

A scroll of parchment with the title "The Long March" written in a black, gothic-style font. The scroll is unrolled, showing the texture of the parchment and the binding at the top and bottom. The text is centered on the page.

The
Long
March



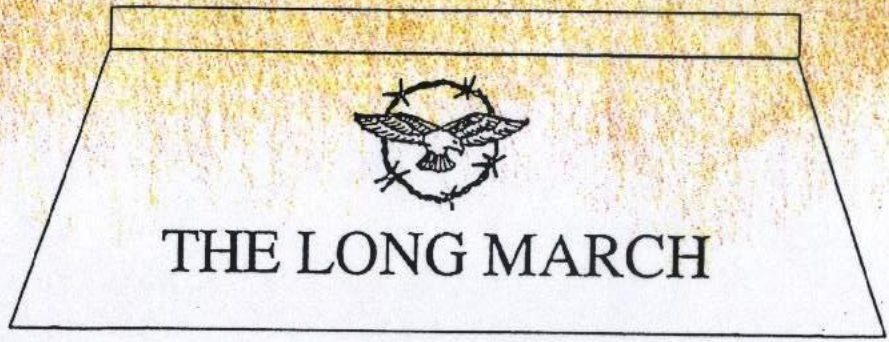
Sculptor Pam Tiytor ARBS

Times Roman
45 & 25 approx
Cap heights

inscription to
Long March plinth

RTweed RA FM 4/03

Front Elevation



Erected by the Royal Air Forces ex-Prisoners of War Association and dedicated
to the memory of prisoners of war of the Allied and Commonwealth air forces.

Unveiled by His Royal Highness, Prince Philip, The Duke of Edinburgh, KG KT.
14th May 2003

This memorial depicts air forces prisoners of war trudging through the snow after being forced
by their guards to leave their prison camps in the face of the Russian advance in 1945.

Generously provided by members and widows of the RAF ex-PoW Association and their friends.
Sculpted by Pam Taylor ARBS



Air Commodore Charles Clarke

Your Royal Highness, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my privilege to welcome you on behalf of the Committee of the Royal Air Forces ex-Prisoners of War Association and to thank you for joining us on this very important occasion.

The replies to my recent circular to Members brought home to me just how scattered we are, and the difficulty many Members now experience in traveling.

The Monument represents a remarkable achievement by all concerned and a great deal of hard work by our aged Committee; particularly by Maurice Butt, who kindly agreed to take on the task of co-ordinating our appeal. It has been most touching to receive so many contributions, both large and small, from companies, members and friends, along with many messages of goodwill.

I should emphasize that the Memorial commemorates prisoners of war of all the allied and Commonwealth air forces, including those from Europe and the Far East, and the later campaigns in Korea, Falklands and the Gulf.

We are thankful that we did not gain any new members from the more recent conflict.

Most of you will know that the statue represents a prisoner of war pulling a sledge in the snow on the Long March, after we were forced to leave the Camp when the Russians were only a few miles away.

We had no idea of what was to become of us and feared that we would be held as hostages. For some prisoners, this involved walking five hundred miles and living by digging into the icy ground to find food. Many of you will remember how pleased we were to collect and eat kohlrabi tops, left in the fields to feed the animals.

