

*Stell dir vor, es ist Krieg, und keiner geht hin.
(Carl Sandburg)*

Imagine it's war, but nobody goes. (Carl Sandburg)

The War Diary of Wilhelm Eid

15th May 1887 - January 6, 1956

Reserve Infantry Regiment 53, 11th Company



World War 1 (period described: 6 August 1914 - 30 October 1919)

Introduction

Wilhelm Eid was a soldier in the German army and fought in World War 1 from 1914 until he became a prisoner of war on the 26th of August 1918 and was held at Park Hall camp near Oswestry.

Over a century later, when the eldest of his four daughters died at the age of 94, her son Joachim Rettig discovered Wilhelm's war diary among her possessions.

"I knew him personally and can remember him well, Wilhelm Eid, my maternal grandfather, although he died when I was only five years old. He had a dog, Brigga, a fairly large Airedale Terrier, which, however, seemed to me somewhat frightening. I remember my grandfather as an exceptionally strict but lovable person. Strict, for example, if I did not like my food he sent me, a small fellow, out into the hallway where I had to stay until I had left the plate empty. Lovable when he was sitting comfortably with his grandchildren and we had bouillon together."
Joachim Rettig 2017.

Wilhelm had recorded events as handwritten notes in small notebooks and when the war was over he had accurately copied these into to a single large notebook which covered the period from 6 August 1914 to 30 April 1917. Four of the original small notebooks survived, numbered 8-10. A final notebook, not numbered, covered the period from the 26th of August 1918 until his release in October 1919, while he was a prisoner of war at Park Hall.

Joachim has produced a CD with a transcription into modern German; and copies of all the notebooks, photographs, and maps. The work took several months and Joachim writes;

"It is fascinating, so terrible was the First World War. Wilhelm Eid describes his war experiences neutrally, rarely - if ever - judgemental. He does not ask the question "Why?", On the contrary, it is a description of his job as a soldier in an emergency. And on every page the reader is reminded of the meaninglessness of the war in an impressive way, especially in the description of the Battle of Verdun (February 21 to December 15, 1916), from February 21 to October 25, 1916. Nevertheless, here and there the diary does not lack a certain dry humour, for example when he writes "the French send back iron greetings". There are also a few very emotional passages, for example when it comes to Christmas at the front."

What follows is a translation of the last notebook and Wilhelm's moving and stoical account of his time in captivity at Park Hall.

Last Notebook (August 25th, 1918 - October 30th, 1919)

Translated from the transcription made by his grandson Joachim Rettig 2017

25. August 1918 Out from Ginchy at about 2 o'clock in the afternoon, on the way we were bombarded. In the afternoon fighting with the English, violent artillery fire, but almost no losses. Supported by artillery, we pushed the British back, but the firing stayed quite lively all day.

26.8. We were located in the former town of Flers, which now it is almost completely destroyed and for many kilometers the fields are a large cemetery, because everywhere there are wreaths of fallen British and Germans. Overnight heavy rain, artillery and moderate MG fire, about four o'clock in the morning. There was lunch, but shortly after 5 o'clock the firing started again, it was a lively fight, we held on a long time until about 11 o'clock we had almost no ammunition, part of the company was still able to get away, we were at the front, the Englishmen laid down an artillery barrage and were able to take us from behind, so I was taken with my platoon of 32 men. We were then led back, we paused on the way for a while, in the evening we went on to a large farm, where we were fed, there was biscuit and canned meats, it was 10 o'clock in the evening.

27.8. That night slept well in the straw, I was quite tired because I had not been sleeping properly for several nights. The treatment on the part of the English was very good, there was food again, biscuit and canned meat, but it tasted rather good. Here we were investigated to see whether we still had prohibited items with us, around noon we were loaded up, we drove a few hours and arrived at about 6 pm at Cannes (*-Écluse*) to a prison camp. We arrived in the barracks, there was no straw and blankets there, though we slept quite well, there was food again.

28.8. In the morning there was biscuit and canned meat again, but only water everywhere. During the day we stayed in the camp, at 7 o'clock we went to the train where we were loaded up.

29.8. We travelled all night, it was not a nice trip, as there were many people in the carriage and we could not stretch out. During the day we travelled farther, the English were very decent, but the French made grimaces when they saw us. Four in the afternoon we arrived at Le Havre, where first we bathed, and then we had to wait a while, there were many large ships in the harbor. Towards seven o'clock in the evening we had to go on again, we marched almost all night and then came to a prison camp, it was already dark when we arrived. There are no huts here, all tents.

30.8. We were up to 22 men in a tent, as we had a blanket and the weather was nice and warm, we slept pretty well that night. In the morning there was white bread and jam and finally, best of

all, warm coffee. The food at lunch was very good, in the evening again there was warm tea and biscuit. We only had to assemble twice to count the prisoners.

31.8. It rains all day, so we must stay in the tent. Since you can hardly move, it is very boring. In the afternoon, all the non-commissioned officers and some sergeants were brought in, and in the evening we came to another camp. Food as yesterday.

1. September 1918. There are just tents. It is Sunday; it rained in the night and in the morning very heavily. Morning roll call of prisoners. Midday 1.30 we started, marched back to the port by night, here we were loaded on a ship for transport to England. We set off at half past eight in the evening.

2.9.18. Overnight we got out to sea, accompanied by two torpedo boats. The voyage was nice, because I was passing over the sea for the first time; you just saw water all around. Many had seasickness, but the journey did not harm me. Food was good during the trip. At three o'clock we arrived in Southampton. It is a beautiful big city, it is more beautiful here than in France. The traffic is quite lively, the trams run at two levels. Many people stood by on the streets and looked at the prisoners, but they were very well behaved. There was another march in the night, around 5 o'clock we came to a camp, here it was nice, and the food was also very good.

