**Camp 9** **& 681 - Kempton Park Camps, Sunbury-on-Thames, Surrey**

Included in the 1945 ICRC List - Reception Unit, 9 Kempton Park Racecourse Camp, Sudbury-on-Thames

|  |
| --- |
| **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 |
| TQ 110 700 | 176 | 9 | Kempton Park Camp, Sunbury-on-Thames | Surrey | 4 | ReceptionCamp | Large complex encompassing all pre-existing racecourse buildings to east of Staines Road and 212 tents within the prisoners' compound that was enclosed by a double perimeter fence with guard towers. Guards’ compound consisted of c20 huts and some 52 tents to east of Park Road. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **NOTE:** Camp 9 and 681 were two separate, neighbouring camps with their own administrations. I have placed them together due to the use of the same name, their close proximity, the shared activities for some of the pows – and to be honest, confusion on my part about some of the stories. I think some stories of pows at these camps have become mixed together. For example there is an account of two Dutch pows escaping from ‘Kempton Park’, but was this camp 9 or 681? Dutch pows would have passed through Camp 9, but they were also recorded at 681.Camp 9 was a reception/transit camp – 681 was a German Working Camp. I have put the records that I know for Camp 9 first:D:\kg6gbweb\POW Camps in UK - 1 to 100_files\kempton.jpg**Location:** NGR TQ 110 700. The site had an ideal railway station located within the grounds. **Previous use:** A race course from 1878. During WW1 used as a transit depot for military vehicles.Used for a time at the start of WW2 as a temporary transit camp for internees. **POWs arriving at Kempton Park Station** |  |
| **Ordnance Survey – Revised 1938, published 1946** |

**Pow Camp 9:**

**August 1940** - the site changed to a pow camp (Reception Camp / Cage) after 700 refugee internees were transferred to a camp in Sutton Coldfield:

*“***Mr. Graham White***asked the Secretary of State for War how it happened that some 700 refugees were transferred, on or about 4th August, from Kempton Park and Lingfield camp to a camp at Sutton Coldfield where inadequate preparations had been made for their reception?*

***Mr Eden*** *-* *The camp at Kempton Park has been in temporary use for internees for transit purposes, but was urgently needed for another purpose for which no other camp in the area was suitable, the only others that were both available and suitable having already been made over to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. Sutton Coldfield had been inspected and reported to be ready for the reception of internees, as a temporary canvas camp, pending the completion of other arrangements. I regret that the necessity for vacating Kempton Park without further delay rendered this transference unavoidable. The camp is not suitable for many of the internees temporarily accommodated there. In consequence, arrangements are already being made for their transfer to more suitable accommodation elsewhere.”*

[The camp at Sutton Coldfield came in for further criticism as it was not ready to receive the internees] (House of Commons, 20 August 1940, Volume 364, Col 1105):

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| The pows that passed through Kempton Park would have been from many nationalities.**1944** - before D-Day, it was agreed that two main camps would be used as ‘bottle-necks’ for all pows arriving in the UK – Kempton Park for pows captured by the British, and Devizes for pows captured by US forces. Both camps were expected to process up to 2,000 pows per day – they sometimes exceeded this.Nearly all pows were sent from Southampton to Kempton Park; exceptions being those going straight for detailed interrogation and injured troops sent to hospitals. The guards were described as; “*Rough, dishonest, thieving and often violent*.” (‘The Way It Was’ – Gary Leon - Book Guild Publishing – 1997).In the camp, the pows were deloused, allowed to clean themselves and interviewed / interrogated. They were then sent on, either to another pow camp, or to assist as ‘friendly enemies’ (e.g. some were used to broadcast messages), or regraded as of interest for further interrogation.The area under the stands were used for delousing using DDT. The stables and loose box area became temporary sleeping quarters, extended with tented areas as necessary. The VIP suites were used by staff and for interrogations.Within Kempton Park, Prisoner of War Interrogation Section (PWIS(H) – H = home) officers carried out initial interrogations and screening. Selected pows were sent for further interrogation at Lingfield or at the London District Cage. Interrogation reports from Kempton Park are held at the National Archives and were identified with the initials P.W.I.S.(H)/K.P.  |  |

