**Camp 21** **- Comrie Camp, Comrie, Perthshire (aka Cultybraggan)**

Included in the 1945 ICRC list – Base Camp. 21. Comrie Camp, Comrie, Perthshire

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| **1947 camp list** | | | | | | | |
| 21(G.W.C.) | Comrie Camp, Comrie, Perthshire. | Sc. | Priswar Comrie | Comrie 311 | Comrie | Lt.Col.D.E.M.Fielding O.B.E | v/1453/2 |

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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 |
|  |  | 21 | Comrie Camp, Comrie | Perthshire |  | Base Camp | Scotland |

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|  | Comrie was a remarkable camp: known for the political ‘character’ of many of its German pows - a murder committed by fanatical Nazis - a peace-keeper/maker - a pow shot dead - a cartoon artist - its isolation - and, that it still largely exists.  **Location:** NGR NN 768 199. The camp is 2km south of the village of Comrie, which is about 11 km W of Crieff. There was another hostel/camp at Cowden, about 4 km away.  **Before the camp:** Part of Cultybraggan Farm.  **POW Camp:** For a lot more information see Valerie Campbell’s book – ‘*Camp 21 Comrie’*. I give an outline for the camp, and additional details.  The history of the camp can be seen as four overlapping ‘phases’: Italian / Base-Transit / ‘Black’ camp / Re-education. |  |
| Plan imposed on Ordnance Survey map, 1968 | <https://www.bing.com/maps?v=2&cp=56.358282~-3.994094&style=a&lvl=18&tilt=-90&dir=0&alt=-1000&encType=1> |

**May to October 1941** - The camp was built by 249 (Alien) Company Pioneer Corps. This company largely comprised Austrian and German refugees, many of whom had been interned before joining the Pioneer Corps. The camp was of standard design with guards’ compound at the ‘front’ by the road, with pow compounds behind. It was surrounded by barbed wire fencing and further divided into four main compounds, (not sure if this was the case for Italian pows). Wooden guard towers were built in 1945. Accommodation was in Nissen huts, with occasional use of tents. There were also some brick built buildings. An overflow hostel was built at nearby Cowden during 1945.

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| Nissen huts, 2019 | Guards Block, 2019 |

Each of the large Nissen huts held up to 90 pows. Each man was issued with a sleeping bag and a blanket. The huts were warmed by two stoves – conditions were often bitterly cold and wet – mud and snow were major issues for the pows. Toilets were not separated in the toilet blocks. A hot shower was allowed once a week, something which the ICRC complained about, and lice became a problem. Facilities varied between each compound – see ICRC reports below.

**1942 - Italians.** The camp was opened for Italian pows in 1942. Following the Italian Armistice in September 1943, security for most Italian pows was relaxed and many were allowed to move out of the camps and into billets and hostels. Italians were still recorded here during 1944.

**1944 - Base Camp / Transit Camp.** German pows replaced the Italians during 1944. There was a short period when Italians and Germans were held here. Many of the German pows stayed just a few days.

Once established as a German camp, there were four compounds holding up to 1000 pows in each. A 5th compound was added for a short time to hold mixed nationality pows.

**13 May 1944** – First ICRC inspection, carried out by Dr G Wirth. 785 pows, with a capacity of 4500. Basic facilities were recorded at this transit camp, and improvements were required. The main complaints concerned food, clothing, lack of mail, lack of recreation facilities, and no canteen.

**15 June 1944** – Second ICRC Report below. The ICRC Inspector, Rodolphe Haccius, calls the German Camp Leaders, ‘trusted men.’ He refers to the rations for the pows at Comrie as being that for non-working prisoners – working pows in other camps received more. ‘Capture cards’ were postcards notifying close family that the man was a pow – but it would seem the standard message postcards issued to pows had not been given out as so many were moving on to other camps.

