**Camp 66** **- Calvine Camp, Blair Atholl, Perthshire**

Included in the 1945 ICRC camp list – Labour Camp. 66. Calvine Camp, Blair Atholl, Perthshire.

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| **Prisoner of War Camps (1939 – 1948) - Project report by Roger J.C. Thomas - English Heritage 2003** | | | | | | | |
| OS NGR | Sheet | No. | Name & Location | County | Cond’n | Type 1945 | Comments |
|  |  | 66 | Calvine Camp, Blair Atholl | Perthshire |  | German Working Camp | Scotland |

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Location:** NGR NN 818 657.Between the A9 and River Garry. About 15 km NW of Pitlochry.  **Before the camp:** Farmland.  **Pow Camp:** Italian pows up to 1945, replaced by Austrian, then German pows. The square pow compound was surrounded by barbed-wire fencing – with 38 mainly large huts. Outside of the compound were the staff quarters and offices with at least 40 huts. There was a recreation area and sewage-works.  **13 November 1942** - International Red Cross inspection - Italian prisoners, capacity 600.  **1945** - Austrian pows arrive, Italians removed and repatriated.   |  | | --- | | Oversight and development of re-education activities and English teaching for German pows was carried out by PID (Political Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office) / COGA (Control Office for Germany and Austria – UK). Visits and reports were made. The standard of the reports varied greatly. The visitors took little interest, if any, in activities other than re-education. They rarely mentioned welfare, sports, games, pastimes, crafts, etc of the pows. |   **16/17 August 1945** – English Education visit.  “*The best supplied camp I have so far seen. There are 538 Austrians, and even the scenery is especially good.”* |  |
| Ordnance Survey 1956 |

Despite this comment, there was an atmosphere of ‘discontent.’ The Austrians generally stated that they should be going home as the war was over. Mail was not arriving.

Basic aspects of re-education were reported on; The library was the best the visitor had seen; Wochenpost was being delivered. There were three pow teachers of English.

Other education classes were held for; French, Czech, Latin, maths, geography, shorthand, history and German literature. Most of the teaching was carried out by one pow – Robert Travnicek.

**28 December 1945 –** English Education visit.

Interpreter officer mentioned – Lt Booth; the visitor believed he would be better placed in a larger camp.

50 Austrian pows had been transferred to other camps.

As in most camps, the initial interest in learning English had declined.

**February 1946** – 315 additional Austrian pows arrived, transferred from America or from American camps in the UK.

**17/19 March 1946** – Purpose of visit; “*Interview and collect data of deserving PW for special employment upon repatriation, - re-education and progress*.” Strength 2 Officers, 682 Other Ranks. This was still a camp for Austrian pows.

Commandant: Major P W Barlow Camp leader: Fw Leopold Vigel (A)

Interpreter: Lt R G Booth Deputy C/L: Fw Johann Halal (A)

Austrian M.O.: Oberarzt Dr Otto Friedl (est B) / Dentist: Stabsarzt Dr Wilhelm Mack (A)

The Commandant and interpreter were stated to display a great interest in re-education. That did not mean they were doing anything to promote it, as can be seen in the activities list.

Morale was recorded as being ‘reasonably high,’ but they were impatient for repatriation and often received bad news from home. Complaints were repeated about the slowness of mail to get through. Some pows had come from camps in the USA where they had been misinformed they were to be repatriated, they then found themselves in pow work camps in the UK.

10 U-boat personnel complained that promises were made for their repatriation if they sailed to British ports. This complaint was repeated in other camps with U-boat personnel.

150 pows were ‘youth’ – under 25. They were not seen as a problem, but took little interest in education or politics.

The standard list of re-education activities was given; it was very poor:

Wochenpost and Ausblick – separate appendix. More copies requested.

Newspapers – Adequate numbers of British papers; an insufficient number of Austrian and German papers received.

Library – 500 books received from the German Red Cross, YMCA and sources in Switzerland. Further books needed to be bought using welfare funds, (money raised through sale of goods in the canteen).

Lectures – None since late December.

Discussion groups – none.

Films – none since December.

Wireless – out of order for 6 months – only recently sent for repair. A poor utility set with limited reception had been placed in the recreation room. The loudspeakers in the dining room did not work as the wireless was incapable of relay.

Camp magazine – none.

Press review – a ‘wall newspaper’ of cuttings from Austrian papers. The study leader held a weekly meeting where the news was relayed and discussed.

English Instruction – 52 pupils in 3 stages with 4 teachers. Several had passed the examinations set by PID.

Other activities –

Religion – A monk, Gefr Rupprechter, had a good congregation but lacked drive and personality. No chapel hut – an altar was curtained off at the end of the dining hut. A Bible study class had recently ceased due to general apathy.

Education – Small classes for English, Austrian history, drawing and maths.

A theatre group of 20 performed in the dining hut. There was a musical quartet playing mainly Wienermusik.

**May 1946** – start to remove Austrian pows and replace with Germans. 736 arrived from camps in the USA.

**July 1946** – 250 additional pows from USA and 20 from camps in Belgium where conditions were very poor.

**20/22 July 1946 –** Visit to organise re-education, look at screening, and interview candidates for special training camp at Wilton Park. Strength 0 officers, 1006 OR.

The camp was a German Working Camp – few Austrians remained.

Commandant: Major P W Barlow Camp leader: O/Fwbl Kirschke

Interpreter: Pte L Herbst Deputy C/L: Uffz Christoph

German M.O.: None.

