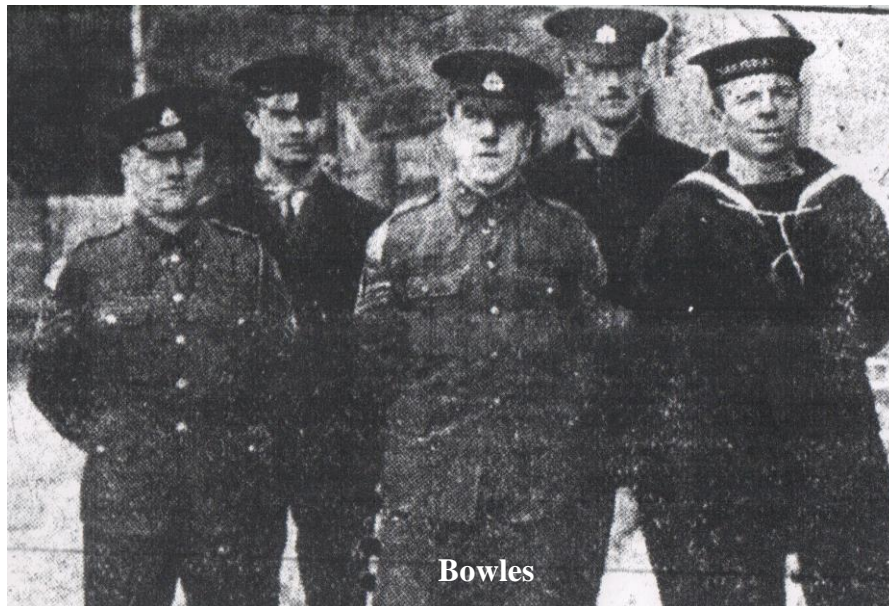
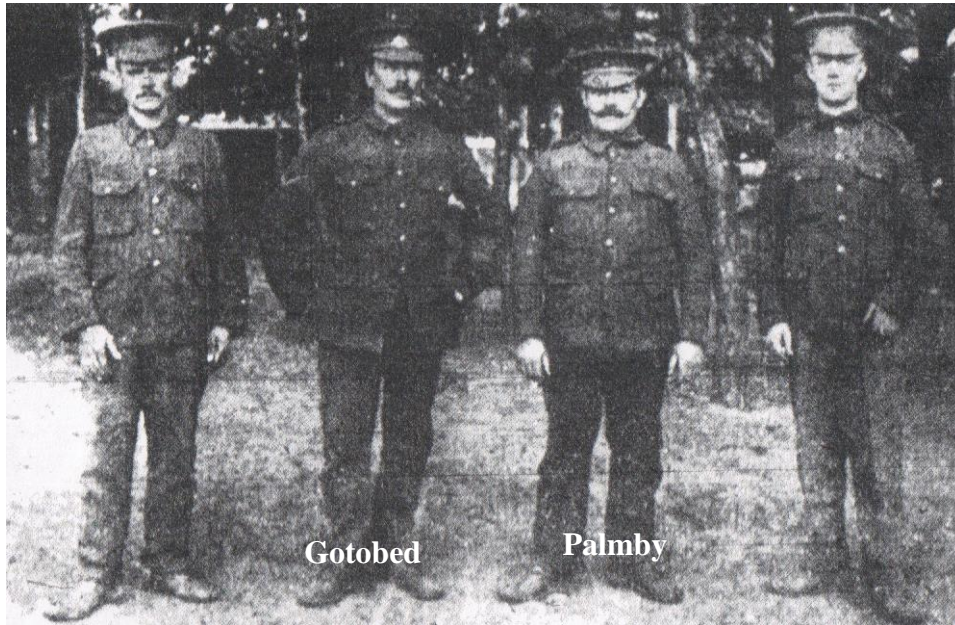


Ely's Prisoners of War

By May 1918 the Cambs. and Isle of Ely Prisoners of War Fund was supporting 658 local men who were POWs with food parcels, with over 4,000 parcels being sent out a month (16 tons of food) at a cost of £22,000 p.a. How many of these POWs were Ely men?





