**Camp 72** **- Duck's Cross Camp, Dacca Farm, Colesdon Road, Wilden, Bedfordshire**

Included in the 1945 ICRC camp list – Labour Camp. 72. Ducks Cross Camp, Colmworth, Bedford.

|  |
| --- |
| **1947 Camp List** |
| 72(G.W.C.) | Ducks Cross Camp, Colmworth, Bedford | E. | Priswar, Wilden, Bedford | Colmworth 67 | Bedford (L.M.S.) | Lt.Col.F.W.Ford O.B.E. | v/1453/2 |

|  |
| --- |
| **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 |
| TL 109 561 | 153 | 72 | Ducks Cross Camp, Dacca Farm, Colesdon Road, Wilden | Bedfordshire | 3 | German Working Camp | STANDARD type. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Location:** About 9km NE of Bedford. Shown as Agricultural Hostel on post war OS map.**Before the camp**: Farmland.**Pow Camp:** The camp was built by the Pioneer Corps with Italian pows during Spring / Summer 1942. The pows were housed in a Ministry of Agriculture hostel at Bolnhurst while constructing the main camp at Ducks Cross – the Bolnhurst site later became a hostel for the main camp. The camp held Italians up to 1945, then German pows. It was a ‘standard’ camp with a main compound for pows and an outside area at the ‘front’ for guards and offices. There were about 30 huts to start with, and later, up to 43 huts, mainly wood with some pre-cast concrete. The pow compound was surrounded by a barbed wire fence, though this was probably removed or greatly reduced after the war. **29 July 1942** – story that an Italian pow was injured by gunfire from a German plane. I have not seen confirmation of this, and it is not included in the Red Cross report below.**24 November 1942** – 24 year-old soldato Eugenio Bracco was killed in an accident while at work. He is buried at Brookwood Military Cemetery**8 February 1943** - An International Red Cross inspection was held – see below. |  |
| Ordnance Survey 1960 |

An Italian chapel was constructed and decorated in one of the huts – this must have been after the IRC report as it was not mentioned.

**9 July 1943** - Seven Italian pows were working in a field near Tilbrook, guarded by the Pioneer Corps. One pow, Antonio Amodeo, attacked Private Charles Hands and killed him with a hedging hook. The pow escaped with a rifle and ammunition. On **10 July** the pow entered a farm and shot at John Shelton, one of the occupiers; he missed and was subsequently shot and killed. Details in newspaper account following the Red Cross Report below.

Private Chrles Hands – Pioneer Corps, aged 26, married to Elsie Hands, was buried at Liverpool (Anfield) Cemetery.

Pow Anronio Amodeo – was buried at Brookwood Military Cemetery. (The news article refers to Amedeo – The Commonwealth War Graves Commission uses Amodeo).

John Shelton – was awarded the British Empire Medal.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Great BritainPRISONERS OF WAR CAMP No. 72Visited by M. H de Pourtables, 8 February 1943Postal Address: Prisoners of War Camp No. 72, Great BritainCapacity: 750 menActual strength: 1 Lieutenant Doctor: 19 NCO’s and 683 other. 562 in the main camp 50 in Ministry of Agriculture hostel; 91 billeted at farms.Nationality: ItalianCamp Leader: Fassi, Arturo.Italian Doctor: Medical Lieutenant Fusaroli, Loris. General informationThis camp is the model for a series of camps, all of identical layout/construction, built in the second half of 1942 in order to accommodate Italian PoW who had arrived in Great Britain as agricultural workers.We propose to give a detailed description here, to which we can refer in subsequent reports when they are dealing with the same kind of camp.Camp 72 is situated in open countryside at some distance from the nearest inhabited area. It covers a large part of the countryside which is lightly undulating in a rich, fertile area. The site is healthy and the climate agreeable. The camp is about seven hectares in area. It is divided into rectangles by wide concrete paths alongside which the huts are placed. These are all of the same type, measuring 6 metres wide by 25 metres in length. The huts are not the older ‘Nissen’ type built from corrugated iron, but of modern construction using materials that are waterproof, insulating, prefabricated and assembled at the site. The foundations are made of cement and are sufficiently raised to stop damp from getting in. The walls have sufficient windows to ensure there is adequate light and ventilation.The camp consists of about 30 huts, of which 21 are used as prisoners’ dormitories. Of the others, 3 are used as dining halls, the rest as a recreation room, sick bay, kitchens, laundries, ablutions and latrines.The whole camp, including a large sports field, which is alongside, is surrounded by a barbed wire fence. Nearby is a similar area where the British guards and camp administration are housed. |  | AccommodationThe huts are lit by electricity and each has 2 heating stoves. A large number have been decorated with paintings by the prisoners themselves. Each hut houses 35-40 men. The double bunk beds are placed along each side of the room, leaving a wide space down the centre. Each man has a mattress, four blankets and pillows.FoodThe kitchens are very well organised and managed. In the centre there is a large modern stove which allows a wide range of menus to be prepared – roasts, grills, etc., while a double row of pots is used for boiling. The prisoners make their own Italian pasta.Menu on the day of our visit:Breakfast: coffee with milk, bread, margarine, jam.Lunch: minestrone, lard, bread.Supper: meat rissoles, minestrone, coffee, bread.In this working camp the main meal is served in the evening, after the prisoners have returned from the fields.The prisoners working in the kitchen and the canteen declared they were satisfied with the quality and quantity of the rations, which conform to regulations. In addition, each prisoner claims 2½d per day for additional foodstuffs – cake, jam, etc. [Using camp token-money] Collective punishment relating to food has never been imposed.ClothingAs usual the prisoners have two sets of battle-dress and two of underclothes and socks. Those working on field drainage are issued with rubber knee boots.Washing, etc.Two blocks are set aside for showers and washrooms. Each has 20 hot/cold water taps for ablutions and 12 shower cubicles with as much hot water as needed. Forty WCs are available to the prisoners.Medical and hygieneA double hut is used as a medical centre, comprising several rooms which are specially heated and have comfortable furniture. One part, with a waiting room, is reserved for visits to the doctor. Inside here is a treatment room, a dental surgery, two sick rooms, washing facilities and the Italian MO’s quarters. Besides the Doctor, 7 Italian medical orderlies look after the sick. There were only two sick on the day of the visit – one with bronchitis, one ill with a temperature, neither serious. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| The state of health of the prisoners in Camp 72 is remarkably good if one considers that only 2 out of 703 were in sick quarters. Four prisoners were undergoing treatment in the hospital in the nearby town – one under observation for TB, and the others with illnesses that were not serious – bronchitis, jaundice and piles.FinanceAll prisoners who are skilled agricultural workers receive 1s a day, unskilled labourers 6d. They are paid in tokens, or if the prisoners prefer, it is credited to their accounts. As a result, most prisoners have some savings. Total deposits sometimes reach a considerable sum – as much as £600-£800. This situation often leads to discontent, with prisoners wanting to buy things which are relatively costly, such as gramophones, musical instruments, leather suitcases, etc. which are difficult to find in the current market. Apart from this, there were no representations relating to finances.WorkAll the prisoners are engaged in agricultural work. The daily timetable is organised to fit in with the length of daylight hours. In winter, work does not last more than 6-7 hours, while in summer it can last for as long as 11 hours. Pay is normally based on an 8-hour day. When the prisoners have to do overtime, it is paid at a rate of 2 cigarettes per hour.The majority of prisoners live in the camp and are taken by lorry each morning to their workplace, which can be up to 30 km away, and brought back in the evening. Fifty prisoners live in a hostel, which is a place set-up by the Ministry of Agriculture for this purpose. Another 91 men are distributed in small groups of 3-12 with farmers who provide food and lodging. This system seems to work to the satisfaction of both parties – the prisoners appreciate the advantages they have, and the farmers generally praise their work.CanteenThe camp canteen is well stocked with all sorts of items, such as toilet requisites, matches, writing materials, cakes and cigarettes. Receipts amount to about £500 a month. The result is of great benefit to the camp, further increasing available funds.As elsewhere, the prisoners receive a free issue of 35 cigarettes per week.Leisure facilities, spiritual and intellectual needsIn view of the hard work done by the prisoners, and the small amount of free time they have, sport requirements are few. However, a football pitch has been set-up in the camp, which the prisoners sometimes use on Sundays.The Italian MO is allowed, on parole, to go for walks outside of the camp.The camp library, which opened recently, is almost non-existent. Books in Italian cannot be found in England. The visiting team note that any books the Italian Red Cross are able to send would be welcome. |  | The prisoners have constructed a small theatre in the recreation room and request musical instruments. No study classes have been held to date. Nevertheless, a number of prisoners who are illiterate want to receive basic education.The prisoners have obtained a radio set. It is being installed.No Italian priest is a prisoner in the camp, however, Mass is celebrated every Sunday by an English priest who comes from the nearest town.CorrespondenceThe prisoners are allowed to write one letter and one card per week and regularly receive mail from Italy. It takes about 5 weeks for mail to reach the camp. Italian Red Cross parcels are rare, while those sent by their own families are more numerous; although according to the prisoners, some are lost on the way.Complaints and requestsNo complaints have been brought to the notice of the visiting team. There are few requests and are mainly concerned with despatch of books and musical instruments.DeathsThere has been one death, due to an accident at work – that of Eugenio Bracco, who was crushed by a lorry. This accident, which took place in November, was notified at the time.ConclusionThis camp gives an excellent impression. The state of health of the prisoners is exceptionally good, and morale also. The prisoners, and especially those living on farms, say that they are satisfied with their treatment from both material and morale standpoints. |

