

Five years as a 'guest' of Adolf

Finding the descendants of my Fathers saviours from 1945



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5 lost years as a POW from 1940 to 1945

The story of five lost years and an incredible reunion of families

Name of POW: Lance Corporal Robert "Ianto" Evans.

British Army 1st Battalion of the Royal Welch Fusiliers

From: Dinas Mawddwy, Wales.

Regular Soldier Robert Evans enlisted with The Royal Welch Fusiliers October 1930 at Wrexham Barracks aged 18 years and 43 days.

Service at Home and Abroad:

Home from 01/10/1930 to 08/10/1931

Gibraltar from 09/10/1931 to 20/10/1934

China (Hong Kong, Singapore and Shanghai) from 21/10/1934 to 17/03/1938

Home from 18/03/1938 to 23/09/1939

Belgium and France 24/09/1939 to 22/05/1940

Appointed unpaid Lance Corporal in February 1940

Reported missing believed dead 25/05/1940 to 30/05/1940

Later confirmed as captured at St Omer, near Dunkirk, France 23/05/1940

Prisoner of War 23/05/1940 to February 1945

Detained at various POW Camps in Germany and Poland, with the Red Cross Certificate of Detention Records obtained by Bob's Son showing him to be at Stalag XX1B on 03/06/1940 before being transferred to Stalag XX1A on 20/08/1940 with other POW cards and repatriation form showing him at Lamsdorf 344 and work camp Blechhammer E793 from 1942 to 1945.

Escaped during forced march from Blechhammer between 17th and 20th February 1945 to Munchengrätz (Mnichovo Hradiste) Czechoslovakia.

Repatriated Home from Prague 22/05/1945.

Home on Release Leave 02/11/1945 - Class 'A' Release 06/03/1946.

FRONT COVER: Mnichovo Hradiste Town Hall with both Czech Republic and Union Jack (UK) flags raised as requested by the British Embassy for the official Memorial Presentation on the 21st May 2022.

Captured at St Omer

This account was patiently extracted from Robert Evans (Also known as Ianto 10 & Bob Shanghai) by his brother-in-law, the late Bill Breeze (RWF). By this time Bob had reached pensionable age and feelings had mellowed slightly towards his German captors and tormentors. Taking things very slowly, and never pushing the pace, Bill eventually managed to put together as accurate an account as possible of Bob's experiences before and after what he considered to be his most humiliating surrender to the enemy. This was later edited and added to by Bob's youngest Son Cyril Breeze Evans.

When asked of his initial reaction to being taken prisoner, he quickly retorted "I cursed myself for falling into the enemy trap. There was I, a regular soldier, trained to fight during wars and with over ten years' service, captured and unable to do anything to try and improve what was a very drastic situation. I did eventually however come to terms with my bad luck and realised that there was absolutely nothing I could have done about it".

Unlike many of his fine comrades, Bob was not to fight with the 1st Battalion RWF during its last moments of heroic defensive action, which earned it the continuing praise and glory the regiment deserved. Sporadic firing had brought home the realisation to high-ranking Officers that the 1st RWF had given its all before fading out of existence at nightfall.

Bob had been home on leave and had married Ella when news filtered through of the Panzer blitzkrieg, and of the British and Allied Armies reeling backwards in pandemonium and disarray. Their often out-dated arms were seemingly useless against the most modern and best equipped Army in the world.

Returning to France and unable to get to the remnants of his battalion, Bob, together with many others trying to get to their units, were duly formed into a mixed group of soldiers tasked with trying to halt the approaching Wehrmacht with their seemingly indestructible tanks. The British Boyd Anti-Tank Rifle did no damage to the Panzers, who tore away relentlessly in all directions to surround the more or less defenceless British and Allied soldiers.

Bob and his companions manned concrete bunkers at Saint Omer, near Dunkirk, in the vain hope of turning back the determined foe, who pressed onwards regardless of all efforts. Having fought valiantly and with many badly wounded, they decided that to continue fighting from the bunkers would be suicidal for all. They withdrew and joined a convoy of civilian and military vehicles as well as those on foot, who were causing chaos and obstruction. French people were pushing handcarts and prams, or rode on horse-drawn carts with all they had left in the world piled up beside them, making the roads virtually impassable for artillery and supplies.

A British officer came to meet them in a jeep and stopped to question them of the situation up front as he had to collect his heavy guns. They assured the officer that he may as well turn around for the fighting was dreadful and that he had no hope of retrieving the guns. He was however determined to proceed and drove on towards the front but soon returned. He admitted that it was a lost cause and offered to take three or four of the wounded with him.



Bob's medals and Dunkirk official Veterans badge



Newspaper cutting of Bob being reported missing



**Bob and Ella's wedding in 1940
Bob's Brother Dick and Sister
Jinny standing behind**

One Fusilier with a severe head wound declined the offer, deciding to remain with his mates on the march towards the nearest Channel Port. It was later realised that he had felt safer in the company of the two Battalion boxers, Bob and Bill Grimes. Sometime later a French Officer halted his jeep and offered to convey the three mates to the Dunkirk. As they were now tiring and with the wounded comrade's condition gradually deteriorating, they were glad to accept the kind offer from an ally and climbed onto the jeep.

Rounding a bend, and running straight into a road block, they were swiftly surrounded by German Soldiers branding revolvers. Too late they realised that the French Officer had turned side so as to work as a collaborator for the enemy.

Bill Grimes' remark of "look at that bastard going back to trap more Britishers" brought on a sickly kind of feeling. Their German captors walked laughingly into a French pub, taking their prisoners with them, but not for a drink! Getting noisier they were ordered outside by one of their Officers, leaving one of the soberer Jerry's with a sub-machine gun in charge of the prisoners. Bill Grimes, fearless as ever, and ready to take a chance, asked Bob which hand he hit the hardest with, and told him to stand on his strongest side, as he himself could hit equally as swift and hard with either hand. Just as they got into position to flatten the guard, they saw a crowd of enemy soldiers coming for them, it was just luck that they hadn't lashed out, for they would surely have been shot without hesitation had they gone ahead with their plan to escape.