3.9. We stayed here all day. Food as yesterday very good. In the evening we went on to the train station, again the streets were full of people. We were loaded up and headed off from Southampton at 8pm. The trip was good, third class carriages with upholstered seats.

4.9. Travelling almost all night, after a 7 ½ hour journey, arrived at half past four in the morning. We came here to the prison camp at Oswestry. I do not like it very much here. There is not so much food, lunch is good, but in the morning there is a small piece of bread and a very little butter, not as big as a fingernail, at 5 o'clock in the afternoon there is also some biscuit and coffee, that's all. It is raining heavily today, so we have to stay in the barracks, except for the roll call, the paths are very soft and it is very muddy.

5.9. It is still raining all night as well as during the day and it is very uncomfortable. We do not have any work, we just line up for roll call, this takes place three times a day. Food is the same every day.

6.9. The weather is slightly better, in the afternoon it got quite warm, otherwise as usual. Because the weather was good and we could be outside, it was not so boring.

7.9. Saturday, rain at times then dry again. We have the roll call as specified. In the afternoon, cleaned the whole barracks, tables, benches, and even the beds.

8.9. Sunday, Emily's birthday, I wanted to be on holiday at home, instead I am now in captivity in England. Food also today as always, there were two herrings, these were also nice, afternoon as always biscuit and sugar.

9.9. At night I was very cold. Today we got our number. I got 5584, after these were issued we were finally able to write our first letter home. Weather is very bad, rain and storm alternating.

10.9. There is always something better, today we were clothed, there was new underwear, socks, handkerchiefs, towels, braces, also a comb, hair and toothbrush and cutlery with a laundry bag. Weather is slightly better, but rather windy and cool, intermittent rain.

11.9. Today I have written a letter once again, otherwise nothing special.

12.9. Finally, the weather is a bit better, today bathed in a beautiful bathtub, clothes and blankets were sulfurized. In the afternoon I washed my laundry.

13.9. Nothing special, weather is very nice.

14.9. Today Saturday we are again cleaning the barracks and have the inventory, even though the weather is very bad.

15.9. Sunday. Morning 7.30am Worship, it was in camp, the mass held by an English pastor. The weather is very bad today, very heavy rain all day. I think it's almost always raining here.

16.9. As usual.

17.9. The day was as always, in the evening we moved again, to another section of the camp, here it is somewhat better; at least the barracks is nicer here.

22.9.18. Sunday. Morning 7.30 Church service, then washed my clothes, the weather is temporarily dry, then rain. In the last days nothing special, every day go to the roll call, no work, we are freezing and have almost constant rain.

26.9. Today I have been in captivity for a month, the time has passed quickly, but I wish all the time of captivity was over. During the week nothing special, one day is like the other.

29.9. Sunday church and go as usual. It is pretty cold. Today a man was buried; he was wounded and died here.

30.9. Two more men were buried today. Also it was summer time here, so today the clock was reset an hour.

1. October 1918. At last a day when the sun is shining, it is a blessing with all the rain of late, it is still quite cool at night.

2.10. The capitulation of Bulgaria was announced today, there was much excitement. Otherwise everything as usual.

3.10. Another man died, he was buried today. In the morning medical examination, otherwise as always.

12.10. After heavy stormy rainy days finally a bit better weather. In the course of the week there were many rumours about peace. Another three men were buried. Also today I was at the funeral of two more men who had died, a lieutenant and a grenadier; it was very nice, 100 of us went accompanied by 25 officers and also a division of English soldiers who carried their rifles under the arm during the funeral parade. Music by the prisoners' band was played during the march and at the grave. Two English buglers played at the grave, then the soldiers fired three honorable salutes, while the band continued to play, the soldiers presented arms, so it was rather solemn. The coffins were quite beautiful, polished oak with a brass trim, a brass plate on top with the name of the deceased. The eulogy was given by a German pastor, who is also trapped here.

13.10.18. Once again Sunday morning I have been to worship, otherwise, as usual, the weather is still good, at night it was quite cold.

18.10.18. During the week nothing special, weather is almost always bad. Today I went to work for the first time; we made holes for fence posts.

19.10. Today to work as yesterday, the work is not so difficult, but I already have some blisters on the hands and was quite tired. Since it was Saturday, work was not done in the afternoon. The weather was a bit better today, but rather foggy and cool.

3. November 1918. For two weeks I have written nothing, there was pretty much nothing new, the only thing is that we had good weather for the first time 14 days together. I have worked these two weeks; we made a new wire entanglement, so today there was money for the first time. As I did not have a single penny, this was good for me; I got 7 shillings and 8 pennies. There were also some funerals in the week. In the evening I went to the theatre which my comrades have here in the camp. "Johannisfeuer" was performed, it was very nice, entrance fee 2 pennies, the proceeds are used for the cemetery, for our comrades who died here.

10.10. Still working this week, a few days it rained heavily, two days there was very hard frost, because it was pretty cold. There were also some funerals.

11. Nov.18. Today rumours about the ceasefire appeared, everyone was excited, we did not want to believe it. I have been working even though it is very cold, it has frozen hard.

12.11. There is certain news about the armistice. The newspapers write many things, one cannot comprehend that it has happened.

