

HQ Southern Command
Salisbury 6222 Ext 323

SC 6/59894/461/PR

28 August 1953.

The News Editor.
The Art Editor.

Dear Sir,

The troopship "Asturias," carrying about 600 repatriated former prisoners of war from Korea, is due at Southampton at about 8-30 am on Wednesday 16 September 1953. She will come into berth 107.

It is hoped to have two gangways in position by 9 am, and the former prisoners of war will start to disembark immediately down both gangways. Their relatives will be waiting on the quayside to greet them.

By 9-45 am it is estimated that all the men repatriated from Korea will be ashore. At 10 am there will be a brief, formal welcome.

After that short ceremony the men and their relatives will be available for Press interviews until 11 am, when the first special train is due to leave. There will be four special trains, leaving at 40 minute intervals. Relatives will be able to travel with the men on these trains. It is regretted that it is NOT possible to arrange for Press representatives to travel on these special trains.

No permits will be issued to anyone to board the "Asturias." The usual Press boarding permits are not valid for this occasion.

Applications for permits to enter shed 107 and the quayside there must reach the Senior Information Officer, HQ Southern Command, Salisbury, not later than 10 am on Tuesday 8 September 1953. There will be no admission to berth 107 without the special permit.

The formal welcome will take place inside Shed 107 and news reels may well require to light it. It is requested they nominate a liaison officer to contact SIO Southern Command as soon as possible with a view to visiting the shed and making arrangements with the Docks electricians.

There will be three Press enclosures on the quayside - one near each gangway for photographers and one in the centre for reporters. It is requested that interviews with the men and their relatives be delayed until after the formal welcome, which will last only five or ten minutes.

Further details will be available later.

Please do not forget that SIO Southern Command MUST know not later than 10 am on Tuesday 8 Sept the number of passes required.

Yours faithfully,

Eric Merrill

(Eric Merrill)

Senior Information Officer Southern Command.

Copies to:-

Chief Press Officer, War Office (80 copies)

SIOs Western, Eastern, Northern Commands

SIO Northern Ireland District

DADPR Scottish Command

Major D. Flood, PR1(a) - 6 copies for PR Directorate.

Please notify your
Command papers of the
arrangements.

Corporal Holdham
(Boreham) (S)

WA.
Pte Widske
(Wakefield) (S)

Corporal F. Upjohn
(Southampton) (S)
(Brimley) (S)

1st Lt Hill of
Kensington
(S)

Hunnell

HQ SOUTHERN COMMAND

SALISBURY 6222 Ext 323

SC 6/59895/A/PR

10 Sep 53

The News Editor
The Picture Editor

Dear Sir,

Enclosed are the passes for which you have asked to enable your representatives to attend the arrival at Southampton on Wednesday 16th September 1953, on the "Asturias", of the repatriated ex-prisoners of war from Korea.

The ship will dock at Berth 107.

Two PR officers from Southern Command, Major E. Merrill, the Senior Information Officer, and his assistant, Capt. S. Long, RE, will be available to assist representatives on the evening of 15th September and on 16th September.

Once the "Asturias" has docked and two gangways are down the ex-prisoners will walk down the gangways to greet their relatives waiting in shed 107.

The men will disembark alphabetically, to assist with identification. How they will be split up cannot be decided until the nominal roll of those aboard is completed. Every effort will be made to have copies of the nominal roll available by 16th September.

There will be no formalities of any kind at this stage. The arrangements have all been formed around the idea that family reunions are the most important thing to consider at the outset, and it is requested that Press representatives wait, in the Press enclosures, until after the formal welcome before starting their interviews. (This formal reception will be very brief).

It is estimated that all the men will be ashore by 9-45 a.m. The formal reception is timed to start at 10 a.m. and the men and their families should be available for interviews not later than 10-10 a.m. The first of the four special trains is due to leave at 11 a.m. Three others will go at 40 minute intervals. Relatives will be able to travel on these special trains, but it is regretted it is NOT possible to arrange for Press representatives to do so.

During the disembarkation, the family re-unions and the short official welcome, photographers will be able to take photographs from the two Press stands provided.

Once the formal reception is over there will be no restriction of any kind on movement among the men and their relatives.

The two Press enclosures will be located near the gangways. Each enclosure will extend about 15 feet on to the quay from shed 107 and about 15 feet inside the shed. Each stand will be 20 feet wide.

/Heights

Heights of these enclosures will range from ground level on the quayside, to 2ft. and then up to 5ft., coming down again inside the shed to 2ft. and to ground level. The topmost platform, 5ft in height, will be 8ft. wide and will be in the shed doorway, so that photographers may use the elevation to take pictures on the quay or inside the shed.

It is not possible to have news reel vehicles on the quay side or in the sheds. Newsreel operators are asked to have their equipment at shed 107 not later than 7 a.m. on 16th September. All vehicles must be moved to the official car park not later than 7-45 a.m.

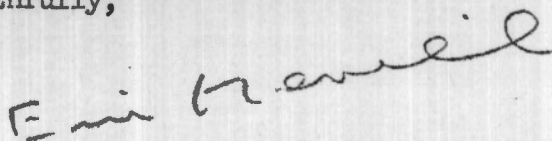
These arrangements have been agreed at a visit paid to the quayside on Thursday 3rd September by a representative of the newsreels, Mr. Paul Wyand.

At that meeting plans were also made for lighting inside the shed. Arrangements have been made for 400 amps to be available at two points. Will newsreel electricians please report to Mr. S. Larkin, at the Docks Mechanical and Electrical Engineers Dept., Old Docks, Southampton, by 3 p.m. on 15 September.

Provision has been made for a BBC recording van to be parked inside shed 107 close up to the wall, between the two specified doors. This van must be in position by 7 a.m. 16th September.

All other Press representatives, including still photographers, are asked to be in one of the two Press enclosures not later than 8 a.m. on 16th September. The ship is due alongside at 8.30 a.m.

Yours faithfully,



(Eric Merrill).
Senior Information Officer.
SOUTHERN COMMAND.

NOTE:

On the night of 15th September 1953 the Southern Command PR Representatives will be at the Royal Hotel, Southampton. To reduce last minute queries to a minimum will you please contact PR Southern Command as soon as possible before that date to discuss any outstanding points.

With the compliments of Public Relations
Southern Command

The troopship "Asturias", carrying about 600 repatriated former prisoners of war from Korea, is due to dock at berth 107 Southampton Docks at about 8-30 am on Wednesday 16th September 53.

The "Asturias" was due off Cowes at sundown on 15th September. There she was met by a tender carrying Customs officers, Port health authorities, immigration officials, representatives of the Red Cross and St John organisations, and movement personnel from the Port of Southampton Embarkation Establishment.

By the time the ship berths all the British troops repatriated from the North Korean prisoner of war camps will have been documented, will have passed through the Customs examination, and will have received free cigarettes and sweets. Every man will have his railway ticket, leave pass and ration card and will know on which of the four special trains he is travelling. (A British Railway ticket bureau will be set up in Shed 107 so that relatives may purchase tickets to travel on the same train. It is regretted that it is not possible to give facilities for the Press to travel on these special trains).

It is hoped to have two gangways in position by 9 am and the former prisoners of war will disembark immediately.

There will be no formalities of any kind at this stage. The arrangements have all been formed around the idea that family reunions are the most important thing to consider at the outset, and it is requested that Press representatives wait in the Press enclosures until after the conclusion of the formal welcome before starting their interviews.

This formal reception will last only about 10 minutes or less. The men will be welcomed on behalf of the Army by Major-General E.S.B. Gaffney, Commanding Aldershot District, and by the Mayor of Southampton (Ald. Mrs. V.F. King, JP).