**June 44** - Major L H Manderstam from the SOE visited the camp (and others) as many of the pows were Russian. They had been captured near Bayeux and Caen fighting with the 441st and 642nd Ost Battalions. Manderstam was looking to see if any of them could be recruited to assist SOE. Extracts from his report made end of June 1944:

*“The interrogation took place on 14th June in Camp 21, where about 200 Russian P/Ws are at present detained. The camp I visited is a ‘clearing house’ and I was told that they are expected to be shipped to Canada within the next few days.*

*The captured men are considered technically as Germans and were not segregated from the rest of their ‘comrades,’ except at night, as most were housed by the Camp Commandant on his initiative in a barrack of their own…”*

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| Great Britain  BRITISH PRISONER OF WAR BASE CAMP NO. 21  Visited on 15 June 1944 by Mr R.A. Haccius.  Capacity: 4500  Actual Complement: 2876 including 74 officers  Nationalities: Allied German from Germany and Italian  Trusted Men: Oberfeldwebel Martens (Compound A)  Oberfeldwebel Gunther (Compound B)  Stabsfeldwebel Hummel (Compound C)  Stabsfeldwebel Gorholt (Compound D)  General.  This so-called “Base Camp” is in fact a transit camp; the stay of the various detachments of prisoners coming from the Normandy front has not exceeded one week. After their disembarkation in England the prisoners in the hands of the British authorities are assembled at POW camp no. 9, acting as a reception camp, before being sent to one of the transit camps. They are then embarked for destinations overseas.  Camp No. 21 has already been visited on 13th May 1944 and that report contained the usual observations concerning accommodation, conditions, etc. We will refer back to it only in so far as those conditions have been the subject of a claim made during the course of the interview with the trusted men of the various compounds. Prisoners having claimed foreign nationality have been grouped in Compound E.  The grouping by compound is as follows:  Compound A: 630 NCOs and men  Compound B: 74 officers and 29 NCOs and men  Compound C: 1000 NCOs & men including 700 previously transferred from camp No.24  Compound D: 853 NCOs and men  Compound E: 290 foreigners.  Food Supplies.  Rations are for non-working prisoners. This comprises 10oz of bread per man per day. In many camps housing German prisoners, the quarter-masters, at the request of the trusted men, generally improve this by the amount of 2d per day, shown in cash on the ration records, in buying a bread supplement; thus bringing the total per man and per day to 16oz. This is not the case in camp 21, and the prisoners complain of the insufficiency of the bread ration. The bread given out on the day of the visit smelt mouldy and gave rise to a complaint by the trusted men. |  | As none of the buildings serving as canteens have yet been provided with tables and chairs, some of the prisoners are obliged to consume their meals in the dormitories. Some of the cooking pans are in a poor state and the cooks are obliged to prepare meals in three successive instalments.  Clothing.  The prisoners arrive in German uniforms of good quality and in good condition. Boots are well kept. None of the prisoners have braces, these having been taken from them at the time of their embarkation. Ten men coming from camp 24 are still clothed in cotton uniforms (Afrika Korps).  Clothing and toiletries distributed to the prisoners during their transit to a base camp are shown on the list annexed to the present report.  Medical Care.  The MO, Dr. Baumstark, has 21 medical orderlies at his disposal; 15 other medical orderlies included in the complement are being transferred to other camps or hospitals.  24 officers and men needing care which can not be given in a camp infirmary have been transferred to the closest military hospital.  Dr. Baumstark reports that the fitting out and equipment of the infirmary are adequate. The general state of health is good. The doctor would like to have access to German and British medical texts as well as “Lancet” or the “British Medical Journal”. Some German medical books will be sent to him as soon as the medical library previously at camp No 13 has been reconstituted. The “Medical Cards”, as well as wallets, other documents and watches, are taken when they arrive at the reception camp. These are given back during the period at the base camp.  The German doctor complains of not having had the chance to leave the camp under parole. The medical staff have not had an outing for 7 weeks. Outings take place under armed guard.  Money and Pay.  Prisoners receive their identification record (Army Form 3000) during their transit to the camp. Their accounting card is set up at the same time. Foreign currency sequestrated is shown on the back of the card with the signature of the prisoner.  Canteen.  Camp currency is not used in this camp, the length of stay of the prisoners being too short. There is no canteen, but cigarettes are distributed to the prisoners, the price being debited on the individual’s accounting card. Transfers made through the Protecting Power as intermediary special allowances (Sonderzuwendung) at the time of arrival in a permanent camp overseas are credited to these cards.  The contingent which came from camp No 24 having been in the camp for more than a month, complain of the lack of a canteen. |

