**Camp 115** **- White Cross Camp, St Columb Major, Cornwall**

Included in the 1945 ICRC camp list – Labour Camp. White Cross Camp, St.Columb, Cornwall.

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| **1947 Camp list** | | | | | | | |
| 115(G.W.C.) | White Cross Camp, St.Columb, Cornwall | S. | Priswar, Fraddon | Fraddon 18 | St.Columb Road | Lt.Col.A.J.B.Larcombe | 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 |
| SW 889 597 | 200 | 115 | White Cross Camp, St Columb Major | Cornwall | 3 | German Working Camp | STANDARD type. Caravan holiday site |

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Location:** About 4 km SW of St Columb Major.  **Before the camp:** Farmland.  **Pow Camp:** Listed as an Italian working camp / labour battalion to 1945, then a German Working Camp.  The site had a standard layout with a main pow compound, and with guards’ huts and offices at the front. Probably pre-fabricated concrete huts. 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. |  |  |
| 1946 - [raf\_3g\_tud\_uk\_222\_vp3\_5226 - Aerial Photo | Historic England](https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/archive/collections/aerial-photos/record/raf_3g_tud_uk_222_vp3_5226) | Ordnance Survey 1961 |

**1943 –** opened for Italian pows.

**1943 and 5 May 1944** - Hostels listed for Italian pows from this camp, (WO 32/10737): Redruth, Cornwall (Chapel of Ease); St Erth, Hayle, Cornwall; St Teath, Bodmin, Cornwall.

**May and November 1944** - The camp was listed as an Italian Labour Battalion under the Southern Command area and then as an Italian POW Working Cam, (WO 32/10737). It was recorded that the Italians were non-cooperators.

**1 August 1945** - an urgent memorandum was sent to this camp, and others, about maintaining records of Italians who were classed as ‘co-operators’. At this point many, sometimes all, of the Italian pows were in hostels / billets.

**15 September 1945** – 5 further hostels listed for pows from this camp, (WO 32/10737) – see chart.

**September 1945** – Appendix to HQ Southern Command War Diary for White Cross, St Columb – Italian labour camp – capacity 600 – 143/319822:

Italian hostels – Trenovissick, St Teath, Trewarrick [Trevarrack], St Erth, Ladock, Praze, Trebartha – total cap 600

German hostels – Helston, Roseworthy Farm – total cap 160

*“The Italians built their own elaborately decorated church with an ornate altar, but the latter was later destroyed by the German PoWs. Besides the church, the inmates were allowed to level ground and construct a football pitch. The prisoners were organised into five teams and ran their own league. According to an Italian PoW, they were well treated and given the same food as the local people.”* (Wikipedia)

**25 August 1946** – First edition of the Camp Magazine issued - [? : Lagerzeitung camp 115 - The Wiener Holocaust Library](https://www.whlcollections.org/image/113197/) “?” was the name given to this edition, there was a competition to decide on the best name. Mentions a theatre group at the camp.

**1946 / 1947** - One German pow at the camp was Herbert Klein. During the war he was a ‘combat swimmer’ (Kampfschwimmergruppe – Frogmen Group). Based in Rimini in September 1944, the group’s task was to swim out to enemy ships and attach detonation charges. Some of the frogmen, including Klein, were captured after one raid. While at Camp 115 he continued to train in a pool near to the camp, (translation is a ‘mud-pool’ – I think this must mean a pool dug into the ground). In 1947 he saw a poster for the Cornwall Swimming Championship to be held at Fowey and asked if he could enter. He won his race and was awarded a cardboard suitcase. (They were pretty well made – I’ve still got one). Klein returned to Germany in 1948. He went on to win the 1952 Olympic bronze medal and was the four-time world record holder for breaststroke. (Information mainly from Der Spiegel\*).

**End 1947** – became a satellite Camp for Exhibition Field Camp 42 + 2 hostels at Tregrehan (A & B) and Helston. Continued as a hostel to May 1948.

Known Camp Commandants:

c.1947 Lt Col A J B Larcombe, from the Pioneer Corps. (A Lt Col A J B Larcombe is reported to have escorted Hess to Nuremberg in 1945 – is this the same person?).

