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‘For a crowd is not company; and faces are but a gallery of pictures’: an exploration of loneliness among British officer prisoners of war in the Second World War

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‘For a crowd is not company; and faces are but a gallery of pictures’: an exploration of loneliness among British officer prisoners of war in the Second World War.[1]

[1] F. Bacon, ‘Of Friendship’, in, B. Vickers (ed.), *Francis Bacon: The Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp.390-96, 391

Contents

Definitions

In the text:

POW: Prisoner of War

In the footnotes:

CUST: Board of Customs

IWM: Imperial War Museum

PRO: Public Records Office

TNA: The National Archives, London

WO: War Office

Introduction

Captain John W. Mansel was one of some 41,000 British servicemen to spend at least four years in German hands during the Second World War.[2] Being of officer rank, Mansel was exempt under Article 27 of the 1929 Geneva Convention from being put to work by his captors, and so instead experienced, what Guy Morgan has described as, 'full-time captivity'.[3] In other words, Mansel spent four years in the tight confinements of his crowded prison camps, cut off from the outside world by towering barbed wire fences.[4] Having the time, energy and the skills to write, Mansel kept a very detailed, almost daily, diary throughout his incarceration. In Mansel's own words,

> [the diary's] immediate use is the personal value of being the only channel through which one can get things off one's chest. Its possible future value is to follow one's mental reaction during these 4 years, lessons one has learned, character one may have gained or lost.[5]

In the bewildering environment of the prison camp, Mansel's diary offered him a 'subversive space' in which he could process and express his thoughts and emotions, as well as reflect upon the day's events.[6] An extensive and detailed diary, Mansel's writings offer valuable insight into the experience of incarceration during the Second World War.

Throughout the Second World War 172,592 British servicemen found themselves in captivity, meaning that more men in the British army were held captive than were killed

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[2] Mansel was captured in France, May 21, 1940; London, The National Archives of the U.K.: Public Record Office, War Office 32/10757, British ex-prisoners of war, rehabilitation of those returning to civil life, 16 Aug. 1944, 'Casualties suffered during the war by the armed forces, auxiliary services and merchant navy (from 3 Sept. 1939 to 14 Aug. 1945) as reported to 28 Feb. 1946', in Statistical Digest of the War Prepared in the Central Statistical Office (1951) table 14, p. 13. This figure includes men from overseas serving in the United Kingdom forces, in particular from Newfoundland and Southern Rhodesia.

[3] The Geneva Convention (1929) signed by both Britain and Germany, stipulated that officers were not required to work for the enemy country and that non-commissioned officers could be compelled to undertake only supervisory work, Article 27, see, 'Treaties, State Parties and Commentaries: Geneva Convention on Prisoners of War, Geneva, 27 July 1929' https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/ART/305-430028?OpenDocument [accessed, 17/04/2019]; G. Morgan, *Only Ghosts Can Live* (London: Crosby Lockwood, 1945), p.131

[4] For more information on camp conditions see, A. Gilbert, *POW: Allied Prisoners in Europe, 1939-1945* (Great Britain: Juhn Murray, 2006) pp.66-7, 69-71, 81

[5] London, Imperial War Museum, Documents.9476, private papers of Captain John W. Mansel, Diary Entry, September 14, 1944

[6] C. Acton, 'Stepping into History: reading the Second World War through Irish women's diaries', *Irish Studies Review* Vol.18, No.1 (2010), p.43

whilst serving.[7] Despite this, prisoners of war (POWs) have remained something of a 'missing paradigm' within scholastic works on the Second World War, and the history of combat as a whole.[8] A relatively recent focus of academic works, historiography surrounding POWs is dominated by the gender implications of their cultural practices, the 'politics of surrender', and questions of escape.[9] Whilst the physical hardships of captivity are gaining increasing attention from academic historians, the emotional experience of captivity has received significantly less analysis. Both Michael Roper's popular work, *The Secret Battle*, and Martha Hanna's article, 'A Republic of Letters,' have respectively demonstrated that analysis of the emotional experiences of servicemen can reveal valuable insight into how, and whether, men coped with the intense and unfamiliar environments of combat, yet few historians have applied this focus to prisoners of war.[10] Consequently, Clare Makepeace stands as one of few historians to explore the emotional experience of captivity, with both her works, *Captives of War* and 'Living Beyond the Barbed Wire', offering valuable insight into the ways in which POWs mentally and emotionally navigated their incarceration.[11]

[7] London, TNA: PRO, WO 32/10757, 'Casualties suffered during the war', table 14, p. 13.

[8] See, H. Jones, 'A Missing Paradigm? Military Captivity and the Prisoner, 1914-18,' *Immigrants & Minorities* Vol.26, No.1 (March 2008), pp.19-48; for example, in her short history of the Second World War, Bourke only discusses POWs briefly in order to highlight the tensions between Russia and Germany, see, J. Bourke, *The Second World War: A People's History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Moore states this neglect of POWs is because 'military historians did not like losers and social historians did not like anything in uniforms', B. Moore, quoted in, G. Huxford, 'Representing Prisoner of War Experience: An Interdisciplinary Conference at the University of Warwick, 9th November 2013', *Exchanges: The Interdisciplinary Research Journal* vol.1, no.2 (2014), p.221

[9] For examples of works on camp culture see, I. Rachamimov, 'Camp Domesticity: Shifting Gender Boundaries in WW1 Internment Camps', in, G., Carr, and H. Mytum, (eds.), *Cultural Heritage and Prisoners of War: Creativity Behind Barbed Wire* (New York; London: Routledge, 2012), pp291-306; A. Rachamimov, 'The Disruptive Comforts of Drag: (Trans)Gender Performance among Prisoners of War in Russia, 1914-1920,' *The American Historical Review* Vol.111, No.2, (2006), pp.362-382; for examples of literature on surrender, see, T. Cook, 'The Politics of Surrender: Canadian Soldiers and the Killing of Prisoners in the Great War,' *The Journal of Military History* Vol.70, No.30 (2006), pp.637-665; N. Ferguson, *The Pity of War* (London: Penguin Books, 1998), pp.368-88; for examples of literature on escape see, T. Carroll, *The Great Escapers: Full Story of the Second World War's Most Remarkable Escape* (Great Britain: Mainstream Publishing Company, 2004); P. Doyle, *Prisoner of War in Germany* (Oxford: Shire Publications Ltd, 2008), pp.53-61; T.T.C.F. Pritte, and, W.E. Edwards, *Escape to Freedom* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1953)

