 400 five-gallon kegs of beer was made to the prisoners by the Spanish Govt.

During the evening an orchestra rendered appropriate items. Principal toasts were honoured and refreshments served. At 9pm the usual two minutes' silence was observed in remembrance of fallen comrades.

The guests of honour were : Cpl. R. Vincent, Cpl. J. Tarrant, Ptes N. Lloyd, L. Panton, W. Bourke, R. Eather, W. Foley, H. Whitton, W. Kelly, S. Parker, L. Foster and Gnrs. B. Grayson and P, Staines.

(Extracts taken from *The Courier* newspaper of Narrabri in February, 1941).