

## Reading used at the Funeral of Harry Neal (Tank) on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2011

(Written by Harry Tapley, 4th Btn Gordon Highlanders

PoW No. 5532

Kriegsgefangener Lager Stalag XXB, XVIIIIB, XXA)

I find it hard just to explain  
As I travel back down memory lane  
Of the strength of mind, and stale black bread  
And cattle trucks, and frozen dead

The companionship, when might was right  
The petty thieving in the night,  
The lice, the rags, the hunger pains  
The barbed wire fence, the stink of drains

The sudden blackouts when you stand  
A raging torrent of commands,  
Sleeping in snow in open spaces  
Guards death frozen in their places

Sharing out each little mite  
Eating potatoes black with blight  
Clogs and foot cloths hurting feet  
While topping miles of sugar beet

Dreaming of bellies being filled  
While just another prisoner's killed,  
The eager listening to all news  
The lies, the rumours, the different views

The escapes we made through the fence  
The movements of freedom, sweet and tense,  
The beatings up, the bread and water  
That followed on our capture later

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Notes of love for everyone

Dear John letters by the score,  
Deep despair then face to wall  
One prisoner less at morning call

The seething square at roll-calls roar  
Forty short or twenty more,  
Long hours standing in the rain  
A mighty effort keeping sane

The long, long trek to the west  
Man's endurance put to the test,  
Exhausted stragglers at roadside lie  
Mingling with the hoards that die

Burning buildings all around  
Aircraft rockets smash the ground,  
Your chosen tree it is your fate  
Machine gun bullets sing their hate

Fifteen thousand when the march began  
But only six when all was done,  
Each face still stands out bright and clear  
The friends and comrades of yesteryear

Remembering always makes me sad  
A blazing world that had gone mad,  
Tempering out tolerance of fellow being  
Peculiarities were passed unseeing

Perhaps it is not good to dwell  
On times when life was simply hell,  
God grant we never do repeat  
Treating people just like meat