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| Leisure.  Prisoners in transit in this camp have little free time and the sports field has not been put at their disposal. The group previously occupying camp 24 has nevertheless continued their classes, having brought camp 24’s German library to camp 21.  Correspondence.  The prisoners have all sent off their capture cards. Those sent by the International Committee of the Red Cross had not been distributed at the time of the visit. Under the British regulations, the first letter can be written two weeks after the capture.  The capture cards to families, state that the address of a permanent camp will follow and that no correspondence can be addressed to the transit camp. This is clearly not the case for personnel permanently attached to the English or Scottish base camps, (trusted men, cooks, medical personnel, etc).  German Red Cross.  The delegation ensured that camp aid was distributed from the depot of the German Red Cross in London. The composition of these standard despatches, as calculated on the basis of 400 prisoners per camp, is indicated in Annexe 2.  The trusted men distributed the first despatch for camp 21; these gifts were received with thanks. There is scope for the provision of a greater quantity of playing cards, tobacco and above all, games, crayons and paper.  The status of foreign prisoners in the camp has not been established, so they did not participate in the distribution of aid originating from the German Red Cross.  Résumé of points raised during conversations with the trusted men, officers and doctors  A. NCOs and men.  1. Increase in the bread ration.  2. Canteen.  3. Repair of clothing and footwear.  4. Rations for the day of arrival of new detachments.  5. Supplies for pows being transferred.  6. Cigarettes and toothpaste.  7. Choice of books sent by the International Bureau of Education.  8. Incomplete series of “Soldatenbriefe”. *[Education materials for soldiers]*  9. Personal items missing during capture.  10. Regulation of internal discipline (Vorgesetzten Verhältnis fűr deutsche K.G.)  B. Officers.  1. Officer accommodation.  2. Toiletries and personal papers confiscated.  3. Consideration due by the NCOs of the Detaining Power (Article 21 of the Convention). |  | C. Medical Staff.  1. Official Documents (Sanitätsausweise) confiscated. *[Medical id cards]*  2. Outings.  3. Repatriation.  4. Intellectual occupation.  Actions taken on the requests.  A1. The camp authorities state that the purchase of a supplement in the local shops is difficult, but the point will be looked into again.  A2. Since the prisoners have no money in the camp, there is no point in putting goods on sale in a canteen. Purchases made by orders placed with the army co-operative (NAAFI) will be distributed by the trusted men and the cost (without retention for the camp aid fund) debited to the individual’s personal account.  A3. The question of supplying materials for repairs to tailors and cobblers is to be referred to the War office.  A4. According to the trusted men, new arrivals are included in the rations for the following day; the evening meal on the day of arrival, for example, would come from the provisions allocated for the camp complement excluding the new arrivals. The quarter-master says that this is not the case and that the necessary supplement comes from stocks kept in reserve for such eventualities.  A5. Sandwiches are supplied on departure. If prisoners do not have a cup on their departure from the reception camp, the distribution of drinks to an often considerable number of men in transport is difficult. To be referred to the War Office.  A6. The contingent currently occupying the camp has received, (excluding cigarettes coming from the German Red Cross) 50 cigarettes per man per week, and a box of matches. Consignments of toothpaste from German Red Cross stocks are required.  A7. A considerable percentage of books sent from Geneva by the International Bureau of Education did not seem suitable to the trusted men, their contents not being in conformity with their convictions and opinions.  A8. No series of “Soldatenbriefe is complete, which renders impossible the continuation of courses and the completion of study programmes recommended by the authorities of the Reich.  A9. A list will be sent by the trusted men to the representatives of the Protecting Power.  A10. A circular by the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht which specifies that the authority of NCOs over their men is not affected by the fact of capture has been requested by one of the trusted men.  B1. The officers are lodged in Nissen huts similar to those occupied by NCOs and men, but have more space. The beds have no sheets. Although this relates to a transit camp, we will mention the fact to the War Office. |