Marched in large columns, they were taken on a long, weary and agonising march initially to Luxembourg, halting only at night so as to be packed in tight groups into sheds or buildings whilst constantly and carefully guarded. During this march Bob met up again with some of his best battalion pals such as Bill Jones and Dai Jenkins. Looking down from a hill on a massed crowd of prisoners below, he wondered who was left of the British and their Allies to stop the German war machine from conquering Britain, as they had Holland, Belgium and France.

No. 9/1 Army Form B. 104—88
(If replying, please quote above No.)

16 JUN 1940
SHREWSBURY

Record Office,
19

SIR OR MADAM,

I regret to have to inform you that a report has been received from the War Office to the effect that (No. 4189310) (Rank) Major (Name) EVANS Robert (Regiment) THE ROYAL WELCH FUSILIERS was posted as "missing" on the date not known.

The report that he is missing does not necessarily mean that he has been killed, as he may be a prisoner of war or temporarily separated from his regiment.

Official reports that men are prisoners of war take some time to reach this country, and if he has been captured by the enemy it is probable that unofficial news will reach you first. In that case I am to ask you to forward any postcard or letter received at once to this Office, and it will be returned to you as soon as possible.

Should any further official information be received it will be at once communicated to you.

I am,
SIR OR MADAM,
Your obedient Servant,
Blum
Lieut.
Officer in charge of Records.

IMPORTANT.
Any change of your address should be immediately notified to this Office.

WL 5000/12549 400,000 (16) 9/39 KJL/8812 Op 698/3 Form B.104—88/9

Letters received by Ella following Bob being reported missing and then later reported as being a POW

No. 3015/1098 Army Form B. 104—88A.
(If replying, please quote above No.)

14 JUL 1940
SHREWSBURY

Record Office,
Station.
19

SIR OR MADAM,

I have to inform you that a report has been received from the War Office to the effect that (No.) 4189310 (Rank) Lt Col. (Name) EVANS ROBERT (Regiment) THE ROYAL WELCH FUSILIERS is a Prisoner of War. Place not stated.

Should any other information be received concerning him, such information will be at once communicated to you.

Instructions as to the method of communicating with Prisoners of War can be obtained at any Post Office.

I am,
~~SIR OR~~ MADAM,
Your obedient Servant,
Blum
Officer in charge of Records, Capt.

IMPORTANT.—Any change of your address should be immediately notified to this Office. It should also be notified, if you receive information from the soldier above, that his address has been changed.

WL 50241/1270 500M. 9/39. KJL/8812 Op. 698/3 Form B.104—88A/9

Ref. No. 566 242 b-bis
Geneva, 18 6 40

Dear Madam, (Sir)

We beg to inform you that we have received a card dated 11-6-40 from the STALAG XXI B in Germany advising us that EVANS Robert Lance Corporal R. W. Fusiliers born 19 2 12 is interned in that camp.

From now on you can send letters to the above mentioned prisoner of war to the address given, adding the following: "Kriegsgefangenenpost" (prisoners of war post) and "Gebührenfrei" (free of postal charges).

He is well

Yours faithfully,
Comité International de la Croix Rouge
Agence centrale des otages de guerre
GENÈVE



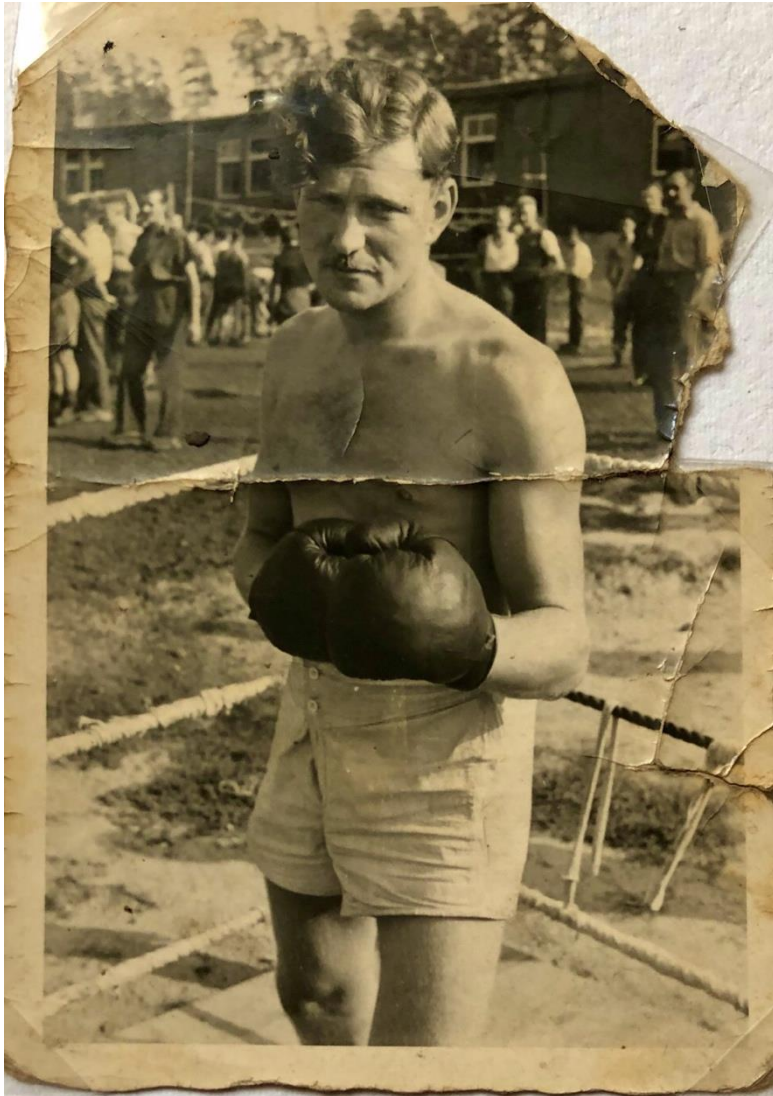
All outward signs seemed to be discouraging for it seemed that the War was turning heavily in favour of the enemy whichever way they cared to look at the situation.