|  |
| --- |
| **16 July 1943** - Bedfordshire Times and Independent**INQUEST ON SHOT ITALIAN - Home Guard Commended for Presence of Mind - "IT WAS HIM OR ME"** A twenty-two-year-old Italian prisoner of war escaped on Friday afternoon after killing his guard with a hedging knife, and after being at liberty until Saturday evening was shot dead by a member of the Home Guard. The Italian was Antonio Amedeo, and at the time of his escape he was engaged on farm work at a place on the borders of North Bedfordshire. He was working in a field with a party of farm workers, when suddenly he swung round and attacked his guard, Pte. Charles Hands, of the Pioneer Corps, of Liverpool, with a hedging-knife, and with a single blow almost severed the guard's head. After grabbing the guard's rifle and ten rounds of ammunition he ran off, firing wildly as he ran at a girl farm worker, who gave the alarm.Police, military, and Home Guards were called up to assist in the search, but it was not until about 6, p.m. on Saturday that he was discovered in a farmhouse, occupied by Mr. Sidney Shelton and family. Mr. Shelton's son John saw him first near the dairy. The Italian raised his rifle, fired, and missed, and John Shelton slammed the door and called his father. The Italian ran in the house, where he was shot by John Shelton and then by his father.**JUSTIFIABLE HOMICIDE**A verdict of justifiable homicide was returned by a jury at the inquest on Amedeo at Kempston Police Station on Thursday, and the Coroner (Mr. R. G. Rose), in recording this verdict said he considered that John Shelton should be commended for his pluck and presence of mind.The story of the Italian's bid for freedom and his death in the farmhouse was told by John Michael Shelton, who is aged eighteen. On Saturday at about 6.15 p.m. he said that he was in the kitchen of his home with his father and younger brother and sister. He picked up his rifle before going out to feed the hens, accompanied by his brother. They had been warned to carry their rifles at all times when the alarm was given that the prisoner was at bay in the district. He opened the kitchen door and saw the escaped Italian standing with his rifle at the ready at the dairy door, which was about five feet opposite. The Italian fired and the bullet buried itself in the wall behind his head."I immediately slammed the door, after seeing the Italian run up the passage towards the stairs," he said. "I then told my father, and went up the back stairs after him. These stairs lead up from the kitchen. I opened the door on to the landing, and I could just see the shadow of the prisoner on the wall in one of the other rooms. I went round the corner and I saw him backing towards a window, with his rifle pointing towards me. I had my rifle at the ready in both hands and I shot at him."Shelton said he saw the Italian drop down behind a bed which was in the room. He then told his father he thought he had shot the prisoner. His father was just coming up the stairs and they could see the Italian's feet moving below the bed. His father then fired several times at him."Then we went up to him," he said, "and found he was quite dead, so I went down and phoned the police. It was either him or me. We were both looking for one another, and it was a question of who shot first," concluded Shelton.Sidney Bernard Shelton, father of the previous witness, next gave evidence, in the main corroborating what his son had related.**GIRL'S ORDEAL.**Miss Sylvia Rita Gladys Higgins a Women's- Land Army worker, said that at 3 p.m. she went to scare crows in a bean field and there saw an Italian prisoner. He started talking to her in Italian, which she did not understand. As he was a long way from the camp, she pointed towards it. He then ran off in that direction."At 4 p.m.," she continued, "I saw a prisoner jumping over a stile carrying a rifle. When he got near the straw stack he began to load the rifle and come towards me. I picked up my hoe and went towards him. When he got up to me I screamed and turned round and ran. He fired, but I do not know whether he shot at me or not. When I looked back he was running across a potato field."In summing up, the Coroner said that it seemed that Amedeo was ready to murder anyone he came up against and was what could be called a "killer".**THE MURDERED GUARD. CORONER AND DISQUIET IN PUBLIC MIND.**At St. Neots Magistrates Room on Tuesday, Mr. Lionel Abrahams, County Coroner, inquired into the circumstances concerning the death of Pte. Hands. Evidence of identification was given by Major James Andrew McDonnell, Pioneer Corps. He stated that Pte. Charles Hands, aged twenty-five, of 101 Hornsey Road, Anfield, Liverpool, was married and had one child. The chief witness was Miss Higgins, who gave evidence similar to that given at Kempston.The Coroner directed the jury to return a verdict of murder against Antonio Amedeo. He considered there was abundant circumstantial evidence to connect him with the crime. The Coroner then said:"Certain facts have been deduced during the inquiry which I feel must have caused some disquiet in the minds of all of you. These Italian prisoners enjoy a considerable amount of liberty, varying in degree. It is, I feel, a matter of grave concern that a desperate man, who is in possession of such a lethal weapon as this hedging-hook with which he murders one man, obtains possession of another weapon and attempts to murder at least two others. The Public is entitled to the assurance that adequate precautions are being taken for their safety. I have little doubt that the authorities concerned will as a result take the necessary steps to prevent the recurrence of such a tragedy as this."The jury returned a verdict of wilful murder against Antonio Amedeo.  |

