

**Diary of George Middleton Gibson**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant – Northumberland Fusiliers**  
**Prisoner of War**  
**September 5<sup>th</sup> to December 8<sup>th</sup> 1918**  
**Germany**

Transcribed by Robert Gibson Shaw – October 2002

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Diary

Sept 5 Captured with 8 men while on patrol west of Cambrai (France) south of La Basse Canal about noon. We were marched back about 20 kilo and on the way were interviewed by several officers who gained no information. I was greatly astonished at the wretched state of the German transport. About 9 o'clock we reached Phenalfin where I was separated from my men. I was locked up in a cell after a very meagre meal of bread and jam the 1<sup>st</sup> I had had since 5 AM, the cell contained plain wooden bed without bedding. I was too cold to sleep and was severely handled by fleas. There was a Canadian Flying Officer Holland from Vancouver in the next cell.

Sept 6 I was allowed out in the yard next morning and was able to have a wash at the pump, a French woman gave me a towel to use. I walked round the yard for some time surrounded by German privates. Then I went back to my cell and Holland took my place in the yard. Later on I was once more taken before a German officer and questioned. So far I have been very well treated by the German officers, especially the Lieut I first saw just a few 100 yds behind the line; he gave me 6 cigarettes & a drink of mineral water and also returned to me my jack knife which had been taken by a private. About noon Holland, I and young naval flying officer & my men were taken by train to Lille. We were marched right through that fine old town to the citadel. On the way my men sang the good old songs much to the delight of the French inhabitants. In the citadel we officers were once more put in solitary confinement.

Food Bum.

Have run out of smokes.

Sept 7 At midday I was taken to another room and at 2 my solitary confinement was ended & I was taken to a room where there were 4 other officers.

Scarlet	Rose	MacEwen	Bond
RA	FC	HLI	KRR

Menu at Lille

Breakfast Tea made of unknown leaves with dreadful taste. No milk or sugar.

Dinner Limited bread & soup could be eaten when very hungry.

Supper Coffee made of acorns. Bread & jam of sorts in small quantities.

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8<sup>th</sup> Left Lille en route for Karlsruhe, we five officers and Charles Le Grand, sergeant Pilot Belgian army.

A motley crowd.

A British Tommy was detailed to carry a sack with our rations, which for a journey of unknown length was 9 loaves of bread as heavy as lead & a tin of beautiful pigs blood which was really intended for food, but in reality was a source of amusement, as we could neither cut it or give it away to soldiers or civilians.

Our guard consisted of a Sergt & 2 privates.

The citizens were again most sympathetic on our march to the station and we got several present handed to us on the way.

Some tobacco by a man, a piece of bread by a child & a 1 mark note by a woman. Scarlet & Le Grand both spoke French, and they spoke to several people whose great question was when would the allies take Lille and we said within a month and this proved to be true.

Cost of articles at Lille

A 1 lb loaf cost	10 francs
1 egg	2 francs
Butter	50 francs per Kilo
Boots soled & heeled	41 francs

Entrained in a cattle truck at 2 PM and arrived at Tournai at 4 PM and were kept in the guard room in the station till 9 next morning, thanks to the kindness of a German Corporal we were able to buy some honey & sardines.

9<sup>th</sup> Sept Proceeded on our journey as far as ATH where the engine went away and left us stranded on the rails from 9 AM till 5 PM when we proceeded to Brussels by civil train.

During our wait on the rails whe civilians were very good, on running to his home & bringing us a huge dish of potatoes French beans & some stewed apple.

At Ath we saw an example of how the German soldiers treated the Belgian women.

Arrived at Brussels at 5 PM after a splendid view of the city particularly the Palais de Justice.

The American Red Cross gave us a 2 lb loaf of bread each cut into slices half with margarine & half with honey and 2 meat risoles which was a God send

11 PM left Brussels & travelled all night through NAMUR & LUXEMBURG arriving at SARABUCKEN at 11 PM.

Spent the night in the waiting room.

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11<sup>th</sup> Sept 4 AM left Sarabucken & arrived at STRASBOURG at 8 AM where the people seemed to meet us with pity more than hostility. We were able to buy quite a fair meal at an outrageous price. Left Strasbourg about 11 AM arriving KARLSRUHE about 2-3 PM. Here we were marched through a very fine town to the Hotel STATLER or what used to be that in better days. Scarlet Bond & I shared one room.

12<sup>th</sup> Sept Got up 10 AM feeling much better after our very tiring journey. Food was a little better but we were always hungry. MacEwen joined us. Russian prisoners brought our meals.

13<sup>th</sup> Sept Bond & I were taken to another room where there were 3 British Flying Officers (one being Shipman of Nottingham) & an American. At the present 3 are catching lice & squashing the eggs. V.B. AIR Raid.

14<sup>th</sup>, 15, 16, 17<sup>th</sup> no change

18<sup>th</sup> Sept Were taken to camp, and were able to send cable via Geneva. We were very carefully searched before being admitted to the camp, about 30 of us. After searching we are allotted to huts Scarlet, Bond, MacEwen & self going into a hut already containing 4 men Capt Wheatly, Tucker, Tayler & Benjamin a very moderate bunch. Glorious feeling to be able to walk about in the open air after our long confinement.

19<sup>th</sup> Sept Issued out with clean shirt pants & socks by Red Cross. We now start to draw Biscuits & Emergency Red Cross rations & with the help of these we are able to have one good meal a day & one or 2 biscuits for breakfast.

27<sup>th</sup> Sept Whist drive in afternoon. Concert in evening.

29<sup>th</sup> Sept 3 British & 2 American officers tried to escape, but were all caught, and we were hauled out of bed in middle of night for Roll Call.

2<sup>nd</sup> Oct Received our first pay. During this last 2 weeks I suffered much under the German bricklayer (dentist).

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5<sup>th</sup> 6<sup>th</sup> 7<sup>th</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> heard news in German papers about their asking for an armistice.

Remark

Karlsruhe was a well conducted camp, the Commandant & other officers were very courteous & treated us well, we had plenty of room to walk about in & the camp was well supplied with a recreation room & library. The canteen was not a success, it was run by Germans and the prices were inflated.

8<sup>th</sup> Oct Left Karlsruhe for destination unknown 63 British Officers of all regiments except Flying Corps.

Left Karlsruhe 11.30  
Arrived Heidelberg 1.30  
" Frankfurt 6.30

9<sup>th</sup> Oct Last night fearfully cold had no sleep

10<sup>th</sup> Oct Arrived Berlin at 2 AM had a feed of macaroni soup about 5 AM  
Left Berlin at 12.30 PM

Arrived KREUZ about 10 PM had another feed of Bread & butter, sausage & coffee substitute & a few of us managed to wangle some soup as well.

11<sup>th</sup> Oct night D--- Cold arrived 8 AM KONIZ where once again we fed. Bread & butter Sausage & Coffee

Arrived KONIGSBERG [renamed Kalingrad] at 7.30 & were shunted into a siding where we are met by a German Field Marshall & his staff, and are given another meal. Never saw so many sentries before in my life.  
Slept the night in the train surrounded by sentries.

12<sup>th</sup> Oct Moved about 8.30 AM & arrived at PILLAU [renamed Baltiysk (across Gulf of Danzig from Gdansk, Poland) 9.30. We then marched about 2 miles to camp at KAMSTIGALL accompanied by Field Marshall & staff. Camp on a promontory into a bay on the Baltic.

We are the first officers to come to the camp and everything is upside down. We were all searched most thoroughly and it took nearly 3 days and as you were passed you were taken to another part of the camp.

13<sup>th</sup> Bond Scarlet & self are in the same hut with 9 others.

14 Roll call 10 AM. steps taken to form committees.

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15 Food disgraceful.

Rations Breakfast coffee

Bread ration for day about 5 oz

Dinner soup made of dry mangolds

Supper soup as for lunch

This soup has practically no food value and certainly never sees meat.

18<sup>th</sup> Oct Text of Wilson's reply read to us. We evidently want no future between new German Gov & Militarists.

19<sup>th</sup> Oct Run out of dried mangolds and thank God get a few vegetables for dinner instead.

20<sup>th</sup> Oct News of fall of Lille & Ostend & good news from Palestine.

21<sup>st</sup> Oct Two doctors depart for Blighty and promised to let the authorities know about our plight.

22<sup>nd</sup> Oct Signed parole for purpose of walks & games.

A few parcels.

Went for walk for about ¾ of hour and then found out how weak we were from starvation, I felt bad from the result all the next day. Some of the men in the camp brought considerable food with them & some got parcels, but our hut is doing a straight starve.

23<sup>rd</sup> Oct A batch of 150 Flying Officers arrive.

News of fall of Bruges & Courtrai.

No rations for new officers so had to share ours.