[10] See M. Roper, *The Secret Battle: Emotional Survival in the Great War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009); A. Gregory, 'Review: The Secret Battle', *The English Historical Review,* Vol. 216, No. 519 (April 2011), pp.487-488; M. Hanna, 'A Republic of Letters: The Epistolary Tradition in France during World War I', *The American Historical Review* Vol. 108, No. 5, (December 2003), pp. 1338-1361

[11] C. Makepeace, *Captives of War: British prisoners of war in Europe in the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); C. Makepeace, 'Living Beyond the Barbed Wire: the familial ties of British prisoners of war held in Europe during the Second World War,' *Historical Research* Vol. 86, No.231 (February 2013), pp.158-177

Although Makepeace has made valiant strides in the study of the emotional experiences of POWs, in discussing the relationships they built within the camp, she gravitates back to questions of homosexuality.[12] Whilst this dissertation does not mean to discredit such discussion, it does posit that such limited focus is restrictive in understanding the emotional significance of the bonds that inmates built and maintained throughout their incarceration. As a result of this focus, ideas of genuine friendship and the possibility of loneliness have gone relatively unexplored by academic historians despite being prominent features of POW writings.[13] Indeed, Mansel wrote,

> Loneliness doesn't come under the heading of self pity – it is a state of existence and not a state of mind. And yet here again I find it hard to understand as I have a vast number of friends who are all incredibly kind to me.[14]

By describing loneliness as a 'state of existence and not a state of mind', Mansel implies that loneliness is dominating within the camp, and that all inmates were victims of loneliness. Furthermore, Mansel's feelings of isolation in spite of friendship suggest that, all being victims, POWs, were unable to rescue each other effectively. This dissertation will use the diary entries of Captain John Mansel, as a case study, in order to explore the prevalence of loneliness among British officer POWs in the Second World War, as they understood it at the time of capture. For the purposes of this dissertation, loneliness will denote feelings of isolation, a lack of fulfilment in one's present company, and feelings of having little in common with others. In order to facilitate detailed analysis, this essay will exclusively examine the entries that Mansel made between September 1942 and April 1945, the duration of his stay at Eichstätt prison camp, in Bavaria, Germany.[15]

Hinton correctly asserts that diaries 'cannot be treated as transparent windows on the soul' as, however private, the act of putting oneself down on paper is something of a performance.[16] Furthermore, Makepeace finds that Mansel's diaries are 'hard to discern between being written for a family member to read and written purely for himself.'[17]

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[12] Makepeace, *Captives of War,* pp.114-26

[13] For example, friendship is a significant theme in, K. Panter-Brick, *Years Not Wasted 1940-45: A POW's Letters and Diaries* (Sussex: Bookcraft Ltd., 1999); Morgan states, 'the form of prison life is strictly individualistic', in Morgan, *Only Ghosts,* p.132; see also, R. Kee, *A Crowd Is Not Company* (London: Hamilton & Co., 1958)

[14] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, August 26, 1944

[15] For more information on Eichstätt camp, see, Gilbert, *POW*, p.81

[16] J. Hinton, *Nine Wartime Lives: Mass Observation and the Making of the Modern Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010,) p.6

[17] Makepeace, *Captives of War,* p.123

Perhaps more so than other diaries, POW diaries are plagued by a sense of audience, as their writings were liable to seizure by their captors.[18] Although this sense of audience should be acknowledged, its significance must not be overstated. This dissertation agrees with Lizzie Oliver, that diaries are inherently personal, even if at some stage they are public.'[19] Indeed, whilst Mansel acknowledges other potential readers in stating what the diary's 'possible future value' is, that its primary importance is 'to follow one's mental reaction during these 4 years' explicitly states that he is writing to meet his own needs; its intended audience is the future-Mansel himself.[20] For being so frequent and detailed, it is in their raw and fragmentary nature that Mansel's diary entries hold their value for a modern audience, as they allow their reader to bear witness to the daily navigation of captivity, revealing how moods, emotions and their meanings shifted from day to day.

Through its explicit focus on Mansel's diary, this dissertation acknowledges that it draws upon a more narrow selection of sources than other historical works on POWs.[21] A focus on Mansel's diary, however, lends this dissertation its structure; using Mansel as a common theme, this thesis is able to explore a wide range of factors that influenced feelings of isolation among POWs. In its exploration of loneliness, this dissertation breaks down into three chapters, each addressing a distinct, but connected, influence over feelings of loneliness. The first chapter will explore the conditions of officer captivity at Eichstätt and whether they facilitated sentiments of genuine comradeship or isolation. The second chapter will focus on Mansel's relationship with his roommate, and perhaps best friend within the camp, Eric, in order to explore the ability of camp companions to offer comfort and reassurance. Finally, the third chapter will analyse Mansel's response to the arrival (or lack) of letters in order to explore the influence that correspondence with home had on prisoners' feelings of loneliness.

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[18] See, L. Oliver, *Prisoners of the Sumatra Railway: Narratives of History and Memory* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), pp.40-1; Beckwith states that Mansel wrote various 'red herrings' in order to mislead potential readers, E.G.C. Beckwith, (ed.), *The Mansel Diaries: The Diaries of Captain John Mansel, Prisoner-of-War – and Camp forger – in Germany 1940-1945* (London: Biddles Ltd, 1977), p.vii

[19] Oliver, *Prisoners of the Sumatra Railway,* p.41

[20] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, September 14, 1944

[21] For example, Rollings attempts to give voice to the untold experiences of numerous POWs from a wide geographical range, in, C. Rollings, *Prisoners of War: Voices From Captivity During the Second World War* (Great Britain: Ebury Press, 2007), pp.380-2; Makepeace draws on the writings of nineteen prisoners in, Makepeace, 'Living Beyond the Barbed Wire', p.160

This dissertation further differs from other historical works on POWs as it offers an unapologetic study of officer prisoners, not only recognising but actively analysing this unique experience of captivity, as it explores the impact of continuous forced company on feelings of isolation, and ideas of collective identity.[22] It must be noted that this essay does not attempt to depict Mansel as "typical" of officer POWs, as Tom Harrison states, 'at this degree of intimacy [diaries] the word "typical" is no longer suitable. No one is privately typical of anyone else.'[23] Instead, this dissertation seeks to use the case of Mansel to highlight a need for greater scrutiny of the emotional experiences of captivity, as well as contribute not only to the limited literature on wartime incarceration, but to emotional histories of combat, and the cultural history of warfare narratives as well. Overall, this dissertation demonstrates that loneliness was a prominent part of Mansel's experience of captivity, as his company throughout his incarceration, both within and beyond the camp, failed to meet Mansel's emotional needs.