It is expected that, among others, the Lord Mayor of Bristol, the Mayors of Gloucester and Cheltenham, the Deputy Mayor of Tewkesbury, the High Sheriff of Gloucester, and local MPs will be present.

From the end of the formal reception the men and their families will be available for interview by the Press.

At Shed 107 free refreshments for the repatriated men, provided by NAAFI, will be dispensed by members of the WVS. NAAFI canteens will also be available, on payment, for the welcoming relatives and the Press.

Relatives of the men have been invited by the War Office to attend if they wish. At the time they were invited they were also asked if they wanted accommodation in Southampton and whether they wished to travel on the special train from London early on 16th September. This special train, if required, will go direct to Shed 107.

By the Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Families Association, the Order of St. John and the British Red Cross Society, and the Women's Voluntary Services arrangements have been made for an emergency rest centre in Southampton, hostel accommodation in London, information centres in both places etc.

/Southampton....

Southampton Corporation are providing free buses for the conveyance of next of kin from the rest centre to the docks, and, later, for the next of kin and the former prisoners of war from the docks to the town railway station for those not travelling on the special trains. Some of the men may also be travelling home by road.

The band of 1st Bn The Gloucestershire Regiment will be on the quayside.

Berth 107 has been decorated by the Docks and Inland Waterways, which has worked in close co-operation with the Embarkation Establishment at Southampton.

GPO telephones will be available on the quayside.

As soon as the disembarkation of the former prisoners of war has been completed the "Asturias" will move to Berth 106 for the disembarkation of the remaining personnel, including the advance party of 1 Bn The Wiltshire Regiment.

Press: Facility Arrangements

During the disembarkation, the family re-unions and the short official welcome, photographers will be able to take photographs from the two Press stands provided.

Once the formal reception is over there will be no restrictions of any kind on movement among the men and their relatives.

The two Press enclosures will be located near the gangways. Each enclosure will extend about 15 feet on to the quay from shed 107 and about 15 feet inside the shed. Each stand will be 20 feet wide.

Heights of these enclosures will range from ground level on the quayside, to 2 ft. and then up to 5 ft., coming down again inside the shed to 2 ft. and to ground level. The topmost platform, 5 ft in height, will be 8 ft. wide and will be in the shed doorway, so that photographers may use the elevation to take pictures on the quay or inside the shed.

It is not possible to have news reel vehicles on the quayside or in the shed. Newsreel operators are asked to have their equipment at shed 107 not later than 7 a.m. on 16th September. All vehicles must be moved to the official car parks not later than 7.45 a.m.

Provision has been made for two BBC recording vans to be parked inside shed 107 close to the wall, between specified doors. These vans must be in position by 7 a.m. 16th September. If a third van is needed it may have to be placed a bit further away.

All other Press representatives, including still photographers, are asked to be in one of the two Press enclosures not later than 8 a.m. on 16th September 1953.

11th September 53

HQ SOUTHERN COMMAND

SALISBURY 6222 Ext 323

SC 6/59894/461/A/PR

11 September 1953.

The News Editor.
The Art Editor.

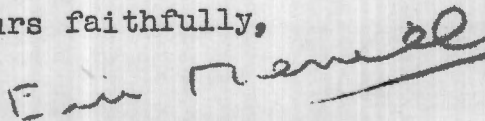
Dear Sir,

All the passes requested for the arrival of the "Asturias" at Southampton with the former prisoners of war from Korea have now been issued.

Attached is a nominal roll of the former prisoners of war aboard.

Mr. Eric Merrill, Senior Information Officer, Southern Command, and Capt S. Long, RE, his assistant, will be staying at the Royal Hotel, Southampton. One of them will be available there from 4 p.m. on Tuesday 15th September 1953 to deal with any queries you may have and to supply any last minute information.

Yours faithfully,



(ERIC MERRILL)
Senior Information Officer
Southern Command.