**After the camp:** 2019 holiday park, mainly mobile homes.

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|  | **Further Information:**  \*Der Spiegel, 25 June 1952.  < Italian Eagle at the site of the Camp, taken 2005. (The Eagle has since been moved) WHERE DID IT LAND?  <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wceagle.jpg> |

**POW NUMBERS**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Open |  |  | With other camps |  |  | Unknown |  |  | Not open |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1943 | 1945 | |  | End 1947 |
| Main |  | Cap. 600 | |  | With C42 |
| Redruth |  |  | |  |  |
| St Erth, Hayle |  | It | Cap 600 |  |  |
| St Teath, Bodmin |  | It |  |  |
| Ladock |  | It |  |  |
| Praze |  | It |  |  |
| Trebartha |  | It |  |  |
| Trenovissick |  | It |  |  |
| Trevarrack |  | It |  |  |
| Helston |  | Ge | Cap160 |  | With C42 |
| Tregrehan (A & B) |  |  | |  | With C42 |
| Billets |  |  | |  |  |
| TOTALS |  |  | |  |  |

**Hostels**

**Helston, Roseworthy Farm** (The only Roseworthy farm I have found in Cornwall is by Camborne, not Helston SW 619 393).

The Archaeology Data Service place the Helston hostel at NGR SW 6620 2650 – see Camp 42 for map.

**< Ladock,** Truro, Cornwall. SW 894 507.

Nansawsan House in Ladock was requisitioned by the War Office and used as quarters for British, Commonwealth, and American troops, as well as a holding camp for German and Italian prisoners of war.

**Praze**, Camborne, Cornwall

No further information.

**Redruth,** Cornwall (Chapel of Ease).SW 697 420.

*“Bishops preached there, but following the building of St Andrews Church in the town in 1880 the worship ceased in 1916. It became a Labour Exchange in the 1920s to help meet the problems of high unemployment in the area...and then a prison camp.*

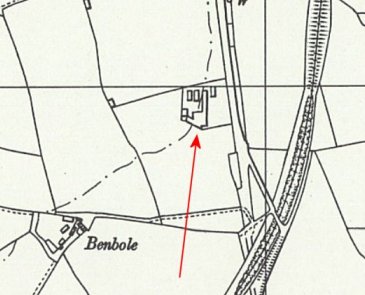
*I can recall the Italian PoWs with their guitars serenading the local ladies! There were quite a few of them on parole and allowed to walk around the town. They wore brown uniforms with a large yellow square on their backs for easy identification."* <https://www.somersetcountygazette.co.uk/news/7202928.old-chapel-to-become-council-housing/>

**St Erth,** Hayle, Cornwall. SW 551 349.

“*German and Italian WWII Prisoners of War and displaced persons of various nationalities were based in a camp at St Erth. They worked in the “Dixies,” (open cast mines now fishing lakes) along the side of the river. The Italians also helped make a road all the way from St Erth Church up to Relubbus bridge and built the pump house to feed water into their camp and the village.”* <https://www.st-erth.co.uk/files/st-erth-FAT-oct-15.pdf>

Local history states that it was under the command of Hamilton Hawkins.

Appears on 1946 aerial photo - [raf\_3g\_tud\_uk\_209\_v\_5294 - Aerial Photo | Historic England](https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/archive/collections/aerial-photos/record/raf_3g_tud_uk_209_v_5294)

**< St Teath**, Bodmin, Cornwall. SX 059 820.

**1943** - opened for Italian pows.

1946 aerial photo - [raf\_106g\_uk\_1498\_rpp2\_3277 - Aerial Photo | Historic England](https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/archive/collections/aerial-photos/record/raf_106g_uk_1498_rpp2_3277)

**Trebartha**, Launceston, Cornwall. Trebartha Hall – SX 263 775

*“The mansion and outbuildings were used for Italian prisoners of war, many of whom were released to farming, mining, and other jobs when the Italian nation turned against the Nazis. The American Army later took up residence, for training purposes and for storing vast amounts of stores in preparation for the DDay landings.”* <https://www.northhillhistory.co.uk/docs/JimEdwards.pdf>

Demolished 1947/8

**Tregrehan** (A & B)

**1947** – a small detachment of Bomb Disposal pows from this camp were based at ‘PW Hostel “A” Camp, Tregrehan, near St Austell, though it was administered by Ashton Court Camp 6A). (FO 939/83).

**Late 1947** – transferred to Exhibition Camp 42.

**Trenovissick** (Farm), St Blazey, Cornwall. NGR for the farm – SX 067 531.

**Trevarrack**, Penzance, Cornwall. Trevarrack farm NGR SW 519 372.