**May and November 1944** - The camp was listed as an Italian Labour Battalion under the Eastern Command area, and then as an Italian POW Working Camp, (+Pioneer Corps Groups), (WO 32/10737).

Memories - “*I resided in Colesden during the Second World War. The camp was roughly a mile from our home. The first PoW to arrive were Italians, later followed by Germans. When they first came out to work on local farms, they had an armed guard escort. As the war continued, they were allowed out to work without guards. I recall several of the former prisoners took up residence on local farms. A number of them married local girls. Dances also used to be held up at the PoW camp.*

*Some were very good at making children’s toys out of wood such as wheelbarrows, dolls houses, and trains, also slippers out of string. After the war finished, the Duck’s Cross Camp became a home for displaced persons. Known as DPs, several of these also worked locally. Many came from countries that were later behind the Iron Curtain*.” (Will Stapleton of Sandy, recorded in the Biggleswade Chronicle, 26 November 2010).

|  |
| --- |
| 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. |

A German name for the camp was ‘*Entenkrezungslager’* – Ducks Crossing Camp.

**September / November 1944** – a segregation report issued in June 1946, recorded that the German pow, Willi Baber, had been Camp leader here from this date. WO32/10737 cited above states there were still Italian Working Pows in November 1944. The camp would not have held German and Italian pows within the same compound – so I expect that the Italian pow numbers were being reduced and they were located within a separate hostel(s) and billets.

**14 – 15 July 1945** – Mr James Grant visited the camp and gave a general report, though he was actually there to report on English Instruction. The pows were all German.

“*This is a camp with a vigorous community life. Everyone in the compound with whom I spoke, at once asked if it were not the best camp I had seen. The church\* was lavishly decorated in a colourful, Italianate way, the theatre also has every square inch painted by the Italians who were there, and even on the doorways of the dining-rooms appear rather humorous cartoons. Many of the blackout boards have country scenes painted, with groups of cows and other animals. There are two orchestras, one with six camp-made mandolins, another with three violins, two saxophones, an accordion and a cello*.” \*In a converted hut.

Mr Grant visited classes and inspected the teachers. There were lessons at the weekends and ‘a complete school’ in the evenings from 8.30 to 10.30. Lessons were held for English, history, chemistry, mathematics, Russian, French, Spanish, shorthand, business methods, book-keeping and sign-writing. A request was made for more books as the English language ones held were too difficult for most.

**19 – 20 October 1945** – Mr Grant returned for another camp visit. Commandant; Lt Col Ford.

“*Much of the zest which was so noticeable in this Camp on my first visit seems to have gone. However, it is evident that the interest in learning English has scarcely diminished.”*

The reason for this decline was given as the long working hours during harvest – in many camps, days were over 12 working hours in length during harvest. It was hoped that lessons would be resumed in the near future. The requested books had still not arrived.

One of the pow teachers of English and Russian raised particular comment: *“Otto Horn… is a mischief maker I was told and caused endless trouble because of his militant atheist and communist agitation. There had been complaints from the clergy, who are said to be doing good work, that he raised questions about payment of Communion Wine from the Welfare Fund, etc. It is a great pity that he has anything to do with English teaching. He is being transferred elsewhere shortly and it is to be hoped he will not teach in his new camp*.”

“*The choir of this camp is the best I have ever heard.”*

**28 – 30 March 1946** – Mr Alan Thomas visited the camp with trainee, Mr Blatch, to make a Progress Report. Strength - 2 Officers, 817 OR’s – all German at 1 main camp and 1 hostel + billets.

Commandant: Ford, O.B.E. Camp Leader: St.Fw. Baber (B)

Interpreter: None [? see below] Deputy C/L: Fw. Perschke (A).

 German M.O.: Oberst. Rupp (C)

Camp Leader – Wilhelm / Willi Baber - “*a regular soldier of 45, is suited by his wisdom and steadiness to his post. He was graded ‘C’ in an internal screening carried out by the whites themselves in the early days of the camp because he ordered the use of the military salute to British staff and of the Nazi salute among PW.”*

Deputy – Alfred Perschke - also a regular soldier – “*sound and able.”*

There was an interpreter – “*S/Sgt Seaton only appeared for an hour and left on the last day of our visit to attend a course. He does not command the confidence of British staff*.” There were also two German pow interpreters – Knispel (A) and Hirsch (A) – both “*excellent types”.*

Medical Officer – Wilhelm Rupp - “*was well spoken of by all witnesses and has a letter of recommendation from the Dame of Sark, where he was stationed before surrender*.” Despite this, the visitor had reservations about the doctor, and as he was also MO in a number of other camps, believed his ‘C’ (Black) grading of importance.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Political Screening figures: | A | A/B | B | C | Unscreened |
|  | 344 | 15 | 420 | 18 | 23 |

 Total comes to 820, not 819.

Overall, the camp was categorized as low risk, white/grey.

Morale was described as, “*lower than at any camp I have visited.”* The positive aspects were excellent living conditions and sympathetic treatment by the British staff. A very high level of ‘indignation’ arose from the continued detention of whites, political category A. Pows stated that they had been promised early repatriation – this was also recorded in other camps which held pows from the Channel Islands. 100 pows were from a pow camp in Colchester (Camp 186 Berechurch) who had “*declared themselves openly as anti-Nazi before the end of the war in the face of 6,000 of their fellow prisoners.*” The RC Padre was “*on the verge of hysteria.”* Comments included:

“*Camp Leader: the introduction of postal service with the Russian zone has caused discontent as PW learn not only that reconstruction is more rapid under the Russians but that prisoners are being released more quickly. Many decent men are consequently turning to communism*.”