Red Cross parcels did not arrive in sufficient quantity so as to support them in their drastic need, neither did they know for some time whether or not their relatives had been informed of their whereabouts as no mail was arriving at the camp. Some of the German Guards enjoyed throwing crusts of bread into canals or rivers so as to watch the starving prisoners jump into the water to try and retrieve them. They laughed as the hungry men splashed about and struggled, and even fought in the water in an effort to grab even the smallest portion so as to satisfy their craving stomachs.

Bob recalled Guards screaming 'Raus, Raus', while they were trying to load their prisoners into lorries, and suddenly recognising the voice of a fellow soldier from his home village of Dinas Mawddwy. Jack, who had been a labourer on a farm called Tan-y-Bwlch, shouted to him "try and get on a lorry for ???? Camp, I hear that news is getting home from there of those who have been captured and still alive". It is not known whether Bob managed to get to that camp or not, but he did meet up with another Dyfi Valley Soldier, a Welsh Guardsman by the name of John Jones from Maespoeth, Corris.

Later they were herded tightly into a cold and dirty unused factory building or warehouse, where the guards, determined to dish out more cruelty, would burst into their midst, select a young soldier and force him to stand to attention with arms above his head. Should his arms drop even a little then severe punishment followed to the sound of German laughter.

Bob remembers a particular occurrence when a poor young Fusilier named Owens, who was almost asleep on his feet due to the fatigue of long marches, was selected for their cruel game, knowing full well that he didn't have enough strength left to hold out for long. Another of their captors' favourite games was to aggravate their prisoners by cupping their hands and shouting as loud as they could into their ears.



Bill Grimes at POW Camp. Bob and Bill made at least one unsuccessful escape attempt together



Idris Owens at POW Camp. He was made to stand to attention until he passed out



Bob's great friend Bill Grimes survived being shot through the throat during an escape attempt

Under normal conditions, one could tolerate such abuse by regarding it as pure stupidity, but being a prisoner who dare not complain or retaliate was a different matter altogether, as the slightest show of resentment saw a loaded rifle being raised to the firing position.

The Welsh Guardsman from Corris, quite understandably, and like many others, was by now showing signs of low spirits and voiced his belief to Bob that neither of them would return to the Dyfi Valley. Bob always strove to say the right thing at the right time to cheer his mate up despite the gloomy outlook, as indeed he did with many other fellow prisoners. Managing to keep both his own and his comrade's hopes and spirits up, he became known as 'The Propaganda King'.

Working outside the camp area under the ever-watchful eyes of their guards, Bob felt the shivering that usually precedes a heavy dose of influenza, and having been ordered to remove overcoats and place them on the fence nearby, he asked the permission of a German equivalent to his own rank of Lance Corporal, to wear his as he was unwell. The German hailed his Sergeant Major so as to pass on Bob's request. Walking over, the Sergeant Major stared at Bob and then hit him hard on the face and ordered him to continue working.

Later on Bob asked the Lance Corporal to pass on a message to his Sergeant Major saying that he had initially respected him as someone who like himself, was a regular soldier before the War, but said that he had now lost what little respect he had for him following his cowardly attack on a defenceless POW and, furthermore, should he have the guts to get in the ring with him, then he'd get his deserved pasting.



Head of POW Camp who had been a POW himself in Britain during 1914-18 War



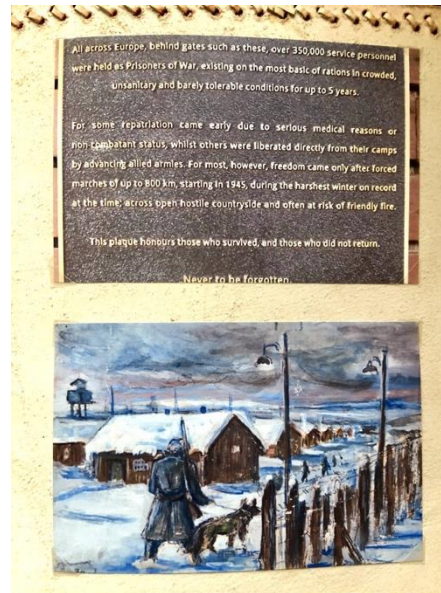
Funeral at POW Camp

Strangely, there was no response from the German NCO indeed, he seemed to regret his actions that day and from then on offered Bob much fairer treatment whenever he was in his working party.

The situation improved with the regular arrival of nourishing Red Cross food and clothing parcels, whilst letters from home brought comfort and solace as well as a greater determination to survive against all efforts to rob them of spirit and dignity. Soon, but not too soon, the noise and sight of passing bombers brought with them a message of hope and the realisation that the tide was turning. The German attitude was also different as the situation was changing in Allied favour, with the guards becoming more tolerant and showing a marked leniency, a sure sign of their growing uncertainty as to who would be victorious.

The guards began praising the accuracy of the British bombers in avoiding the unnecessary death of civilians whenever it was possible but complained of the indiscriminate use of HE bombs by the Yanks on households and hospitals with no effort to avoid unnecessary loss of lives. Bob grabbed the opportunity to remind the enemy of their indiscriminate destruction of British towns and cities such as Liverpool and Coventry, when they too robbed ordinary people of their homes and their possessions as well as killing thousands of innocent civilians.

Some prisoners were intentionally placed in compounds in the hope that this would discourage Allied bombing and some were indeed killed by British bombs, but thankfully this practice was quickly discontinued as the long war drew to its longed-for conclusion.



Bob with fellow POWs at one of the Stalags he was held at - He was allowed to send this photo home



Bob's escape from the long march

After five long years of being a POW Bob's impatience, combined with defiance, as well as his readiness to accept any kind of challenge, and following several previous unsuccessful attempts, including one with his mate Bill Grimes, led to his decision to try and escape again. He discussed his plan with another old and trusted peacetime comrade and they decided to make a break for it as soon as the opportunity came their way. The pal had second thoughts however, and decided to wait for his release. He warned Bob of the grim consequences should they be re-captured. Once he'd made his mind up, Bob wasn't one to cancel plans and clung on to his original decision to escape. Another prisoner, a sailor named Eric begged to go with him, and as the plan had always been for two to escape, Bob welcomed Eric's offer of accompanying him.

The un-rewarded courage and kindness of Polish and Czechoslovakian women who risked severe reprisals to push a bit of bread into the hands of the hungry prisoners as they wearily made their way on a long march that was to take them from Poland into Czechoslovakia will never be forgotten. They risked their lives to ease the tribulations of captured British soldiers who they never knew and would never meet again.