**December 1944** - Description of the camp – *“Kempton Park racecourse, where we arrived last night, by train from Southampton, is in a fine mess. Small compounds have been erected for us with miles and miles of barbed wire. Inside each of these compounds are neat rows of little, round tents. Each tent is floored with boards. There isn’t a blade of grass to be seen, only dirty, slimy mud equally as bad as the Cherbourg compounds. One of our ambitions is to have a compound where we can keep our feet dry.*

*It is the first Sunday in November 1944, but we are not left alone. We are filing through one of the buildings where our names are taken. We are all given a label with a number on it. An ominous-looking triangle is stamped on my label. Nobody knows why. The others haven’t got triangles. In a tent we have to undress. Tommies take our clothes and put them into a bag. We file along the counter. At the end each prisoner has to stand on a box while a doctor inspects him for lice.*

*We get a shower, but only a very quick one. Tommies are running up and down to keep us on the move. I let them shout away because I want to have a decent wash. When we get our bags of clothes returned some articles are missing.”* (From ‘The Other Side’ – John Murdoch – Hodder and Stoughton – 1954). The triangle signalled further interrogation and the pow was taken for a short time to Kensington Park Gardens, the London District Cage.

- - - - - - - - - - -

When Soviet pows within the German armed forces, (willingly or not) arrived as pows after D-day, they also passed through Kempton Park just as German troops did.I have made an assumption that the following details relate to Camp 9, as there were interrogation reports for the Russians from that camp:

*“”Kempton Park was also a place where Russians captured in German uniform were interrogated by officers of the Soviet Military Mission, headed by General Ratov. Lawrence Green recalls the arrival of survivors of the Caucasian Division from Italy, wretchedly clothed and stinking to heaven. Few British had sympathy for these men who had gone over to the invaders of their country, either to save their lives or to try to bring down their government. They simply appeared as tools of Hitler’s grand design for Europe. But then the Soviet interrogators were seen or heard using physical methods, and a Russian pow was found bound hand and foot in a hut, without food. Colonel Dennison then tried to assert his proper authority, at which, according to Green, the Soviet Mission then appointed a more senior officer to whom Dennison might not give orders. It is said that General Ratov, after a severe dressing-down from General Firebrace, head of the British-Russian Liaison Group, for allowing these things to happen on British soil, was soon sent home.”* (Thresholds of Peace – Matthew Sullivan – Hamish hamilton – 1979).

Considering the fate in store for the Russians it is unlikely that this was the reason why Ratov was sent home. Captain Lawrence Green worked with the PWE spotting likely collaborators as they passed through Kempton Park.

From amongst these, a group of about 40 former Red Army soldiers were selected under the codename *‘Mamba’* to see if they could be used to return to the frontline and encourage other Soviets to surrender. There was also the possibility that they would be of long-term use when they returned to the USSR. Training for these soldiers began at various centres.

Events soon overtook the Mamba plans. In September 1944 the War Cabinet decided to return all Soviet pows, (War Cabinet conclusions, 4 September 1944, 115(44)). On 14 September, following an agreement made earlier in August, members of the Soviet Military Mission in the UK, visited Kempton Park to speak to the Soviet pows held there. Those involved with Mamba were not included. It became clear a few days later that the Russians were aware of the plan – and they objected that they had not had access to all Soviet pows. The Military Mission returned to Kempton Park in October and spoke to most of the Mamba members, (some were on training courses). Afterwards, the British abandoned the idea of continuing with Mamba, and the Soviets were informed they would have to return to the USSR - two of them attempted suicide at this news. The agreement to return all Soviets did not allow for exceptions.

Shortly before the Military Mission returned to collect the 40 Mamba Soviets from Kempton Park, it just happened that they made an escape. The Soviet officer in charge protested, but had no evidence to prove British collusion. There has been no further revelation as to what became of the Mamba members, it is believed that some went to the US.

- - - - - - - - - - -

**20 June 1945 –** a report on a visit made by a lecturer to the camp.

“*This camp is a transit camp, which, at the moment, is empty and only contains about 50 PW’s who belong to its permanent staff. Most of them are very young and openly admit that they were Nazi before. In captivity, however, they were converted to anti-Nazi opinions, mainly it seems through the efforts of Sergeant Reynolds at the camp.”*

The lecturer had spoken to the Sergeant and stated he was; “*particularly gifted for this work*” (converting Nazis) – and suggested his methods should be studied.