[22] In her analysis of captivity Makepeace not only acknowledges her reliance on officer POWs but almost apologises for their "over representation" as she acknowledge that whilst officer writings are more abundant, they do not depict captivity as the majority experienced it, see, Makepeace, 'Living Beyond the Barbed Wire', p.160; Jones states that officers' 'understanding of imprisonment was far from representative', in, Jones, 'A Missing Paradigm', p.28

[23] T. Harrison, *Living Through the Blitz* (Haramondsworth: Penguin, 1978), p.254

Chapter One: Camp Life

> The trouble is that anywhere else in the world but in a prison camp you can disappear for a time and have complete privacy. But here that is quite impossible.[24]

For officer POWs solitude was something of an inconceivable fantasy. Packed into the crowded confinements of the camp, contained by the towering barbed wire fences and without work to offer respite, the company of one's inmates was unavoidable. In an environment where bodies were abundant and empty space hard to come by, loneliness may seem hard to imagine. Yet, Joanna Bourke argues that 'comradeship is not an inevitable, organic sentiment of war'; although her statement refers to the environment of the Front Lines of the Great War, it reigns true for prisoner camps of the Second World War too.[25] Indeed, it would be naïve to assume that feelings of loneliness were dictated by proximity to others. Although Dennis Winter argues that 'there was much more' during the war 'to unite men than to divide them,' male bonding was limited and contingent on a huge range of factors.[26] Whilst relationships with other men may have been desired and (in theory) easily obtainable, the conditions of officer captivity often did more to drive men apart than they did to bring them together. This chapter examines the conditions of camp life at Eichstätt and whether they fostered genuine companionship or feelings of isolation. Ultimately this chapter will argue that close proximity does not equate to intimacy, that 'a crowd is not company.'[27]

Overcrowding was a prominent problem in Eichstätt camp and forced many men to share confined spaces.[28] 'Our room for 8 for living, sleeping, and everything else – cooking etc., is the same size about as my workroom at home.'[29] The claustrophobic and stagnant environment of the camp, from spending so much time among the same men, often, as Makepeace highlights, resulted in irritation at one's inmates.[30] Expressions of such irritation are abundant in Mansel's diary, centring on his annoyance at individuals'

[24] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, July 28, 1944
[25] J. Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain, and the Great War* (London: Reaktion, 1996), p.128
[26] D. Winter, *Death's Men: Soldiers of the Great War* (London: Penguin Books, 2014), p.20
[27] Bacon, 'Of Friendship', in, Vickers (ed.), *Francis Bacon: The Major Works*, p. 391
[28] See, Gilbert, *POW,* p.81
[29] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, April 18, 1943
[30] Makepeace, *Captives of War*, pp.102-4

habits and behaviours, such as Buck rocking in his chair, Alan's idleness, and Harold with his 'limbs everywhere.'[31] Whilst 'rocking' is a dynamic verb, 'idle' and 'limbs everywhere' suggest more a state of being, thus revealing that Alan and Harold do not have to physically do anything to be irritating. The continuous repetition of such criticisms throughout Mansel's diary testifies to the prevalence of frustration, and the tensions that close proximity imposed on inmates, therefore suggesting that the crowded conditions of the camp bred sentiments of annoyance and frustration rather than comradeship.

Although Makepeace is correct in highlighting the tensions that existed in camps as a result of close proximity to, and an inability to escape from, one's inmates, such tensions bore more emotional weight and consequence than Makepeace credits them.[32] Whilst irritation was usually expressed at seemingly insignificant habits, frustrations enforced barriers between inmates, both communicative and physical, in the name of maintaining the peace. Indeed, Mansel wrote, 'I had to leave the room to hold myself in check... The wisest course I find is to speak as little as possible…'[33] Thus, these tensions do not merely exist, but demand action from the inmates, the solution, as Mansel sees it, being self-isolation.

> I feel so hopelessly out of it in my room sometimes – due to my own behaviours and sensitiveness entirely, owing to which irritating little habits annoy, ill-manners irritate, rudeness makes my blood boil...[34]

Although Mansel acknowledges that he is in part to blame for his isolation, his list of the increasingly infuriating acts of others implies that he sees his isolation as essential for survival. Furthermore, by using 'hopelessly' Mansel depicts himself as a victim of circumstance, and suggests that there is no means for him to connect with his roommates despite any longing to, or attempt. Thus, the crowded conditions of the camp evoked isolation, as frustration towards others demanded that Mansel retreat into himself in order to avoid conflict.

[31] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, December 6, 1944; London, IWM, Dcuments.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, May 16, 1943; London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, April 11, 1943
[32] Makepeace, *Captives of War,* pp.102-4
[33] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, July 24, 1943
[34] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, January 30, 1945

Beyond general annoyance at one's inmates, stricter social divides existed within the camp, most notably between new arrivals and long-term prisoners.[35] Following the arrival of 24 officers into the camp, Mansel wrote:

> 24 new Ps.O.W. arrived and what they must have been thinking of. 3 ½ years ago we were thinking probably much the same and damning our luck and talking nothing but "ifs". We saw them first on appel this morning when the rest of the Camp put on its "visit to the zoo" turn. Hundreds crowding round to see if they knew anybody.[36]

Although Mansel implies that there is something of a shared experience between the long-term prisoners and the new arrivals, his repetition of 'we' and 'they' enforces a clear distinction between the two groups. This separation is further emphasised by Mansel's comparison of his fellow inmates' behaviour to that of visitors to a "zoo". Whilst this comparison implies an almost childish excitement and intrigue at the new arrivals his depiction of the new POWs as a different species implies an inability to communicate, and a lack of understanding, between the long-term prisoners and the new arrivals. Rather than desiring to meet and embrace new people, the large crowd that turned out 'to see if they knew anybody' appear interested only in those whom they met prior to their capture. This in turn implies that true friendship is only available in pre-capture relationships. Furthermore, their excitement was driven by a selfish motivation rather than offering friendship, namely the need to find information. Indeed, Mansel's earlier description of his fellow long-term inmates as the new arrivals' 'interrogators' and their fleeting interest in the new arrivals, imply that there was little attempt to bridge the gap between the new prisoners and the long-term POWs.[37] New arrivals might have helped disrupt the otherwise monotonous company of the camp, but, unless they were previously known to the long-term captives, interest in them was fleeting.

Beyond the divisions felt within the camp, new prisoners further evoked feelings of loneliness as their arrival made Mansel question his ability to connect with wider society beyond the camp. Following the arrival of the 24 new POWs, Mansel asks himself 'what in God's name will <u>we</u> have to talk about after the war.'[38] Although Mansel's use of the pronoun 'we' might be seen to present a united front of prisoners, it

[35] Makepeace comments on this in, Makepeace, *Captives of War,* p.104-110
[36] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, November 28, 1943
[37] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, October 9, 1943
[38] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, November 28, 1943, (emphasis present in the original)

still marks them, the POWs, as a separate entity from the rest of society. Having different experiences of fighting the war, new prisoners made Mansel fear his isolation in the world beyond the camp, after the war.