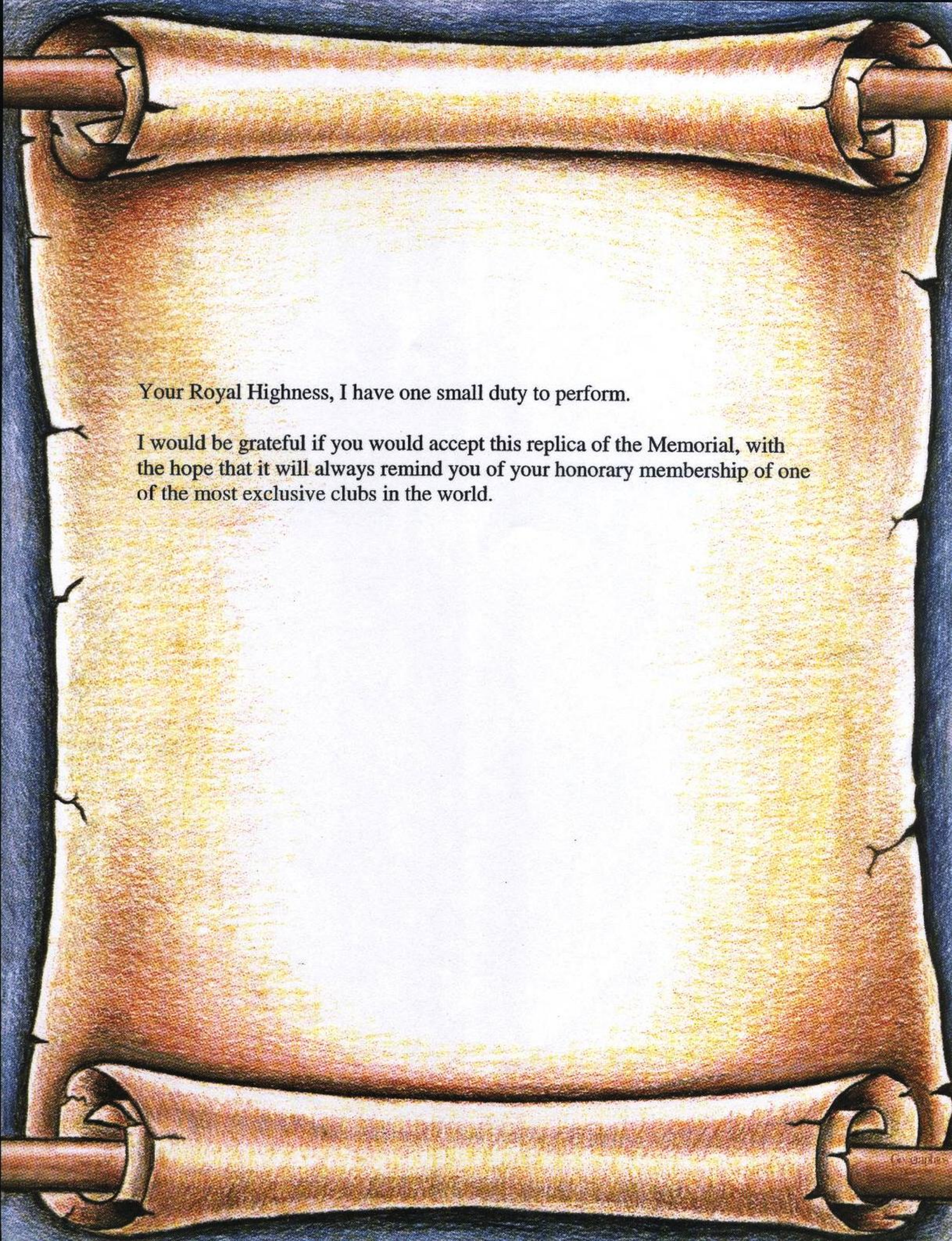
Most of us suffered from dysentery and many fell by the wayside, but guards refused to allow us to go to their aid. As is, a recent book by a reputable author has claimed that one in twenty prisoners lost their lives in captivity --- - so-called friendly fire was well-known to us.

At a later date, the Memorial will form the centre piece of a major prisoner of war display in the Museum, and I urge you to donate any artifacts you may have, so the display is truly representative of the time we spent behind the wire.

We are indebted to Doctor Michael Fopp and all his staff for allowing us to take over the Museum for this important occasion, and for giving us so much help.

We were very lucky to meet up with Pam Taylor, our sculptor, and I would like to thank her publicly for her patience with us, and for translating our ideas into the magnificent Memorial you will soon see.

On this note, Sir, could I invite Your Royal Highness to do us the honour of unveiling this Memorial to all Air Forces prisoners of war.



Your Royal Highness, I have one small duty to perform.

I would be grateful if you would accept this replica of the Memorial, with the hope that it will always remind you of your honorary membership of one of the most exclusive clubs in the world.

Unveiling

His Royal Highness The Prince Philip

As we stand here in silence we are all as one in our fellowship, as we honour those of the Royal Air Force and all allied air forces, who became prisoners of war.

We think of the lads we knew: and all who served their captivity with such endurance and fortitude.

Dedication

In gratitude and humility, I dedicate this memorial to the Glory of God, in memory of the men and women of all the allied Air Forces who suffered the hardships and deprivations of being Prisoners of War

- those who, in the hands of their enemies faced the hardships and miseries of prison camp life with unfailing cheerfulness and courage,
- standing by their friends in all kinds hazardous situations
- and upholding the honour of their country in the face of all restrictions and adversity.

And especially remembering those who died in their captivity, and who are buried in graves far from home.

The Rev. Victor Cooper MA ex POW
Let Us Pray

Prayer

O Gracious Father, who didst send thine only son into the world to set us free from the bonds of sin, hear us as we remember before Thee our comrades, men and women, who, while striving to preserve our freedom suffered and died as prisoners of war.

- Help us never to forget their sacrifice.
- Forgive us our indifference and help us to live for the time when men will build a better world;
- where freedom will be the lot of every man and woman;
- and justice and goodwill the foundations of human society.

Prayer and Benediction

O God our Father we pray thee to

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| - Grant to the living | <u>Grace</u> |
| - to the departed, | <u>Rest</u> |
| - to the Church, the Queen and the Commonwealth | <u>Peace and Concord</u> |
| - and all Mankind | <u>Life Everlasting</u> |
| and to us and all thy servants | |

and the Blessing of God Almighty, the **Father**, the **Son** and the **Holy Spirit**
be with you, and abide with you always.

Amen.