**8 May 1946** – the Reception Camp was visited by Mr R A B Young carrying out a general survey of the pow staff only. NOTE the reception camp intake of pows in transit was not included. Strength - 46 Other Ranks, including 6 Austrians.

Political complexion – white. The staff pows were working as administrators and were considered to be politically “*beyond reproach”.* The 6 Austrians had been screened, the remainder were to be screened with pows from Camp 681.

Commandant: Lt Col Dennison Camp leader: H.Fw. Spahr, Wilhelm (est A+)

Interpreter: S/Sgt Zamory for intakes Deputy C/L: -

 S/Sgt Ackroyd “ “ German MO: -

“*There is a permanent staff averaging 50 at this transit camp; most of the men have been at the camp for the past 18 months.”* The camp leader had been there since February 1945. Morale for the staff was good, helped by ‘*unusually good living conditions’*. They had some concern about their own repatriations.

All of the staff were involved in some sort of study. The standard re-education activities were listed:

Wochenpost and Ausblick – Wochenpost was being ‘irregularly’ received.

Newspapers – English and German papers were received.

Library – adequate, but need for a change of books.

Lectures – Every month. High intellectual level recorded.

Discussion Groups – Weekly meetings. They had co-operated with the adjacent Camp 681, but “*rivalry and occasional bitterness”* had led to less contact.

Films - satisfactory

Wireless – under repair for 6 weeks.

Camp magazine – “*They take one page in each edition of the magazine of camp 681*.”

Press review – not held.

English Instruction – virtually all studying, sufficient text books.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Other activities:Religion – satisfactory with attendance at camp 681 services.Theatre – “some activity”. The play ‘Jedermann’ was performed at Christmas – also to an audience of 200 at Camp 681. No orchestra.**May 1946** - One of the many escapes from Kempton Park (9 or 681?) was made by Erich Zacharias. He had been a member of the Gestapo and involved in the murder of 50 Allied RAF officers who escaped from Stalag Luft III in Sagen, March 1944. After being interrogated at the London Cage, Lt.Col Scotland said he was, “*without doubt the most uncivilised, brutal, and morally indecent character of the whole story.*” He apparently escaped from Kempton Park by scratching at the lock on his cell door with a metal dinner plate (one story) – or an old penknife he had been allowed to keep (other story).Zacharias was spotted in a London park hiding under a bush with a sprained ankle on 13 May, 1946. He later appeared in a British military court in Hamburg in July 1947 and found guilty of murdering two of the prisoners in Germany. He was hung on 27 February 1948.- - - - - - - - - - -**June 1946** - Another escape occurred in 1946 from Kempton Park. Two Dutch Nazi members of the Waffen-SS, Herman Meijer and Hendrick Tieken, escaped from Kempton Park **(**9 or 681?), probably fearing their fate if they were returned to the Netherlands. They made their way to a vile British fascist, Arnold Leese, a member of the ‘Imperial Fascist League’. In his own words:*“…They escaped from Kempton Park prison-camp in British uniforms, and having seen my address in one of the “smearing” articles about me, published from time to time in the papers, made straight for my house in Guildford where they arrived on 13th June 1946. As I had always opposed the practice of keeping prisoners-of-war illegally confined long after the time when there was any possibility of war being resumed, which is contrary to the Hague War Regulations, I was willing to assist them to avoid re-arrest. I kept them in my house for two nights and found out for them that the Argentine Embassy was in charge of a man likely to be sympathetic to escaped prisoners-of-war. Then I passed them on to friends in the East End of London.”* (‘Out of Step’, autobiography by Arnold Leese, 1951). |  |

The Dutchmen approached the Argentine Embassy for assistance, but were turned down. They were arrested on 15 December 1946 at a house in Worthing. Leese alleges that they must have had “pressure” to give away the names of those who had helped them. However, details released in 2013 gave a slightly different story. Leese was being tracked by MI5 as they believed he was trying to set up a group to assist more Nazis to escape to South America. He was involved in moving the two men between hiding places, and the final place of arrest was already under surveillance. The reason for the delayed arrest was to try to find out who else might be involved. They decided to act as the two men were about to be shipped to Eire.

