**Camp 69** **- Darras Hall, Middle Drive, Ponteland, Northumbria (aka Ponteland)**

Included in the 1945 ICRC camp list – Labour Camp. 69. Darras Hall Camp, Ponteland, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

|  |
| --- |
| **19947 Camp List** |
| 69(G.W.C.) | Darras Hall Camp, Ponteland, Newcastle-on-Tyne | N. | Priswar, Ponteland | Ponteland 162 | Newcastle-on-Tyne | Lt.Col.R.F.Pitz | 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 |
| NZ 1465 7088 | 88 | 69 | Darras Hill, Ponteland | Northumberland | 4 | German Working Camp | STANDARD type. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Location:** About 12 km NW of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne**Before the camp:** Farmland.**Pow camp:** Built during 1942 with mainly pre-fabricated concrete huts and an expected capacity of 450. Standard type with a main pow compound and British / administration huts at the ‘front.’ The pow compound had 19 accommodation huts, a cookhouse, 2 dining huts, 2 ablutions, 2 latrines, a recreation / theatre hut, canteen and hut for making and repairing shoes. A hut was used as a camp chapel. The compound was surrounded by barbed wire fencing and guard towers, (removed before 1947). The guard area with accommodation huts, dining facilities and offices, was located alongside Middle Drive at the front of the camp.Just caught in the corner of 1947 aerial photo >*“In March 1942, the Ministry of Works and Buildings submitted outline proposals to Castle Ward Rural District Council… for the construction of an Italian Prisoner of War Camp on Lots 152, 153, 154 and 155 off Middle Drive, Darras Hall. This site, to be known as Camp 69 and covering almost 17 acres, was located on the sloping ground to the south of Middle Drive and west of The Rise.”* There was unsuccessful opposition to this by the Darras Hall Estate Committee. <http://www.ponthistsoc.freeuk.com/pinindex.pdf> |  |
| Ordnance Survey 1951 |

**Late 1942 / Early 1943**  – Camp opened for Italian pows.

**1943** – Hostels listed for Italians: Catton – Redesdale - Seaton Burn Hall, Northumbria.

**5 May 1944** - Hostels listed for Italian pows from this camp on, (WO 32/10737): Redesdale, Byrness, Northumberland - Seaton Burn, Newcastle upon Tyne.

**9 May 1944** - There was an International Red Cross visit; Italian prisoners, capacity 760. After the Italian Armistice, Italian pows required reduced security and were increasingly placed in hostels and billets, mainly at local farms.

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

Memories of Italians – *“My dad was a kid living in Throckley during the war and he told me about some Italian pow’s from Darras camp who used to get dropped off by lorry at Throckley Lyric cinema every morning, where they were picked up by various local farmers and taken to work for the day before being dropped off back at the cinema again at teatime where the army would come back in the lorry to take them back to Darras camp. The prisoners used to make toys for the Throckley kids who used to come and see them. My dad had a handmade wooden train made by one of them and said they were very friendly and pleased to be out of the war.”* Paul Armstrong – Facebook.

**10 March 1945** - With the arrival of the first German pows, the camp increased in size. (When the camp opened with 450 pows the rank of the Commandant was likely to have been ‘Major’, from 1945 it was recorded as ‘Lieutenant Colonel’).

**25 May 1945** - The camp was inspected by Dr Mamie from the ICRC - 830 pows. Approximately 40 pows per hut. The camp leader was Stabsoffizier Heinz Effinghausen. There were weekly protestant and catholic services. Recreation and education facilities included a library, German and English newspapers, a limited range of educational classes, theatre group, orchestra, a radio, occasional films mainly supplied by the YMCA, a football pitch and athletics area.

|  |
| --- |
| 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 June 1945** – English educational visit. 130 taking English classes.

Commandant: Lt Col R F Pitz. Camp leader: Effinghausen

Interpreter Officer: Lt Maggs ( a school master by profession).

The camp leader was described as; “*a very fine type of man*.” He was finding it difficult to maintain discipline as the pows were unsettled and uncertain of their own and their families’ futures. Some pows thought they should learn Russian rather than English.

