

PERCY EDWIN BROOK

A Collection of Paper Ephemera collected in Ruhleben Civilian Prisoner-of-War Camp, Berlin 1914-1918ⁱ

Percy Edwin Brook was born in Hailsham, Sussex on 9th January 1894ⁱⁱ.

By 1913 he had become a waiter at the Queens Hotel, Eastbourne. In 1914, in order to further his abilities in his chosen profession, he took a position in the Continental Hotel, Berlin, Germany.

At the outbreak of war in August 1914, all foreign nationals in Germany were taken into custody and Percy Brook, aged 18 years, together with some 4500 other men, was interned as a Civilian Prisoner-of-War at Ruhleben in Spandau, a suburb of Berlin. Up until that time, Ruhleben had been a race-course for horses drawing a very light two-wheeled carriage.

He was housed in Barrack 11, Box 12; and though he appears not to have left any personal record of his experiences, whilst in camp he collected a great deal of material relating thereto.

This catalogued collection is a tribute to Percy Edwin Brook in that this accumulation of material is his own.



Percy Edwin Brook [1917]

[pages]

[1]. Original newspaper cuttings from the Sussex Country Herald 14 December 1918 reporting Percy Brook's return to Hailsham in August 1918.

[2]. Enlarged photocopied copy of the above

[3]. 8 items : a portrait photograph of Percy Edwin Brook, a photograph together with his colleagues outside the Queen's Hotel, Eastbourne, a photograph together with his colleagues inside the dining room of the Queen's Hotel, Eastbourne, a printed Queen's Hotel menu dated October 10th, 1913, 4 postcards addressed to him from Gladys of Leyton, Essex, two to the Queen's Hotel (January and March 1914), one to 17 Albrechtstraße, Berlinⁱⁱⁱ (April 1914) and one via the Comité International De La Croix Rouge, Genève

[4]. 6 items: 4 postcards of Spandau and 2 postcards of Trabrennbahn Ruhleben pre-1914

- [5]. 4 items: 2 German work permits; a “Krankenkasse fur die Betriebe” serving as a certificate of service from the Continental Hotel to addressed to Herrn P Brook at Ruhleben (dates 25.4.1914-21.8.1914); and postcard of the Continental Hotel
- [6]. The reverse (originals) of the above



- [7]. 2 items: copy of the Ruhleben Camp Magazine No. 4 August 1916; *Ruhleben Camp Six Colour Prints* by Andrew Healey Hislop December 1916^{iv}
- [8]. The reverse (originals) of the above



- [9]. 12 camp coupons: Ruhleben Camp School Membership Cards (3), Tobacco Cards (2), Oats Card (1), Concert Tickets (4), censor label (1), "Kasino: Engländer" with canceller
- [10]. 2 items: invitation to "AS YOU LIKE IT"; program for Ruhleben Model Boat Exhibition May 3rd, 1917
- [11-12]. 12 items: postcards of scenes in the camp 1917; nos. 1394, 1395, 1695, 1701, 1705, 1707, 1711A, 1712, 1713, 1713A, 1714, 1714A, all addressed to Mrs Brook of Hailsham and carrying various cancellers authorizing their release.



- [13-14]. A postcard, no. 819, portraying a soccer team, original photograph portraying a soccer team, original photographs of PEB with a set of weights, two contact prints of PEB entertaining companions to tea, a passport-size photograph and one bigger of PEB (below)
- 8 postcards of theatrical groups 1917, nos. 1502, 1637, 1763, 1766, 1770, 1768
- [15-16]. 5 Ruhleben Christmas postcards 1914, 1915, 2 x 1916, 1917; postcard illustrating the Ruhleben Coat of Arms
- [17-18]. 12 used postcards to Barrack 11 Box 12, Ruhleben Camp and from PEB in Ruhleben Camp, written in English and German, carrying censor and other cancellers. Authors include a friend Harry S, brother Fred, sisters Gladys and Edith.
- [19-46]. 70 items: camp newsletters, programmes for music concerts, hobby fairs, sporting events
- [47-50]. The Dénouement
- [47]. A salutation circular: "Gentlemen: In the historical moment when you are regaining your freedom" For the Soldiers Council, Engländerlager, Ruhleben (Signed) Zirwes. Plümer, Wolff. Beer. Kieser. Schütze.
- [48]. Post representative of his assimilation back into society, including a Christmas card [1921] from Andrew Healy Hislop wherein he announces his marriage.
- [49-50]. Letters from Central Prisoner of War Committee dated December 1916, December 1917, December 1917, March 1919, April 1919; circulars from Central Prisoner of War Committee and headed "Prisoners Personal Parcels"; circulars from Central Prisoner of War Committee and headed "Standard Parcels of Food"; and another headed "Special 5 – URGENT" together with the associated postcard from The British Red Cross & Order of St. John out of Copenhagen