The seven people involved, all supporters of the IFL, were sentenced to twelve months imprisonment in March 1947. Leese served eight months in Pentonville.

- - - - - - - - - - -

**2 June 1946** – English Inspector’s Report by Captain J L Martin. Strength – 58 permanent staff + 9. All accommodated in a ‘building’.

Commandant: Lt Col Dennison Camp leader: Wilhelm Spatry [I think this is the same as May – but with different spelling].

“*No classes – Transit camp.”* 25 staff were studying privately.

The additional 9 in the strength were – “*9 nondescripts who escaped from France and are classed as being ‘under protective custody’.”*

**10 July 1946** – in a letter to the ‘Lecture Section’ of PID from the camp an apology was given for misunderstandings over receiving a visiting lecturer. This was as a result of *“the winding up of this Camp and preparing for the forthcoming move…”*

No more entries for this camp filed. Quorn Camp, Leicester (previously Camp 183) became Camp 9 as Kempton Park closed.

- - - - - - - - - - - - - -

Commandant - Lieutenant Colonel Harold Anthony Denison – Kings Royal Rifles and Pioneer Corps, also at Glen Mills Camp 2.

**Prisoner of War Camp 681**

The address given for reports concerning Camp 681 was the same as Camp 9 – Kempton Park (Racecourse). They also had the same telephone number – Sunbury 3077, though some documents recorded different extensions.

**8 August 1945** - Camp 681 was started with an intake of 197 pows from Camp 28 (Garenden Park, Leicester), and 667 pows from Camp 184 (Llanmartin, Wales). The German Camp Leader was Hpt.Fwbl Karl Brechtel from 10 August.

I have assumed that the following memories of a camp and the local area concern Camp 681 because, 1. Pows recorded as working – pows passing through the reception camp did not do this; 2. the comment, “*where he ended up”, so not a reception camp.*

“*Kempton Park was a big German Prisoner of War camp. The PoW’s were taken out each day to do agricultural work; Hanworth Smallholdings was regular place that you could see them. They had brightly coloured patches sewn onto their trouser knees and the backs of their jacket to identify them as PoW’s. I was in Germany once, drinking in a bar, and I got into conversation with this man and he asked me if I knew a place called Kempton Park; I’ll say I did! He’d been a Luftwaffe pilot; he spoke good English and had been to University here before the war. Kempton Park PoW camp is where he ended up. He remembered the Reservoir public house very well. A lot of the Prisoners of War would drink there; it became closely associated with the Germans. He told me that a lot of local girls had been very nice to them. And the farmers and smallholders that they went out to work for every day would pay them pocket money so they could drink a bit in the Reservoir. Quite a few local girls married these PoW’s.*

 *The Germans built themselves a wooden hut near the old Jolly Sailor public house and used it as a chapel; it’s still a Baptist or Methodist church of some kind.*

*Les told me tragic story of a German Pow who’d made a local girl, of 17-or-so, pregnant and he was keen to do the right thing and marry her. But her father had had a bad time in the First World War and he hated the Germans, so that he wouldn’t hear of it. One day, the German turned up on his doorstep, in Hanworth, with a gun, goodness knows how he’d got hold of it. And he shot the girl’s father dead and then himself, too! The tragedy made the national newspapers and quite a few of the older people will remember it.”* (Posted by ‘Nope’ on the felthaminww2.blogspot.com).

**16 September 1945** – 15 NCO’s refused to work and were transferred to Camp 166 (Wollaton Park, Nottinghamshire).

The Geneva Convention, Article 27, stated: ‘*Non-commissioned officers who are prisoners of war may be compelled to undertake only supervisory work, unless they expressly request remunerative occupation*.’ At first sight it appears the British were acting against the Convention, but as Kempton Park was designated a ‘Working Camp’ and the NCO’s were refusing work, then the British had the right to transfer them to another camp. The question arises whether these 15 NCO’s were then forced to work or punished for not working – that would definitely be against the Convention, but no further information is given in the Camp 681 report.

**1-4 October 1945** – Visit by E Lehnert for a General Survey and Organise Re-education. Strength 680 (capacity 1000) – 221 NCO’s and 459 OR’s.