“Knispel, Interpreter (A): “…*In letters from home we learn that our wives are taunted by repatriated Nazis and SS men about our continued detention.”*

The USSR did release many German pows during 1946, however those that died were numbered in the hundreds of thousands, and most did not return until well after all UK held pows had been released. The second comment is strange. The policy was for the release of white pows before grey / black, though in many camps there were complaints that Black pows (Category C) were managing to get early repatriation. I have not seen reference to ‘taunting’ in other camp reports.

The visitor believed that there was a growing anti-British, and increasing pro-Russian, feeling amongst some in the camp.

Morale was likely to fall even lower as they expected 180 pows to arrive the following day from the US – they had been misinformed in the US that they were being sent back to Germany.

Facilities for re-education activities were regarded as excellent, however many of the pows consdidered it to be “*preaching to the converted*”. The standard list was given:

Wochenpost and Ausblick - separate appendix.

Newspapers - British newspapers were adequate. A Swiss paper, ‘*Basler Nachrichten’* was received and censored by S/Sgt Seaton.

Library – adequate.

Lectures – interest had fallen off unless it concerned Germany or repatriation.

Discussion groups – large popular group and several smaller.

Films – mixed repsonse, many of no interest.

Wireless – in the main and hostel.

Camp magazine – “*Nachrichtenblatt*” (Newsletter) - good, but needed wider contributions. There was a shortage of paper.

Other activities –

Religion – roughly equal numbers of RC / Protestant. Evangelical padre, Bluthartt – RC padre Bettinger. Both expressed dificulties in keeping the bitterness away regarding repatriation.

Theatre – the theatre could only hold 150 – a new one was expected to be completed by July. A theatre group of 22, gave perfomances at weekends.

Choir – a choir and sextet gave regular performances.

**21 / 25 May 1946** – Re-education Survey carried out by Mr O F Nash. Strength – 1 officer, 1236 ORs at 1 main camp + 4 hostels + billets.

No change in senior staff. No interpreter.

150 pows arrived from Canada, all category C + on 5 May, and 160 pows from the USA via Belgium, mainly C, placed in the Milton Ernest hostel.

This visitor did not have a high regard for the Camp Leader, describing him as an “*opportunist”.*

Morale was again recorded as extremely low in the main camp – also at Highlands Farm and Harrold hostels. The same reasons as before were recorded. Anti-British feeling and pro-Russian cummunist attiudes were present.

8 men had attended special training courses at Wilton Park, but the visitor only thought three of them were of use for re-education activities.

Wochenpost and Ausblick – 200 copies of Wochenpost were received which was not sufficient. 100 copies of Ausblick received.

Newspapers - British newspapers received. German papers needed. The hostels were not yet receiving newspapers.

Library – now recorded as “*very badly stocked*” with only 150 fiction.

Lectures – very good and well attended.

Discussion groups – abandoned since the group leader was no longer medically fit to lead them.

Films – supplied by PID and YMCA.

Wireless – good in the main camp.

Camp magazine – ended.

Press review – started in the main camp.

English teaching – classes ended in main camp due to apathy.

There were theatre and orchestra groups – “*very good but of no re-educational importance.”* Despite this comment, the visitor recommended; “*That the excellent band and the camp be given an opportunity to do a BBC PW broadcast, which would greatly reawaken interest in re-education.”*

**28 June 1946** – A visit by Mr H Hansen and Capt Charles Chubb of the Segregation Section. The visit was to look at political screening of pows and to consider their placement following a very rapid increase in numbers. Strength – 3 officers and 2364 ORs. 1 main; 1 satellite and 8 hostels + billets.

An interpreter had been placed – S/Sgt G Paul.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Screening: | A+ | A | A- | B+ | B | B- | C | C- | Unknown |
|  | 14 | 349 | 0 | 192 | 1249 | 259 | 254 | 44 | 6 |

Brief histories of the camp and hostel leaders were given. The Medical Officer, Wilhelm Rupp, was upgraded from C to B.

*“…one of the earliest anti-Nazi camps in Great Britain and still contains a large number of whites who have been here since the end of 1944.”* There were many who were indignant at their prolonged captivity and they alleged that many Nazis had been released before them and held good positions in Germany. They were apathetic towards re-education.

**17 – 19 July 1946** – O F Nash and Dr O John, visited the camp to conduct a Re-education Survey of pows in the new hostels. Strength – 2 Officers, 2321 ORs. 1 main; 1 satellite and 8 hostels + billets.

No changes to British staff. Only change to German staff was a new Deputy Camp Leader – Fritz Reinhardt (A).

Screening figures were similar to previous. The overall camp complexion was graded as grey. About 30 pows had been repatriated from the main camp. It was recommended that the C+ category pows be removed from this camp.

Morale had greatly improved once repatriation started, however, there was a warning that some pows were too optimistic about the speed of further repatriations. Previous anti-British feelings were decreasing, and there appeared to be less support for communism. Morale in hostels was generally good, though it was still low for those pows arriving from the US.

Many of the pows from Canada had been there for a long time, up to 7 years. After talking to pows who had been captured later in the war, and realising the total failure of the Nazi state, many were changing their political outlook.

Pows who had been held in very poor camps in Belgium, appreciated the much better conditions in this camp. Many of these pows arrived in a poor physical condition and received supplementary rations.

One negative factor noted was that pows were prohibited from buying additional bread, cake or flour with their daily twopence allowance.

Youth (under-25) pows were not seen as a problem except at Potton Satellite where they were coming under the influnce of the category C pows from Canada.

Re-education was administered by the camp adjutant Captain Ellis. The standard list of activities was given – there was some improvement, but overall little difference to the previous report. The orchestra was dismissed in this report as; “*No great merit or importance*”.

**5/8 September 1946** – English Inspector’s Report by Major J E Jackson. Total strength declared as 2193, however the figures did not include those pows in billets.

Very short and uninformative report. 6 hostels listed.

**25-28 October 1946** - As part of the re-education programme by COGA, Paul Bondy, a German-speaking refugee gave lectures at the main camp, 1 satellite and 5 hostels.

**29 November 1946** – English Inspection report by J H Dagnall. Strength – 2037. There were only 2 classes for English teaching in the main camp.