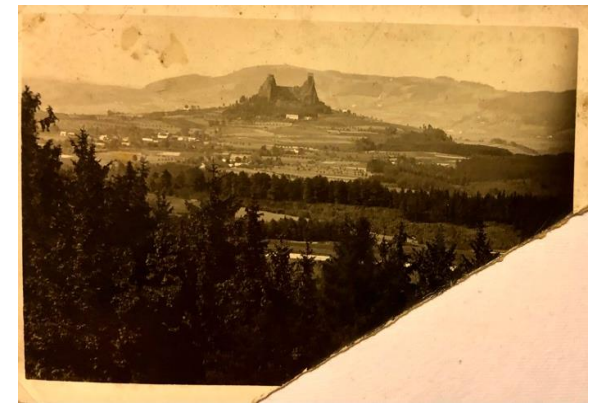
Bob and Eric's opportunity to escape arose on a freezing cold and snowy night while they were resting from marching in the Mnichovo Hradiste area of Czechoslovakia. With the guards being distracted by the intentional noisy quarrelling of other prisoners, they failed to notice the two comrades making a careful but speedy getaway. Creeping up quietly to farmhouse doors whilst in constant fear of the barking dogs, they listened and tried to decide whether it was the German or Slovak language that was being poken inside. Deciding that the family in one house they had stopped at were indeed Slovakian, they knocked on the door anxious of their fate when it eventually opened.



Ruta Mill (Valkov Mlyn), Dolni Bukovina, Klaster Hradiste Nad Jiizerou, where Bob escaped to



Mníchovo Hradiste where Bob hid and was looked after by Mrs Pravda at the Sokolovna (Cinema)



The Trosky castle ruins which Bob would have seen in the distance during forced march

The farmer was understandably reluctant to offer them hospitality, as he couldn't understand their attempts to explain that they were British. Trying to use the word 'Englander', they were really struggling to make it understood who they were until Eric raised his sleeve and showed him a tattoo of the Union Jack saying 'Englander, Englander'.

The farmer then understood and sympathised with their plight and bade them both to enter his house. He made them welcome by giving them food and warmth and a hiding place was found for them. It was only later that the farmer was able to explain that he had originally feared they were escaped Russian POWs, as some of his countrymen had helped some Russians before, only to be betrayed by them to the Germans when they were captured. Knowing who had sheltered the Russians, the Germans reacted sharply and violently against the Czechoslovakians and warned them of the consequences of any repetition.

Bob and Eric were taken very good care of and were even allowed inside for the occasional supper with the kind family, as well as the very risky treat of hearing the 'Nine o'clock news' and the chiming of Big Ben on the radio. The two men's spirits were raised, as they were kept up to date of the ever-increasing British and Allied victories and of the retreating German Army.

A frightening occurrence tested their nerve and reaction one night when a German patrol arrived out of the blue at the farmhouse and entered the house whilst Bob was having supper with the family. The stern German patrol leader asked "Who is the Master of the house?", and then asked him about other family members. Pointing at them all in turn, the farmer explained that Bob was a deaf and dumb living there, and then, cunningly, so as to entice them to depart; he asked them if they would like some fresh eggs. The leader jumped at the chance and then ordered his men to leave as he bade them goodnight.



**Bob formed a strong and trusting friendship
with Josef and Ruzena's daughter Miluska Rutova**

**Owners of the Cinema at Munchengratz and the
washerwoman at the mill and her daughters**



Another brave friend who helped Bob

It was decided that Bob should work in a Flour Grinding Mill amongst some local workers, and that he should carry on pretending to be deaf and dumb. He was to operate a machine on which a bell tinkled at the end of its cycle, but due to the importance of playing the part of being deaf and dumb to the full, he was to ignore the tinkle and continuously watch the sliding movement of the machine as anyone who was deaf and dumb would have to do.

The acting went on without a hitch until one day familiarity bred the usual contempt, and Bob having turned away from the machine, heard the bell tinkle and immediately turned around to slide the beam backwards so as to reset it. A youth was seen to stop working and look very puzzled at the strange incident he had just witnessed of a deaf and dumb person reacting to the sound of a bell that he couldn't hear! Others who knew what was going on decided that they couldn't take any more chances, hence the decision that Bob should work elsewhere for both his and their safety.

He was to work transplanting cauliflowers in a plot bordering a nearby German Army Barracks where enemy soldiers drilled, but as the Germans would hardly expect an escaped prisoner to be working next to their base, then it was felt to be as safe there as anywhere. He also worked at a cinema (Sokolovna) where he was fed and looked after by the kind and brave Vera and Josef Pravda. Enemy soldiers came there regularly to watch films and Bob probably stamped their tickets!

As the end of the war approached, Ferdinand Kuchar, a Village School Teacher, took Bob and other escapees to a nearby forest, where a hut had been built. This was a comfortable hideout with a fireplace, but one look at it convinced Bob that it was not the place for him and against the advice of comrades and locals, he walked away and decided to return to the kind hearted Joseph Ruta and his family, who welcomed him back, as did the equally kind and brave Pravda family.



The Cinema (Sokolovna) at Mnichovo Hradiste where Bob was looked after by Mrs Pravda



Mrs Pravda who helped hide and feed Bob at the Sokolovna

Vera and Josef Pravda and son Zbynek who helped save Bob's life in 1945 (girl unknown)



Bob remained with the Ruta family near Munchengratz (Mnichovo Hradiste) until the end of the war was announced, at which time he borrowed a bicycle and rode out on the rough track to the forest hideout where the others had remained, to inform them of the Armistice and duly brought back a comrade to the happy village on the bar of the bicycle. The others walked and ran to the village where both villagers and escaped prisoners celebrated joyously together.

Taken up a hill by friends following the Armistice, Bob was shown columns of German soldiers being marched into captivity by Russian soldiers, and despite the rough and unnecessary cruel treatment that he and so many of his fellow POWs had received, he felt sorry for his old enemy, for he understood their feelings as they were urged on relentlessly by their captors. He knew of how they would be wondering what fate lay in store for them and the pain of thinking of their families back home as they plodded on towards an unknown destination and fate.