> They give one the impression of regarding you as a dead beat and – I suppose rather naturally – can talk of nothing but modern war… this is exactly what is going to happen when we get home. All one's friends who have lasted the course will talk of nothing but campaigns for months, in fact years, and at any party we may go to I can't help feeling we will be shut out of all conversation.[39]

Mansel's use of 'they give one the impression' implies that this is not necessarily how the younger POWs perceived their predecessors, and suggests that Mansel is instead reflecting his own insecurities onto them. This supports Makepeace's argument that it was the long-term prisoners who enforced the divide, as new POWs (intentionally or not) had the ability to evoke feelings of irrelevance among older prisoners as they reminded older prisoners how much of the war they had missed.[40] Mansel's use of the passive voice in declaring he 'will be shut out' from conversation, depicts him as powerless in his ability to prevent his future isolation. Indeed, while Mansel's use of the definitive modal verb, 'will be shut out', suggests certainty in his future rejection, the prior modal verb, 'may go', asserts that the only control POWs will have concerns whether or not they choose to attend the parties. Therefore, the arrival of new POWs evoked feelings of loneliness among long-term prisoners as they, like the world beyond the camp, had different experiences of the war, making Mansel consider the threat of his future isolation.

Despite the prevalence of divides and frustration within the camp, there were attempts to bring men together. Indeed, unable to work, officer POWs had the time and energy, that working prisoners lacked, to invest in recreational activities such as sport and theatre.[41] Jones argues that organising and participating in such cultural activities was one of two ways in which POWs could restore a sense of self and empowerment (the other being escape).[42] Although Jones is correct in highlighting the intention of such activities, she overstates their meaningfulness for POWs, and thus their ability to bring

[39] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, July 7, 1944
[40] Makepeace, *Captives of War,* p.105-6
[41] For more information on camp activities, see, Gilbert, '"Time on My Hands": Leisure, Entertainment and the Arts', in, *POW*, pp.159-181
[42] Jones, 'A Missing Paradigm', pp.25-6

men together. To some extent such cultural activities did facilitate male bonding, '7-aside Rugger Matches start. Big excitement and betting and many casualties.'[43] Sport not only offered recreational activity to players, but entertainment to spectators and gamblers as well. Whilst the wide range of participants might be seen to suggest something of a community, it should be noted that both spectating and particularly betting are individual (rather than social) activities. Sentiments of comradeship created through sport, can also be seen in Mansel's listing of teammates in his descriptions of cricket games,

> We had quite a good side which included Dick himself (a Crusaders and v. fair performer), Simon Molloy (F. Foresters), a bloke called McClean, a New Zealander I think and obviously v. fine bat, Colin Yarrow, David Stebbings, Philip Mitford, Sidney Morse.[44]

Mansel's listing of his fellow teammates, in full name with accompanying descriptions, perhaps indicates fondness and a desire to remember these characters. It should, however, be noted that although Mansel's use of the pronoun 'we' implies unity and community, his comments on his teammates are superficial. Instead Mansel's descriptions note features visible at face value ('New Zealander I think') or their contribution to the game ('v. fine bat'), thus suggesting a lack of personal connection to his teammates, and therefore testifying to the shortcomings of sports' ability to bring men together. Thus, despite some success in offering empowerment and entertainment to individual participants, social and team-based activities were limited in their ability to bring men together and generate feelings of comradeship.

The success of recreational activities in helping POWs overcome feelings of loneliness was limited because they failed to offer sufficient meaning to daily officer POW life, which thus impeded its ability to generate meaningful conversation between inmates.

> I don't quite know how I should get on in company now… I seem to have lost all power of conversation, to have nothing to talk about. I should think I've only had about 3 or 4 what I call worthwhile conversations with people in the last year… Anything else has just been confined to "bullers"...[45]

Mansel's concern for his future ability to converse implies that he does not consider camp conversation to resemble, or help him prepare for, conversation at home. Mansel's reduction of the majority of his social interactions to "bullers" implies that he does not

[43] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, April 21, 1943
[44] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, August 27, 1943
[45] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel, Diary Entry, December 11, 1943

consider them to be of any real depth or value. Moreover, repetition within Mansel's diary of phrases such as 'as nothing happens there is nothing to report' and 'bored to tears this evening' implies that the numerous camp activities fell short in their ability to disrupt the stagnant existence of officer POWs. [46] Therefore, recreational activities failed to help POWs overcome feelings of loneliness, as they were unable to offer topics of meaningful discussion between inmates.

Although relationships with other men may have been desired and (in theory) easily obtainable, the conditions of officer captivity did more to drive men apart than they did to bring them together. An inability to escape from the same company day-in-day-out bred frustrations that forced inmates apart, and required Mansel to withdraw himself in order to maintain peaceful relations with his fellow prisoners. Neither the arrival of new faces nor participation in recreational activity succeeded in helping Mansel overcome feelings of loneliness as they failed to provide any meaningful comradeship, and thereby made him fearful of his future isolation beyond the camp.

[46] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, April 4, 1943; London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, October 14, 1943

Chapter Two: Camp Companionship

Although conditions of camp life did not facilitate widespread sentiments of comradeship, Mansel did consider himself to have several close friends at Eichstätt, particularly his roommate Eric. Whilst Makepeace posits that the friendships that POWs developed in captivity cannot be read in diary entries, but are instead visible through physical imprints such as signatures and sketches, Eric and his daily activities are recurring features of Mansel's diary, testifying his importance to Mansel.[47] Bourke argues that where friendship was attempted it often failed, and to some extent this chapter agrees with Bourke's assertion.[48] Although it acknowledges that Mansel himself felt he had friends within the camp, this chapter, through analysing Mansel's relationship with Eric, perhaps his best friend within the camp, posits that overall camp friendships 'failed' to help inmates overcome feelings of loneliness.