**28 January 1947** - Five pows died while based at the camp through its history. The last pow, Alfred Ruf was by suicide and was raised in the House of Commons:

## “*Mr. Skeffington-Lodge asked the Secretary of State for War if he will make a statement about the circumstances in which a German prisoner of war, Obergefreiter Alfred Ruf, of Stuttgart, was found hanged at Grange Farm, Colesdon, Bedfordshire, on 17th January; and whether he is satisfied that men in trouble for family reasons have full opportunity of seeking help and advice from experienced and sympathetic authorities.*

## *Mr. Bellenger - Alfred Ruf had been working with another prisoner for some time at Grange Farm. He was a good worker, in good health and normally cheerful. On 17th January he disappeared during a meal break and when a search was made, he was found to have hanged himself with the tapes of his cape. The finding at the inquest was that he had hanged himself while unsound of mind. His friends have no idea why he should have committed suicide. His parents and wife are dead and he had no children. I am satisfied that Commanders of Prisoner of War Camps are ready to give sympathetic help and advice to prisoners who have domestic troubles*.” (House of Commons, 28 January 1947, Volume 432).

Pow Alfred Ruf, was later buried at Cannock Chase German Military Cemetery.

**30 January to 1 February 1947** – Oliver Nash visited to conduct a Re-educational Survey. Strength 1 officer; 1570 ORs. 1 main; 1 satellite and 3 hostels + billets.

Commandant: Lt Col Ford Camp Leader: Uffz Alfred Munkelt (B) New; aged 31; “*Sincere desire to further political enlightenment*.”

Interpreter: S/Sgt Paul Deputy C/L: Fw Henry Pietsch (B) New; aged 23; “*honest type, somewhat weak.”*

Adjutant: Capt Ellis German M.O.: Dr Karl Bodarwe (A) New; “*takes no noticeable part in camp political life.”*

Screening figures had been simplified to: A - 6 / B – 1347 / C – 217. 250 pows were appealing against their grading - a lower grading meant earlier repatriation, in theory.

Repatriated to date: 409 A’s and B’s / 416 “*crocks*” (pows repatriated on medical grounds).

Morale was seen as mediocre in the main camp as repatriation was not as fast as many had hoped. A remarkable comment was made by the visitor – “*The P.W. are apathetic – in my opinion due to too much entertainment*.”

Re-education activities were very similar to previous reports – there was some disruption due to repatriation of leading pows.

Entertainments – “*Arising from the great interest taken in the welfare of PW by the C.O., entertainments are on a scale and lavishness unequalled in any other camp I visit. There is an excellent theatre group with ambitious repertory, a well equipped band, football, table-tennis and anything else that may be required is provided.”*

**20-24 May 1947** – Oliver Nash returned for another Re-educational Survey. Strength – 1 officer; 1460 ORs. 1 main and 1 satellite + billets.

Commandant: Lt Col J H T Mardell [Mardall - New] Camp Leader: Uffz Alfred Munkelt (B)

Interpreter: Pte Siegfried Wuhl [New] Deputy C/L: Uffz Reinhold Guenther (B) [New – about to be repatriated]

Adjutant: Capt Ellis German M.O.: U/Arzt Dr Karl Bodarwe (A)

The Commandant had recently been appointed and was new to pow work.

Screening figures: A – 10 / B+ - 117 / B – 1046 / B- - 288. 534 pows repatriated to date + 420 medical repatriations.

Morale was fairly high – reasons stated were; “*excellent treatment by the British staff. Livelier re-education programme, more freedom, and re-screening of all C’s…”* However, I expect the main reasons were 534 repatriations + dates set for other groups.

A reduction in the number of hostels helped to make re-education activities much easier to organise. Standard activities:

Wochenpost and Ausblick – separate appendix.

Newspapers – adequate English papers; some German and Swiss papers.

Library – small for this large camp

Lectures – regular, but many pows preferred to go out walking while there was better weather.

Discussion Groups – taking place in main and satellite.

Films – YMCA and travelling films.

Wireless – satisfactory

Camp magazine – none

Press review - taking place in main and satellite.

English Instruction – separate appendix.

Information Room – none, though there were newspaper rooms.

Mr Nash made arrangements for groups of pows to visit Petty Sessions, the City Council, and two Bedford Schools – the adjutant also arranged for visits to County Council meetings and Quarter Sessions.

Other activities:

Religion – Protestant padre Uffz Alfred Bluthart / RC padre Wilhelm Bettinger – both the same as in previous reports.

Education – “*not of any significance*.”

Entertainments – “*Everything possible is done for the edification of the PsW. The theatre groups at HQ and Tempsford are very active and their programme ambitious. There are also bands.”*

**21/24 June 1947** – English Inspector’s Report by Major R L S Raffles. Strength – 1568.

Although no classes were recorded, the Inspector carried out tests / exams.

**30 July to 2 August 1947** – Oliver Nash returned accompanied by F French for a Re-education Survey. Strength 1 officer; 1488 ORs.

There was just one change in personel, a new deputy Camp Leader: Uffz Horst Sobotka (B).

Repatriations to date 588 and 420 medical.

Morale was still fairly high in the main camp – “*excellent treatment… concessions… bright weather… early repatriation*.” There were concerns about news from the Russian zone and international problems.

Re-education activities were similar to the last report, though there had been some decline due to increased outside activities. The library had improved and was “*very well stocked”.* The discussion groups had been suspended. A news-sheet was being distributed.

Outside visits had continued. On 6 August a group of pows were to visit London and the Houses of Parliament with Skeffington-Lodge M.P. and Driberg M.P. acting as hosts.

Religion – the previous comments about the RC padre, Wilhelm Bettinger, were emphasised – “*Hysterical and theatrical. Strongly anti-communist but also full of resentment at the British failure a) to release Ps/W b) to alleviate German want. His flock of about 80 keeps aloof from all activity in the camp and I suspect his influence of being very bad indeed.”* It was recommended that he be replaced.

**7 – 10 October 1947** – I R Bell visited to conduct a Re-educational Survey. Strength 1 Officer; 1330 ORs

Commandant: Lt Col J H T Mardall Camp Leader: Uffz Alfred Munkelt (B)

Interpreter: S/Sgt Siegfried Wuhl [promoted] Deputy C/L: Uffz Horst Sobotka (B) [New]

Adjutant: Capt Ellis German M.O.: U/Arzt Dr Karl Bodarwe (A)

796 pows repatriated to date + 432 medical cases. Morale good in the main camp.

Plans for reducing the size of the camp, and its future status, were confused. The current plan was for 300 to leave on 14 October and a further 200 later – from the numbers in November, it looks like these transfers did take place.

Re-education activities were very similar to before.

Religion – attendance at services had declined, but no reason was given for this.

Entertainment – “*A revue, complete with PW chorus girls and elaborate staging, has just finished a successful run. No serious drama has been attempted.”*

**11 – 13 November 1947** – F C French visited to conduct a Re-educational Survey. Strength – 2 officers; 680 ORs.

No change in personnel. Screening figures; 3 – A / 679 – B. Number of pows repatriated to date 1100.