13.11.18. I did not have any more work today, it has stopped, it has frozen hard again, even at night it was quite cold in spite of our four blankets. There is still talk about everything, it starts in the morning, then goes on until the evening. We ordered a newspaper, which is always awaited longingly.

14. Nov.18. Always as in the days before, one rumour follows another. The cold continues, the day is nice, it is very cold in the night, the windows are frozen in the morning.

17.11.18. Sunday. Weather is still beautiful. Was at the service, otherwise as usual. There is still much to be told, would that our captivity will not last too long. I have not worked any more, now I am always in the camp.

11.19. Always as always, today we got as a gift a piece of sausage, about 5 ounces, which is 140 gr. The sausage was very nice. Also in the last days a lot of mail came from Germany, but there was nothing for me, although I am very anxious as I have not received anything for 3 months.

23.11.18. No work during the week, there were several funerals. A lot of post came again, but again there was nothing for me. In the evening once again I was in the theater here in the camp, it was a "Bunter Abend" again it was quite beautiful, especially here in this monotonous monotony. The electric lighting system has burned out, so we have not had any light for more than 8 days, we buy candles if they are available.

1. December 1918. Not much new this week. It has rained a few days, so it is very muddy in the camp; one almost sticks to the earth. The boots are always wet, so the feet are always cold. There have been some symptoms of febrile disease. The physician has decreed that all the windows of the barracks should be open; in the afternoon half open, so it is too cold in the barracks, especially uncomfortable because there is not much coal. Again some people died in the night. We have no light again still, but first we had a lantern, later there was another one, so at least you see something, candles are almost not available anymore. Because of the cold and to save light, we go to bed early in the evening, usually around 8 o'clock, only I have to get up at night two times. In the evening I was at the theater again, three one-act plays, quite beautiful again.

2. Dec.18. Today is a joyful day because after such a long time at last something from home; because I got my first post at last, and two small packages, one morning and one afternoon. Although no letter came it was quite a great delight finally to see something from home again. The weather is very bad, it rains again quite heavily and the dirt gets worse and worse outside. The boots are no longer dry, but everyone thinks this will end and we will come back home. The newspapers write a great deal, so everyone hopes that the imprisonment will not go on so long.

8.12.18. Nothing special in the course of the week. Again some have died. It's colder again but still very muddy. We are told that we are moving again, the whole camp is getting away.

12.12. Today we moved, it was very dull, especially when handing over the things from the old camp. At eight o'clock in the morning the thing began, we handed in the bed boards, later the blankets and plates, it was almost noon, then we ate and relinquished the bowls, at about 2 o'clock we finally moved off. We came to another camp, the so-called West Camp, here we were divided again, thus it was evening. The barracks is not as nice as the old, but the camp is significantly better, there is not so much mud and it is much drier.

14.12. Life is in general as always, only here we have to roll up the straw mattresses every day. Today was a joyful day for me, because I got a package again. I was waiting for a letter, but there was still nothing for me.

15.12. Sunday, the weather is very bad, heavy rain all day long. There is a theatre here in the camp too, so I went there in the evening, but as only eight days have passed, the performance was not particularly good, although the evening was well spent, for it is always a change in this monotony.

19.12.18. Today was another good day for me because again I got a package and for the first time, after 4 months, a letter again, namely a card and a letter, the joy was very great. About twenty letters were sent to our barracks, so most of the comrades were happier than if it had been a great feast. The weather is very bad, it is a terrible storm and very heavy rain, water and mud everywhere, there is very little coal, so we are freezing, because also the windows are always supposed to be open. In the evening we go to bed at 7 o'clock to get warm and because we have bad light, only two lanterns.

24.12.1918. Mail came again for me, two cards and a letter. We have only one Christmas tree in the camp, so the Christmas celebration could not be for everyone at the same time. We therefore had the celebration at 9 o'clock in the morning. A comrade gave a speech, then we sang some Christmas songs. In the evening the candles were lit on the tree, so the celebration was beautiful because we all remembered home very much.

Christmas. 25. December 1918. For the first time since we are in captivity, it has snowed today, it is quite cold in the barracks, especially since we get little coal. In the morning I went to the

service, over here you felt nothing of Christmas, we got some sausage from the German Red Cross, there was 2 ½ ounces, which is 70 grams. Then I bought some pudding, at coffee I had some pastry from home and in the evening I cooked some potatoes, plus some blood sausage, so at least I had something at Christmas. Everyone was given two cigarettes; we had bought them from the money the camp had saved from the razor money. We talked a lot about home today, and hopefully it will be better next year.

31.12.1918. Continuous very bad weather since Christmas, rain every day. Tonight we had a little celebration. The Christmas tree was lit again, a comrade gave a speech, we sang some songs and then lay down. Almost the whole week we had no light and little coal, so we were usually already in bed shortly after 6 o'clock, I have often been frozen today.

1. January 1919. Today is like any other day here, New Year is not celebrated here, it rained again all day, that's pretty uncomfortable. In the night at 12 o'clock everything was cheerful in the barracks; otherwise one noticed nothing of the change of year. Post has not come for 8 days.

5.1.1919. Again, it's Sunday, the weather is better than in recent days. I have not received a letter since Christmas; we have not received any stationery for two weeks, so we could not write in all that time. Lunch during this time was not very special, because in 3 weeks we had fish once and once mutton, otherwise every noon horse meat. There are all sorts of rumours that we are about to leave, and soon we will go home, there may be some truth in this but no one knows.

8.1.19. A few things came from the Red Cross, we each got 2 ½ cigars. These were the first cigars that I had smoked in prison, so they tasted very good. Finally I got some mail again, you feel right again, a bit more comfortable, if something comes from home. Weather is very bad, cold and very much rain, we then usually go back to bed in the morning after roll call. Because we have very little coal a fire is only made after lunch.

