**Camp 100** **- St Martins Camp, St Martins, nr Oswestry, Shropshire**

Included in the 1945 ICRC camp list – Labour Camp. 100. St.Martins Camp, Oswestry, Shropshire.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1947 Camp list** | | | | | | | |
| 100(G.W.C.) | St.Martins Camp, St.Martins, Oswestry, Shropshire | W. | Priswar, St.Martins, Shropshire | Chirk 2176 | Gobowen | Lt.Col.W.H.Dumain | 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 |
| SJ 311 363 | 126 | 100 | St Martins (St Martin's) Camp, St Martins, Gobowen | Shropshire | 1 | German Working Camp | STANDARD type. Light industrial estate |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Location:** About 1.5 km SWW of St Martins; 7 km N of Oswestry. Shown as Industrial Hostel on map. Just on the edge of 1946 aerial photo – >  [raf\_106g\_uk\_1517\_rs\_4392 - Aerial Photo | Historic England](https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/archive/collections/aerial-photos/record/raf_106g_uk_1517_rs_4392)  **Before the camp:** Farmland.  **Pow Camp:** Built by Italian pows who lived in tents until the construction was completed. Listed as Italian working camp / labour battalion for up to 600 pows to 1946, then a German working camp and increased size.  The site had a standard layout with a main pow compound, and with guards’ huts and offices at the front facing the road. Buildings included a water tower, offices, officer's mess, a canteen, guard rooms, barrack huts, ablution blocks, cell blocks, a camp reception station (medical facility/hospital), a cookhouse, dining rooms, recreation rooms and living huts. One hut was converted for use as a chapel.  The huts were mainly Standard type made from prefabricated concrete sections.  **1943** - Opened for Italian pows.  **1943** - Hostels listed for Italian pows; Hanmer (Green) / Chirk / Llanrhaeadr-Ym-Mochnant / Morda (Oswestry)  **5 May 1944** - Hostels listed for Italian pows, (WO 32/10737): Elson, Ellesmere, Shropshire / Overton, Wrexham, Denbighshire. |  |
| Ordnance Survey 1954 |

**May and November 1944** - The camp was listed as an Italian Labour Battalion under the Western Command area and then as an Italian Working Camp, (WO 32/10737). The Italians were recorded as non-co-operators.

**1944/5** – German pows start to arrive – at first placed in hostels.

**18 February 1945** *– “a number of German PoWs escaped and one managed to get onto Rednal Airfield, a big Spitfire training base. He fell asleep in a Spitfire cockpit and was discovered in the morning by a WAAF flight mechanic called Margery Lamb. "One of our jobs was to empty the planes of petrol every night. In the morning the first thing we did was to fill them with petrol again. I struggled up this icy wing to open the cockpit and there he was, a very beautiful blond German pilot, who was asleep. I let out a bloodcurdling scream that brought everybody running to the spot and also woke up the fugitive. While they awaited the arrival of the Military Police, the Group Captain invited the German into the crew room for a drink of hot cocoa. He conveyed to the Group Captain he would not go until he found me. By this time, I was hiding at the back of the crowd. He found me and beckoned me. He said, 'You cocoa with me'. So, I found myself drinking cocoa with a German escapee. As I left, he clicked his heels and bowed. He gave himself up without a fight and on being searched was found to have in his possession a half pound of black pepper in a tin and a knife handle sharpened to a razor's edge. The prisoner was returned to the POW camp. Later in the day it was reported that all the escaped prisoners had been recaptured." ‘* (Shropshire HER).

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **1 August 1945** - an urgent memorandum was sent to this camp, and others, about maintaining records of Italians who were classed as ‘co-operators’.  **15 September 1945** - Hostels listed for pows from this camp, (WO 32/10737): Baschurch, Shrewsbury, Salop / Chirk / Hanmer(Mill Hill) / Llanrhaeadr / Morda.   |  | | --- | | 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. If there were still Italian pows in hostels, they were usually ignored by PID. |   **5 April 1946** – Camp officially changed from Italian to a German Working Camp. There may have been Italians still at the camp in separate hostel(s) awaiting repatriation.  **8-11 July 1946** – PID Visit No 1. To organise re-education; Interview P/W causing trouble; Screen Wilton Park candidates; Visit all hostels. Strength; 1 officer, 1098 Other Ranks.  “*Situated amidst beautiful surroundings and the accommodation is spacious and well laid out.”* There was however a lack of extra room so lessons took place in the dining hall. |
| Cappella italiana San Martino |

Commandant: Lt Col W H Dumain Camp leader: Ofw Ditterich (B) [Diettrich?]

