**Camp 128** **- Meesden, Buntingford, Hertfordshire**

Included in the 1945 ICRC camp list – Labour Camp. 128. Meesden Camp, Buntingford, Herts.

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| **Prisoner of War Camps (1939 – 1948) - Project report by Roger J.C. Thomas - English Heritage 2003** |
| OS NGR | Sheet | No. | Name & Location | County | Cond’n | Type 1945 | Comments |
| TL 43 32 | 167 | 128 | Meesden, Buntingford | Hertfordshire | 5 | German Working Camp |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Location:** The NGR above is a general location.**Before the camp:** **Pow Camp:** Listed as Italian collaborator working camp / labour battalion to at least 1945, then a German Working Camp.**November 1944** - The camp was listed as an Italian Labour Battalion, (WO 32/10737).

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| 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. |

**24 April 1945** – Segregation Section of PID, Progress Report 71. “*600 Austrian Ps/W from* [Dunham Park] *Camp No 189 are being moved to Camp No 128 (ex.Italian Camp), Butingford, Hertfordshire on 30th April 1945 to form a new Austrian Working Camp*.” A small group of pows who had attended the special training course at ‘Winter Quarters Camp 7’ were also sent to assist re-education activities.**3 / 4 November 1945** – Report on English Education. HQ + Chrishall hostel.Commandant: Major Clemshaw, on leave. |  |
| Ordnance Survey 1960 |

80 Austrian pows (70 beginners, 10 advanced) studying English with 3 pow teachers + a number studying on their own.

The pows had not been politically screened.

**11/15 February 1946** – Report on the camp. Strength; 0 officers, 908 Other Ranks.

Commandant: Major Clemshaw. Camp leader: Stabsfw L Sedlacek (A)

Interpreter: S/Sgt Thomas Deputy C/L: Fw F Riegler (A)

The camp leader was an Austrian army bandsman. “*He is not a very impressive character, but is obviously a keen anti-Nazi and is thus politically suitable for his job*.”

Deputy leader; aged 46, a motor mechanic. “*He seems an honest man, and apparently a stronger character than the Lagerfűhrer.”*

Austrian padre, Marine Pfarrer J Wurzwallner (A). “*A keen cleric, eager to get things going*.” He organised a Christian discussion group.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Political screening: | A+ | A | B+ | B | B- | C | C+ | Unscreened |
| HQ | 5 | 44 | 115 | 389 | 42 | 9 | 0 | 2 |
| Chrishall | 1 | 12 | 18 | 137 | 9 | 124 | 1 | 1 |

High number of ‘black’ (C grade) pows at Chrishall.

Up to 200 pows attended religious services at HQ.

**16 February 1946** – English Educational visit. Strength; 588.

Good atmosphere recorded in the camp. Teachers were of a high standard. Groups of pows took English exams.

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< **February 1946** - To an uncle. Austrian pows in camp.

**April 1946** - Camp magazine No.2 –- [Die Lagerstimme : Monats Zeitung der Osterreichischen Kriegsgefangenen des Lagers 128 - The Wiener Holocaust Library](https://www.whlcollections.org/image/99693/)

**June 1946** - Became a German camp

**July 1946** - became a satellite camp for Royston Heath Camp 29.

Known Camp Commandants:

1945 - Major Clemshaw

**After the camp:**

**Further Information:**

National Archive files FO 939 - 113 and 297 – 2 reports placed in Royston Heath file. – used above.

**POW NUMBERS**

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

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1943/44 | 11/1945 | 2/1946 | 7/1946 |
| Meesden HQ | Italian | Austrian | 605 Austrian | With C29 |
| Chrishall |  | Not recorded | 303 German | With C29 |
| Billets |  |  | Included in above numbers |  |
| TOTALS |  |  | 908 |  |

**Hostel**

**Chrishall.** Chrishall Grange – TL 445 427; land used alongside, to E of the Grange.

Early history still to be resolved. In a later report (8/1946) for Royston Camp 29, it stated; “*Chrishall Hostel, originally HQ of 270 Camp, was formed in August 1945..*.” According to the English Heritage report, Camp 270 was at Luton Airport in 1945. The camp at Chrishall was a hostel for Meesden Camp 128 from at least November 1945 to its recorded transfer in July 1946 – making the link to Luton Airport C270 dubious. Either the above entry is incorrect, OR, it was a HQ camp for just 3 months, OR, Camp 270 was not at Luton Airport in 1945???

Chrishall Grange was built by the USAAF in 1943 as accommodation for their personnel at RAF Duxford, 5 miles away.

<http://www.ickleton.org.uk/ipsgallery/images/d1398.pdf> - a history of the camp / hostel.