



PoW radio # 9  
Allied  
Germany/Italy



### Modified DKE 38

Private Reginald Lawrence Glanville of the Australian 2/7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion, held captive in a German PoW camp, was assigned to work in a Silesian sugar beet factory. Being a radio expert he was allowed to leave the camp to repair local broadcast radios. In this process he managed to acquire enough components to build his own radio in 1943. The receiver was principally constructed from parts taken from German DKE 38 receivers ('Deutschen kleinempfänger 1938', see chapter 207), modified to operate on short wave and built in a wooden enclosure with open back having a mock Bakelite half round front.

<p><b>DATA SUMMARY</b></p> <p><b>Organisation:</b> Prisoners of War originating from the USA, UK and Commonwealth countries, interned in German camps.</p> <p><b>Year of Introduction:</b> World War 2.</p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> Secret listening to Allied news broadcasts.</p>
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The headphones were supplied by a sympathetic German servant girl. Powered through the socket of an Edison light bulb in the work camp's latrines, the radio was concealed in a Red Cross food carton when not in use. Listening was restricted to three 15 minute periods a week.



Detail view of the crystal receiver hidden in a modified pattern 37 water bottle.

### Radio in a water bottle. Stalag III D

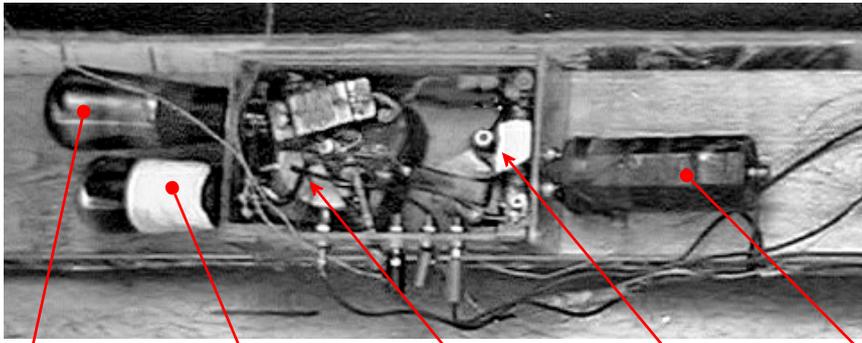


The water bottle radio shown on display in the Imperial War Museum. The false top and pouch appear to be missing.

The photo right shows a pattern 37 water bottle in its original form. It was normally covered with a pouch and only the top opening with cork would show. The blue colour enamel was rare as most of the pattern 37 and variations water bottles had a green colour.



A crystal receiver constructed by N. Norris, a prisoner of war in Stalag III D near Berlin, was hidden in a pattern 37 water bottle. The bottle was modified and had a separate top section which could be filled with water. Along with the pouch nobody would suspect its authenticity. The first crystal detector unit was obtained from a French prisoner and a second from a German sentry in exchange for cigarettes. It had a coil tuner; a good aerial and earth were essential for reception.



Stalag Luft I  
secret radio.

AF output valve    Detector valve    Reaction capacitor    Tuning capacitor    Plug-in Coil

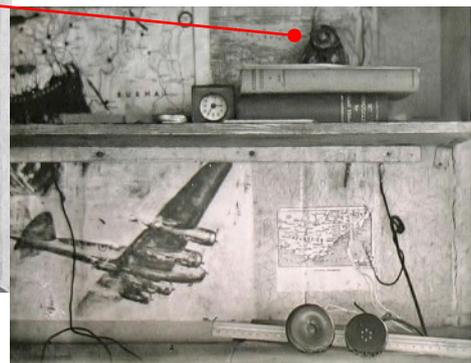
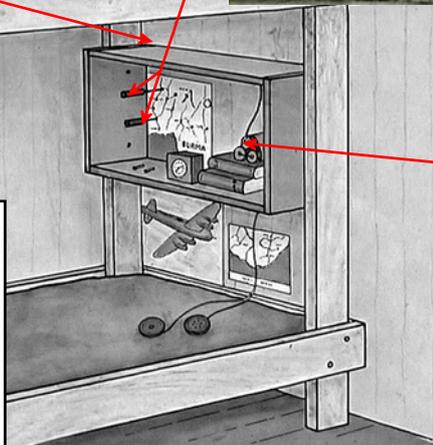
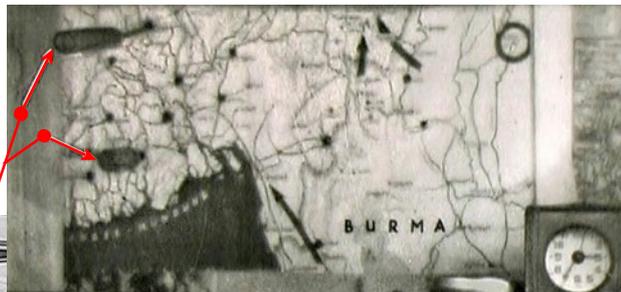
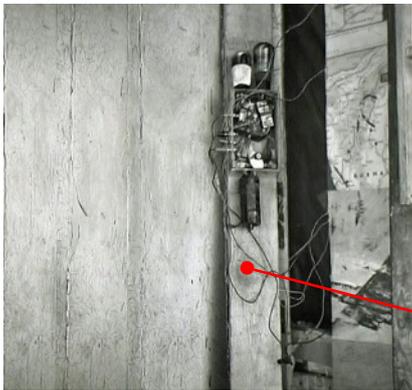
The radio, operating on short-wave, seen from the rear, comprised a detector with reaction and an AF amplifier valve, tuned by two screwdrivers pushed through holes in the wallboard.