The pows had fairly recently been shown the compulsory film about concentration camps – “*most of the pows were stunned and looked it*.” The Camp leader admitted that he knew of the existence of Dachau, but of no others. Some of the pows were anti-Nazis and were worrying if their own wives, daughters and other relatives were among the corpses on the screen. The pows stated that; “*no one had any idea of the extent of the number of camps… nor of the cruelty involved*.” £165 from the camp welfare fund, (money raised through the sale of goods in the canteen) had been sent for relatives of concentration camp victims.

Despite the reactions to the film, the Interpreter Officer reported that the anti-Nazis in the camp; “*were, for the most part, a nuisance on account of their sneaking denunciations of Nazis for having accepted jobs under the Hitler regime*.”

A variety of books and texts were requested to aid teaching English.

**14 December 1945** – English educational visit. No numbers given.

A different view from the June report – “*This camp, according to the Camp leader has been Anti-Nazi since before the end of the war.”*

During this visit, a third sudden death among pows in four months occurred and had a very depressing effect.

The pows had been busy during the past month making an imposing array of toys to send to four different hospitals with children’s wards.

**15 September 1945** - Hostels listed for pows from this camp, (WO 32/10737): Bothal Barns, Morpeth, Northumberland - Prestwick, Ayrshire (< Incorrect – Northumberland) - Wylam, Northumberland

****Memories of the camp – “*During the 1940's my parents ran a small holding in Northumberland and employed many German POW's from the Ponteland Camp.*

*The POW's were treated the same as the family. They ate their meals with the family, and although neither of my parents drank coffee or smoked, they provided coffee and cigarettes for the POW's. In return the POW's worked extremely hard, and in appreciation made toys and a chess set for me and a pipe for my father.*” The chess set was hand carved and the darker set were possibly stained with blackberries, to give them their hue. (From BBC Peoples’ War site – Contributor L Quinn).

**1 February 1946** - There was a camp newspaper – ‘Welle 69’ (Wave 69).

**12/16 April 1946** – Visit by four members of PID to carry out political screening. Strength 1282.

Commandant: Lt Col R F Pitz. Camp leader: Heinz Effinghausen (A+)

Interpreter Officer: S/Sgt Sinclair. Deputy C/L: Rudolf Kmuth (A+)

The commandant was recorded as being very co-operative and liked by the pows. Camp 69 had; “*the highest percentage of man hours of all PW camps in the country*.”

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Political screening: | A+ | A | A- | B+ | B | B- | C | C+ | Unknown |
| Total = 1257; 25 missing. | 9 | 138 | 4 | 272 | 549 | 185 | 85 | 5 | 10 |

A high number of ‘white’ pows.

3 batches of pows from camps in the USA had arrived during the past few months. They had been misinformed in the US that they were to be returned to Germany. Consequently finding themselves in pow camps in the UK, morale was low and they had a serious grievance. The overall output of work fell.

**25 July 1946** – English Inspector’s Report. Total strength 1466. 56 pupils in 7 classes – after an initial high interest in 1945, numbers in all camps fell rapidly after.

**1 – 4 January 1947** – Re-education report. Strength; 2 Officers, 1019 Other Ranks.

Commandant: Lt Col R F Pitz. Camp leader: Uffz Froebel (B+)

Interpreter Officer: Major Seckel Deputy C/L: O/Fw Mueller (A)

 German M.O.: S/Arzt Eberspaecher (C)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Simplified screening figures were used: | A | B+ | B | B- | C |
|  | 24 | 215 | 555 | 134 | 93 |

153 pows had been repatriated to date.

Although the Commandant was friendly and co-operative, the British staff had little interest in developing re-education.

The IO was an improvement on the previous S/Sgt interpreters, he was also 2nd i/c and had worked in other pow camps.

The Camp leader was described as “*a pleasant, intelligent man and keen on his work*” (- but not as good as his predecessor). Likewise, the new deputy was also regarded as not as good as his predecessor, but still did his work well and conscientiously.

Morale was negatively affected by length of captivity and news from Germany. Positive effects were arising from the relaxation of restrictions. Rumours spread here as other camps – one noted in this camp was that the British were exporting vast quantities of butter from Germany.

33% were ‘youth’ pows (under-25). 3 were A, but 58 were C. It does not state it here, but young C grade pows were often Waffen-SS who had not been given any option as to which outfit they were assigned. The youth pows were not regarded as a problem.