The future of the camp was uncertain. The Commandant was due to leave within the next few weeks. The current plans were either - Camp 72 becoming a satellite of Camp 278 (W.D. Camp, Clapham, Bedford) – or vice versa.

Morale remained high despite transfer of pows to other camps. Captain Ellis, the adjutant, received further praise for his work with the pows – *“..extremely popular, and looked upon as a father by Ps.W.”*

Activities were continuing as before.

There were no further re-education reports after this date.

**14 November 1947** - Camp number included in an ‘Urgent Memorandum’ (FO 939/270) regarding inspection of food parcels.

**1948** - From the following forum entry, it seems the camp closed in 1948, though whether as a main camp or satellite is uncertain: *“My father passed away when I was 15 years old and I never used a chance to find out from him about his war experience. He was drafted to the SS-Grenadier-Ausbildungs- und Ersatz Batallion and became a POW on Apr. 24, 1945 of the British Army and was released on May 24, 1948 from POW Camp Ducks-Cross, Colmworth, Beds., England.”*

 <https://forum.axishistory.com/viewtopic.php?t=116329>

Known Camp Commandants:

1942 - ? Possibly Major James Andrew McDonnell of the Pioneer Corps, who gave evidence at the murdered private’s inquest. He was recorded as Commandant of Byfield Camp 87 in 1945.

(1945 or before) - 1947 Lieutenant Colonel F W Ford, O.B.E. (I think he was from the Royal Welsh Regiment).

1947 - ? Lieutenant Colonel J H T Mardall

**Numbers of pows at Ducks Cross Camp**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Open |  |  | With other camps |  |  | Unknown |  |  | Not listed / not open |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2/43 | 1943 | 1945 | 3/46 | 5/46 | 6/46 | 7/46 | 9/46 | 11/46 | 2/47 | 5/47 | 6/47 | 8/47 | 10/47 | 11/47 |
| Main Camp | 562 | ? | ? | 704 | 820 | 808 | 812 | 950**+** | 652 | 662 | 847 | 900 | 840 | 759 | 344 |
| M of A Hostel, Bolnhurst | 50 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Ampthill |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Lidlington |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Bedford |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Roxton Hostel |  |  | ? | 80 | 80 | 77 | 92 | 70 | 50 | 61 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Milton Ernest |  |  | ? |  | 156 | 152 | 154 | 147 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Highland(s) Farm |  |  | ? |  | 80 | 79 | 78 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Harrold |  |  | Camp 611 | 50 | 48 | 42 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Potton Satellite |  |  | Camp 269 | 566 | 510 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Upper Dean |  |  | With Camp 98 | 81 | 81 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Cockayne Hatley |  |  | Attached to C269 | 220 | 220 | 213 | 200 | 128 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Ravensden |  |  | ? |  |  | 100 | 110 | 128 | 140 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Farndish |  |  | With Camp 98 | 51 | 51 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Everton / Tempsford Sat. |  |  |  | Attached to C269 | 585 | 578 | 303 | 400 | 437 | 423 | 354 | 147 |
| Sharnbrook |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 100 | 250 | 201 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Billetees | 91 |  | ? | 35 | 70 | 185 | 187 | ? | 85 | 216 | 214 | 231 | 226 | 217 | 191 |
| Other |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 82 attached |  |  |  |  | 1 hospital | 7 civilians |
| TOTAL | 703 |  |  | 819 | \*1237 | 2367 | \*\*2323 | 2193 | 2037 | 1571 | 1461 | 1568 | 1489 | 1331 | 682 |

 \*totals come to 1256 not 1237 / \*\*totals 2337 not 2323. **+** may include billetees.

**After the camp:** Used for a while to house displaced persons. Some buildings still in existence. Site used for farms and light industry.

**Further information:**

Prisoners of War in Bedfordshire - Stephen Risby – 2011 – Amberley Publishing

National Archives FO/939/152 – 72 Working Camp, Ducks Cross Camp, Colmworth, Bedfordshire. Dated 1945-1947. Used above.

**Satellite camps and Hostels**

**Potton Satellite Camp** – previously Camp 269, (separate details and map).

**June / July 1946** – Many of the pows at this hostel were accommodated in tents.

Camp leader: Werner Boslet (A+). The Segregation Report rated him highly as being well-educated, reliable, efficient and diplomatic. Formerly a correspondent of a small newspaper – and as a pow he had been the C/L at Happenden Camp 19. “*He is interested in re-education and has been fairly successful in dealing with a recent unruly intake of black PsW from Canada. He is the right man in the right job.”*

Interpreter: J Broniatowski – “*efficient and very active… He is pre-occupied with administrative duties and his own importance*.”

German M.O.: Dr Paul Schemann – “*Age 53. He was in the Party and NSKK from Dec., 1943, but his interest lies only in his medical work. He is a typical provincial doctor, does his work well, and is liked by the British staff.” NSKK =* The National Socialist Motor Corps (Nationalsozialistisches Kraftfahrkorps).

Poor communication with main camp. “*135 P/W fresh from Canada have very much darkened the colour of that camp and are having a bad influence on the younger P/W here.”*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2/43 | 1945 | 3/46 | 5/46 | 6/46 | 7/46 | 9/46 | 11/46 | 2/47 | 5/47 | 6/47 | 8/47 | 10/47 | 11/47 |
| Potton Satellite |  | Camp 269 | 566 | 510 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

At some time between July and September 1946, most pows were moved to the Everton Satelitte pow camp.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Everton / Tempsford Satellite Camps** – 8 miles from main camp. Huts. The Everton site was attached to Camp 269 Potton until it was transferred to Camp 72. [Old Woodbury Camp 561 was very close to Everton – it was taken over by Potton – and so it is possibly the same camp].**November 1946** – Complaint made that they had not received copies of ‘English For All’ since being attached to C72.**February 1947** - Camp Leader; Fw Horst Rumbler (B+) – aged 26 – “*Rather silly type, innocuous*.” Morale was ‘fairly high’ due in part to: “*good living conditions and an active re-education programme…”***Between February and May 1947** - the camp was transferred to nearby Tempsford.**May 1947** – Comment in report regarding political progress; “*At Tempsford (formerly Everton) progress has continued at its previous good pace.”*Camp Leader: Fw Horst Rumbler (B+) as before. Deputy C/L: Hwm Adam Schreiner (B+)**August 1947** – C/L as before. A comment about the changes of location for this camp; “*Morale in the Tempsford satellite is somewhat lower. The location of the camp has been shifted twice in about a year and there is the prospect of a further move which is undermining enterprise.”***October 1947** – C/L as before. Low morale – *“…is now in an unattractive location and has no one on the spot who fosters its welfare… a marked apathy and pessimism*.” |  |
| Probable site for the Everton Camp |

**November 1947** – the camp was expected to close.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2/43 | 1945 | 3/46 | 5/46 | 6/46 | 7/46 | 9/46 | 11/46 | 2/47 | 5/47 | 6/47 | 8/47 | 10/47 | 11/47 |
| Everton / Tempsford Sat. |  |  | Attached to C269 | 585 | 578 | 303 | 400 | 437 | 423 | 354 | 147 |

**Ampthill hostel** – believed to be a hostel for Italian pows opened in late 1943. No reference to the hostel in 1945, so either closed or transferred to a different main camp.