Eric is elevated above other characters in Mansel's diary through frequent and detailed mention, such as Eric's trip to the dentist,

> Poor old Eric had a frightful time at the dentist… He had a wisdom tooth extracted…not only did they take a hammer and chisel to it literally, but cut his gum away from round it. No anaesthetic. He must be pretty tough… He came back – looking pretty miserable – but insisted on cooking supper etc. just the same.[49]

The fact that Mansel chooses to discuss Eric's visit to the dentist at all, let alone in such detail, when his treatment is not unique in its gruesome or makeshift nature, testifies Eric's importance to Mansel.[50] Mansel's use of the premodifying 'poor old', later repeated in 'old Eric', implies a warm sympathy. Following the gruesome description of what Eric endured with his insistence to cook dinner, Mansel is highly complimentary of Eric's character. Moreover, 'looking pretty miserable' suggests that Mansel typically knew Eric to be emotionally otherwise. Whereas Mansel's comments on other inmates, such as Buck, centre on physical action, here Mansel makes an observation on Eric's

[47] Makepeace, *Captives of War,* p.95
[48] Bourke, *Dismembering the Male,* p.126
[49] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, January 7, 1943
[50] For more information on POW medicine, see, M. Parkes, 'Tins, Tubes and Tenacity: Inventive Medicine in Camps in the Far East,' in Carr, and, Mytum, (eds.), *Cultural Heritage*, pp.51-65

emotional state, implying that he knows Eric personally.[51] This sense of emotional understanding is reinforced by statements such as, 'Eric is very worried – it is obvious from his manner.'[52] Whereas other inmates such as Alan obtain frequent mention for their negative habits, Eric's faults are rarely mentioned and when they are it is done sympathetically.[53] 'I got very irritated today by old Eric's clumsiness and very nearly opened my mouth but what's the use?...I don't think he really realises he does it.'[54] Although Mansel expresses frustration with Eric, in managing to exercise restraint and in attempting to explain Eric's behaviours, as well as again using the companionable premodifier 'old Eric', Mansel suggests that he himself has already excused him. Thus, from the detailed and complimentary references, it is evident that Eric is important to Mansel.

Although Mansel is clearly fond of Eric, their relationship is limited in its ability to counter Mansel's feelings of loneliness, as it is not built on open communication. Mansel writes that 'two people couldn't be greater friends than Eric and I, but this is a silent friendship and I think we find each of us a great comfort in that silence.'[55] Whilst Mansel's insists that he and Eric are 'great' friends, the repeated idea of silence emphasises that their relationship is not built on conversation, as does the tentative 'I think we find each of us'. In this entry, the adjective 'silent', which describes their friendship, is repeated at the end of the sentence in the form of the abstract noun, 'silence'; it is apparently this very 'silence' which gives him 'great comfort'. Evidently Eric and Mansel are friends because they do not make each other talk. This lack of transparency within their relationship is reinforced when Mansel states of Eric, 'we each understand some of each other's worries and being aware of them don't talk about them, but nevertheless appreciate them.'[56] Due to the muted nature of this friendship, Eric and Mansel have a limited knowledge of each other, only understanding 'some' of each other's worries, and then largely owing to their shared experience of captivity. Mansel's use of the connective 'but nevertheless' implies an awareness that their

[51] For example, see, London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, December 6, 1944
[52] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, July 6, 1944
[53] For examples of Mansel's criticism of Alan, see, London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, May 16, 1943; London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, July 8, 1943; London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, September 14, 1943
[54] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, December 5, 1944
[55] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, August 26, 1944
[56] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, August 26, 1944

relationship has shortcomings. Although Mansel believes that he and Eric are able to sympathise with each other, they are limited in their ability to do so as they have a limited understanding of each other.

Thus, fond camp companions were unable to completely diminish feelings of isolation in others.

> Loneliness doesn't come under the heading of self pity – it is a state of existence and not a state of mind. And yet here again I find it hard to understand as 'I have a vast number of friends here who are all incredibly kind to me. But again, this loneliness is to a certain extent self-imposed, being caused by an absolute refusal to let anybody really know me – what goes on in my mind…[57]

Describing loneliness as a 'state of existence' rather than a 'state of mind', Mansel implies that he considers loneliness to be all encompassing, and subject to external forces (thus out of one's control). Mansel depicts himself as a victim of circumstance, of the conditions of captivity, as his 'absolute refusal' to let anyone close implies that isolation is essential for survival, that it must be enforced in order to maintain one's sanity. Having friends, and fondness for others, does not mean that one feels understood, or that they truly understand others. Whilst friends within the camp may offer temporary distraction, and some emotional support, they are ultimately unable to silence feelings of loneliness.

Mansel considers his incarceration to be the hindering factor in his ability to connect with his inmates.

> I feel more and more here daily a sense of loneliness in that I have no pre-war connections with anybody in the Mess. Eric, Bob, Chang, Jack being in the same regiment and Buck, whom I disliked when I first set eyes on him as he looks so shifty, who was a pre-war friend of Eric's.[58]

Mansel's attribution of his inability to connect with other inmates to a lack of 'pre-war connections' suggests that he does not consider relationships built within the camp to resemble those constructed in peacetime.[59] Mansel wrote these sentiments several years after he and Eric were first imprisoned together. Although this connection does not predate the war, the fact that so much time spent together seems to account for so

[57] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, August 26,1944
[58] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, November 5, 1944
[59] Bourke argues that male friendships built within wartime were fundamentally different to those of peacetime, Bourke *Dismembering the Male*, p.144

little testifies to the limiting ability of camp conditions to bring men together, and the constraints of POW bonds to offer sufficient emotional fulfilment. Having fallen in each other's company through 'the tremendous sieve of war', basic human instincts of wanting company were still at play, yet friendships were hard to progress beyond basic foundations and initial impressions.[60]

Where Eric failed to meet Mansel's emotional needs, he offered alternative comforts. One of the most frequent references made to Eric are compliments about his cooking, such as 'Eric providing terrific evening meals on this full parcel' and 'Eric produced a damn good 3 course supper tonight.'[61] Although such compliments might be seen as dutiful respect and praise of one's friend, it is important to recognise that these compliments centre on food.[62] 'Eric still keeping our meals going, though how God knows.'[63] The repetition of Eric's ability to provide for the room suggests that this friendship has its roots in material gain.

Eric is further useful to Mansel as he offers him a point of contact with home. Sponza states that a shared province of origin was one of two loyalties that often strengthened 'personal links of comraderie and friendships.'[64] Although this is somewhat true for Mansel and Eric, as the two men encourage their respective relations (Mansel's mother and Eric's wife) to get into contact, it is the mutual material benefit of exploiting their shared province of origin that centres their relationship. Whilst their encouragement of their respective relations to get in contact might be seen as a testimony to their friendship, the mutual benefit that this connection offered Mansel and Eric is significant.

