

Fred Welsh

Arrival at an Italian POW Camp

We marched in. You were examined, searched for knives, watches, which they loved to take off you. Pens, anything that was moveable they wanted. And we walked down the centre of these two compounds, and by then all the prisoners in the compound were at the wire, because was a friend coming, was my brother coming? We'll get up to date news off these. And I heard someone shout "When you settle come to Hut 32". And we were allocated Hut 54. And in these huts there were room for 100 prisoners. We were in bunk beds in fours – two up and two down. Wooden, even wooden pillows. Absolutely no heating, never had a vestige of heat in Italy for the whole time I was there. Never saw a fire or a radiator, anything to give any sort of heat. And when we settled down I went to find this Hut 33, and to this day I've never had a cup of tea which tasted as good as that. They had a cup of tea for me and they gave me a biscuit. And this was brilliant in a prison camp - giving. You had to buy or you had to barter, but for someone to give you a cup of tea with sugar and milk in, and a biscuit, and I took Tom Porter with me and we both got a pot of tea off this lad.