Commandant: Posted abroad, new OC expected 4/10. Camp leader: Hpt.F.W. Karl Brechtel

Acting C.O: Captain P R Devey Deputy C/L: Hans Köhler

Interpreter: Sgt Hollender German M.O.: None.

The acting C.O. was the accounts officer, the previous Commandant had left the week before. Information about re-education was given to Captain Devey, but no actions taken.

The Interpreter (spelling as Hallender in another report) was a refugee from Vienna, formerly Polish, then Stateless, who had been in a concentration camp. Although eager to start re-education activities, he was reported to be not popular with the British staff and the acting C.O. did not have confidence in him.

The German Camp Leader was 50 years old and appointed by seniority; “*he is the typical German N.C.O. He was a P/W in British hands in the last war. A man who would do his duty as a soldier blindly, but it seemed pretty obvious that the Nazi ideology suited him well. I would classify him as ‘C’*”. Brechtel was more highly regarded in later reports and regraded as B+.

The deputy leader was aged 35, a school teacher, a Nazi party member and S.A. Scharfűhrer (Squad-leader) 1933 to 1939. His sincerity in offers to help were a matter of grave doubt. He was also classified by the visitor as ‘C’.

Amongst the pows were, “*23 rejected Dutch pows (Landwacht)”*. ‘Landwacht’ could refer to ‘Nederlandse Landwacht’, a paramilitary Nazi service in the Netherlands, or ‘Landwacht Nederland’ Dutch volunteers fighting with the Germans. Either way they were enemy pows. The escape attempt by two Dutch pows recorded above could therefore have been made from Camp 681.

The pows were accommodated in tents. The Camp Leader had an office in a brick building. There was a large dining hall and a recreation hall, both had electric lighting.

Morale was seen as fairly high, the main issue regarded lack of news from Germany.

Political screening had not yet been carried out. The acting CO had been informed that the pows were mainly ‘white’ [non-Nazi] with only a few ‘black’. The Works Officer, Lieutenant Morris stated; “*they are all ‘good boys’ working well and giving no trouble*”. However, the visitor’s estimate of the camp was overall very different; ‘Black’ [C category – Nazi].

It was noted that two weeks prior to the visit, the Camp Leader had told pows to remove their “*Hoheitsabzkichen*”. This would seem to mean – ‘Hoheitszeichen’ or symbolic badges, rather than rank badges. “*He is said to have told them that this action would benefit them, and anyway they could still think what they liked. This seems to be typical of the attitude taken by the vast majority of P/W in this camp, i.e., pretence and no more, to have abandoned Nazi ideology but a long way from honest conversion.”*

A small group of about 10 pows claiming to be ardent anti-Nazis were stated to be witnesses to beatings in other camps and were afraid to express their views. Three pows were named as witnesses – Andreas Banaschack, Alois Schöpf and Erich Drescher. “*The latter in a bad state of nerves owing to the fear that his statements might be overheard, which was actually the case until police were posted outside to move the eavesdroppers.”*

The visitor gave his estimates for the political complexion of the camp as:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| A | B | C- | C | C+ |
| 2% | 8% | 30% | 55% | 5% |

This is a considerably higher number of C grades than most other camps. The visitor recommended that segregation should be carried out and that any white pows should be moved to a different camp.

Re-education activities were practically non-existent. The camp leader was said to be against political discussions – “*probably being afraid that it will bring to light the real state of mind of his comrades and spoil the rosy picture he is so anxious to paint.*” The visitor thought there were about 250 pows who were willing to “*listen to reason*”.

The standard list of activities was recorded showing that the camp was very badly resourced:

Wochenpost – none received. 60 copies required.

Ausblick – 60 received – sufficient – popular.

Lecturers – none so far. [No films either].

Newspapers – none obtainable.

Library – Poorly stocked.

English – 2 classes with about 100 students. Text books needed.

Radio – was located in the recreation room with an extension speaker outside. The set had broken down after 3 days and was being sent to London for repair.

Other activities:

Religion – no resident or visiting padres. There was some demand for religious services.

Classes for about 100 students in – arithmetic, maths, Spanish, French, Russian, preparation for Artisan Certificate, book-keeping, architecture, electrical engineering.