15.1.19. It is miserable, I have not had any money for a long time and very little to eat, there is no mail for me, no letter, no money, no package, so it goes every day, although there's always a great deal for the camp, one will soon be tired of life. We still have bad weather, rains every day, the whole camp is just mud again.

17.1. Still received no mail, also have nothing more to smoke, everything is gone. Today we got 1 shilling as a Christmas present, for this I bought potato, onion and salt, so I had something to cook again.

20.1.19. Still very bad weather, always rain. I received a card with an old date as post, but still no money or package.

22.1. At last two letters came from home again and after four weeks we were again given stationery for writing, we were all glad to be able to write home again. Weather is still bad, nothing but rain.

27.1.1919. I still do not have money or a package. Today I went back to work, we are working on an exercise and shoveling the trenches. It is real winter weather, cold and for a change and snow again.

28.1. Today there was such a heavy snowfall that we could not continue working, so we stayed outside for only two hours.

31.1. No work at all today, it is still very cold.

2.2.1919. Sunday morning went to church. I have nothing in the post again, no letter for a long time. We did not get any writing paper today.

5.2. The cold and snowfall continues, today it snowed so hard that we could not work again.

7.2. It is so cold that the windows are barely thawing, so I have stayed up in the night and have boiled and washed my clothes, it is too cold in the laundry house, clothes do not have time and opportunity to dry because everyone wants to wash something.

10.2. Today we could not work again because the earth was frozen too much, it was a cold like we had not had yet, but also it was good to be in the barracks, because I took the time to do cooking and sewing and got various things fixed.

16.2.19. For the whole week there was severe frost, so we could not work, now it is the thaw and rain. At last I have now received money and also another package. Cooked every day, all kinds of carrots, rice and peas, then potatoes with herring, etc., the days pass quickly because one must always wait for the other, there are 36 men in the barracks, and there is only a small one oven.

21.2. There was good weather in the morning, so we went back to work, but had to break off again because of heavy rain in the afternoon.

23.2. Sunday, I did washing again, the weather got better, so it dried everything quickly, otherwise it is always very troublesome for the laundry to dry, it stands or sits by the oven and dries, which then always takes a very long time. Today I have cooked well, potatoes with bacon and green peas with carrots, then rice pudding and chocolate and later a cup of cocoa, plus a package from home with pastries, so it was a good Sunday. The only malady is our damaged

bathing establishment, so we have not bathed for more than 4 weeks, then you get lice again and that is not particularly pleasant.

27.2.19. Finally after a long time today we could bathe again, it was a treat for the body. In the evening I went along to get the parcel post, I had two packages again, so I was glad the post had come. The weather is as beautiful as it has been for a long time, the sun is very warm, but we did not work the whole week.

2. March 1919. Sunday, once again we have not got writing stationery because every week there is stationery only twice, that is very unpleasant. Today I cooked well again, salt potatoes with white beans as a vegetable and bacon, so I am quite satisfied once again.

9. March 1919. During the week, nothing special, always bad weather, I had luck with the mail this week, a lot came. Every day I cooked well, did not work at all, only washed clothes, darned stockings and sewed, the rest of the time slept. Today, Sunday, I was at our camp theatre for a long time, "*Der Herr Verteidiger*" was performed, it was very nice and you could laugh again. Also today we got writing stationery, so we could write again home.

12.3. It is snowing today as hard as almost all winter. In the evening I was again in the theatre, there were 3 one-act plays, 1.) *Blau*, 2.) *Der hundertste Schimmel*, 3.) *Postfestum*, it was very nice.

16.3. Sunday. In the morning to church, then washed laundry. As the weather has been better, we worked two days. Today it is very nice and very warm, and you feel the captivity again strongly, since you must remain within the barbed wire cage.

23.3.19. Sunday again, the weather today is good again, in the week it snowed a lot and froze, we worked for two days. Today I cooked well again, salt potatoes and green beans, plus bacon, then rice pudding. Also three packages came for me today, so I had something good for coffee as well. In the evening I again went to the theatre of our camp, "*Spezialitäten Abend*", it was nice. Finally after 14 days we got writing stationary again, so it was again a nice Sunday, only one always has the desire for home.

30.3.19. It's snowing and raining today, well, we only need to get out for the roll call, so that does not hurt much. Today summer time was introduced here, so the clocks were put forward an hour. Since yesterday, our food has also improved a bit, we get ½ ounce of bread more each day and 40 gr. butter, also some white beans in cans, so it is a noticeable improvement, but the horse meat remained, so we get it five times a week. Today, Sunday, I cooked salt potatoes with green cabbage and then pudding of pudding powder, which I got from home. In the evening I was back in the theatre, for the play "*Die Liebesschule*" in three acts.

31. Monday. Weather is still bad, we are not working, also we cooked. For this week I will write down my menu, there was no coal today, so I burned all the wood that I had brought back from work. I baked a whole plate of potato pancakes, we ate these with sugar, they tasted very good.

1. April 1919. Today there was coal again, so I cooked boiled potatoes with kale and some rice pudding.

2.4. Afternoon we got gruel instead of coffee, this I ate with some potato and white beans , I only cooked rice pudding and a good cup of coffee.

3.4. Since I liked the potato pancakes so much, I baked them again today, they were pretty nice and tasted again very good and above all I was quite satisfied. Weather is still alternately good and bad, otherwise nothing is special.