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| B2. The officers wanted their confiscated toiletries – particularly nail scissors – returned to them, along with their personal papers and family photographs. To be taken up with the War Office.  B3. Will be communicated to the competent authority.  C1. The “Sanitätsausweise” to be returned to the base camp. This will be discussed with the competent authority with reference to article 21 of the Convention concerning improvement of the situation of the sick and injured.  C2. We will ask for a copy of the administrative regulation concerning the conditions under which medical personnel are allowed to leave camp.  C3. Medical staff and German military doctors wanted in particular to be informed precisely of the dispositions made by the belligerents in light of the application of the articles concerning them in the two conventions. We will ask the Protecting Power to supply this information to those concerned.  C4. The delegation will ensure that a list of the medical books available is provided; the English and foreign medical periodicals will be put into regular circulation.  Conclusion.  Having taken up his post on the very day of our visit, the new commandant has obviously not yet taken his organisation in hand. The flux of a transit camp in which one proceeds within a limited period of time, as well as the marshalling of prisoners for their registration and equipping and for the establishment of their account cards imposes considerable work on his administration.  There is every reason to believe that, once a good routine has been established, the transit of prisoners to camp 21 will be effected without a hitch.  - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -  ANNEXE No.1  PARCELS SENT TO CAMP 21   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  | Meat and fruit | 80 |  | |  | Biscuits | 39 |  | |  | Bread | 49 |  | |  | Razor blades | 2000 |  | |  | Jam | 17 |  | |  | Soap | 80 |  | |  | Tobacco | 50 |  | |  | ANNEXE No. 2  LIST OF AID DISTRIBUTED TO BASE CAMPS (Transit Camps)   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | Shirts | 2 | Comb | 1 | | Socks | 2 | Razor with 1 blade | 1 | | Kitbag | 1 | Towels | 2 | | Braces | 1 | Knife | 1 | | Hair brush | 1 | Fork | 1 | | Tooth brush | 1 | Spoon | 1 | | Shaving brush | 1 | Soap | 4 oz. | |  |  | Shoe polish | 1 | |
| Cartoon drawn 1944 by a German pow whose full name is not known. The artist drew a series of 66 pictures depicting life at the camp. They were given to the Camp Adjutant, Captain Makins after the war and were later presented to Comrie camp where they can be seen. |

Manderstam interrogated 20 pows picked at random from the ‘Russians’ (‘Soviets’ as they included Ukrainians, Siberians and Mongols), the German 441st Company Commander and a German medical orderly. Most of the pows stated that they had been recruited into German service as pows in appalling German camps, with little or no choice. Most were anxious as to what would happen to them if they returned to the USSR where they would be considered as traitors for surrendering, yet alone serving in German armed and labour units. Manderstam did not believe that the USSR wanted these men back - this was 7 months before the Yalta Conference where Stalin insisted all to be returned.

The Soviet pows presented Manderstam with a signed statement requesting that they be separated from German pows within the camp, and stating they were willing to co-operate with the British Armed Forces.

A few days later, one of the Soviet pows, Dr Vassili Merlnikov (name later corrected to Melnikov) committed suicide. Manderstam stated that he believed this was due to his fear of being sent back to Russia. (Details above from – ‘Operation Mamba’, Bernard O’Connor, 2020, original documents; TNA HS4/339).

[There is a CWG entry; Wassili Milnkow, served with German Army, nationality German. Died 19 June 1944. Buried at Cannock Chase German Military Cemetery. I believe this is the same man who was “*considered technically as Germans*” – he was actually born in Ivanovosnesensk, near Moscow in 1918.]

In details about Operation Mamba given by Manderstam, he only mentioned recruiting ‘Russians’ in order to fight the Germans and encourage others to desert. However, it is known from other operations, that pows from Soviet controlled states were recruited to go back to their own countries as agents for the British. It is therefore likely to be just as true for the ‘Russians.’ As far as known, no agents were successful and all were captured and executed as Kim Philby was passing on their details. This was another reason why Stalin would have insisted that ALL Soviet pows be returned – many to be murdered or exiled.

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|  | **‘Black’ Camp.**  Its isolation and internal arrangement made Comrie suitable to house Category C, ‘Black’ pows in greater security. It should be noted that only one of the compounds was in regular use to hold the hard-line Nazis – another held German officers and NCOs – and White and Grey category pows were in the other two compounds.  Many of the Black Nazis were extremist young thugs who demanded nothing less than fanatical obedience to the fűhrer. Kangaroo courts, intimidation and beatings were recorded – “*the atmosphere at Comrie camp was poisonous with hatred, bitterness and frustration*”. (‘My Germans’ – Terence Prittie - Wolff (Oswald) Books – 1983). |  |
| Inside a Nissen hut, 2019 | Processing Station and Jail, 2019 |

“*In this camp, the SS and paratroops had organised a regular system of spying on the other officers… a secret police with executive powers… If they recognised a man who had ever made an anti-Nazi remark, then they pounced on him in the night. It was organised terrorism*.” (Quote on display at the camp).

Even though pows were not allowed to communicate with others in other compounds, it was difficult to prevent with just barbed wire fencing separating them.

Intimidation was also carried out by making threats about a pow’s family back in Germany. During this time, it was necessary to transfer several pows from the camp for their own safety.

**29 November 1944** - German pow, Oberleutnant Willy Thormann, aged 39, was found hanged, the death was recorded as suicide, but the circumstances were suspicious. Willy Thormann was later reinterred at the Cannock Chase German War Cemetery.