Occasional photographs home such as the ones above would have reassured, or perhaps worried, the families of Prisoners of War.

The newspaper of **26th November 1915** carried a list of those Prisoners of War whose names had been sent to the local Prisoner of War Committee and a month later listed those to be remembered at Christmas. Many of these men were members of the regular army, or reservists who had been called up, and who had been captured and imprisoned early in the conflict. News of other POWs in the newspapers appears chiefly in 1918, once the war moved from trench warfare to open conflict and the numbers captured on both sides increased dramatically. In 1918 it was often the case that a man would be listed as “missing” and it would then be several weeks before their anxious family received a standard postcard from Germany to tell them where he was imprisoned – of course, for many other families the news of their missing soldier was far less positive. Additional POW lists started to appear in 1919 as the news of the men’s repatriation came through.

When the War came to a close repatriations of POWs were carried out as swiftly as possible with soldiers being shipped back through Hull, Dover and Portsmouth. The first their families knew of their relatives’ whereabouts was when a telegram was sent telling them that they were again on English soil. On 22nd November 1918 the Ely Standard carried the story of how three next door neighbours in West Fen Road all received the telegrams at the same time, i.e. the parents of Private Charles Green, Gunner S Thompson and Private Albert Fitch (see below).


On the **29th January 1919** a special supper was held in Ely’s Public Rooms for returning Prisoners of War at which each one was given a sterling silver cigarette case filled with cigarettes. The list of those 50 men who were invited helps to confirm some of the Ely men who were captured and imprisoned in Germany and elsewhere. After years of short rations they must have relished their cold turkey,


ham, roast beef, potatoes, plum pudding and hot mince pies! In **March 1922** another identical dinner was held for the nine POWS who had not been repatriated in time for the original supper.


It cannot be guaranteed that this list of names of Ely's POWs is complete.


Name	Regiment and service number	Additional Information
Private Frederick William Black	8628, A Company, 2 nd Suffolks	Born 2 nd April 1892 at Ely, lived Barton Road, Ely. Career soldier. His father Fred was an Ely blacksmith and Fred junior joined the family business before he went into the army. Taken 26 th August 1914 at Le Cateau. Imprisoned in Doberitz. He was repatriated by January 1919. Fred was a former pupil of Needhams School and the pupils' families put together parcels to send him.
Lance Sergeant Bertram James Bowles	8009, 2nd Suffolks	Born 1892 at Witchford. Of St Johns Place, Ely. A career soldier. Taken at Mons. Imprisoned in Doberitz. In 1918 he was moved to Holland and was one of the first local men to be repatriated in November 1918.
Private John "Jack" Brand	East Lancashire Regiment	Born 27 th May 1898 in Ely. Son of blacksmith Joseph Brand "of St Mary's Church". Attended Ely Boys' School and then received a free place at Needham School in February 1911. He was employed at an ironmonger's. Listed as wounded and a prisoner in Ely Standard of 31 st May 1918.
Private Leslie Broad	8352, 2 nd Suffolks	Born 15 th August 1883 in Ely. Of 1 Silver Street, Ely. Employed as a butcher's assistant. Taken at Le Cateau on 26 th August 1918 and placed in Doberitz. He was repatriated in January 1919.
Private Ezra Bullman	17782, 12 th Suffolks	Born 29 th March 1887 at Kenny Hill. Married Susan Gipp 1910. One son. Of Annesdale, Ely. Farm worker. Joined up 11 th January 1915 and reached France that August. Taken at Bellecourt 22 nd March 1918 on the first day of the German offensive. Was two months before family received news of his imprisonment. Repatriated in December. Lost a brother and two brothers-in-law in the War.