The Interpreter knew very little English, he had no interest in the job and was regarded as incapable of performing normal duties.

Morale was recorded as low due to; a. disappointment of pows from USA, b. bad news from home, c. uncertainty over the future of Germany, d. some pows objected to the democratic principles being developed in the camp. Badges of rank were not worn in this camp.

A breakdown of the type of work the pows were doing was given – 345 on Tummel-Garry scheme (hydro electricity scheme) / 163 agriculture / 60 forestry / 20 roadmaking / 60 ‘Board of Trade work.’ Even with some pows working in the camp, this left a large number of pows who were unemployed.

250-300 pows were ‘youth’ – they were not regarded as a problem.

The state of re-education activities was little better than before:

No German or Swiss newspapers, lectures or discussion groups.

Films – YMCA every three weeks and COGA newsreels and cultural films fortnightly.

Wireless – the main set still not repaired after 9 months.

## Camp magazine – started; “Knirps.”

## Press reviews – weekly.

Other activities made up for the lack of re-education activities, and were no doubt a lot more enjoyable –

## Religion – little interest. No protestant padre. One pow ran scripture lessons. A new RC padre had been transferred from Camp 21 where he had not been a success, (see further comments in August report).

## Education – small classes for maths, French and economics.

Theatre – 11 pows specialised in comedies.

Orchestra – 8 pows performing light music, “*but not swing.”*

Choir – 20 pows being formed.

A fortnightly show was put on from the above groups with music, poetry, folk music and songs.

Sport – “*indulged in with gusto.”* Football, handball, punchball and boxing most popular. The pows constructed a level football pitch and were preparing a tennis court as they had tennis racquets and balls brought from the USA. Home made table tennis and chess.

**30 July 1946** - The camp was mentioned very briefly in Parliament:

## *“Lieut.-Commander Hutchison asked the Secretary of State for War why German prisoners of war at Calvine Camp, Blair Atholl, are being issued with white bread.*

## *Mr. Lawson - They are not, Sir. During the recent turnover of reserve flour stocks they received some bread made from 85 per cent extraction flour. Instructions have since been issued to ensure that prisoners of war are always given the 90 per cent extraction bread now in use by civilians.”* (House of Commons, Written answers, 30 July 1946, Volume 426).

## 2/3 August 1946 – English Inspector’s Report. Strength 1006, including just 4 billetees.

## 30 July – 6 August 1946 – Visit by a member of the Segregation Section for screening. German pows (a few Austrians left). Strength, 0 officers, 947 OR. (8 billetees).

## No interpreter officer. No M.O., but there was a German dentist – Guenther Fleischer (C), aged 35, “*harmless, stupid.”*

## Camp leader – Herman Kirschke (B+), aged 27, “*decent chap who tries to run the camp on democratic lines*.”

## Deputy C/L - Alfred Christoph (B), aged 41, “*harmless, cheerful and willing but absolutely non-political. Useful as interpreter*.”

## Organiser of studies – Wolfgang Voit (B), aged 24, “*quite good for general education… as regards politics… too inexperienced and too non-political*.”

## ¾ of the pows came from US camps, ¼ from Johnstone Camp 188.

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| Political screening: | A+ | A | A- | B+ | B | B- | C | C+ | Not known |
|  | - | 34 | - | 25 | 659 | 115 | 102 | 2 | 10 |

## Not known = 4 billetees and 4 in hospital. There were a further 60 pows who were in the process of being transferred to Findo Gask Camp 233.

## Many pows had received bad news from home and this affected morale. Pows from the Polish occupied territories had an additional problem that their mail was returned undelivered if they used German names for places, and some because they used German text.

## The visitor interviewed pows who wished to return to Germany as volunteer miners - gaining early repatriation. He dismissed all who were C grade and the ‘opportunists,’ and recommended 35.

## One of the Austrian pows remaining received comments – R.A.D. Mann Kren, Ferdinand, (C), aged 18 – “*completely poisoned with Nazi ideas, claims to be ‘Ostmaerker’ and not Austrian, etc, etc. Only his age saves him from a (C+). Please transfer him to a Nazi youth camp. At present he has the ideal makings of a Werwolf.”* [1938, with Nazi governments in control of both Berlin and Vienna, the country was annexed to Germany (Anschluss) as **Ostmark**.] The visitor also recommended the removal of the 2 C+ pows.

## Religion – still no protestant padre. One pow ran scripture lessons.

## RC Padre – Gefr Ludwig Jamar (B-), aged 38 – “*mentally narrow, stupid, conceited… no help for re-education and no guide for those who are trying to find the way back*.”

## 27/28 December 1946 – English Inspector’s Report. Strength 741 including 10 billetees. 61 pupils in 5 classes + some studying privately.

## A new Commandant: Lt Col Eliot.

## April 1947 – recorded as a satellite camp to Balhary Camp 63.

## Known camp Commandants:

## 1945 Major P W Barlow M.M.

## End 1946 Lt Col Eliot.

**After the camp:** Calvine became a camp for displaced persons until the 1950's.

The site as it is now - <https://repatriatedlandscape.org/pow-sites-in-scotland/pow-camp-66-calvine-camp-blair-atholl/>

**Further information:**

National Archive FO 939/147 – 66 Working Camp, Calvine Camp, Blair Atholl, Perthshire. Dated 1945-1946 – used above.

Canmore – very little -  [http://canmore.org.uk/site/272696](https://canmore.org.uk/site/272696)

Vertical air photographs (106G/Scot/UK 59, 3051-3052, flown 8 May 1946).