Pow Camp 261 was at Ampthill – was this the same site? Possibly a hostel for C72 in 1943 / 1944, then becoming an enlarged separate camp?

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2/43 | 1943 | 1945 | 3/46 | 5/46 | 6/46 | 7/46 | 9/46 | 11/46 | 2/47 | 5/47 | 6/47 | 8/47 | 10/47 | 11/47 |
| Ampthill |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Cockayne Hatley hostel** - about 20 Nissen huts by The Old Rectory, Village Road (TL 260 495). Later attached to Camp 269, Potton, then returning to Ducks Cross when C269 became a satellite. 16 miles from the main camp.Abridged entry from Bedfordshire Archives: “*During and immediately after WW2 a pow camp was established in Cockayne Hatley on three acres of ground to the back of The Old Rectory. The camp was made up of about 20 Nissen-style huts, of which only one concrete base remains, with the Old Rectory itself used as the camp mess. Cockayne Hatley Hall may have been used as quarters for the British camp staff.**Initially the camp was used for German pows and was wired and guarded. Later it was used for Italians and security was relaxed. By 1946/7 it was again occupied by Germans, operating as a satellite of Potton camp. In January 1946 the use of prisoners of war as drivers for trucks taking other prisoners to work on local farms triggered a strike among drivers employed by the Bedfordshire War Agricultural Executive Committee. As a result, around 1200 German prisoners in camps at Potton, Colmworth, Luton, Ampthill and Cockayne Hatley were left idle. A spokesman for the strikers said that drivers had been detailed to train German co-drivers and complained that; “This means that Germans are taking Englishmen’s jobs at lower rates of pay … yet when ex-Service men recently demobilised from the war have applied for driving jobs, they have received the reply that there are no vacancies”.**Later that year in a tragic accident a German prisoner billeted at what was described as the Cockayne Hatley “hostel” was killed after a fall from a bicycle while cycling to work on a farm at Sutton. A fellow prisoner cycling with him, Sergeant Ernst Selle, heard Werner Schadow fall behind him as they were going down a steep hill, and thought he had braked too suddenly. Sergeant A M Robertson of the Pioneer Corps detachment in charge of the hostel told an inquest that Schadow, a 20 year old farmer from near Berlin, had been in good health,* |  |
| Ordnance Survey 1960 |

*and that the bicycle was in good order. The young German died of a brain haemorrhage immediately after he was admitted to hospital in Bedford the same morning.*

***Sources:****Heritage Environment Record no. 21160  / Bedfordshire Times, 25th January 1946  / Biggleswade Chronicle, 18th October 1946*

*From:* <https://bedsarchives.bedford.gov.uk/CommunityHistories/Cockayne-Hatley/Cockayne-Hatley-Prisoner-of-War-Camp.aspx>

[Werner Schadow - died on 10 October 1946 – he was later buried at Cannock Chase German Military Cemetery.]

**July 1946** – Attached to camp 72 - Hostel leader: Erich Stoppel (B). 70 men from USA and 150 men from USA via Belgium. A grey/white hostel with many A+ pows.

**February 1947** - same camp leader – “*quiet, unimaginative man*.”

No further record of this camp in the re-education reports.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2/43 | 1945 | 3/46 | 5/46 | 6/46 | 7/46 | 9/46 | 11/46 | 2/47 | 5/47 | 6/47 | 8/47 | 10/47 | 11/47 |
| Cockayne Hatley |  | Attached to C269 | 220 | 220 | 213 | 200 | 128 |  |  |  |  |  |

**Farndish hostel**

Attached to Little Addington Camp 98 before June 1946.

**June 1946** – POWs were mainly young Waffen-SS, but they were “*keen to learn about democracy*”. The hostel had very few re-education activities or facilities.

Hostel leader: Hans Schuetz (B-) – Aged 26. ex-SS Police Division member. Although the segregation report found him ‘*entirely satisfactory from the administration point of view,’* they recommended that he be replaced with an older A category pow to give a lead in re-education.

**July 1946** - 51 men arrived from poor pow camps in Belgium. Leader was regarded as; “*too young and politically too benighted to have a good influence and should be replaced.*”

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2/43 | 1945 | 3/46 | 5/46 | 6/46 | 7/46 | 9/46 | 11/46 | 2/47 | 5/47 | 6/47 | 8/47 | 10/47 | 11/47 |
| Farndish |  | With C98 | 51 | 51 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Harrold hostel** – 17 miles from the main camp.

Previously Camp 611 in the grounds of Harold Hall – separate details.

**May 1946** – pows a mixture of A’s and B’s. No electricity. Battery wireless only reception sometimes poor. Some English Instruction lessons.

**July 1946** – Hostel leader: Herbert Gedies (A) – anti-Nazi.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2/43 | 1945 | 3/46 | 5/46 | 6/46 | 7/46 | 9/46 | 11/46 | 2/47 | 5/47 | 6/47 | 8/47 | 10/47 | 11/47 |
| Harrold |  | Camp 611 | 50 | 48 | 42 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Highlands Farm hostel** – 8 miles from main camp - Bedford Road, Northill, (Bedford Road runs along the top of the map). Highlands Farm is just east of Northill, Bedfordshire – NGR TL 1342 4609Bedfordshire Archives record – “*the house was requisitioned during the Second World War and used for evacuee children and, later, Italian prisoners of war*.”**1943** – recorded as a hostel for Italian pows.**May 1946** – German pows. No electricity. Battery wireless only, reception sometimes poor. Some English Instruction lessons.**July 1946** – Hostel leader: Alfred Renner (B) – “*entirely satisfactory”.* Mainly white category pows.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2/43 | 1943 | 1945 | 3/46 | 5/46 | 6/46 | 7/46 | 9/46 | 11/46 | 2/47 | 5/47 | 6/47 | 8/47 | 10/47 | 11/47 |
| Highlands Farm |  |  | ? |  | 80 | 79 | 78 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

 |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Ordnance Survey 1960 |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Milton Ernest hostel** – 8/11 miles from main camp. 1 building and 1 hut.The local heritage trail puts the location of the camp approximately at the spot marked X just off Radwell Road TL 014 561– sites just to the N and the Agricultural Hostel may well have been associated with the site.**September 1945** - Italian pows**May 1946** – German pows - all were provisionally graded – C. Good wireless.**June 1946** – Hostel leader: Walter Mueller [Műller] (C) – Aged 31. He was interviewed by the segregation team and downgraded from A to C. The Commandant agreed to remove him from this hostel and replace him with an A+ pow. There was a high number of category C / black pows with 78 C and 35 C+ out of a total of 152. All came from the US and many had been held in captivity for some years. “…*the bad blacks were wildly fanatical and dangerous types who would immediately start to work for the re-birth of Nazism in Germany*.” It was recommended that all C+ pows be removed from this camp.**July 1946** – The same leader was regarded as; “*too young and politically too benighted to have a good influence and should be replaced.*”