4.4. Cooked Königinssuppe [chicken] soup, tasted good. Weather today is very nice and quite warm.

5.4. In the morning washed, weather is not so good again, looks gloomy, but the laundry was dry in the evening, you are always glad when this is again in the laundry bag, since you never know where to put it when it is wet. Today I cooked white beans.

6.4.1919. Sunday. Today I have barrack room duties; I have to get coffee and food, sweep, etc. In the morning I was at church. In the afternoon read and cooked again, salt potatoes & spinach & sauce, then some cocoa. In the evening went for a stroll in the camp and I thought a lot about home, we often ask ourselves when this misery might come to an end.

13.4 Nothing special in course of the week, one day like any other, only now we get no more coal so we cannot cook as much. Already 14 days with no letter from home, the time is long for me.

18.4. Good Friday. It is very nice weather, our camp played a football match with a subsidiary camp, it was very interesting, almost the whole camp watched, so the time passed quickly.

20.4.1919. Easter. The weather is still beautiful, our camp band gave a concert outside. You walk around the camp, spend your time reading and other work. Otherwise the time here is as usual, only the longing home is always quite great.

29.4. Today I went to the theatre once again, again it was "*Johannisfeuer*" again it was very nice. The weather is very bad, a strong storm, rain and snow. There is all sorts of nonsense in the barracks, and we spend the time as best we can. One man was made completely black while in bed, the bed boards of another were nailed together, this always gave lots of fun and

laughter. Then today because of the bad and cold weather there was coal again, then there was cooking again right on into the night.

4. May 1919. Sunday. In the morning worship. There was a game of football in the afternoon, the game was nice, our camp won 2 goals to nil. Cooked soup. Cooking is now very cumbersome. As we do not get coal any more, we have a small oven made of a tin can, which we heat with cardboard, paper and some wood, if we have it. The weather is a bit better today.

5. May 1919. Today we had a mixed entertainment evening, which included singing club, wrestling, music and lectures, it was very nice and a pleasant evening for one penny.

11.5.19. The week went by as usual, but all speak of the peace negotiations, of course, most is about our extradition, rumours are circulating every day, one thinks it is going to happen soon, the other thinks it will still take quite a long time. So the conversations are always quite lively, well, one cannot blame anyone, because everyone would like to get home very soon. Today, Sunday, our camp played a football match against the East Camp team at our camp, it was pretty good, thousands of people watched. In the evening I went to the camp theatre, there were three "one-acters", there was plenty to laugh at, then for a while the captivity is forgotten, which is particularly difficult on a Sunday in the beautiful May weather when one thinks how nice it would be at home now.

14.5.19. The weather is very nice and it's pretty warm. A new "prisonerjoke" was made, at noon one man lay outside on a bed, another sprayed him with water. In retaliation, the one who had been doused with water put the other's bed on the roof of the barracks. So in the evening there was a lot of fun in the attempts to bring the bed down again. An attempt was made with ropes, etc bed boards, but it didn't help, in the end it had to be clambering onto the roof.

17. May 1919. Today it was quite lively again; two Poles came to the camp and wanted to see the people who had intended to come to Poland. No sooner were they in the camp and in the huts where they wanted to talk, than there was a loud cheer. Music was being practiced and they were just playing "Deutschland, Deutschland über alles ", all the people shouted. Loud calls, such as "Skin the Pollack" and "Knives Out" were everywhere, many people had sticks with them and wanted to beat the Poles. The camp commander now sent for the guard, which took the Poles into protection and led them from the camp again. In the evening there was another order that such people should no longer come into the camp, we should be reassured. In the evening there was more fun. Some people had dressed up as gypsies, some made a camel and rider, another a bear, then some gypsy music, the bear danced, again there was lots of laughter.

18. May 1919. Sunday. The weather is very nice, again it was busy, namely we had sports competitions, jumping, putting the stone, wrestling, relay race, 3000 meters race and so on, I'm in the glee club, we got to sing a few songs, it was very nice. The game lasted from 2 to 5 pm, many English officers were there, and they watched. So the days in summer go by pretty quickly, only we wish more with each passing day, finally to come home.

24.5. In course of the week the about 1,200 men were taken away from the camp, they say, they went to France to work.

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25.5. Today there were beautiful sports- games again, there were several prizes, our camp has won.

1. June 1919. Today we had for the very first time in captivity salt potatoes and goulash for lunch. The kitchen had been saving the potatoes for a week, it was nice and we were all glad , also we got sausage and canned meat donated by the German Red Cross, it was also very nice, it came from Denmark.

8. June 1919. Pentecost, the weather is very nice, At 6.30 in the morning there was an early concert by our camp band, and at 7.0 am a football game, the whole day went on like this. The kitchen also cooked something special, once again it is salt potatoes and goulash, then rice pudding, again today the food was beautiful. But the bad thing is that again we have not received writing paper for 14 days, although we have complained about this several times before.

9. June 1919. Pentecost holiday. In the morning concert the glee club sang a few songs, afternoon foot and fistball games with the winners from yesterday. The weather is still good, but rather cloudy sometimes, so we spent the holiday as well as we could, especially as everyone says it is the last *hohe Feiertag*, which we will experience in captivity.

15.6. During the week, nothing special, everyone speaks of the coming peace, there is always a lot going on, everyone is looking forward to the newspapers if anyone hears anything, it is immediately retold. The question of when we get out of here plays the leading role, and there are many rumours which are usually not true.