A secret two valve radio was constructed by W/O Leslie Hurrell and another RAF PoW in 1943 mainly from smuggled components in Stalag Luft 1. It initially operated on the camp electrical system, but was later converted to run on batteries in order to listen to the BBC nightly broadcast when the camp electricity supply had been cut off. The receiver was concealed within a wall panel located behind a bunk in the barrack room. Suspected that the PoWs had a secret receiver, finding the radio ultimately became one of the prime objectives of Abwehr searches. As the radio was relatively bulky, hiding it securely whilst still being able to use it easily presented some problems. When the wallboard with the radio on the back was put in place, pictures and maps from German newspapers were pinned over the joins of the wallboards, a bunk-bed was pushed back into position against the wall and a book-shelf fixed over the critical position. To make contact

with the radio, wires were pushed through holes in the wall boards. Those holes were positioned as inconspicuously as possible and normally filled with plugs made to match the rest of the wall. The batteries to operate the radio were on top of the books on the book-shelf, the earphones resting on the blanket of the bunk-bed. Under normal conditions, the BBC midnight news was taken down on most nights by Lieut. Lou Trouve, a PoW from the American Army Air Force who was proficient in shorthand. The notes were transcribed the next morning and then read out in each hut. The written transcript was then destroyed. The radio program 'The Voice of America' often included coded messages for Americans, of which some were at Stalag Luft I. The shorthand notes transcribed the next day were also checked to see if there were any messages relevant to American PoWs of Stalag Luft I.

Plugs for the screwdriver holes were disguised to look like the towns that were genuinely part of the map. The plugs could be removed with a pin when the radio was to be used. For security, a map of a remote geographical area was chosen. On the left of this map of Burma, screwdrivers can be seen inserted through two fictitious towns. Even the most observant guards were unlikely to have noticed anything strange about an alteration to the topography of such a remote and little-known area.

This illustration showing the wall board taken from the inner wall of the hut with the radio fixed to the back of the board.



To tune-in the radio stations it was necessary to adjust the two variable capacitors in the radio by means of screwdrivers pushed through holes in the wallboard. Unavoidably, those holes were in a more exposed position and, to camouflage them, the holes were bored through one of the newspaper maps that had been suitably positioned on the wall.

Secret radio in PoW camp Gravina (South Italy)

Bill Corp, a RAF prisoner of war was interned in a camp in southern Italy near the village of Gravina in 1942. The camp itself was still in the process of being built. When completed, it was to hold 10,000 men though at the time, it contained only 6,000. All the men lived in stone-built barrack rooms to which the Italian police had access at all times. Life in the camps was very bad; food was scarce and what there was, was the worst. Many men died there, and hundreds suffered the agony of Malaria, simply because there were no medicines.

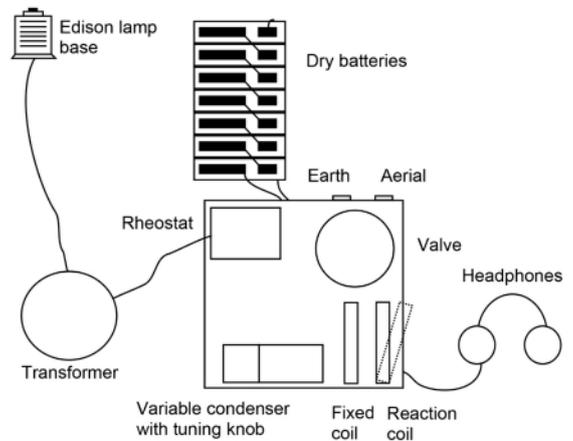
In the absence of any reliable news of the progress of war, Bill and a fellow PoW considered building a secret radio receiver.