Private J H Butcher	8 th Battalion Queens Royal West Surrey Regiment	Of Church Lane, Ely (previously of Burnt Fen). Married. Joined up 8 th July 1916 and reached France in December. Captured April 1918. Repatriated early December 1918. Lost brother Henry Butcher in the War.
Lance Corporal Albert William Chapman	1 st Suffolks	Of Nuthall Lane. Born 12 th October 1895 in Ely. Albert attended the national school (church school) and was then given a free place at Needhams school in 1903, from which he went on to work at a butcher's in 1911. Brother of John Henry Chapman (see casualty list). Repatriated January 1919. As a former pupil of Needhams School the pupils' families put together parcels to send him.
Lance Corporal Frank Clarke	King's Royal Rifles	Of Cambridge Road. Born 27 th March 1896. Attended the national school (church school) and was then given a free place at Needhams School from 1905 to 1910. Worked at Cutlack's shop. Captured April 1918
Private P G Clarke	7351 2 nd Suffolks	Captured late September 1914, listed as imprisoned late 1915. In Doberitz.
Private George Clarke	9581, of the 1 st Suffolks?	In Gissen?
J Clarke		Recorded as one of the last nine POWS to return to Ely.
Private John Thomas Collins	9425, B Company of the 1 st Suffolks	Of Fieldside, Ely – former Post Office worker. Member of the Ely Volunteers and called up with the Reserve. Wounded in left arm by shell and right hand by shrapnel when captured on 8 th May 1915. In hospital at Duisburg for 17 weeks, was for a short time at Camp Munster II. Then imprisoned in Senne III Sennelager. 15 th December 1915 sent to hospital at Dulmen in Switzerland and wrote home of marvellous welcome from the Swiss for the British prisoners (see letters 1916). Repatriated January 1919
Corporal P.G. Cooke	Royal Garrison Artillery	Repatriated January 1919
Private W Crabb,	Suffolks	Listed as imprisoned late 1915
Private Ambrose Flack Crane	7 th Suffolks	Of Queen Adelaide, went missing early December 1917, imprisoned in Dulmen,


		Westfalia. Had been wounded earlier in the War. Repatriated December 1918
Lance Corporal John Herbert Creak	5159, of the 2 nd Suffolks	Born 28 th March 1878 in Manningtree, Essex, lived Ely. Enlisted 1898. Captured 26 th August 1914 at Le Cateau and imprisoned in Doberitz. Died 1933, Ely.
Sapper Ernest Curtis	Royal Engineers	Of 3 Hills Lane, Ely. Originally a farm labourer. Reported missing March 21 st 1918 is confirmed as a POW in Germany when his wife receives a card a month later. Captured in the same action as Sapper Moulton when surrounded by Germans while on the Bapaume- Peronne Road. Repatriated January 1919
Sapper Ernest Arthur Day	Royal Engineers	A farm labourer from Queen Adelaide. Ely Standard of 11 th January 1918 records him as imprisoned at Karlsrube and wounded when captured. Married
Private Frederick Drake	6722, of the 2 nd Suffolks	Born 6 th May 1886 Soham Fen but living in Ely. Married Gladys Dexter 1912. Taken at Le Cateau 26 th August 1914. In Doberitz and repatriated by January 1919. Died 1940.
Private Charles Edwards	7106, of the 2 nd Suffolks	Born 17 th May 1885 in Soham, lived Annesdale, Ely. Taken on 26 th August 1914 at Le Cateau. Imprisoned in Doberitz and repatriated by January 1919. <i>See 1917 Letter</i>
Private Allan Cecil Ellingham	36170, D Company, 5 th Royal Berkshires	Born Ely 31 st December 1887. Postman from Bletchley who previously served nine years with the G.P.O. in Ely. Members of his family still lived in Ely. Wounded and captured at Ephey 30 th November 1917. Imprisoned Munster 2. Repatriated November 1918.
Private John Fisher	2636, of the 1 st Suffolks	Born 1881 Ely. Of Common Road, Ely. Labourer. Listed as imprisoned late 1915. Taken at Zonnebeck. Imprisoned in Gissen, repatriated January 1919
Private William Fisher	44015, 12 th Suffolks	Born 9 th March 1892 at Ely. Of 5 Council Houses New Barns Road, Ely. Was taken 22 nd March 1918 at Bullecourt but not listed as a prisoner until 21 st June.