24<sup>th</sup> Oct The new arrivals have brought quite a bit of food & some red cross biscuits. They decide to issue 15 biscuits per man throughout the camp. I have never valued anything so much in my life.

25<sup>th</sup> Oct Text of Germanys reply to Wilson seemingly nothing to stop peace now.

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Turkey & Austria ask for separate peace.  
Hope to get home for Christmas

30<sup>th</sup> Oct Cookson gets a food parcel

31<sup>st</sup> Oct Best dinner yet.

Nov 1<sup>st</sup> Official news of revolution in Austria & flight of Kaiser Carl

Nov 2<sup>nd</sup> Another batch of officers arrive

Nov 3<sup>rd</sup> More officers arrive including Brigadier Pardre & some merchant marine officers.  
Good war news Turkey & Austria finished

Nov 4<sup>th</sup> Bitter cold morning. Were kept waiting a long time for morning parade so walked off parade.  
Burgess gets cigarette parcel. Sergeant a biscuit parcel.

Nov 5 Details of terms to Austria & Turkey.  
Flying officer arrested for insolence to German officer & given 3 days.

Nov 7 News arrived from Copenhagen that food from Red Cross is on the way.  
Lodged food complaint. Officially stated that hostilities have ceased for German staff to visit Froch.

Nov 8 Roll call to be in huts in future.

Nov 9 News of riots in Germany. Every sign of terms being accepted. Food question very acute squabbles over a few biscuits. Men show up in their true light. Scarlett dines out.

Nov 10 Kaiser & Crown Prince go. Bavaria a Republic. Armistice signed. Rumours of riots in Pillau. Roll call outside again. Boche officers seem windy.  
9 PM Warning by our Brigadier to be quiet & ready for a sudden move. Stock taken of food in camp.

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Nov 11 No developments in night. General addressed us after Roll Call & told us the situation as far as he knew.

Workmen & Soldiers council in charge at Pillau & Konigsberg & wish us to take charge of camp until all arrangements made for our removal. Economy of food to be observed. (Very easy for us in our hut)

Railways said to be normal. Letters & parcels to be distributed at once by us. Officers seem to have joined the soldiers party and a little interpreter seems to be the chief man amongst the Germans now, all their officers and men have taken off their had badges.

The little interpreter was only last week given 3 days CB [Confined to Barracks] for getting food through from outside to us.

12 Armistice definitely signed. All we now want is food & letters.

13<sup>th</sup> The greatest day of all

Campbell received clothes parcel & gave me braces & shaving soap & brush. A sailor gave me a piece of soap.

The help committee gave me a pair of servicable boots.

In the evening I received a 1<sup>st</sup> captured parcel containing

2 oz packet of tobacco

" " chocolate

Golden syrup

Rice

Turbon pudding

Ginger pudding

Sugar

Golden-syrup

Soap

Shaving Soap

Bully

Sausages. Veal loaf

Potted meat

Army rations

Cocoa & Nestles milk

Bond went out to dinner with the Colonel so the remainder of our mess Scarlet & Self had a great meal of Bully & boiled rice with Nestles milk.

The only time I have ever nearly satisfied my appetite since captured.

We have a splendid hut & all help each other.

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15 Nov Pay day !!! Do not know why it is termed so as, after 3 months in Germany & in that time having received only 30 marks I was told I am 18.35 in the hole

16 Nov Cheers!! Bread arrived at last from Copenhagen. Beautiful white bread in 2 lbs loaves. 2 loaves each to last a week. Made pigs of ourselves at tea with toast.  
Hampton dines out with Robrin & makes a beast of himself on his celebrated duff.

18 Nov Told to be ready to move any day

19 Nov Wrote to Grace. Bitterly Cold.

20 Nov Woke up to find the ground covered with snow. German papers say we are to go home via Copenhagen.

21<sup>st</sup> Nov another issue of bread

22<sup>nd</sup> Nov Announced that definite news of our departure is expected in a day or 2. We are to go to Stettin [renamed Szczecin] thence by boat to Copenhagen. All greatly excited.

23<sup>rd</sup> Nov Germany reports that the British Casualties are

Total	3,049,991
Killed	37,876 officers
"	720,728 O.R. [Other Ranks]

Snow still covers ground. Wind very cold & icy where frozen hard. Still patiently waiting a letter.

24<sup>th</sup> Still freezing. Went to Church

Rumours that we are now going back home from Konigsburg.