21.6. In the course of the week prisoners came from other smaller camps came here, in place of those who have gone to work in France, namely a division of 1300 men have gone. Now everyone believes again, now it's starting soon. A chess betting game is being played in the camp, and is spreading to others too; it is played a lot in almost every barracks, especially since the weather is poor again.

22.6. Today, everyone is in a state of excitement as to whether the peace is signed or not. Later in the evening there was a cheer, the English guards were calling from outside: "The peace is signed". It is very bad weather, a terrible storm, half a tree is broken and a hut is badly damaged.

29.6. In the course of the week all spoke of the peace, many rumours were circulating one thinks it is signed, the others did not, then again, we'll be gone soon, then again, it will take a long time, so it goes on.

30.6. We were not told that the peace was signed, although we thought it was because the English were already making a noise and playing music everywhere, until when the newspaper came, then we saw it.

2.7.1919 Today the devil was out in the camp, for some time now there has been less food at noon, or the food has not been cooked until evening, now the potato was missing again, when these words were said at the roll call, everything went awry, we went on strike and the count could not be made, the order to assemble was made several times, but none came. So the garrison at Oswestry was alarmed, more than half a regt. of soldiers entered to the camp, but still no one came. The commander promised to provide the missing food, and because it was 2.00 in the afternoon we went to roll call and by 3 o'clock it was quiet again, the soldiers covered their bayonets again, but it was said that as soon as the delivery was wrong again, the rumpus would return. The English were afraid it would come to a direct revolt, but we had achieved our purpose, the matter will have to be reported upwards, so hopefully it will be better. In the evening I went to the theatre, the social drama "Franz Wilde".

3. July 19. Today was a terrible storm, heavy rain and hail, it was particularly large hailstones, because of the bad weather we did not need to complete the extra roll call.

7.6.19. The strike brought some good, we do not need to line up in the afternoon, we have complete freedom to play and so on. In the past we were always interrupted by the roll call.

9.7. There is also a lot more to buy in the canteen and much cheaper, cigarettes, tobacco and food, once the items were smuggled into the camp by the guards, so we had to pay twice as much.

13. July 19. In the night a prisoner in the East camp was shot dead by a guard, there should have been a big football game and the theatre today but because of this matter nothing was played in any camp. For us it is still quiet, but in the East camps and officers' camp everyone is on strike today, even those who would otherwise have gone to work, six companies of soldiers have already been called in, everyone is very bitter about the case, as for the situation, we do not know yet exactly, one tells it one way, another a different way.

14.7.19. Last night the strike in the eastern camp was settled again. We got the invitation from the officers' camp to take part in the strike because of our retention in England, but we have provisionally rejected this, on the grounds of not knowing whether we will be staying here much longer or not. Such a request should first be addressed to the authorities. We have extended the peaceful period with games etc. for three days, the English have noticed this. An ably

worded invitation has been sent to the commander for a delegation from our camp to go to the funeral of the assassinated comrade to lay wreaths at the grave.

15.7. Today there was a delegation to the funeral of our comrades shot in the East (camp) various speeches were made at the grave, this was previously prohibited.

20.7. For three days the British have celebrated the victory, there is a lot of noise, you can watch it from the camp, but we are irritated by the celebration, so we do not go, a few individuals were for running around there, but they were held back again by others, Today, the football players from the East camp came, there was a big sweepstake, almost the entire camp watched. Our camp won the game again.

30.7. Nothing special. There are new rumours about our removal every day, you hear all sorts of things, but none are right. People are still examined for D.U. (*duodenal ulcer*) If the doctor writes D.U. then they are sent home. Now I have reported my wound too, as it is always interesting to see what there is.

4. August 1919. There is a lot going on with money in the camp now, despite it being prohibited. It is the gambling game, in all corners there are tables with dice and cards, looks like at the funfair. I never play, but often watch, time passes by well. I went to the theatre again today, it was "*Die Logenbrüder*" it was pretty funny and people laughed quite heartily again.

10. August Sunday. Morning concert outdoors. It is very hot, the English guards took off their coats, rolled up shirt sleeves and are unbelted on guard. Now you hear almost daily talk about when we will be gone, always there's something new, one has heard this, the other that. Most estimate November, many well until Christmas. If you think like this, you will soon go crazy.

12.8.19. For the third time I have taken part in a walk today, there are always 400 men with usually a 10 man escort and one officer, but always everything is comfortable.

13.8. I have quite strong stomach pain today, could not eat anything all day.

14.8. I am somewhat better, but I am not completely healthy again, I have taken medicine twice. Today I went to the doctor, to have a check-up to be considered for D.U. to go to Germany. But it has not worked out, my complaint was not strong enough. The weather is still very nice and quite hot.

20.8. Today I went to the theatre again, the play was "*Ein Toller Einfall*" and it was again a laugh. Apart from the frequent "rumours" about the removal everything goes on as usual.

24.8. Sunday, very nice warm weather, the imprisonment is felt the most and the sweat most.

29.8. In the theatre it was a *Bunter Abend* today, I was also there once again, it was very nice and we had quite a good laugh.

30.8. Today, the English newspapers said we would be freed, there was great joy. All hope to get away soon.

31.8. Rumours now buzzing constantly, which is quite exceptional, everyone knows something new, sometimes they go almost crazy, this does nothing. These recent days the weather is always quite bad.

2. September 1919. The theatre from the East camp was here today and gave a guest performance of "*Die Spanische Fliege*". I was lucky enough to get an entrance ticket, it was very nice and you could not get out of laughing, which is always good, at least for a time the miserable life is forgotten. In the afternoon there was a football game between the East camp and our camp's team. As the weather in the afternoon was beautiful, the game went well.