Interpreter: S/Sgt G N Preston Deputy C/L: Ofw Krűger (B)

German MO: St/Arzt Seitz (B)

The Commandant was a recent appointment.

The Interpreter was of German origin, “*most efficient and has a good understanding of the aims of PID.”*

In addition to camps in the UK, just over 300 pows had arrived from camps in Canada. They were often C grade as they had been captured early in the war and retained their Nazi ideology. There was also an intake of pows from camps in the USA. Most had very low morale as they had been misinformed in the US that they were being repatriated. Instead, they found themselves in working camps in the UK. A smaller number of pows had been transferred from Belgium where they had experienced extremely poor conditions.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Political screening: | A | A- | B+ | B | B- | C | Unscreened |
|  | 16 | 1 | 5 | 341 | 7 | 6 | 728 |

Morale was regarded as only ‘fair,’ particularly for pows arriving from other countries. Many had received no mail at all for many months. Despite this, there were no complaints from local farmers about their work.

35% were ‘youth’ pows (under-25). No special provision was recorded for them.

Re-education had barely started and there was opposition to it from some pows. The standard list of activities was given and showed a very low level in comparison to other camps:

Wochenpost and Ausblick – 325 / 0 copies respectively. Commandant told Ausblick was out of print, same reason was not noted in other camps.

Newspapers – Unsatisfactory supply of British papers. 10 German papers infrequently sent by PID. 1 copy of a Swiss paper and another from USA was received.

Library – None.

Films – Only YMCA films fortnightly.

Lectures – None.

Discussion groups – these were “*not encouraged*” by the previous Commandant. It was hoped that a group of pows would soon start discussion sessions.

Wireless – 1 set with 1 loud-speaker.

Camp magazine – None.

Press review – Given orally twice a week.

English instruction – Approximately 80 pupils.

Other camp activities –

Religion – Protestant padre Hans Knepper (B) / RC padre Josef Koeckemann (A). Low attendance at services. Pows could use the village church once a week.

Education – Small classes for shorthand and signwriting.

Theatre – None

Orchestra – None

Choir – Good.

There was no mention of any pows *“causing trouble*” - given as one reason for the visit.

Wilton Park Camp 300 (also 20) held special training courses for pows – there were two candidates.

This was one of the poorest records for re-education of any camp at this time. The comment about the previous Commandant not wanting discussion groups may well provide a wider reason for the lack of almost any activity.

In the report there were mentions of an imminent take over of Mile House Camp 8, near Oswestry – but this was not recorded in the next reports.

**16 October 1946** – PID Visit No 2 - the shortest report I have seen from a PID visitor at this time, just 1 page. To Screen PW. Strength; 1 officer, 1324 OR.

Only change to senior personnel – Interpreters; Capt Stemmer [new] and S/Sgt G N Preston.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Political screening: | A+ | A | B+ | B | B- | C |
|  | 1 | 57 | 131 | 1024 | 62 | 51 |

With a new Commandant there was some progress developing re-education activities under a newly formed pow committee. Political discussions took place with attendances between 150 to 300. A camp magazine had started – ‘Die Neue Saat’ (The New Seed).

**14-18 April 1947** – PID Visit No 3. ‘Organise Re-education.’ Strength; 1 officer, 962 OR.

Commandant: Lt Col W H Dumain Camp leader: Ofw L Ditterich (B)

Interpreter: S/Sgt Engel and Sgt Sandig [new] Deputy C/L: H Kiehling (B+) [new]

German MO: H M von Rauch (B-) [new]

The Commandant was very co-operative with the visitor.

S/Sgt Engel had transferred from Camp 659 and was keen to assist with re-education. Sgt Sandig was new to the work.

The Deputy C/L was aged 25, an engineering student. Had been a member of the Hitler Youth, was in Fallschirmjaeger (paratroopers), served in France and Russia. Had spent 1½ years as a pow in Canada. “*Good qualities of leadership.”*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Political screening: | A+ | A | B+ | B | B- | C |
|  | 1 | 3 | 93 | 759 | 51 | 56 |

150 pows were appealing against their political grades – the better the grade, the sooner repatriated, in theory. 345 pows repatriated to date.

The visitor believed that morale had considerably improved. This was mainly due to excellent conditions, fair treatment, good employment with ‘extras,’ good relationships with local civilians. However, the main factor, which he did not mention, would certainly have been the start of repatriations.

A very different standard list of re-education activities than before:

Wochenpost and Ausblick – separate appendix.

Newspapers – adequate.

Library – over 1000 books and more expected.

Lectures – Adequate and regular.