The standard list of re-education activities was given:

Wochenpost and Ausblick – separate appendix.

Newspapers – a very wide range of British papers. A regular supply of varied German papers were received and also circulated to the hostels.

Library – 1150 books and a system for hostels to exchange books.

Lectures – monthly visiting lecturers with varied interest.

Discussion groups – Regular in main and hostels.

Films – YMCA and Gaumont British regularly visited main camp.

Wireless – “*adequate*.”

Camp Magazine – 350 copies each edition.

Press review – Daily review issued (presumably printed and displayed on a board?). A weekly bulletin also issued.

English Instruction – separate appendix.

Information room – No exhibition; materials for display were supposed to be sent from COGA.

Other activities –

Religion – “*adequately run from HQ*.”

Education – A class of 12 studied French. A group of 4 were studying for the Arbitur. (High school level diploma).

Entertainments – A small orchestra, had played at main and 3 hostels. Also a choir.

In his conclusion, the visitor remarked; “*On the whole the camp is fairly dull*.” There were many re-education activities, but few pows were involved.

Picture from an article in the Evening Chronicle >

**5-11 February 1947** - As part of the re-education programme administered by the Control Office for Germany and Austria (COGA), Paul Bondy, a German-speaking refugee gave lectures at the main camp and 9 hostels. He recorded a camp complement of 1,300.

**10/14 March 1947** – English Inspector’s Report. Total strength 813. 72 pupils at all sites.

**15-17 July 1947** – Re-education survey. Strength; 2 officers, 1155 OR.

Commandant: Lt Col Murphy Camp leader: Hfw Kessler (B+)

Interpreter Officer: Major Seckel Deputy C/L: Ofw Spensel (B)

 German M.O.: S/Arzt Eberspaecher (B) [was ‘C’.]

The new Commandant was not interested in re-education activities.

The new camp leader had been leader at Kitty Brewster Camp 291 – “*rather reticent but has a good, fine personality*.”

The new deputy C/L was; “*young, but steady and reliable*.”

Simplified screening in use: A 22; B+ 261; B 693; B- 181. 387 pows had been repatriated to date.

Morale was boosted by further relaxation of restrictions. Pows were also able to use sterling, rather than just camp money, which allowed them to buy a greater range of products. Negative factors included isolation at some of the hostels – and pows transferred from other camps complaining of unreliable and often long, working hours.

Some of the new intake expressed anti-British feeling. One C+ pow and two others were removed rom the camp.

Re-education activities continued, but some were affected by the greater freedoms pows had to leave camp – so activities such as lectures had reduced attendances.

Religion – there was a new protestant padre, Ogefr Kissel (B+) – *“an improvement on his predecessor*.” RC Priest A Cammer visited every three weeks from Camp 93.

Education – Small study groups for French, bookkeeping and “electricity.”

Entertainment – a string quartet, an orchestra of 10 members, and a choir of 18. They sometimes gave concerts at the hostels. A cabaret group visiting from Featherstone Camp 18 was successful. Sport was popular.

Outside contacts – most pows formed their own informal relationships with local families. Some formal arrangements were also made – small groups had visited a Labour Party meeting, the County Council, Newcastle Young Conservatives and the WEA. The Newcastle Town Clerk had arranged for pows to have tours of places of interest and public works.

**7 – 10 October 1947** – Re-education Survey. An English Inspection was carried out at the same time. Strength; 2 officers, 955 OR.

No changes to senior personnel. 576 pows repatriated to date.

Apart from a Bomb Disposal unit at East Bolden, morale was recorded as satisfactory. Anti-British feeling was growing as a result of the length of time being held.

Re-education activities had decreased due to harvest and being able to walk out of camp. Discussion groups and press reviews had ceased. Small education classes were held for agriculture, bee-keeping, French, and “Domestic and Radio Electricity.” [? Bee-keeping or should it be ‘book-keeping’ as before?].

Outside contacts – all previously set-up had ended. New contacts had been formed with the Society of Friends, International Club and Musical Club in Ponteland.

This report stated that Camp 69 was to become a satellite camp for Wooler Camp 105.

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

**January 1948** – Darras Hall was listed as a satellite camp for Wooler Camp 105.

Known Camp Commandants:

1945 - 1947 - Lt Col R F Pitz of the North Staffordshire Regiment / Pioneer Corps.