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2/43 | 1945 | 3/46 | 5/46 | 6/46 | 7/46 | 9/46 | 11/46 | 2/47 | 5/47 | 6/47 | 8/47 | 10/47 | 11/47 |
| Milton Ernest |  | ? | ? | 156 | 152 | 154 | 147 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

 |  |
| Ordnance Survey 1960 |

(Kings Cliffe Camp 702 recorded that – “*The pows on this station [Milton* Ernest] *live at Staughton and are transported daily to and from Milton Ernest, their place of work, some 12 miles away. There is no radio in their compound.”)*

**Ministry of Agriculture hostel – Bolnhurst.**

(There was a ‘Bolnhurst Hostel’ used by the Women’s Land Army at TL 0868 5840 – but I have not seen any records to show that the pow hostel was located there).

**February, 1943** - Recorded in the IRCR Inspection Report with 50 Italian pows.

Not recorded in reports issued from 1945 – so either closed or transferred to another main camp.

**Pioneer Company, Lidlington**

Included in a list of hostels for Italian pows for 1943. Pows from Camp 278 were recorded working at the Lidlington and Ridgemont Brickworks.

Memories – “*The Italian Prisoners of War used to go around singing all the time, the village was swarming with them. They all pinched the swings and they all wore big crosses on their necks, being Catholics. I remember going for a walk with my sister and passed a group of German Prisoners of War. One of them went for a walk with my sister although I kept an eye on her*.” [https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/40/a5085740.shtmlhttps://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/40/a5085740.shtml](https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/40/a5085740.shtmlhttps%3A//www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/40/a5085740.shtml)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2/43 | 1943 | 1945 | 3/46 | 5/46 | 6/46 | 7/46 | 9/46 | 11/46 | 2/47 | 5/47 | 6/47 | 8/47 | 10/47 | 11/47 |
| Lidlington |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Pioneer Company, Bedford**

Included in a list of hostels for Italian pows for 1943.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2/43 | 1943 | 1945 | 3/46 | 5/46 | 6/46 | 7/46 | 9/46 | 11/46 | 2/47 | 5/47 | 6/47 | 8/47 | 10/47 | 11/47 |
| Bedford |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Ravensden hostel.** 6 miles from main camp. Huts.

**September 1945** – Italian pows

**June 1946** – Gap in records probably due to holding Italian pows – PID ignored these in their reports. It was then recorded as a new hostel when it was filled with German pows from Belgium. Many pows were Waffen-SS and had been badly treated in Belgium. Some stated they had received promises that they would be repatriated, but instead they were sent to the UK.

**July 1946** – Hostel leader: Alfred Perschke (A) – previously deputy leader at the main camp. 112 men from Belgium, mainly young SS men. “…*ably led by Perschke… His influence with the help of Wilton Park trainee Roers is making itself felt in this politically unenlightened hostel.”*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2/43 | 1945 | 3/46 | 5/46 | 6/46 | 7/46 | 9/46 | 11/46 | 2/47 | 5/47 | 6/47 | 8/47 | 10/47 | 11/47 |
| Ravensden |  | ? |  |  | 100 | 110 | 128 | 140 |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Roxton hostel** – 1½ / 3 miles from main camp. Huts. (‘High Barns’ is mentioned for location, but no confirmation).

**March 1946** – Hostel leader: Dettmar (B) *– “A sound and able man*”. Deputy H/L/: Sasymannshansen (B)

There was a wireless, but the amplifier had broken last November, so few pows were able to listen. The commandant had been unable to get repairs carried out.

**May 1946** – Roxton pows went to the main camp to view films. Good wireless. Some English Instruction lessons.

**July 1946** – Hostel leader still Hans Dettmar (B) – “*reliable and suitable for the job*.”

**February 1947** – Hostel leader Uffz Hans Scheer (B-) – “*young Nazi type, whose influence is of no importance in view of the proximity to HQ*.”

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2/43 | 1945 | 3/46 | 5/46 | 6/46 | 7/46 | 9/46 | 11/46 | 2/47 | 5/47 | 6/47 | 8/47 | 10/47 | 11/47 |
| Roxton Hostel |  | ? | 80 | 80 | 77 | 92 | 70 | 50 | 61 |  |  |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Sharnbrook hostel** (Vicarage Close) 10 miles from main camp. HutsPossibly the small buildings located towards the top left on map (SP 9915 5980).Probably attached to another camp before September 1946 when it first appears on Ducks Cross reports.**February 1947** – Hostel leader Uffz. Alfred Jung (B-) – aged 28 – “*Military type of doubtful political sincerity*.” Morale was ‘fairly high’ “*though there are many Cs in this camp and impatience to be re-screened is rather apparent*.”

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2/43 | 1945 | 3/46 | 5/46 | 6/46 | 7/46 | 9/46 | 11/46 | 2/47 | 5/47 | 6/47 | 8/47 | 10/47 | 11/47 |
| Sharnbrook |  |  |  |  |  |  | 100 | 250 | 201 |  |  |  |  |  |

 |  |
| Ordnance Survey 1960 |

**Upper Dean hostel**

Attached to Little Addington Camp 98 before June 1946.

**June 1946** – Hostel leader: Hans Scheer (B-). Aged 22. Electrician by trade, joined the Waffen-SS in 1941. “…*his youth and inexperience make him quite useless so far as re-education is concerned and we have advised the Cdt to replace him with an older white PW.”* Pows mainly Waffen-SS, but keen to learn of democracy. The hostel had very few re-education activities or facilities.

**July 1946** - Leader was regarded as; “*too young and politically too benighted to have a good influence and should be replaced.*” 81 men had arrived from pow camps in Belgium.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2/43 | 1945 | 3/46 | 5/46 | 6/46 | 7/46 | 9/46 | 11/46 | 2/47 | 5/47 | 6/47 | 8/47 | 10/47 | 11/47 |
| Upper Dean |  |  | Previous? | 81 | 81 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |