

The Story of Albert Edward Braund: his wartime capture and return home

Branch 1

Alan, Michael and Richard Braund

Albert Edward (1917-1998) (branch 1) joined the Royal Sussex Regiment in 1936. He was in reality an orphan. His father, also Albert Edward, was killed in the battle of the Somme in August 1916 near Mametz wood. His mother Rose, who was carrying him at the time, had a breakdown and was confined to a care home, where she lived until 1974 but could not recognise members of her family. Her other children Tom and Rosa were housed with other family members, Tom in London and Rosa in Sussex. (She died in a motor cycle accident in 1934). During his childhood Bert was looked after by his mother's family in the Horsham area of Sussex. On leaving school he worked as an apprentice gardener in Leonards Lea gardens near Cowfold and later for greyhound coursing trainers.



**Bert and Lou on their Wedding
Day**

At the tender age of 16 he fell for Louisa May Golds, a young lady from Horsham. However, he wanted to broaden his horizons and enlisted in the Army in 1936. He served for a time in Northern Ireland and on 7th December 1939, Cpl Bert Braund and Lou were married in St. Mary's Church, Horsham. War had already broken out. The phoney war persisted until May 1940 when Hitler's armies invaded Belgium and troops of the British Expeditionary Force, Bert amongst them, moved from the French border to meet them.

A short account by Albert Edward (Bert) BRAUND, Royal Sussex Regiment, of his wartime experience and capture, 1940

I was taken prisoner on the morning of 29th May 1940. We had been in action after 10th May at Oudenard, on the canal where we took quite a hammering. We were withdrawn from there when Jerry broke through away to our right and we withdrew towards Dunkirk. We arrived back at Hazebruck on 25th May and in the early morning of the 26th, I with a Bren carrier and crew, escorted the Battalion Commanding Officer to a forward company which had been sent out to form a line to keep the bottleneck open to Dunkirk. This company was very depleted and was not much more than a normal platoon strength. Whilst the CO. was visiting the front line Jerry attacked us through a wood. I was lucky, only receiving a graze in the shoulder from a bullet, and bullet holes through my trouser legs. Others were not so lucky and we had several fatalities. Our positions were overrun, and I with two men from the company were forced to hide in a ditch until nightfall. We were now isolated behind enemy lines. We tried to find our way back to our lines at night, lying up during the day. On one occasion we encountered a German unit and were engaged in a skirmish (I had armed myself with Mills bombs). However, our luck ran out with a rifle butt and taken prisoner



Bert relaxing on his Bunk as a POW

hit

The following is a letter from Pte F Kelleher of Bert's platoon received by Lou after his rescue at Dunkirk

The letter was found amongst family documents recently.

(Undated but May 1940)

Pte F Kelleher / R Sussex Regt

Military Camp

Reservoir Road, Gloucester

Dear Mrs Braund,

Just a few lines to let you know how sorry I am, at your (loss)*. I don't know if you have heard anything about Bert. The only thing I can say is that he was captured, according to reports. And he will be home to you after the war. So that is not too bad.

I really can't say too much as this is a very difficult subject to write about. But you know I am a pal of his. So therefore I know you would like to have something about him, whilst in action. I can honestly say that Bert was the bravest man I saw, in fact he was superb.

Well really this is all I can say, so I must close, hoping you are not taking the news too badly, as everything will turn out for the best eventually.

All the best to you

Yours truly

Tich

* This word (although just legible) was scribbled through as it might have caused grief to Lou Braund.

Bert and his companions were sent back from the front, in part by German military vehicle, having been given German helmets to disguise them, as it was against regulations for prisoners to use such vehicles. Soon afterwards they were sent with other prisoners in cattle wagons on a three-day journey, without water or sanitation, to prison camp Stalag XXA at

Thorn (now Toruń) in Poland. He spent around 2½ years here, where he was forced to work on a farm.



Bert Braund

front row second from right as a POW

He then transferred to another camp, Stalag 383, near Hohenfels in Bavaria, where he remained until mid-April 1945. As a prisoner his daily rations consisted of a ½ litre of very watery soup, three potatoes, a spoonful of jam, half a spoonful of margarine and a piece of black bread. The camp was evacuated by the Germans when the sound of American artillery was heard. After a few days on the march, staying in farmhouses overnight, he was liberated by American soldiers at Landshut on the river Isar.

He arrived back in Horsham in May 1945, after a flight from Germany in the bomb bay of a Lancaster bomber. His son Alan, also being carried by his mother Lou when Bert was captured, remembers at 4½ meeting his father for the first time, wondering who that man was kissing his mum...! In 1946 Bert was invited by his elder brother Tom to join his electrical business in Pontefract, Yorkshire. Lou and Alan followed shortly afterwards. In 1947 Michael was born, followed by Richard in 1950. All three are members of the Braund Society with Michael now playing a key role in the Australasian organisation.