		Imprisoned in Parchim. Repatriated in time for Christmas 1918. Married
Private Albert Edward Fitch 	47737, 2 nd Suffolks	Born 1886 Ely. Of Chiefs Lane, Ely. Married Georgiana Clark 1907 with children. Farm worker. Listed as POW on 21 st June 1918 after being missing since 28 th March. He had returned from leave to be caught up in the German Offensive. Repatriated at Dover 22 nd November 1918. <i>See his account of his imprisonment below.</i>
Private E Fitch	2 nd Leinsters	
Drummer Ernest Ford	6109, 1 st Suffolks	Born 1884 in Ely. Originally a leather cutter then in Suffolks for 12 years before the War, including service in India, Malta, Khartoum and Egypt. Member of the old Ely Militia Band. Taken at Bousbecque 7 th May 1915, wounded. Taken to German Field Hospital 2,15. In Bruder Krakenhaus, Dortmund, from where he wrote to his sister (Mrs E Watson) about the impossibility of getting cigarettes. Ernest spent a total of three years and eight months in Germany. Repatriated December 1918. Ernest returned to his sister's home in Silver Street and from here married Laura Jane Pooley I Holy Trinity church in January 1919.
Mr Joseph Freestone	Marconi Wireless Operator on the ship "Brussels" which was captured by Germans 23 rd June 1916.	A native of Ely; family lived Annesdale. Joseph was technically a civilian but was kept prisoner with the crew of the Brussels at Ruhleben Camp and then Brandenburg. He was returned home via Copenhagen and Leith and reached his home in Parkeston Quay (Essex) in early December 1918. 40 years old when captured.
Private Arthur William Gipp	40263, Bedfordshires	Fought with the Norfolks, then the Bedfordshires. Missing 22 nd June 1917, but family heard in early September that he was a POW. He was taken at Hulluch and finally reached the camp on 4 th August. His mother was Mrs Hall of Crossbank , Burnt Fen, although he and his wife and

		<p>child were then at West Row Fen Farm, Mildenhall.</p>
<p>Private John Gathercole</p>	<p>Lancashire Fusiliers</p>	<p>John went to France in May 1916. He appeared as missing in the Ely Standard of 2nd August 1918. He was a brother of Francis and George who were both killed in 1916. The account also records that of his other brothers James and William one had been injured in Egypt and the other had a finger amputated.</p>
<p>Lance Corporal Thomas Gotobed</p>	<p>4706, B Company of the 2nd Suffolks</p>	<p>Born 13th July 1875 at Ely. Of Hills Lane, Ely. Labourer. Enlisted 1896. Taken at Le Cateau 26th August 1914. Imprisoned in Senne. Repatriated January 1919. At the time he was captured Thomas had already seen almost eighteen years of army service, including ten years in India.</p>
<p>Private Charles Green</p>	<p>65666, 5th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers</p>	<p>Listed as imprisoned in Ely Standard of 31st May 1918. Of West Fen Road, Ely. Born 11th April 1899. A free boy at Needhams School. Taken at Estaires 16th April 1918, less than three weeks after he arrived in France. Repatriated at Hull 23rd November 1918. 19 years old. Milk roundsman assisting in his father's dairy. "cheery and kind disposition".</p>
<p>John J Hackett</p>		<p>Recorded as one of the last nine POWs to return to Ely. A farm worker from West End. Born 1899.</p>
<p>Private Charles Haigh</p>	<p>325975, 1st Cambridgeshires</p>	<p>Born 19th November 1896 in Keighly, Yorkshire. Father a cathedral lay clerk – lived Gordale, Barton Road, Ely. Wounded in left leg and captured 26th March 1918 at Peronne. In Leimberg then Munster II. Repatriated in time for Christmas.</p>
<p>Lance Corporal Fred Harding</p>	<p>18455, 2nd Suffolks</p>	<p>Born 21st February 1893 at Whittlesea. Of Folly Farm, Prickwillow. Taken at Bullescourt on 5th January 1918 and imprisoned in Le Quesnoy. Repatriated</p>