1947 Lt Col Murphy

**After the camp:** The site was used for the European Voluntary Workers scheme until the 1950’s and then as a Civil Defence Training Centre. The site was cleared in 1961. Now part of very large residential estate.

**Further information:**

National Archives FO 939/150 – 69 Working Camp, Darras Hall Camp, Ponteland, Newcastle upon Tyne. Dated 1945-1947. Used above.

Imperial War Museum holds some of the private papers of Lieutenant Colonel R F Pitz – various documents and anecdotes relating to his army career including an account of his capture and time as a prisoner of war in German in 1918, and an account of his service as Commandant of the POW camp in Northumberland during the Second World War. Catalogue number nts.13875

Imperial War Museum – March and April 1946 issues of ‘Welle 69’. Catalogue LBY E.J.439

John Turner, chairman of Ponteland Local History Society, has made a study of the camp.

Camp Magazine number 5, from 1 June 1946 - [Welle 69 : Arbeitslager Darras Hall - The Wiener Holocaust Library](https://www.whlcollections.org/image/112805/)

**Camp and hostels + number of pows where known:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Not open |  | Unknown |  | Open |  | With another camp |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1942 (It) | 1943 (It) | 1944 (It) | 1945 | 4/1946 (G) | 7/1946 (G) | 1/1947 | 3/1947 | 7/1947 | 10/1947 |
| Main |  |  |  |  | 702 | 857 (1) | 426 | 367 (1) | 648 (2) | 571 |
| Catton |  |  |  |  | 68 | With C18 |  |  |  |  |
| Redesdale |  |  |  | Camp 667 | 29 | 38 |  |
| Seaton Hall |  |  |  |  |  |  | 42 | 39 | 82 | 64 |
| Bothal Barns |  |  |  |  |  |  | 45 | 42 |  |  |
| Prestwick |  |  |  |  |  | 90 | 50 | 42 |  |  |
| Wylam |  |  |  |  | 77 | 80 | 63 | 57 | 73 |  |
| Raylees/Otterburn |  |  |  | With C105 | 94 | 85 | 33 | With C18 |  |  |
| Colwell |  |  |  |  | 61 | 56 |  |  |  |  |
| Longhorsley |  |  |  |  | 41 | 46 | 41 | 40 |  |  |
| Westerhope |  |  |  |  |  |  | 24 | 20 |  |  |
| Druridge Bay |  |  | With C105 |  |  | 67 | 81 | 87 | 103 |
| Anick |  |  |  |  |  |  | 12 |  |  |  |
| Eshott |  |  |  |  |  |  | 42 | 87 |  |  |
| East Boldon (BD) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 52 |
| Billets |  |  |  |  | 131 | ? | 176 | ? | 177 | 167 |
| Total | 450 cap. |  | 760 cap |  | 1282 | 1466 | 1021 | 813 | 1157 | 957 |

(1) Includes billetees (2) + 52 ‘sundries’ which could be in hospital, in gaol, or on attachment.

**Hostels**

**Anick -**

Most likely administered by a different main camp before this single entry.

**1/1947** – Hostel leader; Falk (B). Not on the film circuit as too small.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1942 (It) | 1943 (It) | 1944 (It) | 1945 | 4/1946 (G) | 7/1946 (G) | 1/1947 | 3/1947 | 7/1947 | 10/1947 |
| Anick |  |  |  |  |  |  | 12 |  |  |  |

**Bothal Barns,** Morpeth, Northumberland – NZ 244 870.

**1945** – listed as a hostel. May have held Italian pows after this, and so was not recorded by PID until it became a German hostel?

**1/1947** – Hostel leader; Uffz Flassnoecker (B)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1942 (It) | 1943 (It) | 1944 (It) | 1945 | 4/1946 | 7/1946 | 1/1947 | 3/1947 | 7/1947 | 10/1947 |
| Bothal Barns |  |  |  |  |  |  | 45 | 42 |  |  |

**Catton** (Allendale) – NY 830 575. (See Camp 18 for map).

**1943** – Italian hostel

**Mid-1946** - administration transferred to Featherstone Camp 18, (recorded in the camp newspaper, Die Zeit am Tyne).

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1942 (It) | 1943 (It) | 1944 (It) | 1945 | 4/1946 (G) | 7/1946 (G) | 1/1947 | 3/1947 | 7/1947 | 10/1947 |
| Catton |  |  |  |  | 68 | With C18 |  |  |  |  |

**Colwell** (Whittington) -

Most likely administered by a different main camp before these entries.

**4 August 1946** – a brief time as a hostel for Featherstone Camp 18, then closed.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1942 (It) | 1943 (It) | 1944 (It) | 1945 | 4/1946 (G) | 7/1946 (G) | 1/1947 | 3/1947 | 7/1947 | 10/1947 |
| Colwell |  |  |  |  | 61 | 56 |  |  |  |  |

**Druridge Bay**, Eshott (Tynemouth)

**1944 / 1945** – administered by Wooler Camp 105

**1946** – Gap in records. May have held Italian pows, and so was not recorded by PID until it became a German hostel?

1/**1947** – Hostel leader; Gren Schlodder (A) – “*very young but is most able… He is the best of the hostel leaders*.” From the Russian zone, he had delayed repatriation to attend the special training centre at Wilton. Pows would travel to Eshott to watch films.

**7/1947** – Hostel leader; Uffz Flassnoecker (B) – was leader at Bothal Barns – “*reliable, but not outstanding*.”

**10/1947** – same leader. No electricity supply – wireless used dry batteries.

**1/1948** – listed as a hostel for Wooler Camp 105

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1942 (It) | 1943 (It) | 1944 (It) | 1945 | 4/1946 (G) | 7/1946 (G) | 1/1947 | 3/1947 | 7/1947 | 10/1947 |
| Druridge Bay |  |  | With C105 |  |  | 67 | 81 | 87 | 103 |

**East Boldon**

**10/1947** - Attached to Camp 69 for rations etc – it was made up mainly of No.8 P/W Platoon, 20 Bomb Disposal Squadron.

C.O. Major Brown, 2nd i/c Captain Landy.

It was reported that this camp had been “*rather neglected owing to their small numbers, remote situation, and mobility*.”

The usual base camp for No.20 BD Squadron RE (PW) No.8 PW Platoon (BD) was at The Hutted Camp, East Bolden, Co.Durham. (From list in FO 939/83).

Pows were allowed to volunteer for bomb disposal work – however the pows at Darras Hall had a particular grievance as they stated that they had been chosen without their consent while being held at Munsterlager. They believed that such work should be carried out by war criminals, or they should be entitled to preferential repatriation. There had been some casualties in the unit. This matter was being investigated by Mr Hoffmann of the International Red Cross – and most definitely broke the Geneva Convention – *“****Art. 32****. It is forbidden to employ prisoners of war on unhealthy or dangerous work.”*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1942 (It) | 1943 (It) | 1944 (It) | 1945 | 4/1946 (G) | 7/1946 (G) | 1/1947 | 3/1947 | 7/1947 | 10/1947 |
| East Boldon (BD) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 52 |

**Eshott** –

Most likely administered by a different main camp before these entries.

**1/1947** – Hostel leader; Strehlau (B)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1942 (It) | 1943 (It) | 1944 (It) | 1945 | 4/1946 (G) | 7/1946 (G) | 1/1947 | 3/1947 | 7/1947 | 10/1947 |
| Eshott |  |  |  |  |  |  | 42 | 87 |  |  |

**Longhorsley** – NZ 128 946.

Most likely administered by a different main camp before these entries.

Facebook entry for Longhorsley – “*Forget Me Not Country Park was an Italian POW camp during the war. The POW's used to work on the local farms except when they 'kicked off' as they sometimes did. I recall 3 Wagon loads of them outside Park Cottage they were stamping their feet and shouting refusing to go to work. They shut up and away they went when some armed soldiers came and 'Had a word'.”*

**1/1947** – Hostel leader; Kersting (B).

Map OS 1950.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1942 (It) | 1943 (It) | 1944 (It) | 1945 | 4/1946 (G) | 7/1946 (G) | 1/1947 | 3/1947 | 7/1947 | 10/1947 |
| Longhorsley |  |  |  |  | 41 | 46 | 41 | 40 |  |  |

**Prestwick**, Northumberland – (NOT Ayrshire)

Only clue I have to location – Facebook comment – “*My grandad was in the royal artillery and was at Prestwick Hall watching the prisoners, that’s when he met my nana who lived in Prestwick.*”

**1/1947** – Hostel leader; O/Faehn Stelzer (B+) – “*a barrister from Leipzig; forceful and direct in a pleasant way, but inclined to talk over the heads of the Ps/W*.” Pows would cycle or walk to the main camp to watch films.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1942 (It) | 1943 (It) | 1944 (It) | 1945 | 4/1946 (G) | 7/1946 (G) | 1/1947 | 3/1947 | 7/1947 | 10/1947 |
| Prestwick |  |  |  |  |  | 90 | 50 | 42 |  |  |

**Raylees** (Otterburn) / Otterburn – Assuming same place – called Raylees (Otterburn) up to January 1947, then just Otterburn. also recorded by Featherstone Camp 18 in the camp newspaper, Die Zeit am Tyne.

**1/1947** – Hostel leader; Kurt Schmitt (B). Not on the film circuit as too small.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1942 (It) | 1943 (It) | 1944 (It) | 1945 | 4/1946 (G) | 7/1946 (G) | 1/1947 | 3/1947 | 7/1947 | 10/1947 |
| Raylees/Otterburn |  |  |  | With C105 | 94 | 85 | 33 | With C18 |  |  |

**Redesdale**, Byrness, Northumberland. NT 779 013

**1943 / 1944** – Hostel for Italian pows.

Became Camp 667 – Byrness Camp, Redesdale, Otterburn.

**7/1947** – Hostel leader; O/Fhr Stelzer (A). His political grade had been upgraded because – “*He recently handled a detachment of malcontents, new to his hostel, in exemplary fashion.”*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1942 (It) | 1943 (It) | 1944 (It) | 1945 | 4/1946 (G) | 7/1946 (G) | 1/1947 | 3/1947 | 7/1947 | 10/1947 |
| Redesdale |  | ? | ? | Camp 667 | 29 | 38 |  |

**Seaton Hall,** Northumbria.

Location problem with the listed names; ‘Seaton Burn’ in 2 lists / ‘Seaton Hall’ in 2 reports / ‘Seaton Delaware’ (not Delaval) in 1 report. Seaton Burn/Delaval are 5 miles apart.

Seaton Burn was the location of a searchlight battery (TT124; HER 5560) – many of these sites were then used as pow hostels.

Seaton Delaval is known to have held pows, and the friends of the Hall believe it was linked to Darras Hall. However, I have been told that only German pows were recorded here.

3 possibilities – 1 It was located at Seaton Burn in 1943/4 with Italians, and then moved to Seaton Delaval with Germans. 2 It was at Seton Burn and the Delaval site was attached elsewhere. 3. It was at Seaton Delaval and the Burn reference was a mistake.

I think option 1 is likely. A comment made; “*Later in the war Seaton Delaval Hall was used as a Hostel for German Prisoners of War as part of CAMP 69, Darras Hall Ponteland, Northumberland,(NORTHERN COMMAND) and the POW’s were policed, after D-Day, by …”two Pioneer  Corp and a nice sergeant”… which is  how one POW, Karl Heinz Poelzing, from Premnitze, described his captors.”* <http://www.pillbox-study-group.org.uk/gazetteersubsite/section-post-e11906-extant/>

**1943** – ‘Seaton Burn Hall’ – listed for Italian pows.

**5 May 1944** – ‘Seaton Burn’ Newcastle upon Tyne - listed for Italian pows.

**1/1947** – ‘Seaton Hall’ – German pows. Hostel leader; Uffz Warning (A). No electricity – so no films.

**7/1947** – ‘Seaton Hall’ - Hostel leader; Gefr Derichs (B) – *“is forceful but lacks ideas. He is, however, quite efficient and reliable*.” Still no electricity supply – wireless used dry batteries.

**10/1947** – ‘Seaton **Delaware**’ – English Report, note not Delaval. Re-education report - same hostel leader.

Clip about pow toys made at Seaton Delaval - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00s6pft>

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1942 (It) | 1943 (It) | 1944 (It) | 1945 | 4/1946 (G) | 7/1946 (G) | 1/1947 | 3/1947 | 7/1947 | 10/1947 |
| Seaton Hall |  |  |  |  |  |  | 42 | 39 | 82 | 64 |

**Westerhope** -

Most likely administered by a different main camp before these entries.

**1/1947** – Hostel leader; Fw Boy (B-).

**4/1947** – ICRC report on Eden Camp 250 stated that pows were trained here in how to use mine detectors before being detached to Bomb Disposal Units.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1942 (It) | 1943 (It) | 1944 (It) | 1945 | 4/1946 (G) | 7/1946 (G) | 1/1947 | 3/1947 | 7/1947 | 10/1947 |
| Westerhope |  |  |  |  |  |  | 24 | 20 |  |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Wylam**, Northumberland – 2 sites either side of Church Road (central spot NZ 1132 6470).Attached to a different main camp before 1945 with Italian pows.**A schoolboy's memories of Wylam in wartime –** "At the end of the war Italian soldiers captured in the Western Desert were kept in wooden huts near the Parish Church. Some of them had been basket makers back home in Italy and they were to run a flourishing "business" in Wylam weaving baskets from willows cut at the riverside. My mother still carries hers made nearly 40 years ago!Many of the Italians (who had huge patches of brightly coloured cloth sewn into their uniforms to show who they were) were freed on parole each day to work on local farms.In the evenings they were also allowed out of captivity, though banned from the six local pubs (the present four plus the Bird Inn, next door to the Ship Inn, and the Stephensons Arms then at the end of Falcon Terrace).But the Italians, the "Eyeties" as we boys called them, were allowed to visit the nearest cinema in Crawcrook. One night I was in a group of youngsters who were asked by some Italian P.O.W.s where the "ceenimar" was. We pointed in the opposite direction to Crawcrook, to Horsley, and off they set to walk it. We thought it was part of the war effort to obstruct the enemy! I often wonder how far they got before they discovered our hoax! Perhaps they even reached the Roman Wall which their forefathers built! <https://wylamparishcouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/WYLAM-GLOBE-NO.-26.pdf> |  |
| Ordnance Survey 1951 |

**1945 –** listed with German pows.

One pow, Rudi Kuhnbaum helped to make a miniature castle at the hostel. The prisoners also made a fountain for the community centre in the village. He was able to take photographs of the castle, fountain and huts of the POW camp. <https://www.northumberlandarchives.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Rudi-Photographs.pdf>

“*German prisoners, over a period of just eight days in 1947, built a 3 foot high Bavarian castle in the gardens around their Nissen huts. It was built using stones from the river with roofs made from tins and had four towers, electric lighting and elaborate home-made furniture, and a ball room with tapestries and carpets.*

 *The front door could be opened and closed automatically and the castle even had its own ornamental fountain. A discreet panel above the front door read ‘*Built by German prisoners*’ and it was intended as a lasting reminder of their stay in Wylam.*

 *It attracted hundreds of sightseers over the next two years, but in May 1949, a lorry appeared on the site, the castle was lifted from its foundations and is reported to have fallen into pieces*.” <https://heddonhistory.weebly.com/blog/wylam-from-above>

*“Rudi also recalled going to the church in Wylam, which was next to the hostel, with eight or nine other POWs. The vicar had never visited the hostel, unlike the Catholic priest. When the POWs went to church, the vicar told them to leave because he claimed that his parishioners would object to having to sit beside them. The men went to the Catholic church [in Crawcrook] instead, and after the service they were marched to the Women's Institute for coffee and homemade cake. Everyone got five cigarettes and a box of matches as well, something the Catholic POWs had not divulged to them before. In return, the men renovated the corrugated iron church because they were so thankful.”*

<https://calmview.northumberland.gov.uk/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=T%2f497&pos=1>

**1/1947** – Hostel leader; Reczkowski (B+) – “*a youngish convert from Nazism with positive ideas; he has a good influence over the hostel*.”

**7/1947** – same leader.

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|  | 1942 (It) | 1943 (It) | 1944 (It) | 1945 | 4/1946 (G) | 7/1946 (G) | 1/1947 | 3/1947 | 7/1947 | 10/1947 |
| Wylam |  |  |  |  | 77 | 80 | 63 | 57 | 73 |  |

The 2 sites can be seen in aerial photograph - <https://www.britainfromabove.org.uk/en/image/EAW016724>

### OBJE