



Guards Tower at Stalag 7, Moosburg, Germany

## Swindon Soldier A Prisoner

### Private Lyford in a German Camp

A Swindon woman who, for more than two months after receiving news that her son was “missing” refused to give up hope, has now been overjoyed by the receipt of a letter from him.

The communication bearing the address Stalag 7, is from Private Ronald William Lyford, of the R.A.O.C., son of Mr. & Mrs Lyford of Hinton Street, Swindon.

It was on 31 May the parents received official intimation that their boy, serving in the Middle East was reported “missing”. After some time they saw Mr. T. H. Fessey, Citizens Advice Bureau, who instigated an inquiries through the Red Cross, whose special arrangements and facilities often serve to secure news of missing men and thus to relieve the anxiety of parents and friends.

The good news has now come direct from a prisoner-of-war camp in Germany, and indicates that Ronald is quite well.

Official intimation that he is a prisoner-of-war has not yet been received from the War Office

**North Wilts Herald, 22 August 1941**

#### OPC Notes:

Ronald William Lyford survived and returned to the Swindon area. He was the son of William Bernard Lyford a railway locomotive driver of Swindon. He married Ethel Louvain Watkins on 3rd March 1934 at the Swindon Register Office. Their daughter Sheila Maureen was born on 1st August 1934, her birth being registered in the Stroud (Gloucestershire) Registration District. It would appear that by 1946 Ronald and Ethel had separated and divorced as both Ronald and Ethel had remarried by 1949. Ronald it would appear married Elaine B. Reeves in the December Quarter of 1946 in Swindon. Ethel Lyford nee Watkins remarried in Newport, Monmouthshire in 1949 to Henry Jennings who subsequently adopted Shelia Maureen Lyford. In the March quarter of 1967 Ronald William appears to have married a third time to Mary Reeves again in Swindon. Ronald died in the June Quarter of 1972.

Stalag 7 was built at Moosburg, Southern Bavaria, Germany, to initially house up to 10,000 Polish prisoners. It was opened in September 1939. Later it was used to imprison British, French, Belgian, Dutch, Greek and Yugoslavian soldiers. Soldiers captured in the Battle of France, in the Balkans campaign and from the North African Campaign were all sent here. From the summer of 1941 captured Soviet soldiers also were retained here. In 1942 American soldiers from the Battle of the Bulge and Italian Campaigns were also sent here. As more and more camps were threatened by

advancing allied troops prisoners were marched to Stalag 7 at one point it is estimated that the camp detained 70,000 soldiers. Surviving records show that more than 150,000 prisoners passed through the camp. The camp was liberated by American troops on 29th April 1945 where it is understood that several Soviet Generals were being held. There is a memorial to inmates of Stalag 7 in the form of a fountain located in the centre of Neustadt. The camp was used by the Americans to detain 12,000 German men and women suspected of criminal activity for the Nazi regime.

### **Source Material**

Marriage certificate of Ronald Lyford and Ethel Watkins  
Entries for Ethel in the 1939 Register - updated with later vital records  
England and Wales BMD indexes.  
POW Camp information - from Wikipedia and Moosburg.org