

8 Carmarthen Road / Torpy family.

BACKGROUND

Veronica Bowerman has been in touch by email with Michael Torpy since the early part of 2013. He had then recently read the Henleaze Book which encouraged him to submit some information on some of the former residents from Carmarthen Road. This resulted in some really interesting social history on the Winter family from no 7 (a separate pdf file on the following Henleaze Book webpage

<https://sites.google.com/site/henleazebook/Home/peopleofhenleaze>

Michael also submitted the following paragraph on Croft Cottage:

“8 Carmarthen Road is next to a detached house called Croft Cottage. In the 1950's it was occupied by an elderly spinster called Mildred Baker, who was the sister of Lady White and she was visited by Lord and Lady White in their chauffeur-driven Bristol, which had curtains in the windows. Miss Baker lived with live-in maid called Ada and I became great friends with Miss Baker and ran errands to the Henleaze shops for her. Occasionally for a treat I was taken in the chauffeur driven car to Whiteladies Road when Miss Baker and Lady White went shopping. Sadly she died when I was 8 or 9 years old.”

“I have been interested in history all my life and would like to think that my parents' time at 8 Carmarthen Road was remembered. I have therefore included some details on my mother, Iris Torpy. I have also attached a piece about my father Maurice's war time experience written by my brother David and myself.

“My father was reluctant to talk of the war and my brother and I knew a few snippets but I felt given the fact Dad had been an Officer, been in so many POW camps and survived the war that records must exist. I visited the National Archives and was rewarded to find a two page manuscript report written by my father when he was de-briefed on his return home, together with a report by the British Commandant of Stalag Luft 3A on the forced march from the camp and to see Dad's name in a list of Officers and men who went missing on the march.

“My father was a modest man and wouldn't consider himself famous, fortunately for us he was a survivor, anyhow this is one resident of Henleaze's war time experiences.”

IRIS TORPY

Iris Torpy, (our Mother) was the eldest resident of Carmarthen Road. She died on the 29th October 2012 at the age of 92. Iris and her husband Maurice, a former RAF POW moved into 8 Carmarthen Road in the summer of 1946. They raised a family of six children who all attended St Ursulas Convent; Christopher and David, Michael, Clare, Catherine and Mary.

Iris had been a nurse at St Mary's hospital and met Maurice whilst nursing his mother. Maurice, a consulting engineer survived the notorious Stalag Luft III prison camp and was re-united with his family. He started his own consulting engineers business, Maurice A Torpy & Partners, specialising in heating and ventilating hospitals and enjoyed playing cricket for Southmead Hospital cricket club. He became a Governor of St Ursulas and spent many years helping the school. He passed away in 1993. Iris survived him into her 93rd year at No 8, cared for by her family.

Sadly, her long time neighbour, Lorna Wells, of 6 Carmarthen Road passed away in December 2011. Mrs Wells was an extraordinary woman, still driving in her 90's, as bright as

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a button and well-known Methodist in Henleaze and Westbury. The Wells family had lived at no 6 Carmarthen Road, as long if not longer then the Torpy's at no 8. She was survived by her sons David and Allan and daughter Rosemary.

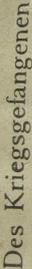


Our Mother Iris (aged 29) taken in the summer of 1948 in a friend's garden in Henleaze, with Michael in the pram.

MAURICE A TORPY

Our late father, Fl/Lt Maurice Torpy, RAF, was a survivor of the Long March(1) from Stalag Luft III, as the Germans retreated from the Russian advance he collapsed in the snow at the roadside (*last seen 29 jan'45*). He somehow survived and was taken into a French POW camp at Muskau where he was medically treated.

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1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12			
Personalkarte I: Personelle Angaben														
Kriegsgefangenen-Stammlager: Stalag Luft 3														
Name: TORPY														
Vorname: Maurice Alexander														
Geburtstag und -ort: 24.8.16 Secunda														
Religion: C of E.														
Vorname des Vaters: Fulton Alexander														
Familiename der Mutter: Brewer.														
Lichtbild														
												Grösse	Haarfarbe	Beso
												1,71	d.braun.	
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Copy of Stalag Luft 3 ID card of our Father Maurice (aged 27) taken in November 1943.

He was then put in Stalag Luft3A. This was liberated by the Russians on the 21 May 1945, the Germans had just fled. Dad was trucked to Halle in Belgium from where he was airlifted to the UK on the 28 May 1945.

