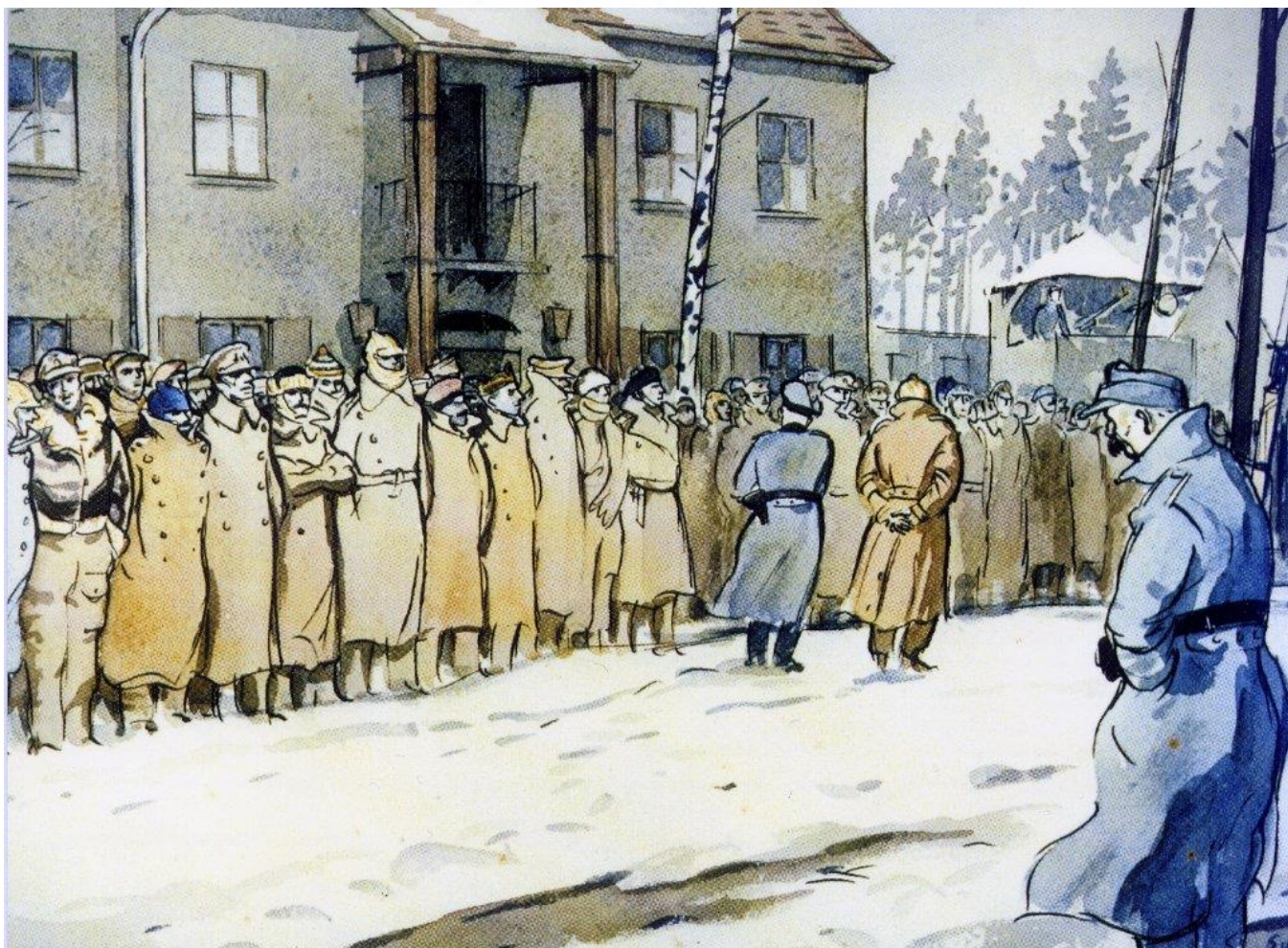


The Brunswick Club

The Story of "Roll Call"



The picture was painted in 1944 in Oflag 79, a prisoner-of-war camp for officers near Brunswick in northern Germany. There were some 3,000 prisoners there, mostly British but including also Americans, Canadians and Australians, many of them prisoners from the early days of the war. It was painted by Gordon Horner, of the Royal Artillery who was taken prisoner in the Western Desert, with material sent by the Red Cross.

The picture was painted from life, the people depicted being actual people there at the time. It recalls "Appel" or Roll Call, which took place every morning at 7 a.m. and at such other times as the Germans decided, especially if they suspected an escape or the prisoners had been unduly truculent. The prisoners were lined up in "funfs" (fives) in front of their quarters, which were old (and bombed) Luftwaffe barracks. They were divided into 14 companies of about 200 each. On "Appel" each company was inspected by a German officer and the company's own Commanding Officer, as is shown in the picture. The German officer, in the blue-grey uniform, in the picture, was a Hauptmann, a Captain. The sentry, presumably guarding the prisoners, looks more bored and fed-up than the prisoners themselves, who in fact look remarkably cheerful.

This particular Hauptmann was killed in one of the air-raids when bombs fell on Oflag 79. During that year the camp suffered fairly frequent air-raids from our own side as there were several armaments factories in the area. Nearby was one particular factory which, it was understood, was involved in the production of V1 and V2 rockets, the "flying bombs" which were fired on London and other large cities in the United Kingdom. What was going on in the factory was known to our people and accordingly it was bombed - by the Americans by day and the R.A.F. by night - and Oflag 79 caught the misses. There were killed and wounded among the prisoners and also among the Germans, including that Hauptmann.

The prisoners in the picture were officers in Gordon's Company. Though, when asked about it some 50 years later, he remembered virtually all of them by sight, as he had painted them from life, he remembered only a few by name. The one in the flying jacket in the front row is John Fowler, who played in the camp's band. Next but one to him is Paul Hardwick, the son of a famous pre-war actor and himself an actor. After the war he played in the Royal Shakespeare Company, in various films with Michael Redgrave and Marilyn Monro, and in television. The tall officer in the balaclava is Denis Beasley who afterwards had a successful career in hotel management.

The picture was painted to help raise funds for the Boys Club to be formed after the war and to be named Brunswick, after the location of Oflag 79. Once the camp had approved the idea put to it by the founders, who became the Trustees, many ways of raising funds were devised. The most successful, after cheques written on scraps of paper to be honoured after the war - and they all were - was the raffle of prizes promised by individuals. They included a week-end for 2 at the Savoy, a year's subscription to Punch, kippers from the Isle of Man and many more of a more exotic nature. Gordon Horner painted this picture for that purpose. It was raffled and then - such was the confidence that the Club would indeed be formed after the war - it was donated to The Brunswick Boys Club. It has now been in its rightful place, in the Club in London, for many years.

The picture is in a museum-type of showcase with other memorabilia of the prisoner-of-war camp and an almost life-size blow-up covers one wall of the senior members lounge upstairs.

"Roll Call", depicting as it does characters typical of those who started it and the place where it all began, is the Brunswick's most prized possession.