

Reading used at the Funeral of Harry Neal (Tank) on 8th June 2011

(Written by Harry Tapley, 4th Btn Gordon Highlanders

PoW No. 5532

Kriegsgfangener Lager Stalag XXB, XVIIIIB, XXA)

I find it hard just to explain
As I travel back down memory lane
Of the strength of mind, and stale black bread
And cattle trucks, and frozen dead

The companionship, when might was right
The petty thieving in the night,
The lice, the rags, the hunger pains
The barbed wire fence, the stink of drains

The sudden blackouts when you stand
A raging torrent of commands,
Sleeping in snow in open spaces
Guards death frozen in their places

Sharing out each little mite
Eating potatoes black with blight
Clogs and foot cloths hurting feet
While topping miles of sugar beet

Dreaming of bellies being filled
While just another prisoner's killed,
The eager listening to all news
The lies, the rumours, the different views

The escapes we made through the fence
The movements of freedom, sweet and tense,
The beatings up, the bread and water
That followed on our capture later

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Notes of love for everyone

Dear John letters by the score,

Deep despair then face to wall

One prisoner less at morning call

The seething square at roll-calls roar

Forty short or twenty more,

Long hours standing in the rain

A mighty effort keeping sane

The long, long trek to the west

Man's endurance put to the test,

Exhausted stragglers at roadside lie

Mingling with the hoards that die

Burning buildings all around

Aircraft rockets smash the ground,

Your chosen tree it is your fate

Machine gun bullets sing their hate

Fifteen thousand when the march began

But only six when all was done,

Each face still stands out bright and clear

The friends and comrades of yesteryear

Remembering always makes me sad

A blazing world that had gone mad,

Tempering out tolerance of fellow being

Peculiarities were passed unseeing

Perhaps it is not good to dwell

On times when life was simply hell,

God grant we never do repeat

Treating people just like meat