25 Nov 58 R.A.F. officers arrive from a camp near Munich, to join us for our homeward journey. The latest rumour is that we start from here 4<sup>th</sup> Dec. Issued with half a loaf of bread.

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26<sup>th</sup> Nov Run out of Bread. No signs of letters or parcels.

27<sup>th</sup> Nov General Cunyngham had us together & told us he had been officially told by General Lehmann that we are to be off in 10 days. Got some Bosche tobacco from Cantine. The 1<sup>st</sup> we have had since we left Lille. Not much good but makes a smoke.

28<sup>th</sup> Nov Very cold, very hungry. Worst Birthday I ever remember.

29<sup>th</sup> Nov Rumour that we are to leave Tuesday Dec 3<sup>rd</sup>, still nothing in food line

30<sup>th</sup> Nov Issue of 3 biscuits each. Scarlett receives a Regimental parcel, once more we can eat in moderation.

1<sup>st</sup> Dec Feeling fine thanks to grub. Bacon for lunch with Bosche bread fried in the fat. Rhubarb pudding for dinner.

2<sup>nd</sup> Dec The day of all 2 letters one from home one from Mother & one from Grace announcing the birth of Joan Elizabeth. Most thankful to hear all are well at home.

Rumour that we are not to go on 4<sup>th</sup>.

Scarlett also got a letter from his sister.

Last night Scarlett dreamed that Bond had a letter from home but that there was nothing for himself or me, when he woke he said that dreams always come contrary.

3<sup>rd</sup> Dec Bond receives 1<sup>st</sup> capture parcel.

4<sup>th</sup> Dec Bread arrives so now we have plenty to eat.

News that 1000 emergency parcels are at Pillau so we are at the end of our starvation days.

Reported that we leave Dec 14<sup>th</sup>.

5<sup>th</sup> Dec

Great news today!!!

Have received wire from Berlin to say that we are to leave here either tomorrow or day after & our boat leaves Danzig at 4 AM on Sunday the 8<sup>th</sup>.

We can hardly believe it.

Also a Red Cross representative arrived from Copenhagen today with a huge amount of clothing & food.

26<sup>th</sup> Nov Run out of Bread. No signs of letters or parcels.

27<sup>th</sup> Nov General Cunyngham had us together & told us he had been officially told by General Lehmann that we are to be off in 10 days. Got some Bosche tobacco from Cantine. The 1<sup>st</sup> we have had since we left Lille. Not much good but makes a smoke.

28<sup>th</sup> Nov Very cold, very hungry. Worst Birthday I ever remember.

29<sup>th</sup> Nov Rumour that we are to leave Tuesday Dec 3<sup>rd</sup>, still nothing in food line

30<sup>th</sup> Nov Issue of 3 biscuits each. Scarlett receives a Regimental parcel, once more we can eat in moderation.

1<sup>st</sup> Dec Feeling fine thanks to grub. Bacon for lunch with Bosche bread fried in the fat. Rhubarb pudding for dinner.

2<sup>nd</sup> Dec The day of all 2 letters one from home one from Mother & one from Grace announcing the birth of Joan Elizabeth. Most thankful to hear all are well at home.

Rumour that we are not to go on 4<sup>th</sup>.

Scarlett also got a letter from his sister.

Last night Scarlett dreamed that Bond had a letter from home but that there was nothing for himself or me, when he woke he said that dreams always come contrary.

3<sup>rd</sup> Dec Bond receives 1<sup>st</sup> capture parcel.

4<sup>th</sup> Dec Bread arrives so now we have plenty to eat.

News that 1000 emergency parcels are at Pillau so we are at the end of our starvation days.

Reported that we leave Dec 14<sup>th</sup>.

5<sup>th</sup> Dec

Great news today!!!

Have received wire from Berlin to say that we are to leave here either tomorrow or day after & our boat leaves Danzig at 4 AM on Sunday the 8<sup>th</sup>.

We can hardly believe it.

Also a Red Cross representative arrived from Copenhagen today with a huge amount of clothing & food.

Have got a pair of socks & pair of underdrawers (Made by G W Gibson & Son of Nottingham)  
The Bosche cannot (or wont) look after us. Our own old country will.

6<sup>th</sup> Dec

News arrives that boat is 15 hours late at Danzig so our start is postponed.  
Feeling result of plenty to eat

7<sup>th</sup> Dec Emergency parcels arrive 3 per hut.  
Had to see Dr Davis  
Leave tonight or early tomorrow morning

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BUCKINGHAM PALACE

1918.