In Memory of the PoWs of the 'Long March'

By Peter Davies

THE MEMORIAL to RAF prisoners of war who died on the "Long March", unveiled by the Duke of Edinburgh at the Royal Air Force Museum Hendon, yesterday, is a reminder of one of the Second World War's most extraordinary — yet unsung — feats of endurance amid extreme privation and suffering. This was the enforced march of British, Commonwealth and Allied PoWs to western Germany from camps on the eastern borders of the Third Reich in the winter and spring of 1945.

In the summer of 1944, with the Red Army already on the borders of Germany, there were around 200,00 RAF, army and naval PoWs, besides thousands of Americans, in camps dotted throughout Germany and the occupied territories. Many of these lay in the east of the country and included Stalag Luft III, of Great Escape fame 100 miles south east of Berlin. Others were more remote still: in East Prussia, Poland and Czechoslovakia.

To prevent their occupants being liberated by the advancing Russians. Hitler ordered that they should be marched westwards, out of harm's way. Put in charge of this operation was an SS lieutenant-general, Gottlob Berger, a man with a history of brutal suppression of unrest in the occupied territories. However, with the Third Reich collapsing around him he seems to have felt might be politic to ignore the Führer's severer orders for the treatment of PoWs.

In the chaotic conditions of Germany in early 1945 when the evacuations began, this scarcely made any difference. Driven from the shelter of their camps, bullied, beaten and hectorated by their guards, shot dead if they lagged behind or fell by the wayside, a quarter of a million PoWs stumbled and shuffled their way hundreds of miles to the west, without adequate food, shelter or clothing, in the bitterest winter Germany had experienced for 50 years.

The harrowing tale of the 86-day trek of the inmates of the notoriously brutal Stalag Luft IV at Gross Tychow in Pomerania to Fallingbomel in Lower Saxony, 500 miles distant, may stand as representative of the collective ordeal. A number of these prisoners had already made the 250-mile journey by sea from Stalag Luft VI at Heydekrug on the borders of Lithuania the previous summer, piled below decks in the disease-rife hold of a rusty cargo boat.

The march out from Stalag Luft IV began on February 6, 1945, with the temperature 20 degrees below zero and with snow falling. Just 11km

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RAF EX-POW ASSOCIATION SEATING PLAN

14th May 2003

COMMITTEE AND WIVES

1

Les Allan

Tim Owen

2

Doris Allan

Geoff Harris

3

D Radcliffe

M. Legault

4

Betty Banfield

Tony Little

5

Mrs Cooper

USA Ambassa'e

6

Mrs Broughton

Michael Fopp

7

Peter Taylor

Prince Philip

8

Pam Taylor

Charles Clarke

9

Gordon Newton

Sir John Day

10

Polish Attache

Polish Ambass're

11

Dot Martin

Chaplain

12

Eieen Clarke

J. Broughton

13

Mary Endsor

G. Crosland

14

Betty Batch

D. Bernard

15

Maurice Butt

FRONT



were covered before nightfall. Blisters on feet were soon bursting, opening them to infection. In the extreme cold resistance to disease was soon eroded. Injuries suffered in baling out or in combat were exacerbated.

Over the following interminable ice-cold days some lucky few might find a barn to lie in at night, but most were compelled to lie in the open. In snow- and waterfilled shell holes men clung to each other for warmth under a shared greatcoat. When guards were not looking the men raided the fields for potatoes, turnips and mangolds.

Raw rat became a delicacy. At times men were reduced to chewing grass. So near to starvation were they that one PoW recalled looking at his arm, suddenly realizing it was a piece of meat and wondering, lightheadedly, whether he could bring himself to take a bit out of it.

The men were plagued with lice and the constant battle to rid themselves of them was a losing one. "If you kill one a thousand will come for its funeral" was the grim PoW saying. But the killer was dysentery, robbing men of their vitality — and dignity. In the utterly insanitary conditions it was almost impossible not to catch it. Men often chose to soil themselves as they marched, rather than falling out to risk being shot. Yet no one could afford to discard even the filthiest rags in the intense cold.

The brutality of their guards was compounded by the hostility of a populace who regarded the airmen as Luftgangsters and Terrorflieger as a result of the widespread damage from bombing raids. Friendly fire in one form or another was a constant peril. As the Stalag Luft IV men entered Swinemunde, bombs were falling on the port, while shrapnel from the flak defences fell among them.

In one of the worst incidents another group, ex-inmates of Stalag Luft III, were targeted by RAF Typhoon fighter bombers. In spite of frantic gesticulations by an officer who bravely exposed himself to canon fire, waving his RAF greatcoat aloft, more than 60 PoWs, including him, were killed by pilots who could have no reason to imagine that a column on the move consisted of other than the enemy.

The figures for those who perished on these marches can only be estimates. Somewhere in the region of 10 per cent did not survive the ordeal. Commissioned by the Royal Air Forces ex-PoW Association, Pamela Taylor's iconic study of a PoW dragging his few remaining possessions on a makeshift sled commemorates those who did not reach the end of their terrible journey.



*With grateful thanks for all the help given by
The Director General and staff of the RAF Museum
and
Media Services, RAF Henlow who designed and produced this fitting commemorative programme*

Compiled by A.J. Tony Little