

## LORD CAMPBELL OF ALLOWAY (MAY 1917 - JUNE 2013)

**Lord Lexden** remembers Alan Campbell, a war hero whose legal genius saved the lives of many of his fellow POWs

I sought out Alan Campbell soon after my arrival in the Lords in 2011. I was keen to add his recollections of Colditz to those I had been given many years earlier when I worked for Airey Neave, another war hero who had been incarcerated in the famous grim fortress, though unlike Alan he escaped from it. Alan needed little prompting. He took justifiable pride in the legal acumen, swiftly recognised in London after his call to the Bar just before the outbreak of war, which so often enabled him to run rings round the German authorities when they sought to prosecute his fellow prisoners of war.

**“ He took pride in the legal acumen which so often enabled him to run rings round the Nazi authorities ”**

His mastery of the complexities of international law which, rather to his surprise, the Nazis invariably respected, played a crucial part in saving many lives, over 40 by his estimate. He was particularly proud of the detailed and ingenious defence he drew up for 13 Czech airmen charged with treason against the Reich. The German court decided that their cases should be deferred until the conflict was over. It was fascinating to listen to the points which Alan, then in his mid-nineties, recalled in the slow, slightly orotund style for which he was so well-known in the Lords.

His success as a barrister after the war owed much to his love of detail which often gave him the edge over less well-prepared opponents. He took silk in 1965 and served for many years as a recorder. One of his



Colditz and Great Escape veterans share memories in 2004 l-r: Ffl Lt Alan Bryett, Lord Campbell of Alloway, Squadron Leader Jimmy James and Captain Kenneth Lockwood



Liberation day: British officers celebrate after being freed from the POW camp at Colditz, April 1945

areas of expertise was industrial espionage which brought him an advisory role with the Council of Europe. His war-time experiences made him an ardent supporter of pan-European institutions. But above all he made his mark in employment and trade union law, appearing in a number of widely reported cases in the 1970s and publishing a string of textbooks which strengthened his reputation.

In the Lords from 1981 onwards he contributed powerfully to the detailed scrutiny of measures destined to affect the workings of the judicial system. He fought the Major Government's War Crimes Bill line by line before the Parliament Act was

invoked to override the Lords. He was one of the first Conservative lawyers to call for the incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights into UK law. As editor of the Conservative Party's publications I was occasionally in touch with him in these years over pamphlets produced by the Society of Conservative Lawyers of which he was a leading light. If I altered a single comma he would notice and rebuke me at some length, but always in the gentlest fashion. Above all I shall remember him fondly for our Colditz conversations. 🐾

**Alistair Lexden** is a Conservative Peer and a historian of his party