References:

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6. Stibbe, M. British Civilian Internees in Germany: The Ruhleben Camp, 1914-1918. Publ: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008
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FAMILY TREE of PERCY EDWIN BROOK

John Brook (1848-1905) a twine spinner of Herstmonceux, Sussex m. 26 August 1875 Susan Elizabeth SMITH (1857-1921) of Arlington, Sussex

Offspring:

1. John William BROOK (1876-1878)
2. James Thomas BROOK (1877-1917)

60572 Private James Thomas Brook, 17th Bn., Royal Welsh Fusiliers died age 40 on 31 July 1917. His next-of-kin was Ellen Brook (wife: married December QRT 1899), of The Old Vicarage, Hailsham, Sussex. His place of burial is unknown. He (together with 54,000 others) is memorialised on The Ypres Menin Gate.

3. Charles Henry BROOK (1879-) m. June QRT 1907
4. Rhoda Jane BROOK (1880-) m. September QRT 1902
5. Annie BROOK (1883-)
6. Frederick George BROOK (1884-)
7. Albert Edward BROOK (1886-1920)

MOOC 6/9/2886. 1925 Cape Town 9 December 1920

8. Arthur Ernest BROOK (1880-1951)

Died Brisbane, Australia 28 December 1951

9. Edith Nellie BROOK (1890-1980)

She married in Billericay, Essex during the December QRT 1915 to Edwin Bede JAMES (1878-1950) ; and died on 8 July 1980, aged 90 years. Their offspring were: NN [a female] James, Hermon Bede James 1915-1987, David Philip James 1925-1976

10. Robert David BROOK (1892-) m. Bath June QRT 1919 Gwendoline May FRY

11. Percy Edwin BROOK (1894-) born in Hailsham, Sussex in 9 January 1894 married Barbla Schmidt in Hailsham, Sussex during the October QRT 1920^v. Reportedly he died in Rhodesia

12. Gladys May BROOK (1897-1924)

ⁱ The former owner of this collection was Kenneth G Gibbon of Benoni; born Kroonstad 8th September 1927 died Benoni late 2004. Thought of as an avid and inveterate collector, he collected antique bottles, crested china, corkscrews and bottle-openers, firearms and pistols, badges, medals, and other military ephemera (the whole extraordinary medal collection sold December 2004 by City Coins), and postcards of Southern Africa (the collection sold December 2004 by Stephan Welz & Co., including his renowned sequence of rare postcards featuring the Chinese miners at ERPM). He was a founder member of Military Medal Society of South Africa and of the Boksburg Historical Association.

The Ruhleben Collection, though peripheral to his mainstream interests, attracted his attention because of its very unique nature. In a letter to John D Heys of Guestling (1992) he recounts the following: "when I acquired an album of postcards and a bundle of papers I wasn't very impressed. Until I stripped out the album and sorted out the postcards into their categories and then into a rough sequence, did I see the interest and possible research potential. So I decided to keep them and find out more about the P.O.W. camps in WW I especially Ruhleben" He went on to list the contents of the reconstituted collection, which remains to-day much the same as it was then.

list above, please
Kenneth Gibbon



ⁱⁱ Births Mar QRT 1894 Brook, Percy Edwin [Hailsham](#) vol.2b pg.107

ⁱⁱⁱ The address of the Continental Hotel today is that of the Hotel Allegra

^{iv} Andrew Healey Hislop, Scottish artist (1887-1954)

^v Marriages Oct QRT 1920 Brook, Percy E to Barbla Schmidt [Hailsham](#) vol.2b pg.237