

# GEFANGANENSCHAFT – A poem by Brian Walley of W.A. and his War

At seventeen I joined the fray,  
Then got my wings – hip-hip-hooray.  
A year of learning how to fly  
Look out Germany – it's do or die.

First "Op" Stettin– eleven hours long  
Piece of cake – not a thing went wrong  
Le Havre next, a 'nursery run'  
Bombed the harbour used by the Hun.

Next trip – the Frankfurt railway yards  
Knocked about like a pack of cards.  
We got home safely once again,  
A gardener trip without pain

Change of target – the Hamburg docks.  
Their master searchlight on us locks.  
Corkscrewed out – lost eight thousand feet  
To get back home was quite a feat.

Then the 'big smoke'- Berlin or bust.  
Shocking weather – in God we trust.  
But we can't have prayed half enough,  
One engine gone – it's getting tough.

Got half way home – things looking grim.  
Ditched in the sea – went for a swim.  
Launched our dinghy – all five aboard.  
Prayed once more and thanked the Lord!

Two days later, only me alive  
Two were drowned- dinghy capsized.  
The other two died, one by one  
With me left behind now all alone.

A seaplane landed to rescue me.  
Just alive – no longer free.  
Black crosses nearly broke my heart.  
Years of misery about to start.

Stretchered ashore on Nordeney.  
Hospitalised – I didn't die!  
New status now – Prisoner of War.  
Recuperation was the score.

Six weeks - lazarette in Hohemark.  
Regained a little of my spark.  
Then moved to Stalag VII A .  
Tried to escape – didn't want to stay

Crept underground via camp's main drain  
Our friends all thought us quite insane  
Soon recaptured to the bunker went  
Four weeks there in misery spent

The next move was to Hohenfels  
A 'holiday camp without the gels'  
Red Cross parcels now kept us fit.  
Nothing to do but hit the pit.

Hohenfels – Stalag 383,  
An army camp. 'Twas plain to see  
We hundred airmen had to go.  
Kreutzberg – and Stalag Luft VII's snow.

We, in the bag since forty-one  
Now heard the war was almost won,  
Of thousand bomber raids and more.  
The second front made it quite sure.

In January forty-five  
Ruskis pressing - To stay alive  
Our hosts marched us out on foot  
Through snow knee deep – nix so gut.

Three weeks later – weary – footsore,  
Not another yard – that's for sure  
Very thin – not enough to eat.  
Glad of the chance to rest our feet.

Luckenwalde – Stalag III A  
With food so scarce – no strength to play.  
Stayed in bed to recuperate.  
The war would end – just have to wait.

Mid April saw the Ruskis come  
Left in camp – did not go home.  
By May the fifth I thought it best  
To go AWOL and headed West.

May the seventh reached the US lines,  
Crossed the Elbe – freedom defined.  
Three days later waved the magic wand  
In England's green and pleasant land.

The homecoming not yet complete,  
Home to Wales, by train, not by feet  
Shotdown this time by Cupid's bow  
To a life still governed by our vow.