Instructions were soon issued for all escaped POWs to report to a given destination, and following considerable questioning prior to being cleared for repatriation, they were then taken to Prague from where they were flown home to Britain. Following kitting up and the issue of train warrants, they were finally on their way to their respective homes.



The Růta family with their children Miluška and Josef



Josef and Ruzena Ruta who did so much at great personal risk to save Bob's life in 1945

Arriving home to face other problems, Bob was given a hero's welcome by the people of his home village of Dinas Mawddwy, from where he had gone to volunteer for Army Service back in 1930.

Upon returning to army life after leave, he was unable to settle down again to good soldiering with the Royal Welch Fusiliers as he had done at Wrexham, Gibraltar, Hong Kong, Singapore and Shanghai, as well as in Belgium and France prior to capture in 1940. Five years of POW life had taken its toll and altered his outlook on life. Ignoring the pleas of good old comrades to re-join for a further six years so as to complete his 21 years (pontoons) in order to be eligible for long service pension, Bob chose to accept his release and become a council worker with Merionethshire County Council. He remained with the Council working as a stone mason for most of his working life.

The contact with his saviours in Czechoslovakia was maintained for a while with Bob sending parcels of food items, which were practically unobtainable there since the time of his release. Joseph Ruta and his good family voiced their fondness and great admiration for him in their letters, and mentioned the times when Bob was busy transplanting Cauliflowers right next to the German soldiers, and of when he went through the streets on a bike to fetch bread from some friends of theirs at the bakery who knew of his escape. Unfortunately, not being fluent in English, and even less so in written English, they quite naturally sent letters in their own language. The then Liberal M.P. managed to find someone who was willing to translate the letters for Bob but this took time, and it was with much regret that due to the short timescale from receiving the invitation to the date of the wedding, Bob was sadly unable to accept Joseph's kind invitation in one letter to return to Munchengratz for his son Josef's wedding.

Most regrettably, the contact with this fine family was later broken, and whilst efforts were made in 1983 and again later to re-establish contact with the Ruta and Pravda families, these were unfortunately in vain.



The wedding of Josef (Junior) in October 1946 which Bob was invited to but was unable to attend

CONFIDENTIAL
124850
GENERAL QUESTIONNAIRE FOR AMERICAN EX-PRISONERS OF WAR

1. No. 4189910 RANK 1/642 SURNAME EVANS
CHRISTIAN NAMES Robert
DECORATIONS 1939 & 1945 STAR

2. SHIP (U.S. or MERCHANT NAVY)
UNIT (ARMY) Royal Welch Fusiliers
SQUADRON (R.A.F. or R.A.F.C.)

3. DIVISION (ARMY), COMMAND (R.A.F. or R.A.F.C.) 2nd Division

4. DATE OF BIRTH August 14, 1912

5. DATE OF ENLISTMENT 1st October 1930

6. CIVILIAN TRADE OR PROFESSION
(OR EXAMINATIONS PASSED WHILE P.W.)

7. PRIVATE ADDRESS PONYBANK, ABERANGELL, MACHYNELLETH, NID. WALES

8. PLACE AND DATE OF ORIGINAL CAPTURE ST. OMAR

9. WERE YOU WOUNDED WHEN CAPTURED? NO

10. MAIN CAMPS OR HOSPITALS IN WHICH IMPRISONED

Camp No.	Location	From	To
1945	STALAG 364	1942	1945
	STALAG VIII D	1946	1948

11. WERE YOU IN A WORKING CAMP?

Location	From	To	Nature of Work
1945	Blechhammer	1945	LABOURER

12. DID YOU SUFFER FROM ANY SERIOUS ILLNESS WHILE A P.W.?

13. DID YOU RECEIVE ADEQUATE MEDICAL TREATMENT?

Bob's repatriation questionnaire. He only mentions two Stalags and Blechhammer work camp

Bob's repatriation questionnaire mentioning Josef Ruta and Valcovy Mlyn

CONFIDENTIAL
124850
GENERAL QUESTIONNAIRE PART II TOP SECRET

1. No. 4189910 RANK 1/642 SURNAME EVANS
CHRISTIAN NAMES Robert

2. ESCAPES before capture:
(a) When you learned of your wish to leave in the event of capture?
(b) When you learned of escape and evasion? (State where, when and by whom).

3. INTERROGATION after capture:
When you specially interrogated by the enemy? (State where, when and methods employed by enemy).

4. ESCAPES attempted:
Did you make any attempted or partly successful escapes? (Give details of each attempt separately, stating where, when, method attempted, nature of your companions, where and when recaptured and by whom. Were you physically fit? When happened in your companions?)

5. SAROTAGE:
Did you do any sabotage or disruption of enemy factory plans, war material, communications, etc., when employed as working parties or during escape? (State details, plans and dates).

6. COLLABORATION with enemy:
Did you know of any British or American personnel who collaborated with the enemy or in any way helped the enemy against Allied Forces of War? (Give details, names of persons) (continued, camps), dates and names of collaborators or help given to enemy).

7. WAR CRIMES:
If you have any information or evidence of bad treatment for the enemy or persons or to others, or knowledge of any enemy violations of Geneva Convention you should ask for a copy of "Form Q" in which to make your statement.
(Name - Form Q is a separate form having information on "War Crimes" and describe the kinds of offences coming under this title.)

Finding Bob's saviours descendants

After many years of searching, Bob's son Cyril incredibly enough managed to eventually trace and make contact with the descendants of both the Ruta and Pravda Families in 2021 and on the 19th May 2022 he, together with his oldest grandson Cai, flew to Prague Airport and were met there by Jiri Zeman who kindly drove them on to Mnichovo Hradiste in Bohemia (Czech Republic) where they would stay the next three nights.

Jiri and Michala Mydlarova had made arrangements for them to meet with, and to personally thank the descendants of the kind and brave people of the Mnichovo Hradiste area who had risked their own lives to help save the lives of complete strangers that had escaped from the long and cruel German forced marches back in the cold winter of 1945.