Camp de Prisonniers de guerre	
STALAG III A	Date 7-2-1945
<small>(Seulement No. du Camp, selon les instructions du Commandant)</small>	
Je suis prisonnier de guerre en Allemagne et en bonne santé — (ou): <u>légèrement blessé.</u>	
Nous serons transportés d'ici dans un autre camp au bout de quelques jours. N'écrivez jusqu'à ce que je vous donnerai la nouvelle adresse.	
Meilleurs souvenirs	
Prénom et nom de famille: <u>Maurice A. TORPY.</u>	
Rang: <u>FLYING OFFICER. POW No. 2450</u>	
Détachement: <u>NEW ADDRESS, STALAG 3A OFFLAG, GERMANY.</u>	
<small>(Aucun autre détail. — Ecriture lisible.)</small>	

A copy of the postcard received by our Mother, Iris in 1945 proving Dad was alive and had survived the forced march from Stalag Luft 3.

My Mother Iris said that his comrades who escaped the march via Norway were ringing her to ask what happened to Maurice. She saw a fellow officer in the street in Bristol and both were too afraid to speak to ask what had happened. Then Dad phoned her from Belgium. He said he owed his survival to his greatcoat. This was treasured in our home for many years; he said it saved his life. (Worn by son David in the school CCF.)

Dad died in April 1993. He always kept in touch with Ron Gray from Australia who had been his friend in the camp and probably helped save his life. The Grays came to England in the late 80's and stayed with dad and mum. Dad never really talked about his POW experiences, but for a brief

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period in 1945 managed to keep a diary. He certainly never glamorised it but rather had nightmares: especially at the end of his life.

He first trained in Everton, Scotland, during which he flew down to Bristol (no parachute) to be married in April 1941. He was posted to Manby, Lincs. as an armaments officer. Then after a few months, at the end of June, he went to Salisbury plain and from there to ship at Liverpool for North Africa via Durban. Shortly after arriving in N. Africa he was captured, two weeks before the birth of his twin sons on the 24th February 1942. He escaped across the desert from Benghazi on the night of 28/29 Jan 1942. The enemy had them trapped but some evaded the Germans and got clear **(2)**; walked east making for Tobruk until captured by German patrol somewhere SW of Derna on 11 Feb 1942. He was listed missing presumed dead, for two years and Iris received a widow's pension. He was a POW in the desert and then in Italy **(3)** and spoke warmly of the Italians. The Vatican traced him. Mother never got his missing officer's salary for those 2 years. When Italy fell he was rail-trucked to Germany. **(4)**

He spread sand in preparation for the Wooden Horse escape and survived the killings after the mass breakout. As the Germans retreated from the advancing Russians, the prisoners were force marched on the Long March from Stalag Luft III. Dad collapsed and was left for dead but survived. He was in hospital in Belgium after the war and then demobbed to a wife and twin boys aged four that he had never seen. He lost all his teeth. Iris had not seen him for five years - since one night on his way to Liverpool. He died at aged 76 of Leukaemia that came on in his early 60s.

Dad had a favourite meal of peanut butter, marmalade, and cheese sandwich – like a Red Cross food parcel.

(His cousin's grandson became Air Chief Marshal Sir Glenn Torpy. GCB, CBE, DSO, ADC, BSc(Eng), FRAeS, FCGI, RAF. *Retired Chief of RAF July 2010.*)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Nichol J., & Rennell T., (2003) ***The Last Escape: The untold story of Allied prisoners of war in Germany. 1944-45.*** Penguin.

National Archives: Information in 'WO 344/320/2' dated 24 May 1945 Also 'AIR 40/1489' report on the long march
+ 2 page handwritten manuscript dated 15/04/1946 and signed FI/O M.A.Torpy RAFVR.

⁽¹⁾ THE TIMES, Register, May 15, 2003.

⁽²⁾ "My party of self and six Army other ranks were given assistance by Sheik of Beracca"

⁽³⁾Barce, Libya interrogated 11 Feb'42 then transit camp at Trahuna in Tripolitania

CAMPO 66	Italy, Capua	01 mar'42	23 mar'42
CAMPO 35	Italy, Padula	24 mar'42	10 may'42
CAMPO 78	Italy, Sulmoiva	11 may'42	20 jul '43
CAMPO 19	Italy, Bologna	21 jul'43	09 sep'43

⁽⁴⁾Moosburg until end of Sep '43

Offlag VA until end of Oct'43

STALAG LUFT 3 Germany, Sagan 01 nov '43 28 jan'45

THE LONG MARCH left at roadside in list of 68 missing persons – no.59 on that list.

STALAG LUFT 3A Germany, Luckenwalde 04 feb '45 28 apr'45