**20 December 1944** - Most of the British guards were replaced by a Polish Guard Company under the British Commandant. Relationships between the Polish guards and the pows were frequently hostile.

There were several escape attempts including digging a 35-yard tunnel.

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|  | **December 1944** - The most notorious incident occurred with the brutal murder of Feldwebel Wolfgang Rosterg. The story begins in Camp 23, Devizes, with a plan for a mass break out to coincide with the German counter offensive in the Ardennes. The escapees were to gain weapons and march on London. The plan was discovered and 27 men were transferred from Camp 23, including Rosterg. His inclusion was surprising as he was not recorded as an ardent Nazi. They arrived at Comrie on 17 December 1944. Suspicions arose over Rosterg and a few days later a mock trial was held in Compound B. On the night of 22/23 December, Wolfgang Rosterg was beaten to death and his body was taken to the toilet block to be hung for guards to discover.  There were 12 suspects for the murder, 8 of whom were tried at Kensington Palace Gardens, London in July 1945. 2 were acquitted, 1 sentenced to penal servitude for life, and 5 were executed, (Joachim Goltz, Kurt Zűhlsdorff, Heinz Brűling, Erich Palme-König and Josef Mertens) on 6 October 1945.  John Wheatley, (later Lord Advocate) investigating the crime described the camp; “*The atmosphere in the camp was extremely violent and threatening. Only the fact that the guards were Poles and were absolutely ready to crack down on these men who had destroyed their homeland held the line*.”  **January 1945 - Re-education.** Shortly after the murder of Rosterg, Herbert Sulzbach arrived at the camp, officially as an interpreter. He was a remarkable man; a German Jew, decorated for bravery in World War 1 fighting for Germany, later a refugee in Britain, he was interned on the Isle of Man, and then he joined the Pioneer Corps. Sulzbach was a peace-maker who achieved excellent results at Comrie though at first he found it difficult:  “*Our camp has about 4000 German POWs and nearly all are fanatics. I always used to say that there may be 10 per cent decent Germans, but you could not find 400 decent chaps here. Out of 100 letters they write home, 95 contain the sentence ‘We trust in our beloved, our Iron Fűhrer. Even if the situation is not good now, final victory is certain.’ I always wish I could invite all soft people of this country here for just a few hours, all of whom would become hard, very hard. The first thing after having arrived here that impressed me were the Poles. A Polish company is doing guard duty here; many of them speak German… I never met such hatred as these Poles have* |
| Willy Thormann and Wolfgang Rosterg  Cannock Chase German Military Cemetery. |

*against those Germans… They have their own camp Gestapo here. They find if a man is anti-Nazi, or half-critical of German victory, or who may say a word of doubt against the God-Fűhrer. There is nothing human left in them, they are just beasts. Some German asks that he be taken out of the compound as he fears to be hanged, some are badly beaten up and shout for help. I myself can only see one way out of the next war: to keep Germany occupied until that generation of Germans is dead. The bad Nazis in our hands should not go back for a long time.” (*Quoted from ‘Thresholds of Peace’ – Matthew Sullivan – Hamish Hamilton – 1979).

Sulzbach wrote many letters to the PID / BBC regarding his ideas for re-education – it would seem this did not go down well with some, including the new Camp Commandant who arrived in March. A short letter within PID:

*To: Dr Koeppler*

*From: Miss Lankaster 22nd May, 1945*

*I attach some further suggestions from S/Sgt Sulzbach. You will remember that we have already sent you some for possible use by the B.B.C. Would you like us to choke this gentleman off as his Commandant suggests?”*

Dr Koeppler responded a week later; *“I do not think we should stop S/Sgt Sulzbach for his ideas seem to me all excellent. The only trouble with his suggestions at the moment is that they are already put into practice, but one of these days he may produce a good one of which we had not thought. In any case, it will keep him happy and it will presumably do no harm for the camp commandant to forward further effusions*.”

Despite his initial feelings towards other Germans, Sulzbach persisted in his work and achieved notable success. He worked mainly through lectures and discussion groups. By May he wrote to the historian Liddell Hart that, “*My job is the most interesting I can imagine.”*

[*7 February 1945 -* In the book, ‘*For* *Fűhrer And Fatherland’,* there is a report of, “*a sit-down strike by all the camp prisoners – all 3,095 of them… after the Polish guards had shot and killed a prisoner*”. There is no record of a pow shot at Comrie on that date – it may refer to pow reactions to news of Paul Hartmann shot dead at Glen Mill on that date]

**27 March 1945** – a new Commandant arrived, Lieutenant Colonel A K Wilson, an ex Chief Constable. He increased security and installed raised guard towers.