In Cyril's words, "My father Lance Corporal Robert Evans (also known as Bob Shanghai and Ianto) was just one of the many escaped Prisoners of War that were helped by these brave people. In my father's case it was the Ruta and Pravda families who helped to hide, feed, and look after him and thereby undoubtedly saved his life which is of course a debt that we can never repay, as without the incredible bravery of these two families' we would not be here today".

Bob, like so many other POWs wouldn't talk much about his five years in various POW camps, but he had kept an album of his 15 years in the British Army including his time in German hands and in Mnichovo Hradiste (which he always called Michengrads). This included photos of Miluska Rutova, the daughter of Miller Josef Ruta and Ruzena Rutova, as well as the Pravda Family and others who had helped him.

He had also kept photos of the area he and fellow escapee Eric, had escaped to during one of the long forced marches that started on January 20th 1945 from one of the Lamsdorf Stalag 344 forced labour work camps named E793 Blechhammer.

APPROXIMATE TRANSLATION OF REAR OF MILUSKA's PHOTO
GIVEN TO DAD BY HER IN 1945

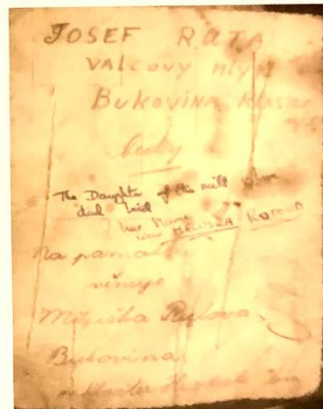


JOSEF RUTA
Valcovy Mlyn
Bukovina Klaster
Cesky

The Daughter of the mill where dad hid
whose name was MILUSKA RUTOVA

“na pamět’ venuje” roughly translates to:
“dedicated to our memory”

Miluska Rutova, Bukovina,
Klaster Hradiste, Cesky



Sadly, Cyril's daughter Donna was
ill and unable to fly so it was only
Cyril and his oldest grandson Cai
who travelled

Travel Itinerary

Your booking codes: NU3D59

Passengers

Cyril Evans
Donna Evans
Stephanie Thomas

Confirmation numbers

Electronic ticket 082-6994528941
Electronic ticket 082-6994528942
Electronic ticket 082-6994528943

✈ Your Flights

Manchester - Prague on Thu, 19 May 22

11:05 Manchester (MAN), Terminal 2
13:25 Brussels - Airport (BRU)

Duration: 01 h 20 min

Economy
Status Confirmed

✈ SN2174

Operated by: Brussels Airlines
Aircraft: Airbus A320

Layover: Brussels (BRU), Duration: 01 h 15 min

14:40 Brussels - Airport (BRU)
16:05 Prague - Václav Havel Airport (PRG), Terminal 2

Duration: 01 h 25 min

Economy
Status Confirmed

✈ SN2611

Operated by: Brussels Airlines
Aircraft: Airbus A319

Prague - Manchester on Sun, 22 May 22

14:10 Prague - Václav Havel Airport (PRG), Terminal 2
15:20 Frankfurt/Main International Airport (FRA), Terminal 1

Duration: 01 h 10 min

Economy
Status Confirmed

✈ LH1307

Operated by: Lufthansa
Aircraft: Airbus A320 (Sharklets)

Layover: Frankfurt (FRA), Duration: 01 h 20 min

16:40 Frankfurt/Main International Airport (FRA), Terminal 1
17:20 Manchester (MAN), Terminal 1

Duration: 01 h 40 min

Economy
Status Confirmed

✈ LH946

Operated by: Lufthansa
Aircraft: Airbus A321

Passengers

Adult
3 tickets

Child
0 tickets

Infant
0 tickets

A very pleasant first
night was spent in
Michala and Jiri's
company

It was so good to
finally meet them both



He and Eric escaped in the Mnichova Hradiste area on a freezing cold and snowy winters night sometime between 17th and 20th of February 1945. The photos kept included a couple of the Mill and the Cinema where he had been hiding, and were it not for the photo of the Mill, then we would most probably have never been able to reconnect with the descendants of both the Ruta and Pravda families, and would therefore not have had this long awaited for opportunity to thank them all in person for the bravery and kindness of their ancestors.

After he was repatriated from Prague at the end of the war, Bob kept in touch with Josef Ruta and family until late 1946 when contact was lost for whatever reason. Bob was even invited to their son Josef's wedding on 27th October 1946 but unfortunately due to the short timescale he was unable to attend.

After many years of searching for the two families, initially in the early 1980's by his brother-in-law on Bob's behalf, including making contact without success with the then Czechoslovakian Embassy, and then by Bob's youngest son Cyril, including contacting both the Czech and Slovakian Embassies, again without success, as well as carrying out internet searches over a period of at least 20 years and probably more. Then by pure luck in February 2021 Cyril carried out a Google search for Valkovy Mlyn and Bukovina Klaster which was written faintly in pencil on the back of the photo of the mill in Bob's album but obviously everything he found was in Czech so he couldn't understand a word of it!

He did however find an article on all the different Mills in the area written in a magazine edited by a lady named Michala Mydlarova, and thought it worth looking at and, incredibly enough, there in front of his eyes, as part of that article, was exactly the same photo of the mill in the snow as the one in his father's album!



This magazine article and photos of Rutuv Mlyn was the starting point for further research



Michala Mydlarova and Jiri Zeman whose committed research enabled the reconnection of families



Had Cyril not found this magazine online then the families would probably have never reconnected

He used Google to translate the whole article and then made contact with Michala through the email address in the magazine and she responded most positively and requested more information on his father's time in the Mnichovo Hradiste area and the mill and cinema in particular, including copies of the photos he had as well as a copy of Bob's capture and POW story which his Uncle had written, and which Cyril had added to. Cyril says:

"Michala was very helpful and then got a gentleman by the name of Jiri Zeman involved. What has happened since then has led to this visit in May 2022 and we really can't thank them enough for the incredible amount of research work they've done in identifying and finding the descendants of both the Ruta and Pravda families as well as finding others interested in the story, some of who we met during our visit.

The effort that the Ruta and Pravda families as well as Michala, Jiri, and others went to in order to make us welcome was incredible and very much appreciated, as indeed is true of everybody we had the privilege of meeting during our visit."

