

George William Elsden
(* June 22, 1921, Colchester, Essex, England)

Brisbane, May 10, 2018

Hello there from Brisbane, Australia,

have been looking at your website about the prisoner of war camp at Muehlberg, because my father was a prisoner there 1944-45. I am wondering if it would be possible to commemorate his name on the Stalag IVB page. Are you still taking names and details?

My father's name was George William Elsden, he was born June 22, 1921 in Colchester, Essex, England. He joined the Royal West Kent Regiment as soon as he was old enough, in fact he ran away twice to join up before that and was returned to Colchester.

I don't have a lot of details of what happened as Dad never spoke of his war experiences, only occasional humorous anecdotes. However, I do know that in November 1943 he and his battalion (2nd Battalion Royal West Kent Regt. (Queens Own)) were taken prisoner on the island of Leros in the Dodecanese Islands and then shipped to Greece, where they were marched through Athens.

They then endured a long, cold and hungry journey by cattle train to Germany, forced to barter with bystanders along the route, swapping much-needed shirts for a loaf of bread or whatever was offered.

Finally they arrived at Stalag IVB and I only know that Dad spent time in solitary confinement and was also woken in the night to be taken for interrogation, to which he only ever replied with his name, rank (corporal) and serial number (6013065). His prisoner of war number was 270115, according to a document I sourced in 2011.

One morning in, I think, April 1945, they found that all the German guards had disappeared, nothing was locked and were told that the Russians were coming 'with daggers in their teeth!' My father and two of his friends just walked out of the camp and eventually managed to cross the Elbe in a leaking boat and make their way to freedom. I think they might have been picked up by American soldiers, but by this time my father was very ill with double pneumonia and pleurisy.



I am attaching two photos, the one on his own was taken in Valletta, Malta in about 1940. He was only 19 and looked still very young.



The other photo is of him and my mother on their wedding day, May 30th, 1945, in Colchester, Essex. As you can see, my mother was also in uniform and my father is quite gaunt after his illness. He was hospitalised for a few weeks when he was repatriated, to recover from the pneumonia and pleurisy. To me, his eyes have a haunted look, though he is smiling. War is a terrible thing but we humans just don't seem to learn, do we?

He weighed about seven and a half stone when he was repatriated to Britain and it took him a long time to recover his health.

This information was gleaned from my mother in about 2008, my father having died suddenly of a heart attack in 1988, in Auckland, New Zealand. He had joined the New Zealand Army and we emigrated there in late 1952, arriving in Wellington in January 1953.

I would really like to see his name on your website so I hope that I hear back from you soon.

Best regards,

Patricia Harper (nee Elsdon)

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Source:

Communication by his daughter Patricia Harper.

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Internetdokumentation der Opfer des Lagers Mühlberg 1939 – 1948
Mehr Details: <http://www.lager-muehlberg.de>
Nichtkommerzielle Nutzung unter Angabe der Quelle gestattet.