Activities were hampered by a lack of space.

**14 November 1945** – the new Commandant, starting in October, was Major H R Lake. Despite the recommendation of the previous camp visitor, and a request from Major Lake, the ‘Lecture and Broadcasting Committee’ of the PID stated they were unable to supply any visiting lecturers for some time. When eventually lectures did start, they frequently attracted large audiences of 4-500.

**February 1946** – a new commandant, Major R W F Pagan, was recorded in a letter regarding a lecture given by 2 German pows about their life in a Concentration Camp. For the lecture; “*The attendants listened noiseless and were shocked by the inhuman treatments which happened…”* In this month it is suggested by the Lecture Service that it would be advantageous if joint visits could be made to Camp 9 and 681.

**21 February 1946** – 300 pows from the USA arrived. Morale was very low for these prisoners as they had been misinformed that they were to return to Germany while in the States, despite their true destination being known.

**17/18/24 April 1946** – R A B Young visited the camp with ‘special objects’; a. Survey of re-education, b. Check screening position. Strength – Officers 0; Other Ranks 927. Note – 0 NCO’s recorded. Pows recorded as being German.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Previous political screening: | A | B | C | C+ | Unscreened |
|  | 4 | 36 | 451 | 7 | 429 |

On these figures, considering the number of C category pows, it is surprising that the camp was given an overall complexion of ‘grey’. 300 of the 429 unscreened pows were those sent from the States. However, the visitor re-assessed the overall camp numbers giving a very different picture as:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Estimated political screening: | A | B+ | B | B- | C |
|  | 100 | 200 | 467 | 100 | 60 |

*“It is estimated that the majority of the whites* [A] *would fight a new National Socialist rising. The greys* [B] *are in the main converts from the blacks (with some opportunists), and re-education should ultimately bring the remaining blacks* [C] *to reason.”*

Commandant: Major R W F Pagan Camp leader: Hpt.Fwbl Karl Brechtel (B+) [Regraded from C+].

Interpreter: Corporal Sales Deputy C/L: O.Fwbl Gottfried Koch (B+)

 German M.O.: None.

Corporal Sales replaced Sgt Hallender [sic] in March – “*he is willing enough, and may eventually prove an asset in re-education*.”

The deputy camp leader was part of the intake from the USA – he had been a camp leader there – “*he is a good type and will be an asset to camp re-education*.”

The pows were organised into 9 companies, and from these a committee of 20 men met to discuss camp matters with the Leader ‘on democratic lines’. “*The spending of Welfare money, sport and recreation and essentially local camp matters are discussed in a friendly and cooperative way*.”

Morale was considered to be generally low due to duration of captivity and worry over families – especially for those with families in the Russian zone. Positive factors were seen as efficient camp leadership, considerate British staff, extensive re-educational activities, and in particular organised free discussions.

“*The PW from USA are bitter over having been ‘deceived about their return to Germany’*”. Three pows were named as having stated that they would return to Germany. They may have done, but this would only have been what they had been told themsleves. Thousands of pows returned from the US were told the same story, undoubtedly to ease their passage while in the States.

Standard re-education activities had greatly improved:

Wochenpost and Ausblick: 190 Wochenpost received.

Newspapers: British papers were irregular and difficult to obtain. It was believed that some German newspapers were ending up at Camp 9.

Library: Still only 250 novels and many religious books. £20 allocated from the welfare fund to improve this.

Lectures: About 1 per month. Usually very well attended – 600 at a talk about the Nuremberg Trials in May 1946.

Discussion Groups: A large group of 400-450 pows met about three times per fortnight. Agendas were decided by a committee. A small group of pows from Camp 9 also attended these meetings. It was noted that although there was cooperation with Camp 9 there was some rivalry. There were also small discussion groups, often focused on literary subjects.

Films: Fortnightly, light entertainment.

Wireless: Functioning properly. The Hamburg station was most popular, with a lot of interest in the Nuremberg trials.

Camp magazine: First edition of ‘Die Glocke’ [The Bell] to appear the following week. To be published fortnightly with 120 copies of 5 sheets – 1 page was devoted to Camp 9 news.

Press review: popular each Friday.