British Embassy representatives intended to attend a presentation by Ondřej Lochman, Mayor of Mnichovo Hradiste, to both families and Cyril at the Town Hall and although they were unable to attend, they arranged for the Union Jack to be raised alongside the Czech flag both inside and outside the Town Hall as a much appreciated tribute to the bravery of the Ruta and Pravda families as well as to Bob.

In addition to the Mayors presentation Cyril presented the two families with engraved wall plaques from the Evans family to thank them and their ancestors for all they did to save Bob's life back in 1945, as well as tri-lingual certificates in Czech, English, and Welsh.

He also presented certificates and small gifts to both Michala and Jiri in appreciation of all their hard work and commitment in identifying and finding the descendants of both the Ruta and Pravda families as without their involvement then this very emotional reconnection of the families would not have been possible.



Presentation at Mnichovo Hradiste Town Hall to the families by Mayor Ondřej Lochman MP

Presenting certificates and plaques to the families and certificates to Michala and Jiri



Saying a fond and emotional farewell to Jiri, Hana, Petr and Iva of the Ruta Family

Reading the Welsh text to Petr and Hana from the tri-lingual certificates presented to the families



Saying a fond farewell for now to Tom and Martin Pravda

Jarmila Pravda, widow of Zbynek with Iva Kostyrová, Miluska's daughter



Cyril went on to say "I really can't put into words just how grateful I am to everybody who helped to ensure we had such a memorable and emotional visit. All of us had an instant rapport and we have all expressed our wish and indeed intent to maintain contact".

"We have been invited to return and to spend more time exploring the beautiful Bohemian Paradise and it is most certainly my aim to return on another visit next year".

On request from the 'Memory of Nations' project, Jiri had arranged for Cyril to be interviewed at their studios in Prague on the last morning of his visit to talk about Bob's escape and the incredible bravery and kindness of both the Ruta and Pravda families in hiding his father from the Germans in 1945, looking after him at great personal risk, and also about the amazingly emotional reconnection of the families during this visit.

The 'Memory of Nations' project is one of Europe's most extensive collections of the wartime memories and other life stories of many brave people throughout the 20th Century.

When Cyril flew home on Sunday 22nd May 2022 it was yet another incredibly emotional moment as it was 77 years to the day since his father Bob was repatriated from Prague, but of course that was under completely different and incomparable circumstances!



Memorial certificate presented to us by Ondřej Lochman, Mayor of Mnichovo Hradste



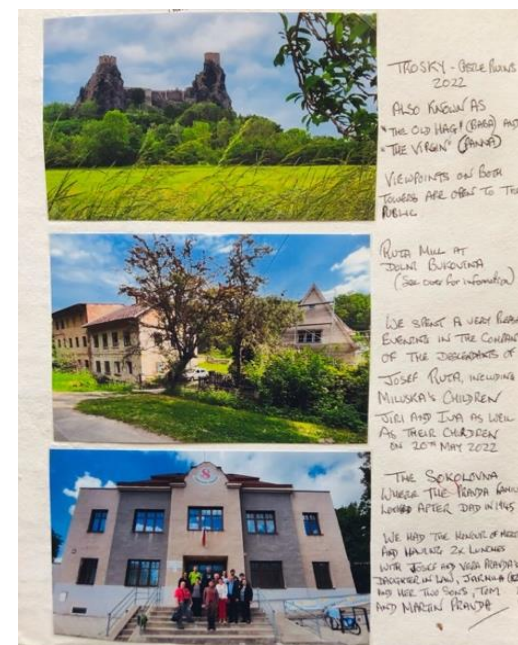
Gift with photo of the Mill in 1945 from Iva (Miluska's daughter) on behalf of the Ruta family to commemorate our families' reunion 77 years after the Ruta Family helped save Bob's life



Translated Kant quote should read "Least afraid of death are those whose life is most valuable"



Tom Pravda presented Cyril with this incredible documentary DVD from the Pravda Family



The Evans family would like to thank everybody who helped make this very emotional and rewarding visit and reconnection of the descendants of the Evans, Pravda, and Ruta family possible.

Both Michala and Jiri exceeded all expectations in finding the descendants of both the Pravda and Ruta families as well as involving local dignitaries in the presentations at the Town Hall. They had also between them arranged a very full and incredible itinerary for the visit by Cyril and his oldest grandson Cai as can be seen below:

Thursday afternoon May 19th: Collection from Prague airport by Jiri - Arrive at Chalupa pod zamkem apartment for 3-night stay - Dinner with Jiri and Michala at the amazing Skala Restaurant, Klaster Hradiste nad Jizerou

Friday May 20th: Meetings with both the Ruta and Pravda families at the Ruta Mill as well as the Mayors of Klaster and Bukovina - Joint Lunch - Cemetery visit with Cyril placing floral tributes from the Evans family on both the Ruta and Pravda family graves - Cyril and Cai invited to a private evening to celebrate the reconnection of the Evans and Ruta families at the Villa by the Mill in the company of the Ruta family

Saturday, May 21st: Visit to Sokolovna with Ales Richly (Culture Officer), and both Pravda and Ruta families - Joint Lunch - Presentation meeting at the City Council with both families, Mayors, Museum and Sokol representatives including presentation of plaques and certificates to both families by Cyril - Sightseeing tour of the area with Jiri and Michala including following some of the route of the Forced March that Bob escaped from and a nice walk in the beautiful Bohemian Paradise - Evening meal at a nice restaurant

Sunday May 22nd: Jiri collecting Cyril from apartment at 8.15am to travel to Prague for an interview at the 'Memory of Nations' Studio at 9.30am - an emotional flight home on the 77th anniversary of Bob being repatriated from Prague.



Cai and Cyril spent an unforgettable evening in excellent company at the Villa next to the Ruta Mill

A meeting of families - the descendants of the Ruta and Pravda families had not previously met



Flowers placed on both the Ruta family grave and on the Pravda family grave by Cyril as a mark of respect and appreciation

Further summary of the reconnection visit

The reconnection meeting between the Ruta, Pravda, and Evans families took place at Ruta Mill on 20th May 2022, more than 77 years after the brave and kind Ruta and Pravda families had given Bob shelter and saved his life.

