

Supplemental Material



Glossary

Gordon Highlanders, a Scottish regiment of the British Army, dating back to 1794. They have since merged with a number of other Scottish regiments.

War Office, a government department, responsible for administering the British Army.

Telegram, a short message, usually sent in Morse code, along electrical wires. The message would then be decoded, printed out and hand delivered. A telegram was the quickest way to send important news to people who didn't have phones.

Nazi, a member of the German National Socialist Party or a follower of Hitler.

Civilians, people who aren't in the armed forces.

Barrage Balloon, a large balloon, tethered with metal cables to defend against low-flying dive bombers.

Ether, a surgical anaesthetic that was inhaled.

P.O.W (Prisoner-of-War), a person who is captured and imprisoned by their enemy in a time of war.

Rations, a government controlled allocation of food, petrol and clothing, through a system of coupons. The system ensured everyone could buy essential items that were in short supply.

The Allies, the countries who joined forces to fight against Nazi Germany. The Allies included Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and later, The Soviet Union and the USA.

Red Cross (X) Parcel, parcels of food or other essential items, sent to prisoners of war by The International Committee of the Red Cross. A Red Cross Food Parcel typically contained tea, biscuits, condensed milk, chocolate, margarine, soap and tinned meat, fish and vegetables.

Home Guard, a volunteer army of men who, due to age, fitness or occupation, were ineligible for military service and who were prepared to defend Britain in the event of a Nazi invasion. At it's peak, 1.7 million men were enlisted in the Home Guard.

D-Day, 6 June 1944, the date Allied forces landed in Normandy, France. Also a code name applying to the start of a military operation.

Author's Note

When I was a child, my grandmother, Ivy, used to tell me stories about the Second World War. She told me that, in the days before they had an air-raid shelter, they used to huddle under the dining table in the darkness, singing hymns together while the German bombers passed over. She told me that the dogs knew the difference between the sound of the German planes and the Allied ones, and always warned them when they heard enemy planes approaching. She told me how she heard Grandpa calling to her in the night and only later realised it was when he was captured.

I never knew my grandfather, Tim. He died before I was born. But in the year 2000, while visiting my Aunty Laura in Gloucestershire, UK, I was able to read his Prisoner-of-War diary and hear his voice for the first time. When I read his detailed descriptions of life as a POW, I realised that like my grandmother, he wanted to share his stories. He wanted them to be remembered.

When I was young, my father never spoke much about his wartime childhood. In later years, he reflected on the impact of the war on his life, particularly the sense of responsibility that came with trying to be 'the man of the house' at age 6. While life without a father had many challenges, adjusting to his expectations when he returned was also difficult.

On Anzac Day 2014, I realised my father, and others of his generation, were in a unique position. Almost his entire childhood had been lived under the shadow of war. I wanted to share his personal story, as he remembered it. I am grateful to him for trusting me with his experiences.

About Lt Col CDM Hutchins, known as 'Tim'

Tim was born in 1898, trained at The Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, in 1916 and served in the First World War. During the Second World War, he was sent to France with the 51st Highland Division. During the evacuation of Dunkirk, when over 338,000 Allied soldiers escaped back to England, the 51st Highland Division was left behind to fight alongside the French.

In June 1940, France surrendered, leaving the highland divisions at St Valerie En Caux surrounded by German forces, out of reach of the British Navy and cut off from supplies of food and ammunition. Major-General Fortune declared that to fight the German tanks empty-handed would have been suicide, so they surrendered, becoming Prisoners-of-War on June 12, 1940.

For the best part of a month, they were marched across France into Germany, travelling up to 30 kilometres per day on starvation rations. They spent many nights sleeping outside, with no toilet or washing facilities. As the only senior officer who chose to march with the men, Tim was able to keep order, prevent outbreaks of violence and negotiate on their behalf. If not for the kindness of civilians along the way, many would have died on the march.

Tim spent the rest of the war as a German POW in various locations throughout Germany. In April 1945, he was released by American forces under the command of General Patton. After receiving medical attention, he returned home and was reunited with his family. His weight was seven stone, equivalent to 44 kilograms.

After the Second World War, Tim was promoted to Lt Colonel and posted to the Scottish Command, with an office at Edinburgh Castle. However, he never overcame his poor health and 'itchy feet'. In 1949, Tim retired from the Gordon Highlanders and the family emigrated to Tasmania, Australia, where they took up farming.

While Nick's sister Laura eventually returned to the UK and became a renowned breeder of Welsh Mountain Ponies, Nick remained in Australia. Over fifty years, he made a substantial contribution to the agricultural industry in the Riverina area of New South Wales.

When he looked back on his wartime childhood, Nick most often described his mother's efforts at raising them single-handedly as magnificent.