7.9. Now more and more is recounted about the evacuation but nothing is true. It's Sunday again, but just about nothing happens. In the evening I went to the theater "*Der Raub der Sabinerinnen*", it was beautiful again.

12.9. Again the post is not really working, again nothing came. Two teams from the eastern camps were back here for football matches, it was pretty lively. Our camp won in both games. The weather is good and very hot.

20.8. (20.9, date wrong) Today three weeks have passed since we were told we would be released, but one does not notice that people have left, opinions are very divided, one is thinking it starts soon, others, it's going to take a long time, so you are always uncertain and do not know what to do. It's maddening, especially now that the days are getting shorter. It's very cold and it rains a lot. At night I could no longer sleep because of the cold and was quite frozen. We all want to go home more and more. The camp is now an art exhibition, there are paintings and carvings, all made here in captivity. There are very beautiful things here. Many British officers have already looked at everything and bought a lot. This week we were able to buy bread for the first time, there were two loaves of bread for the whole barracks every day, four men then shared a loaf, it is not much but a nice addition.

21.8. (21.9, date wrong) Sunday. In the morning it was still raining, but in the afternoon the weather was good, many people went to the East camp. Two teams of us played soccer, our camp won both games.

22.8. (22.9, *date wrong*) Again a lot is said about our evacuation, according to the current rumours, it is taking a long time. In the evening I was back in the theatre for, " *So'n Windhund* " and it was very nice again. Weather is very bad again, it's raining cats and dogs.

28.9. Sunday. Today there is good weather, I washed my laundry in the morning, but it was so cold that I could barely hold the brush. Then I was late for church. There was football game in the afternoon, made up of the best teams of the camp, so it was a very nice game. The rumours about our removal are back especially as people have already left from a nearby camp, so most of us believe our camp is close to leaving. For two days, however, the railway workers here in England have been on strike, since Friday we have not seen a single train pass, the transportation is suspended for the time being. In addition an illness has broken out in the East camp, so again it's said we have to stay here longer. Then again someone says, 10 ships have arrived from Germany, we have to hurry to the port, so everyone brings something new. We have not received bread for two days, biscuit instead, because rail strike is restricting the supply.

5.10. Rail traffic stopped for a week, you only saw a train now and then. This is particularly unpleasant for us because we hoped to get away soon, thus the whole thing is delayed again. Today, Sunday, the weather is very nice, so in the afternoon there was an interesting football game, almost the whole camp watched. In the evening I went to the theatre, " *Jugend* " was performed, it was a drama, but very beautiful.

7.10. Thank God the strike is over, and with it our hopes are rising again that we will get away soon. Now every day there are new rumours again, anything spoken of again, if it were true, then we would have to pack immediately.

15.10. You can now see many trains moving, especially coal and goods. Nothing is known about our transport.

20.10. In recent days the weather is very nice after the last rainy days spell. The rumours of our departure are rushing around, always someone knows something "new" again, only to say we are almost the last camp to get away, then it is said it will start soon, hardly is it over, than it is said there were 1,000 men gone in a week, the next says it is 2,000 men, then again it is said 1000 a day, again another says it is 2000 daily, and one man reports the highlight; by November 2nd everyone must be away from the camp, so it is like this every day now. But no one knows anything accurate, so you have to wait and see what comes. The best is that when everything is said, no one believes anything. A transport from the hospital has now left with 145 men. We have only just received our winter blankets and linen was issued again, also I got a new shirt, thus hopes are still very divided. There is very little post.

21.10. It was announced today that we would get away, and that the whole camp would be vacated by November 2nd, at the same time a loud cheer. For all the joy was great.

22.10. Although still very much doubt here that we are getting away, almost nothing is said about transport.

23.10. Today I went on a walk again, while we were passing the East camp, we saw that here people were already giving up their things, the evacuation had already started this week. When we came back, we were immediately asked, and when we said what we had seen and heard in the East camp and heard, it was believed.

24.10. There is a rush in the canteen, it's colossal, people are buying everything now, it's hard to get to buy anything. The weather is very bad again, very heavy rain and quite cold.

25.10. Transports are already gone from the East camp and here the first lists have already been read, so it will begin here soon.

26. October 1919. Hurray, the last Sunday in captivity is over. Today I was picked in the third transport list, and we have already been issued a set of laundry. In the day the weather was good, but at night it rained again. Afternoon there was a lecture by a bomber pilot, who was shot down during a flight over London, there are now seven pilots here, these people are not put on the English transport lists, they go from one camp to another. For this reason, the lecturer begged us to plead for their release to their homeland. These people have had too much suffering in captivity, they have been locked up in prisons, they have been brought to many camps, one had a placard hung on his chest with the inscription: "This is one of the children killers" So this man was led handcuffed through a city, with the naturally disgusted people throwing stones at him.

27.10. It was a crazy day today; first we first roll call at 7.00am, so that our belongings could be handed in by the 9.00 transport. It also went as far as the beds beings made and all the other things got ready. The rations had been distributed, then, shortly after noon the said the transport was stopped, of course, everyone was dejected. Then around 3 o'clock again it was said the transportation was getting away because then all screamed: "It's starting." Then you could not hear yourself speak. In the evening however blankets were distributed so folk stayed here, although "rumours" of the transport resurfaced a few times, you could hear similar shouting and stomping in other huts. There is heavy rain it's as cold as winter.

28.10. In the morning there was still no message that the transport was leaving, it was not until after lunch that was announced that it would start at night, of course there was again a lot of cheering.