The Queen joins me in welcoming you on your release from the miseries & hardships, which you have endured with so much patience & courage.

During these many months of trial, the early rescue of our gallant Officers & Men from the cruelties of their captivity has been uppermost in our thoughts.

We are thankful that this longed for day has arrived, & that back in the old Country you will be able once more to enjoy the happiness of a home & to see good days among those who anxiously look for your return.

George R. J.

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1918

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George R. J.

Good places in London for meals

Pinoli Coventry Street near Leicester Lounge  
Goblin Haddon St of Regents Street  
Simpsons in Strand  
Scotts Picadilly for Shell fish  
Flemings Oxford St for homely food

Old fashioned places in City

Wilkinsons Wallbrook. City  
Cheshire Cheese Fleet Street

Hotels

Bonnington Hotel near Russel Square. Russel Street. Holborn  
Norfolk Hotel in Strand  
Gows Restaurant in Strand for steak & kidney pudding & oysters

Books & Authors

Vachell Quinneys & Brothers  
Arnold Bennet Old wives tales  
Maurice Heulett Open country  
Halfway house  
Rest Harrow  
Letters to Lencia

Compton Mckenzie  
Sinister Street  
Guy & Pauline

Gilbert Cannon  
Modern Young earnest  
Four just men

W L George  
Making of an Englishman  
Oliver Onion

H G Wells  
Research Magnificent  
Passionate friends  
Mr Brittny sees it through  
Marriage  
Wife of Sir Isac Harmon

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William de Morvin  
Hugh Walpole Fortitude  
Mary ~~Dominion~~ Johnson  
Old Dominion  
Jean Webster Daddy Longlegs  
Henry James The American  
The Golden Bowl  
George Merideth  
Charlotte ~~Brunton~~ Bronte Wuthering Heights  
John Masefield Multitude & Solitude  
Fred White  
Joseph Hocking Sword of the Lord  
Garden of Allah  
Scarlet Woman  
S R Crocket  
Mrs Baily Reynolds Supreme Test  
Justice Miles Torman Garden of Mystery  
Eden Philpotts Human Boy  
Marjorie Bowen Third Estate  
Black Magic  
William by the Grace of God  
Sax Rohmer  
Robert Chambers  
Anatole France The Crime of Silvester Bonard  
Joseph Conrad Romance  
Victory  
Sybil Lethbridge  
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Shadow Shapes  
Hyder Haggard  
Marie  
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Montezuma's Daughter  
Statchpole  
Blue Horizon  
Edgar Jepson  
Garden of Mystery  
Locke  
Beloved Vagabond  
Simon the Jester  
Morals of Marcus Audaire  
Gertrude Page  
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F Burgess  
Westholme  
Lower Peover  
Knutsford  
Cheshire

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Westholme  
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J C D Scarlett  
31 Boulevard Haussman  
Paris

J C D Scarlett  
31 Boulevard Haussman  
Paris

J D Hampton  
10 Manley Road  
Whalley Range  
Manchester

JD Hampton  
10 Manley Road  
Whalley Range  
Manchester

W H Bond  
Capital & Counties Bank  
Finsbury Circus  
London EC

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A F McEwen Jnr  
52 Albirt Drive  
Crosshill  
Glasgow  
Scotland

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J.A.S. Gardner  
789 Beverley St G.2469.  
Winnipeg  
R.A.C. Man. Canada

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J C D Scarlett  
89 Geraldine Rd  
Wandsworth  
SW 16

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89 Geraldine Rd  
Wandsworth  
SW16

John R Robertson  
2 Queens Gardens  
Sunderland

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Sunderland



R. Carleton  
Hartington  
Ontario, Canada  
14-12-18

B. L. Rigden  
60 Burgate  
Canterbury

-----  
Leave of absence form  
B 3A  
Deputy director of personal service  
War Office  
Will you please send me the

-----  
Sauder & Lovick

Pte C Jones  
No. 1 Leyton Square  
Peckham Park Rd  
Peckham SE15

Mr Goadly  
46 London Rd  
Reading

Pte E W Collins  
2 Clopton Rd  
Stratford on Avon  
Warwickshire

Spr F C Critchley  
No 688041  
10<sup>th</sup> C R T

YMCA Hut 3  
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Trooper W R Tozer  
R.I.A. 3  
The Canadian Record Office  
Old Baily  
London EC4

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Eastfield House  
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