After some time they had 'gathered' a pair of headphones, one coil of insulated wire, two valves, 12 dry batteries (pocket lamp size), one cat's whisker and some five or six terminals. All their energies were turned to radio construction. A variable condenser was made from an old aluminium mess tin. A base for the coil was made from another piece of mess tin, bits of wood and candle wax. At this stage it was thought where to conceal the set when it was completed. Many schemes were put forward and rejected, until in the end, a member of

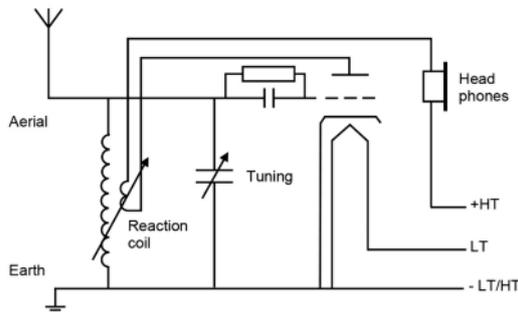
the Royal Engineers came forward and volunteered his services. Being in charge of the British prisoners working inside the camp, he turned out to be the ideal man for the job. He made a locker with a sliding back door. It was made from the wood of red cross boxes, but before he fixed the locker to the wall, he removed one of the stones, thus leaving a small recess, sufficiently large to hold the complete set. About the 12th of May 1943, some 700 men were warned to be ready to proceed to another PoW camp in Italy. Both Bill and his friend's names were on that list. All warned men began packing their few belongings. In their case, it was difficult; they had the radio. Getting the set into camp was hard enough, but getting it out was going to be a difficult job. In the meantime, they devised a scheme to get the radio out of the camp. Two wooden boxes were made with false bottoms, sufficiently large to hold the various essential parts of the set with the addition of the transformer. Eventually the radio arrived unnoticed in the new camp where it was used during the rest of the war.



Original plan of the radio described on this page drawn by Bill Corp. Because of its low resolution it was redrawn (right).



Redrawn plan of the secret radio.



Reconstructed circuit diagram of the secret radio constructed by Bill Corp in PoW camp Gravina.

References:

Modified DKE 38 radio:

<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C119454>,  
Accession Number REL/18422

Stalag III D water bottle radio:

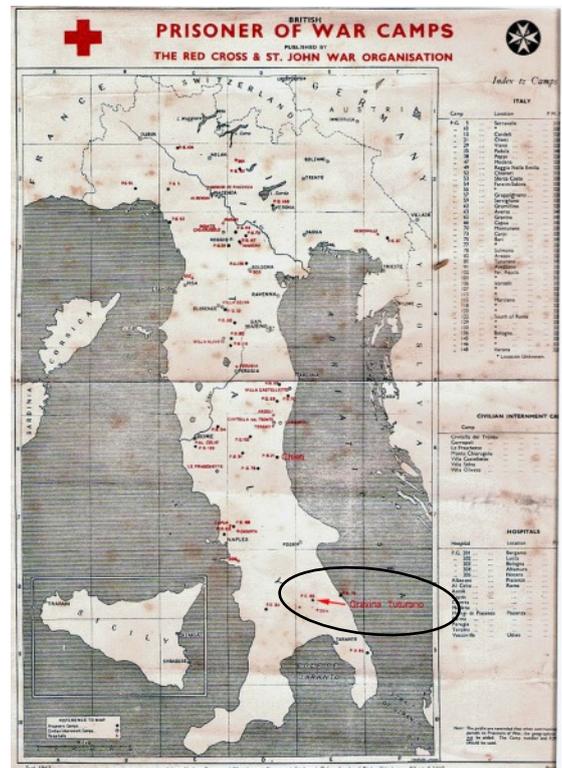
<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30005782>

Stalag Luft 1 radio:

<http://www.merkki.com/Secrets%20of%20the%20POWs.htm>

Secret radio in PoW camp Gravina, South Italy:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/70/a4127870.shtml>



Map with PoW and civilian internment camps in Italy. The Cavina PoW camp was located in the south.