29.10. During the night around 2.00am the first transport left. Today, the second transport gave their things in, today we have signed the roll of names. The weather is very bad, cold and a lot of rain. Everyone speaks only of the journey and home.

30.10. Finally today the beautiful day has come. Morning 9:00 we gave up the straw mattresses, which took 1 hour. Then at half past eleven the bed boards and blankets, it was noon. One o'clock dishes & plates, again more than an hour. Half past three went with luggage to the control point, as there were 1,000 men it lasted another two hours. Then there was still distribution of rations, as it was evening. Finally, I have a kettle of cooked potato boiled and fried. In the night 1.40 we must start. The weather was bad in the morning, but during the day it was lovely and warm.

Rations to April 1, 1919		
bread	daily	5 ounces
horsemeat ³⁵	5 x weekly	4 oz
bacon	1 x weekly	1 3/5 ounce
x Herring	1 x weekly	10 ounces
salt		¼ ounce
coffee		½ ounce
potatoes		20 ounces
sugar		1 ounce
vegetables		4 oz
zwieback		4 oz
Beans or peas		2 ounces
rice		1 2/7 ounce
pepper		1/100 ounce
margarine		3/14 ounce
Oats per week		2 ounces

x As a substitute for herring 4 ounces horsemeat.

If there is no bread or rusk, the same amount of the other component.

Board from April 1, 1919		
loaf		7 ½ oz
horsemeat		4 4/5 oz
bacon		3 1/5 oz
herring		10 ounces
salt		¼ oz
coffee		½ ounce
potatoes		20 ounces
sugar		1 ounce
vegetables		4 oz
zwieback		2 ounces
Beans or peas		2 ounces
rice		1 2/7 ounce
pepper		1/100 ounce
margarine		1 3/7 ounce
Beans with pork		4 oz

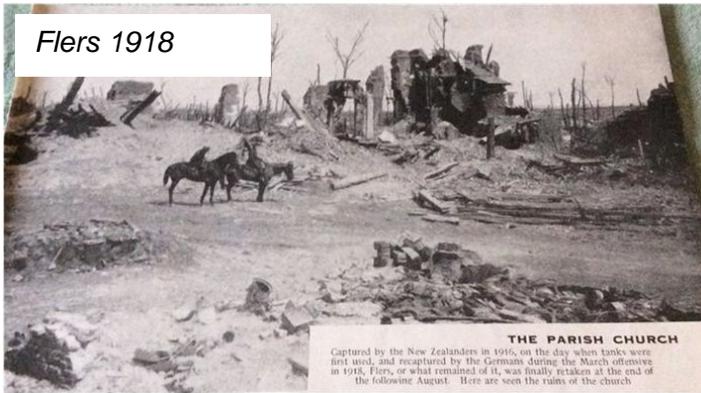
1 oz is 28 grams



Wilhelm Eid's Grandson Joachim Rettig



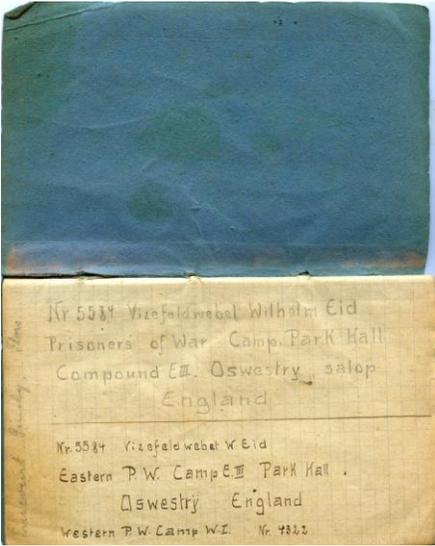
Wilhelm Eid on active service in the German Army



Flers 1918

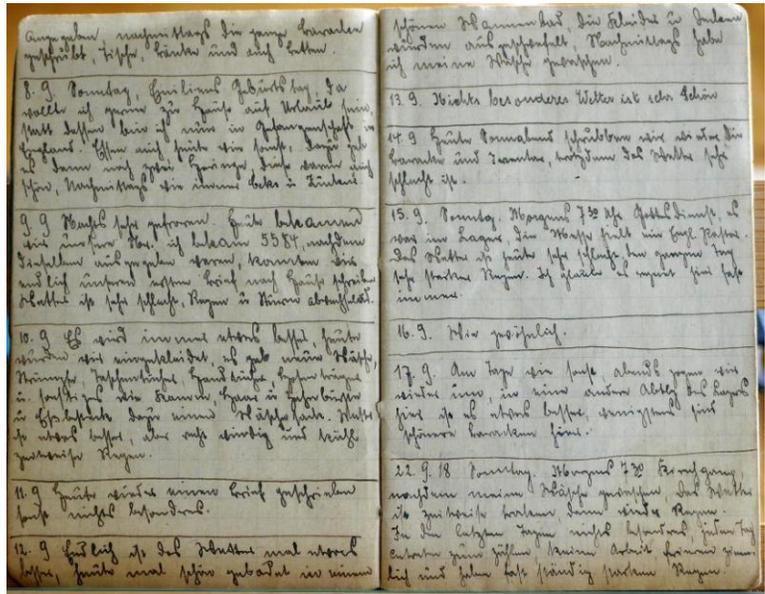
Park Hall Camp 1914





The Park Hall Diary

Front Page and extract written in September 1918



Photographs from Oswestry Family and Local History Group showing prisoners of war in costume and uniform in 1919-20
 OSW-NP-O-30-25 & OSW-NP-O-30-26