Discussion groups – Fortnightly at HQ, but attendance was poor.

Films – adequate

Wireless – adequate

Camp magazine – more paper needed for next issue.

Press review – Weekly news-sheet for billets.

English instruction – separate appendix.

Information room – being set up.

Other camp activities –

Religion – same padres. Interest continued to be low.

Entertainments – an orchestra of 4 men. Excellent theatre group performing in a well appointed theatre.

Pows returning after the war recalled; "*they had cultivated little garden patches outside the huts and grew flowers and tried to make it as homelike as possible."*

**1947** – The following site was listed as being administered by Camp 100 in a 1947 list. It was not recorded in the reports.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| No. | Address. | Cmd | Telegraphic Address | Telephone Number | Railway Station | Commandant | W.E. |
| Hospital | Halston Hall, Whittington, Nr.Oswestry,Salop | W |  | Oswestry 660/1/2 |  |  | Administered by No.100 |

**31 April 1947** - The camp was disbanded with sites taken over mainly by Pool Park Camp 38. St.Martins became a satellite camp. Merrington Green was taken over by Hawkstone Park Camp 240.

Known Camp Commandants:

c.1946 Major Matthews.

c.1946/7 Lieutenant Colonel W H Dumain, from the Royal Artillery. 1947 transferred to Kingsfold Camp 46.

**Numbers of pows**

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

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1943 | 5/1944 | 9/1945 | 7/1946 | 10/1946 | 4/1947 | May 1947 > |
| Main | Capacity 600 |  |  | 579 | 600 | 489 \* | Satellite to C38 |
| Chirk |  |  |  | 67 | 57 | 22 | To C38 |
| Hanmer (Green) |  |  |  | 44 | 42 | 29 | To C38 |
| Llanrhaeadr-Y-M |  |  |  | To C38 | To C101 | | |
| Morda (Oswestry) |  |  |  |  | 37 | 15 | To C38 |
| Elson |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Overton |  |  |  |  | 176 |  |  |
| Baschurch |  |  |  | 46 | 49 | 35 |  |
| Bryn-y-pys |  |  |  | 186 | ? | 75 | To C38 |
| Merrington Green |  |  |  |  | 104 | 80 | To C240 |
| Plas Power |  |  |  |  | 72 | 53 | To C38 |
| Billets |  |  |  | 177 | 187 | 153 |  |
| TOTALS |  |  |  | 1099 | 1325 | 963 |  |

\* + 10 attached to 1018 Company – Acksea, Shropshire.

**After the camp:** Used for a short time as a European Voluntary Workers Camp. 2019 industrial estate.

< <https://www.ipernity.com/doc/302581/37494678>

**Further Information:**

National Archives - FO 1120/224 – ‘Re-educational survey visit reports for camps 100 to 106’. Used above.

Field survey report: Hankinson R. 2016. Bank Top Industrial Estate, St Martin's, Shropshire: building recording. CPAT Rep. 1440.

Die Neue Saat; - [Die Neue Saat : Lagerzeitung des POW Camp 100 - The Wiener Holocaust Library](https://www.whlcollections.org/image/99717/)

**Hostels**

**Baschurch,** Shrewsbury, Salop. Old manor house.

**7/1946** – British NCO in charge; Sgt Fisher. Hostel leader; Uffz Bläsing (C) – *“morose and antagonistic*” – arrangements were being made to have him replaced. 75% had not received mail for many months. No re-education activities noted. Only a battery operated wireless. No electric supply.

**4/1947** – Hostel leader; F Menne (B), aged 27, shop assistant. Had been a member of Hitler Youth. “*Good qualities of leadership*.”

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1943 | 5/1944 | 9/1945 | 7/1946 | 10/1946 | 4/1947 | May 1947 > |
| Baschurch |  |  |  | 46 | 49 | 35 |  |

**Are these the same place ?**

Memories recall – “*on the land surrounding* ***the manor house of Bryn-y-Pys in Overton****… I have mentioned that American troops were billeted in the park surrounding the manor house in the weeks preceding D-Day landings. (Believed to be the fields to the east of the present Bryn y Pys stables)… After the Americans left, the camp was used to house Italian prisoners of war. . They wore a brown uniform of sorts with yellow diamond flashes and to begin with they were escorted to their work on farms but as the war progressed, they were given bikes and allowed to cycle to work. We would see them riding their bikes daily through the village on their way to work on nearby farms. As far as I can recollect, they never caused any problems. We learned a few Italian profanities – which I shall not go into – which we used to shout at them as they rode by and then, as they stopped as if to give chase, we were off like long dogs. We were SO brave!!”* [*https://overton-on-dee.co.uk/images/stories/historyinpictures/Overton\_in\_WWII.pdf*](https://overton-on-dee.co.uk/images/stories/historyinpictures/Overton_in_WWII.pdf)