		January 1919.
Lance Corporal Thomas Hart	6159, 2 nd Suffolks	Born Ely 18 th July 1880. Home is Heacham in Norfolk. Taken at Le Cateau 26 th August 1914 . In Doberitz, repatriated January 1919. Married with six children.
Private William H Haylett	326085, 1 st Cambridgeshires	Driver. Born 1899 Werrington, Northamptonshire. Father John Haylett worked in Ely's mineral water factory. Hospitalised in September 1917 with convulsions (shellshock?) after ten months service. Returned to the Front and captured. Repatriated at Dover 27 th November 1918.
Private Edward Hitch 	287, of the 2 nd Northumberland Fusiliers	Born Lancashire 1888 of Prickwillow family. Listed as imprisoned late 1915. Imprisoned in Gissen
Mr Reginald Sanders Hodges	Captured at sea when returning to England to enlist in Royal Flying Corps	Son of Archdeacon Hodges of Ely Cathedral. <i>See the 1918 letters page on this website for his story.</i>
Lance Corporal Albert E Hoxley	8664, 2 nd Suffolks	Captured at Harcourt on 25 th August 1914. In Doberitz. Sent to Switzerland 31 st August 1918. Repatriated January 1919. Brother of John
Sergeant John Hoxley	6549, of the 2 nd Suffolks	Born 10 th November 1894 in Ely, lived Bury St Edmunds. Captured at Le Cateau 26 th August 1914. In Doberitz. Repatriated September 1918. Brother of Albert
Harry Hunt		Recorded as one of the last nine POWS to return to Ely.
G Jipp	6199 2 nd Suffolks	Of Ely District. In Doberitz.
Lance Corporal John King	2 nd Suffolks	Captured on the retreat from Mons at Le Cateau and imprisoned at Senne
Private Thomas William Larkin	6 th Somerset Light Infantry	Of St Mary's Street. A farm labourer. Wounded and captured in the autumn of

		1917 – a letter printed in the Ely Standard of 2 nd November 1917 said he was being constantly moved and hinted that he was wounded but “no bones broken”.
Private E Miller	Suffolks	Recorded as a prisoner 8/2/1918
Sergeant Moules		Recorded as one of the last nine POWS to return to Ely. <i>330556 1st Cambridgeshire? J but Private 26/11/1918</i>
Sapper John Moulton	231420, Royal Engineers	Born 13 th November 1886 Bromley-by-Bow. Of 4 Bull Lane, Ely. Worked as a cooper. Reported missing March 21 st 1918 but officially captured 23 rd March on the Metz-Neaville Road. Captured in the same action as Sapper Curtis. Is confirmed as a POW a month later to his family.
Private John Harry “Jack” Newstead,	29663, Grenadier Guards	Born 13 th March 1898 Waltham Green, London, but attended Broad Street Infants School in Ely and then Needhams School from 1906 to 1912. Jack came from a family of Ely shopkeepers as his grandfather John ran the Dolphin Inn in the High Street, and his father Percy was a fishmonger. His father was described as “a highly respected tradesman” in Ely and Jack joined him in the business after school. Jack was captured 28 th March 1918 after he had been in France a few days, listed as POW on 21 st June 1918, and repatriated at Leith 1 st December 1918. John’s mother Louisa died while John was listed as missing.
Private Frederick W Nightingale	1/1 st Cambridgeshire Regiment	Reported imprisoned in Queslinberg in Ely Standard of 7 th June 1918. Had been in France for one year 8 months and captured on 26 th March. Wounded and had temporarily lost use of left arm – left hand remained useless. Said that for the first six weeks of imprisonment he nearly starved, until Red Cross parcels began to arrive. Repatriated January 1919. His family was in Rotherhide, but he lived in Downham Road, Ely, with his grandfather Joseph Nightingale. When finally repatriated the Ely Standard reported: his arm which was shot through has healed up and he can use his hand well...(he is

		looking very well”.
Sergeant Major O’Neill		Recorded as one of the last nine POWS to return to Ely.
Private Alfred Palmby,	6399, of the 2 nd Suffolks	Born 1882 Ely. Of Cambridge Road, Ely. Bricklayer’s labourer. Enlisted 1903 for 3 years then placed in Reserve. Married Amelia Handley 1907 with 8 children (4 daughters born before War). Reached France 15 th August 1914 and captured eleven days later. Imprisoned in Senne. . He was repatriated in December 1918.
Private John Palmer	7908, 2 nd Suffolks	Captured 26 th August 1914 at Le Cateau. Wrote from Russia in 1916 about Red Cross parcels not getting through. John’s brother George (Soham resident) was captured at the same time.
Second Lieutenant Harold Edward Arthur Payne	7 th Battalion Norfolk Regiment	Born in Ely March 1891 where his father was a surgeon’s assistant. The family moved to Cambridge when Harold was a child. Here he became a professional cook. Harold reached France on 14 th February 1915, originally with the Cambridgeshires. He married Elizabeth Johnson in the Summer of 1917, and then the following 30 th November was listed as killed in action; in fact he had been taken prisoner at Banteau Ridge and imprisoned at Karlsruhe. A few weeks later his capture was recorded in the Ely Standard of 11 th January 1918. He was repatriated on 2 nd January 1919. Harold actually died in 1972.
		
Private George Payton,	8823, of the 1 st Norfolks	Born Ely 16 th July 1890. Lived Victoria Square, Cambridge. Captured 24 th August 1914. Imprisoned in Stanmuhle Sennelager
Private J Pell,	16937, 11 th Suffolks	Of Silver Street, Ely. A foreman with Ely District Council. Married. In France since 1914. Invalided home in August 1917 and had returned to France on 1 st April 1918 only to be wounded and captured on 9 th April 1918. Repatriated January 1919
Private James John Peters	1131, of the 1 st Suffolks	Of Hills Lane, Ely. Listed as imprisoned late 1915. Captured at Ypres. In Gissen, repatriated January 1919. <i>James was “adopted” by the Ely Women’s Conservative Association who, from May</i>

		<i>1917, paid £2 monthly to the Cambridgeshire POW Committee for his support.</i>
Private Leonard Frederick Plumb,	29862, 2 nd Wiltshire Regiment,	Born 26 th September 1894 in Ely. Brewer's labourer. Of Silver Street, Ely. Had served in France since January 1916, originally with the Suffolks, and had been wounded in July 1916. Captured 21 st March 1918 at St Quentin. Married Adelaide Yarrow 1919. One child. Died 1953.
Lieutenant Robert H Plumb	3 rd Battalion East Kent Yeomanary attached to the 7 th Battalion of the Buffs	Parents ran Ely Constitutional Club. Reported missing, believed to be POW, 6 th August 1918. Had been a GER Clerk but joined Army from before War and was on foreign service with the 1 st Royal Dragoons. Repatriated 26 th December 1918. <i>See account below</i>
Private Harry Rich	18576, 2 nd /4 th Battalion, Oxford & Berks Light Infantry	Of Mill Cottage, Mill Road, Ely. Born 8 th March 1898. Taken at St Quentin on 21 st March 1918. Younger brother of casualty Thomas Rich (commemorated in St Mary's Church).
Private Robertson	Suffolks	Captured late September 1914.
Private Frederick Rowell	7179, 2 nd Suffolks	Imprisoned in Doberitz. Repatriated by January 1919 and attended the POW supper in Ely's Public Rooms.
Private Paul Minshall Seeley	8304, 2 nd Suffolks	Born 1895 Manchester. Of 2 Alderbrooke Cottages, West End, Ely. A signaller who did "excellent work". Was wounded three times during his service. Captured 26 th March 1918 at Wancourt. Sent to Parchim Camp. Repatriated January 1919. Married Janet Miller 1924. 2 children. Death 1961. Worked Ministry of Pensions and Ministry of Labour.
E W Staines		Recorded as one of the last nine POWs to return to Ely.
Sapper John Henry Stevens,	Royal Army Medical Corps	Born 1897. Captured in March 1918
Gunner Sidney George Thompson	Trench Mortar Battery, Royal Field Artillery	Born 7 th July 1887 in Ely. Attended Broad Street Infants School and was given a free place at Needhams School in 1904, going on to become a pupil teacher for a period from 1909. He later became a baker's assistant. Sidney joined up in January 1915.