Everybody then went on a tour led by Jiri of some nearby places of interest including the barn where British POW's had stayed a couple of nights at during the cruel forced march through the area and this was very possibly where Bob spent his last night as a POW before escaping from the Germans following five years in captivity.

This was followed by a nice 'getting to know each other' lunch.

There was then a very emotional visit to the Cemetery which enabled Cyril to place flowers on both the Pravda and Ruta family graves in commemoration and appreciation of everything they did for Bob back in 1945.

Cyril and Cai then had a very pleasant evening at the Villa next to the mill as guests of the Ruta family.

Unfortunately, Cai had to return home due to unforeseen circumstances on the Saturday morning which started with a visit to the Sokolovna at Mnichovo Hradiste.



Group photo of our first 'reconnection' meeting at the Ruta Mill (Local Mayor on the right)



Visit to Sokolovna where Bob was fed by Mrs Pravda. He worked here and hid under the stage



This is the inside of the Sokolovna where Bob hid under the stage (see old photo of how it was then)



The first of two 'getting to know each other' lunches

It's known that British POWs on forced marches slept in this barn on the right at Horní / Upper Bukovina



Bob and Eric possibly spent their last night as POWs in this barn before escaping



The ruin of the barn next to Ruta Mill where Bob and Eric escaped to and initially hid



The Mill, the ruin of the barn, and the Villa as they are today



All that's left of the barn next to Ruta Mill where Bob and Eric first hid after escaping



A different view of the ruined barn

On Saturday 21st May following our visit to the Sokolovna, we all enjoyed another joint lunch.

We were then all invited to attend the Town Hall for the official presentation to all three families by the Mayor to commemorate the reconnection of the Evans, Ruta, and Pravda families, as well as to officially acknowledge the incredible bravery and kindness of the two families who had risked their lives 77 years ago to save someone they had never met before and were unlikely to meet again.

Cyril also made presentations to the Ruta, and Pravda families, as well as to Jiri Zeman and Michala Mydlarova whose research made this reconnection visit possible. Following the presentation ceremony and further conversation, the families bid each other a fond farewell but with a commitment to maintain contact.

It is believed that this was only the second reconnection of families to happen in the Mnichovo Hradiste area since the Second World War, although many British and allied Prisoners of War escaped from German hands in the Bohemia region during the forced marches of 1945 and were also cared for by other brave Czech families.

On the last afternoon of the visit, Jiri and Michala took Cyril on a tour of the immediate area including a short walk in the beautiful Bohemian Paradise, whilst also following a small part of the route that Bob would have taken during the forced march prior to his escape.

A very pleasant dinner followed in the early evening before Cyril bid a fond farewell to Michala before Jiri drove him back to the apartment he was staying at for the last night of his visit.

On the Sunday morning Jiri drove Cyril on a short and interesting sightseeing tour of Prague before taking him for an arranged interview at 'The Memory of Nations' studio and then to the airport for the journey home to Wales.

To conclude, here is a selection of some other photographs taken during our incredibly emotional and unforgettable visit in May 2022



Presentations by the Mayor and MP, Ondřej Lochman at the Town Hall.

Presentation to Jarmila Pravda the 82 year old widow of Zbynek (Josef and Vera Pravda's Son)



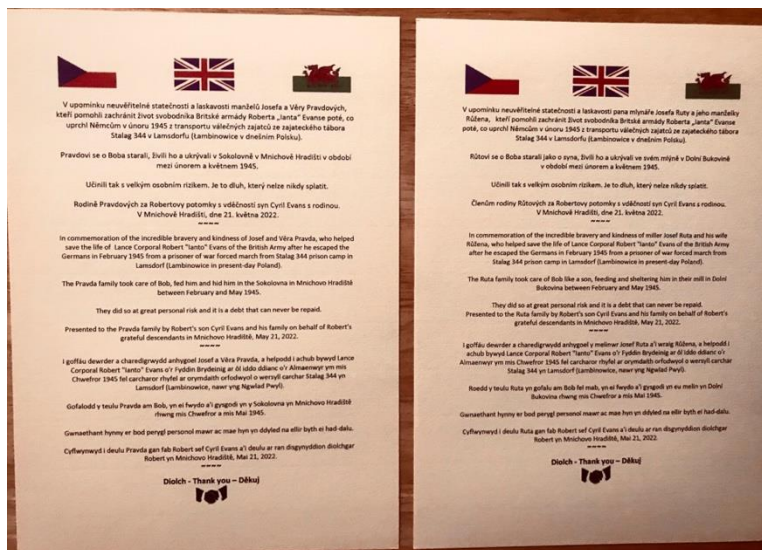
Presentation of certificate and gifts to Cyril by the Mayor

Group photo of families and invited guests at the Town Hall following official presentations





Commemorative wall plaques were presented to both families by Cyril



Trilingual certificates in Welsh, English, and Czech were also presented to both families

Josef Ruta's refurbished desk at the Villa. Bob would have seen him sitting at this many times



Cyril was given the huge honour to sit in Josef's chair at the Villa



We were honoured to be invited to drink from glasses that had once belonged to Milouska



Iva showing a painting done of the Mill in 1945. The same year as when Bob was hiding there



Bob's Great Grandson Cai and Mr and Mrs Pravda's Grandson Tom having a chat



Iva's husband Petr entertaining us at the Villa next to Ruta Mill



Saying goodbye for now to Iva

Final conversations for this initial visit but we'll meet again soon



**Even though they couldn't understand each other
Cyril and Jiri got on really well**



Shaking hands with Martin Pravda before leaving



A walk in the beautiful Bohemian Paradise with Michala and Jiri



Cyril and Michala with the Trosky castle ruins in the distance behind them



**At Jiri's house.
He kindly gave Cyril two local handmade
Christmas baubles which he'd mentioned
that he'd like to be able to obtain**

**One of the commemorative gifts received
from Michala and Jiri**



Considerable local interest in the story

There has been considerable coverage by the local Bohemian and other media with just three examples shown opposite.

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Compiled by Cyril Breeze Evans and printed by Once Upon Photo Books 2022.



Cyril being interviewed at Prague for the 'Memory of Nations' project



An emotional flight home on the 77th anniversary of Bob being repatriated from Prague