**Bryn-y-pys**. Hutted.

**7/1946** – Hostel leader; Fw Schulz (C) – ex Waffen-SS – to be replaced. No re-education activities noted.

**4/1947** – Hostel leader; G Kummel (B) “*Cheerful. Has good control*.” Fortnightly discussion meetings.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1943 | 5/1944 | 9/1945 | 7/1946 | 10/1946 | 4/1947 | May 1947 > |
| Bryn-y-pys |  |  |  | 186 | ? | 75 | To C38 |

**Overton**, Wrexham, Denbighshire.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1943 | 5/1944 | 9/1945 | 7/1946 | 10/1946 | 4/1947 | May 1947 > |
| Overton |  |  |  |  | 176 |  |  |

**Chirk.** Hutted. Where Craig Close is today. NGR SJ 294 384.

**7/1946** – Hostel leader; Fw Voigtmann (B-) – he had been promoted to Leutnant, so it was recommended he be sent to an officers’ camp. *“A clean bright hostel and Ps/W seem contented*.” No re-education activities noted.

**4/1947** – Hostel leader; W Dierks (B+), a clerk. Was a pow in US for 2 years. “*Sound type*.”

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1943 | 5/1944 | 9/1945 | 7/1946 | 10/1946 | 4/1947 | May 1947 > |
| Chirk |  |  |  | 67 | 57 | 22 | To C38 |

**Elson**, Ellesmere, Shropshire.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1943 | 5/1944 | 9/1945 | 7/1946 | 10/1946 | 4/1947 | May 1947 > |
| Elson |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Halston Hall**, (Hospital). A small part of the very large US Army hospital built in the grounds of Halston Hall, NGR SJ 342 313.

**Hanmer** (Green). Hutted.

**7/1946** – Hostel leader; Fw Försterling (B). The hostel was “*excellently situated.”* There were many ‘youth’ pows. No re-education activities noted other than it received copies of the Daily Express.

**4/1947** – Hostel leader; O Flad (B-), aged 29. Elected to position 10 days earlier. “*Uninspiring.”*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1943 | 5/1944 | 9/1945 | 7/1946 | 10/1946 | 4/1947 | May 1947 > |
| Hanmer (Green) |  |  |  | 44 | 42 | 29 | To C38 |

**Llanrhaeadr-Ym-Mochnant**, Denbigh. Location – in area by SJ 129 256, see Pool Park Camp 38 for map.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1943 | 5/1944 | 9/1945 | 7/1946 | 10/1946 | 4/1947 | May 1947 > |
| Llanrhaeadr-Y-M |  |  |  | To C38 | To C101 | | |

**Merrington Green**

**4/1947** – Hostel leader; G Deeg (A), aged 33, worked in engine factory. Hostel leader for 1 year, upgraded during this visit. Imprisoned by Nazis in 1933 and further difficulties with Nazi authorities. “*Honest and pleasing personality. He is intelligent and takes a keen interest in politics.”*

The English teacher at the hostel was, K Kuepper (A) – “*sternly opposed to Nazi methods, he was in Dachau for nine months*.” Weekly discussion meetings.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1943 | 5/1944 | 9/1945 | 7/1946 | 10/1946 | 4/1947 | May 1947 > |
| Merrington Green |  |  |  |  | 104 | 80 | To C240 |

**Morda** (Oswestry). Reported as being at the site of Morda House, NGR SJ 288 279.

The gap in the records is possibly due to it holding Italian pows awaiting repatriation – these were ignored by the PID inspectors.

**4/1947** – Hostel leader; H Neubecker (B), aged 28, a painter. “*Intelligent. SPD family. No Party connections. Was kept out of Berufsschule. Imprisoned by KRIPO in 1938. Enlisted 1939. Politically sound*.”

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1943 | 5/1944 | 9/1945 | 7/1946 | 10/1946 | 4/1947 | May 1947 > |
| Morda (Oswestry) |  |  |  |  | 37 | 15 | To C38 |

**Plas Power** (Wrexham)

**4/1947** – Hostel leader; H Holtmann (B), bank clerk. “*Dreamy and most uninspiring. Joined Party in 1933. Has few interests. Lacks drive.”* No electric supply, so no films.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1943 | 5/1944 | 9/1945 | 7/1946 | 10/1946 | 4/1947 | May 1947 > |
| Plas Power |  |  |  |  | 72 | 53 | To C38 |