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[60] Morgan, *Only Ghosts*, p.67

[61] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, February 10, 1943; London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, February 22, 1943; for further examples see, London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, June 21, 1943; London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, July 11, 1943; London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, March 9, 1945; London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, April 1, 1945

[62] One of Eric's responsibilities within the camp was cooking meals for his Mess (including Mansel), see, London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, March 2, 1945; see also, London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, December 7, 1944; Makepeace highlighted food as one of three elements of captivity that could shape relationships between inmates, Makepeace, *Captives of War*, pp.110-14; for more on the importance of food to combatants see, R. Duffett, *The Stomach for Fighting: Food and the Soldiers of the Great War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012)

[63] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, February 26, 1945

[64] The other loyalty being that to their army corps and shared military campaigns, see, L. Sponza, 'Italian Prisoners of War in Great Britain, 1943-6', in, B. Moore, and, K. Fedorowich, (eds.), *Prisoners of War and their Captors in World War II* (Oxford: Oxford International Publishers Ltd, 1996), pp.205-226

Indeed, by having their relations in contact, Mansel and Eric provided themselves with alternative channels of information on their loved ones at home. For example, Mansel writes, 'this afternoon quite a good mail but I didn't get any. Eric had one from Midge of Dec. 28th saying that she had a bag from Mummy for Christmas.'[65] The news that Eric received a letter immediately follows Mansel's declaration that he received none, implying that, for Mansel, this is the next best thing. Eric's letters provide Mansel with the information of his loved ones that his own irregular correspondence can sometimes deny him. Similarly, Mansel writes, 'letter from Mother today of Feb.9th – that's more like it! Eric delighted because apparently Midge must be O.K.'[66] Mansel's use of an exclamation mark makes it evident that he is more pleased with having direct news of his family. For Eric, whilst 'delighted' seems definitive, 'apparently' and 'O.K.' are more tempered expressions of relief. Mansel and Eric each take some solace in the other having a letter for what they can infer for themselves.

The personal benefit to Mansel of his and Eric's epistolary arrangement raises questions as to where his loyalty lies,

> I will never move as it would be a most unfriendly act – however wise. Eric's and my counter ties at home with Mother and Midge make that quite impossible as they wouldn't understand. Were it not for Eric I wouldn't hesitate as the others have never considered my position.[67]

Although Mansel is fond of Eric, it is Eric and Mansel's shared counter ties that make their separation 'impossible'. Mansel's acknowledgement that it is not just Eric and he who are reliant on the information shared in their epistolary arrangement, implies that it is his loyalty to his mother that dictates Mansel's refusal to move rooms, away from Eric, rather than any emotional value that Eric himself has personally to offer. Whilst this dissertation does not mean to question the legitimacy of Eric and Mansel's friendship, it does seek to raise questions about the purposes, and perceived importance, of friendships within the camp, and what camp companions had to offer one another.

Overall, Mansel's relationship with Eric demonstrates that camp friendships were limited in their ability to help inmates overcome feelings of loneliness. Even though

[65] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, January 28, 1943
[66] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, February 26, 1943
[67] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, January 30, 1945

Mansel considered Eric to be a 'wonderful friend', a lack of pre-war connection imposed a distance between them that they were unable to overcome throughout their captivity.[68] Eric's shortcomings in his ability to offer emotional support to Mansel, however, were made up for by his ability to provide Mansel with both food and information from home.

[68] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, July 27, 1944

Chapter Three: Home Comforts

'Another grand day and v. warm – but no letters.'[69]

During the Second World War, British prisoners of war could send home between two and five letterforms a month, depending on their rank, plus four postcards. Each letterform consisted of just twenty-four lines, a postcard only eight.[70] Whilst POWs' correspondents were permitted to write more frequently, they were advised not to exceed two sides of notepaper and to correspond only once a week in order to minimise postal delays.[71] Although Susan Grayzel overstates letters' ability to 'bridge the gap between divided fronts', letters certainly sought to increase understanding, and reduce indifference, between soldiers and their families.[72] Serving as his only contact with home, letters were very important to Mansel because they were able, to borrow Hanna's phrasing, to 'cultivate intimacy by making the absent correspondent seem almost palpably present.'[73] Whilst the personal significance of wartime correspondence has not gone unnoticed by academic historians, the difference between letters' intentions and their actual impact on their recipients has received insufficient critical analysis.[74] Indeed, Makepeace's study, 'Living Beyond the Barbed Wire', offers the only detailed study of POW correspondence and, although Makepeace explores the emotional significance of letters to POWs, she does not explicitly discuss their influence on feelings of loneliness.[75] This chapter will thus build upon the work of Makepeace and, through analysing Mansel's response to the arrival (or lack of) letters, argues that although

[69] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, October 23, 1943

[70] International Committee of the Red Cross, *Report of the International Committee of the Red Cross on its Activities During the Second World War (Sept. 1, 1939–June 30, 1947),* i (Geneva, 1948), p. 349.

[71] London, TNA: PRO, Boards of Customs 106/369, general post office, communication with prisoners of war interned abroad, Dec. 1940; London, TNA: PRO, CUST 106/369, general post office, communication with prisoners of war and civilians interned abroad, Aug. 1941.There was no mention of limitations on the frequency of correspondence in the communiqué issued eight months earlier (TNA: PRO, CUST 106/369, general post office, communication with prisoners of war interned abroad, Dec. 1940).

[72] S. Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War. Gender, Motherhood and Politics in Britain and France during the First World War* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), p.49

[73] Hanna, ' A Republic of Letters', p.1348

[74] See, Roper, *The Secret Battle;* Hanna, 'A Republic of Letters', pp.1338-61; J. Hartley, and, R. Earle, '"Letters Are Everything These Days": Mothers and Letters in the Second World War', in, R. Earle (ed.), *Epistolary selves: letters and letter writers, 1600-1945* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), pp.183-95; S.P. Mackenzie, *The Colditz Myth: British and Commonwealth Prisoners of War in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp.163-70

[75] See, Makepeace, 'Living Beyond the Barbed Wire', pp.158-77

correspondence sought to offer comfort, the realities and practicalities of the wartime postal system meant that letters did as much to increase feelings of loneliness among POWs as they did to help overcome them.

Through repeated reference to his receipt of letters, and the tables he made charting correspondence sent and received, it is evident that letters carried great emotional and personal importance for Mansel.[76] Indeed, Mansel's diary is littered with mention of the arrival of post, 'another big batch of letters today – 5,000. I get 2. Why can't they do this always?', 'delighted to hear from Mummy tonight', and, 'wizard surprise – a batch of 7 letters (5 from Mother – ranging from Nov. 3rd to Jan. 2nd).'[77] The repeated mention of the mere arrival of letters, without even discussion of their content, supports Acton's assertion that 'tangible objects were as much part of the dialogue as the words themselves.'[78] Mansel treasured letters as material objects as they served as a cherished sign that, at the very least, his loved ones were alive and were keen to maintain their relationship. Following the news of the death of his younger brother, Mansel wrote that a 'letter from Mother' would be 'the most comforting thing possible at this sad time', implying that letters were the next best substitute to seeing loved ones in person.[79] Their value to POWs is further demonstrated in Mansel's comparison, 'no letters - but a hot shower', both being a rare luxury in a prison camp.[80]

Whilst the arrival of letters brought comfort and excitement, a lack or delay of letters could have a detrimental effect on prisoners. 'No letters – miserable.'[81] This short declarative implies that POWs' moods were heavily affected by the arrival of correspondence from home. Also, Mansel sarcastically remarked, 'with lack of fuel and

[76] For example of references to post see, London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, October 23, 1943; London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, October 10, 1944; Mansel transcribed every piece of correspondence he sent home in an exercise book, and for each one he noted in the top-right-hand corner 'written', 'received' and 'acknowledged', with dates filled in accordingly, see, London, I.W.M., Documents.9476, the private papers of Capt. J.W. Mansel

[77] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, December 22, 1942; London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, March 25, 1943; London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, February 18, 1943

[78] C. Acton, 'Writing and Waiting: The First World War Correspondence Between Vera Brittain and Roland Leighton', *Gender and History,* Vol. 11, No. 1, (April 1999) p. 62.

[79] Mansel's younger brother, Major Mervyn L. Mansel, was killed at Kohima in Burma, May 12, 1944, Mansel himself did not hear of the 'death of a family member' until a letter arrived from Eric's wife, Midge, on July 27, 1944, see, London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, July 27, 1944; London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, August 1, 1944

[80] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, April 13, 1943

[81] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, October 22, 1943

no letters, life will be jolly', once again implying that letters can be a substitute for, or substituted by, physical comforts.[82] Therefore, although letters could offer POWs emotional comfort when they arrived, the all too frequent postal delays meant that prisoners regularly felt an increasing sense of isolation and deprivation.

Even when letters arrived, they could evoke feelings of isolation among prisoners as they often fell short in their ability to bridge the gap between POWs and their families, and even widen it. Indeed, shortly after the death of his brother, Mansel observed an alteration in his mother's letters, that 'small as it was, it stuck out a mile' as she altered the ending of her letter from "May God bless you and keep you safe and well and bring you home soon" to include two extra words, "…and bring you home TO ME soon."[83] Although only slight, this alteration carries great significance as it highlights how his mother is affected by her son's loss, and reminds Mansel of his own separation from his mother. Furthermore, after receiving a photograph of his mother, Mansel wrote, 'Mummy's photo arrived and I'm most terribly pleased with it – particularly as I don't think she has changed or aged. This was what I was most anxious about.'[84] The value of the photograph is that, as Susan Sontag highlights, it is 'not only an image (as a painting is an image), an interpretation of the real; it is also a trace, something directly stencilled off the real'.[85] In other words, it serves as a true testimony to the condition of its subject in that moment; for Mansel it serves as proof that nothing has changed drastically or beyond recognition. Although the photo offers Mansel assurance of a lack of change, his use of the superlative, 'most anxious', testifies to the prevalence of anxieties about being distanced, both physically and through experience, from home.

Letters were limited in their ability to ease feelings of isolation as the strict restrictions on their content and length prevented their authors from being able to express themselves honestly. Indeed, censorship meant that relatives were instructed to discuss purely personal matters, while some prisoners of war could only guess at what constituted permissible content.[86] Moreover, the strict length of both letterforms and

[82] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, January 7, 1945
[83] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, August 3, 1944
[84] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, August 16, 1943
[85] S. Sontag, *On Photography* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1978), p. 154
[86] Leeds, Second World War Experience Centre, 2001.1048, the private papers of Driver P.

postcards meant that the content of letters had to be further restricted and refined.[87] Indeed, Mansel stated that it was 'difficult to keep within the confined span of our letter cards' and so spent 'hours' cutting down the content of his letters.[88] 'Drafts, rewrites one after another and then cutting and cutting and cutting down to the short letter it is…'[89] The time and effort that Mansel poured into his letters testifies to his eagerness to maintain relationships with home. His repetition of 'and cutting', however, implies that his letters contain only a fraction of what he wanted to say, and that a lot remained unsaid. 'A dull letter I fear, but they are so short.'[90] Mansel believed that the restrictions placed on correspondence affected what he would otherwise say and unable to communicate openly through letters, Mansel's diary offered the only channel through which he felt able to truly express himself.[91] Furthermore, the limited number of letters that POWs were permitted to send, meant that prisoners had to be selective in who they wrote to.[92] 'Poor old Mervyn – wish I could spare him a letter', implies that this writer was aware of how well-received a letter might be, and that he felt some frustration at the enforced rationing, unable to 'spare' one to his brother even though he had little else to fill his time.[93] His unfulfilled 'wish' to write to his 'poor old' brother suggests feelings of guilt, and his concern that another letter might be 'dull' or 'so short' that it expresses little of its original content, suggests that his satisfaction in writing was muted.

The arrival of letters not only had an impact on their intended individual recipient, but also on the wider environment of the camp. Makepeace posits that the three factors that exercised the most influence over POW relationships were rank, time spent in captivity,

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Hainsworth,'Communication with prisoners of war and civilians interned in Europe (leaflet P 2280E)'; Panter-Brick explains, 'we assumed that our mail was censored yet had no means of knowing what would be censored', Panter-Brick, *Years Not Wasted* p. ix; The camp standing orders for Oflag VIIB set out that 'reports containing conditions or alterations in the camp may not be written in letters, nor may political or military matters be included', London, National Army Museum, 2001-09-300-12, the private papers of 2nd Lt. A. R. Jabez-Smith, 'Camp standing orders Oflag VIIIB, September 1942'; Frustrations surrounding censorship are present in other POW writings, for example, see, A.N.L. Munby, 'Letters', in, E.G.C. Beckwith, (ed.), *Selections from the Quill: A Collection of Prose, Verse and Sketches by Officers Prisoners-of-War in Germany, 1940-1945* (London: Country Life Limited, 1946), p.146

[87] International Committee of the Red Cross, *Report of the International Committee of the Red Cross*, p. 349.

[88] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, August 8, 1943; London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, August 10, 1943

[89] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, August 10, 1943

[90] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, April 11, 1943

[91] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, September 14, 1944

[92] International Committee of the Red Cross, *Report of the International Committee of the Red Cross*, p. 349.