English Instruction: 24 beginners and 26 advanced pupils. GOS text books available. Many pows studied independently.

Other activities:

Religion: The protestant padre H/Fw Keuhne (B+) was being replaced by Paul Bocklitz who would serve this camp and Camp 9. The RCs had a weekly visit from Rev Josef Farenbach of Sunbury Church.

Education: Classes for arithmetic, electrical engineering, building construction, book-keeping, higher maths, French, Spanish, and Russian. All teachers had been screened and were regarded as reliable.

Theatre: 25 active pows.

Orchestra: 7 pows perfrming light music. A piano had been purchased from the Welfare fund.

Choir: 30/40 pows with frequent concerts of folk songs and religious music.

Sport: Football, handball and indoor games.

**9 May 1946** – F L Carsten was a visiting lecturer who gave a talk about ‘Political Parties in Germany.’ 3-400 pows attended, many having to sit on the floor. In his report he stated that there was a large democratic group of pows in the camp. He also raised several issues regarding this camp –

Why was repatriation taking so long? The British response at the time was that there was a labour shortage, but this was disputed by pows here as many were engaged on the task of converting an army camp into a holiday camp. This was most certainly a valid point in 2 ways. 1 Building a holiday camp hardly seems a valid reason for detaining pows. 2 More importantly, the UK was short of labour and there were food shortages – so why were pows here employed on such a frivolous purpose? Who authorised it and why?

The pows felt that “*P.I.D. seemed to have forgotten them with regard to German newspapers and other material which they used to get, but now P.I.D. probably thought them re-educated enough.”* They also requested information about the elections to be held in Germany and the political parties that were standing.

**26 June 1946** – Morale was very low at the camp. A report at Osterley Camp referred back to a petition to the War Office by the Democratic Committee at Kempton Park regarding low morale and urging an announcement on the question of repatriation. There was also a report of a suicide, but it is unclear whether this happened at Kempton or Osterley.

**20 July 1946** – Kempton Park pow camp closed. The number 681 was transferred to Osterley Park Camp (previously 562). The pows and staff were transferred to Osterley and Raynes Park. An entry for Osterley Park records that Major Sanders took over from Major Pagan before the camp moved.

Commandants:

August / September 1945 - ?

October 1945 – February 1946 - Major H R Lake from the Pioneer Corps.

February 1946 – June 1946 – Major R W F Pagan from the Pioneer Corps.

June 1946 – July 1946 – Major F J Sanders from the Pioneer Corps

**After the camps:** After major repairs, it was re-opened as a racecourse in 1947.

**Further information:**

National Archives references:

WO 166/14168 – ‘*218 Prisoner of War Camp. Camp moved from Aldershot, Hampshire, to Kempton Park, Sunbury on Thames; From there to Coleford, Gloucestershire; From there to Rugeley, Staffordshire; From there to Didlington, Norfolk – dated 1942 Nov – 1943 Nov*.’

FO 939/98 – 9 Base Camp, Quorn Camp, Leicestershire & 9 Reception Camp, Kempton Park Camp – dated 1945-47 (Used above)

FO 939/323 – 681 Working Camp, Kempton Park Camp – dated 1945-47 (Used above)

WO208/5619 – Interrogation of POWs in World War II: Operation Overlord: evacuation of POWs to UK: Kempton Park.

Prisoner of War Interrogation Section (Home) Kempton Park: various interrogation reports; WO 208/3623 to 208/3629 – dated 1944 June to 1945 Apr-Nov

WO 208/3582 – 3748 are interrogation reports made by CSDIC from May 1942 to October 1945 and the PWIS from June 1944 to November 1945, plus some others for civilian interrogations – the details above are for the interrogations carried out at Kempton Park.

The reports cover many different areas concerned with military strengths and morale of the troops at that time. There are also transcripts of interviews about particular events, e.g. a report from the series dated 7 July 1944 detailed interviews carried out at Kempton park with four members of the Waffen-SS company who carried out the atocity at Oradour-sur-Glane, murdering 642 people.

The site today - <https://repatriatedlandscape.org/england/pow-sites-in-greater-london/pow-camp-9-kempton-park/>

Short films of pows arriving at Kempton Park, 1944 - <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/1060008562> & <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/1060019422>