		<p>Went missing on 30/11/1917. His commanding officer wrote: “ ...at the time the enemy attacked your son was standing to his guns and I am sure he did his duty bravely as long as he could....he has always done what was required of him cheerfully and willingly; his soldierly qualities were much admired..”</p> <p>First shown as captured and imprisoned in the Ely Standard of 4th January 1918. Imprisoned in Dulman Westl. Repatriated at Dover early December 1918.</p>
Private Tuck		
Private Montague Watson	6601, 2 nd Suffolks	Born 1884 Cottenham. Lived Ely. Captured 26 th August 1914. Repatriated by January 1919 and attended the POW supper in Ely’s Public Rooms.
Private George Webster	993, B Company 7 th East Kent Regiment – the Buffs	Missing from 18 th November 1916 – taken at Grandcourt. Reported wounded and imprisoned in early January 1917. Had been at the Front two years without leave. He was the brother of the Cambridgeshire Times’ “Ely Correspondent”.
W Wells		Recorded as one of the last nine POWS to return to Ely.
Sergeant Cecil Evelyn K Wordingham	12020, 7 th Suffolks -Signal Section	Born 9 th June 1890 at Norwich. Of St Mary’s Street, Ely. Joined up 23 August 1914 and reached France February 1915. Missing/ captured 30 th November 1917. “The enemy made an attack on our front and captured several of our men..” 13 th January 1918 reached Camp Munster II. . Repatriated by January 1919. Awarded the DCM and was also recommended for a Belgian medal. He was promoted to sergeant for his conduct in the field.

On 19th November 1918 the Cambridge Independent Press gave a distressing account of the conditions suffered by some POWs in the latter days of the conflict after talking with Ely’s **Albert Fitch**: *“Pte, A, Fitch, Suffolk Regt., whose home is in Chief’s Lane, has just returned home after being a prisoner of war for eight months. He was under shell fire most of that time working at the back of the German lines unloading shells and digging trenches. He states that the men never received any prisoner of war parcels, and many a day they had to live on mangolds or swedes. These they had to steal, and if the Germans caught them they would fire at them. On one occasion they blew one poor prisoner’s ankle bone right out. Although they were supposed to be in a good camp they had to sleep anywhere they could, and once or*

twice were put in a wire cage and almost starved. Pte. Fitch is now in a very weak condition. During the eight months he was a prisoner he never had a change of clothing. The men were forced to work in the pouring rain, and had to sleep in clothes which were saturated with water. When liberated, Pte. Fitch, along with many others, had to walk about 100 miles, with barely any shoes on their feet and no food to eat, except what was given them by the French people. Although in some very tight corners, the brave private escaped without a scratch. He has seen two years' service with the colours."

However, it was not long before some soldiers were lecturing on their experiences. Here is an account from the Ely Standard of 12th December 1919 about **Lieutenant Robert Plumb**: *"The classroom of the Countess of Huntingdon's schoolroom was packed on Monday evening, when Lieut R.H. Plumb of the Buffs, formerly of the East Kent Yeomanry, gave in a most interesting manner, his experiences as a prisoner of war in the hands of the Germans, the meeting being under the auspices of the Ely Literary and Social Guild. Lieut. Plumb explained by means of a diagram map the circumstances that led to the capture of two companies of his Battalion by a division of the Germans, and proceeded to narrate the incidents of his journey from the front line on the Somme until he was eventually incarcerated on a small island in the Baltic. He dealt at some length with the life of officers as prisoners of war, describing their conditions, food etc. He spoke in a eulogistic manner of the behaviour of the Englishman under all the circumstances, of the joy expressed on the receipt of the news of the Armistice and of the attitude of the English officers, who forced the Germans to take off the sentries in order that they should command their own camp. Lieut Plumb, who returned home at the end of December via Copenhagen, graphically related the welcome the officers received on their disembarkation on English soil, and read a letter handed to him from the King and also another interesting document dealing with the circumstances of his capture and stating that after full investigation he had been exonerated from all blame. Specimens of the bread and biscuits served to the prisoners of war, a German iron cross, and other interesting souvenirs were handed round and examined with much curiosity and interest."*