[93] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, February 26, 1943

and the distribution of food.[94] Although she is correct in highlighting the controversy of each of these factors, this dissertation suggests that correspondence should be added as a fourth component. Indeed, as demonstrated by Eric and Mansel's reading of each other's post, letters had the ability to bring inmates together in order to share and compile their news from home. 'Another excitement today was hearing news of the family through a letter to Charles Clay from Brian Sleeman. Brian had heard from Mother that they are all well and this letter was dated September 20th.'[95] Sharing letters was somewhat able to combat feelings of loneliness as inference from others' letters permitted Mansel to feel included in, and up-to-date, with life at home.

Letters' ability to bring inmates together, however, was limited. 'Even if one doesn't get any oneself it is sometimes terrific value to read those of other people whom you know at home.'[96] This statement highlights the fact that whilst correspondence could be shared and emotionally benefit multiple inmates, the benefits of others receiving post were only felt if they shared a home connection, when information could be applied to one's own family and friends. Indeed, without the sense of shared benefit, letters had the ability to drive inmates apart.

> I got another 3 letters tonight and was almost frightened of producing them… Nothing leads quicker to harsh and jealous thoughts than seeing someone continually getting letters when you are getting none yourself.[97]

The adjectives 'harsh' and 'jealous' imply extreme, almost hostile levels of, envy from his inmates for having received letters when they had not. By stating that he is 'almost frightened' to openly read his letters, Mansel implies that he feels a need to withdraw himself from the company of his inmates in order to be able to enjoy reading his letters. Feelings of envy are further visible in statements made in reference to other inmates' post; 'both Chang and Jack got clothing parcels.'[98] Such observations of the arrival of post for others implies an all too painful awareness of one's own lack thereof, and in turn an envy that others should be so lucky. Letters could thus inflict distance between POWs as well as bring them together, depending on whether there was considered to be mutual benefit in knowledge of its content.

[94] Makepeace, *Captives of War,* pp104-14
[95] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, October 10, 1944
[96] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, September 8, 1943
[97] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, October 6, 1944
[98] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, November 3, 1943

In short, although letters sought to bridge the gap, and reduce indifference, between prisoners and their families, the restrictions imposed on them meant that they did as much to evoke feelings of isolation as they did to help overcome them. Whilst the arrival of letters offered Mansel some comfort, this was contingent on several factors including the letter's content and other inmates' receipt of letters. Moreover, the strict limitations imposed on the letters that Mansel was permitted to send meant that he was unable to express himself honestly on the page; consequently, Mansel did not feel fulfilled by this form of communication.

Conclusion

Using the diary entries of Captain John W. Mansel throughout the duration of his stay at Eichstätt camp, as a case study, this dissertation has analysed the prevalence of loneliness among British officer POWs in the Second World War, as they experienced it at the time of their capture. In exploring loneliness, this dissertation has addressed three prominent and distinct, albeit connected, factors that influenced feelings of loneliness among prisoners.

Chapter One demonstrated that the conditions of officer captivity did more to drive men apart than bring them together. 'Having to live year in year out in a crowd of people in a small room, not even with a bed to oneself, let alone a room, with the same old arguments and topics of conversation, the same old irritants turning up day after day' generated frustrations that forced inmates apart and required Mansel to withdraw himself in order to maintain peace.[99] Consequently, whilst solitude was unobtainable, feelings of loneliness were an all too prominent part of Mansel's captivity. Moreover, this chapter revealed that neither the arrival of new prisoners nor participation in recreational activities helped Mansel to overcome feelings of isolation as neither offered meaningful nor fulfilling company. Thus, this chapter posits that close proximity does not equate to intimacy.

Chapter Two then analysed Mansel's friendship with Eric, perhaps Mansel's closest companion in the camp. In its analysis of Mansel and Eric's relationship this chapter posits that whilst clearly important to Mansel, Eric was unable to counter Mansel's feelings of isolation. Indeed, the muted nature of Eric and Mansel's relationship made it difficult for Mansel to express himself; thus he struggled to overcome the barrier that the lack of pre-war connection enforced between him and Eric. In exploring the tangible benefits that Eric offered Mansel, this chapter raises questions about the purposes and perceived importance of friendships between inmates. Although it does not seek to undermine the legitimacy of their friendship, this chapter argues that Eric's ability to provide for Mansel is, at least in part, responsible for Mansel's fondness towards him.

[99] London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel Diary Entry, July 19, 1944

Alongside, what might be considered the temporary company of camp companions, long-term relationships with relatives at home played a prominent part within the camp. Chapter Three explored the significance of written communication, whether letters exchanged between prisoners and their families could ease feelings of isolation. This chapter argued that despite best intentions, letters did as much to intensify feelings of loneliness as they did to overcome them. Although offering some comfort from home, their frequent delay resulted in feelings of anxiety, emphasising the distance between POWs and their loved ones. Moreover, Mansel's letters did not permit him to express himself honestly, and as a result of the restrictions imposed, Mansel felt his letters were unsuccessful in helping to reduce indifference between himself and his family. Letters not only impacted the relationship between correspondents, but also those within the camp. Indeed, whilst letters could at time bring inmates together in attempt to share information on loved ones, receiving direct news of home was always preferable, thus letters could evoke envy among inmates.

Overall, this dissertation argues that feelings of isolation were a prominent part of Mansel's experiences of captivity, as the muted nature of his relationships with his inmates and the limitations (both enforced and practical) of letters meant that Mansel felt unable to express himself fully to another person. In reaching its conclusion this dissertation does not seek to depict Mansel as "typical" of officer POWs, as it agrees with Harrison that at this degree of intimacy (diaries) the word "typical" is inappropriate.[100] Instead, this dissertation seeks to use the case of Mansel in order to highlight a need for further emotional analysis of not only experiences of captivity, but experiences of combat as a whole, as it posits that such focus would allow for greater understanding of individuals' navigation of the environments of combat and their self-placement within collective identities. Indeed, although Mansel fell under the title of 'prisoner of war' alongside 172,592 other British servicemen in the Second World War for the most part he felt alone, turning to his diary as an ear to his grievances, lacking sufficient empathy from his inmates and relatives.[101] Unable to connect with, and feel sufficient emotional reward from, any of the channels of communication open to him, the words of Francis

[100] Harrison, *Living Through the Blitz,* p.254

[101] London, TNA: PRO, WO 32/10757, 'Casualties suffered during the war', table 14, p. 13; London, IWM, Documents.9476, Mansel, Diary Entry, September 14, 1944

Bacon reign true for Mansel and his experiences of captivity, that 'a crowd is not company; and faces are but a gallery of pictures'.[102]

[102] Bacon, 'Of Friendship', in Vickers, (ed.), *Francis Bacon: The Major Works*, P.391

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