**During April 1945** - 3 tunnels were discovered on separate days.

**17 April 1945** – pow Gustav Reiss, aged 40, died from a liver abscess, later reinterred at Cannock Chase German Military Cemetery.

**21 April 1945** - Feldwebel Heinrich Schwarz, aged 30, was shot dead by a Polish guard (Benke). There are mixed stories for this event - either being out of his hut after curfew - or taunting the guards. The pows staged a strike in protest and British soldiers were returned to guard the camp a short time later.

**22 April 1945** – Pows Hans Schulze and Karl Schwarz were shot and injured by a Polish Guard (Pietrowski) for taunting him and throwing stones.

**3 May 1945 –** pow Johannes (Hans) Wöhrle died from tb, later reinterred at Cannock Chase German Military Cemetery.

**9 / 10 June 1945** - ICRC Inspection Report by Frédérick Bieri, below. By this time all 3,661 pows were listed as German. The camp was recognised for the improvements made, though sanitary facilities were still inadequate. A wide range of education courses were made available. The lack of correspondence at this time was due to the disruption of all postal systems on mainland Europe in the last few months of the war. (Instrument mentioned, ‘jazz’ = drums).

Only 1 recent escape attempt is noted in the report. There were others before this, but nearly all were recaptured within 1 or 2 days – there does not seem to have been any serious attempt to escape.

**1945** onwards - Oversight and promotion of re-education activities for 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 in activities other than re-education, they rarely mention sports, games, pastimes, crafts, etc of the pows.

**22 July 1945** – In a letter to PID, the Commandant A K Wilson, set out some of his views about the camp. He wanted to keep the pows active, and had; “*adopted various means, as far as lay in my power, to employ their hands and minds…. In addition to the considerable number employed on new engineering works in the camp, I have 80 men going out daily on forestry, 20 to an R.E. working site, and roughly 100 to three different building sites. More will be sent out on agriculture and other jobs. These are, of course, all men from this ‘black’ camp and not from our ‘white’ satellite camp.”* [Cowden]. He considered this to be the basis to restore the pows lost self-respect and preparing them for re-education.

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| B/PFV/LC Great-Britain  CAMP 21  Visited on June 9th and 10th 1945 by M. Bieri  Address: POW Base Camp 21, G.B.  Capacity: 4000  Commandant: Lt.Col A. Wilson  Strength: 3661   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  | Compound | A | B | C | D | Infirmary |  | Total | | a) | Officers | - | - | - | - | 5 |  | 5 | |  | N.C.O. | 273 | 366 | 312 | 381 | 1 |  | 1333 | |  | Men | 646 | 510 | 623 | 543 | 1 | (Doctor) | 2323 | |  |  | 919 | 876 | 935 | 924 | 7 |  | 3661 | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | b) | Compound | A | B | C | D | Infirmary |  | Total | |  | Army | 491 | 626 | 340 | 729 | 6 |  | 2192 | |  | Navy | 325 | 82 | 90 | 34 | - |  | 531 | |  | Airforce | 70 | 158 | 497 | 124 | 1 |  | 850 | |  | S.S. | 33 | - | 4 | 23 | - |  | 60 | |  | R.A.D.\* | - | 3 | 4 | 8 | - |  | 15 | |  | Police | - | 6 | - | - | - |  | 6 | |  | Civilians | - | 1 | - | 6 | - |  | 7 | |  |  | 919 | 876 | 935 | 924 | 7 |  | 3661 |   *[R.A.D. = Reichsarbeitsdienst; the Reich Labour Service. They were considered to be auxiliary forces and so came under the Geneva Convention]*  Note: Figures for Compound C are approximate; Airforce [Luftwaffe] includes parachutists.   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | c) | Of these Protected Personnel | | | |  |  |  |  | |  | Infirmary (Officers) | | = | 5 | |  |  |  | |  | Other ranks | A | = | 146 | |  |  |  | |  |  | B | = | 32 | |  |  |  | |  |  | C | = | 9 | |  |  |  | |  |  | D | = | 26 | |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  | | 218 |  |  |  |   Nationality  German (including 7 Sudetan-Germans) |  | Camp Leaders   |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | Compound A | : | LINDNER Walter | Fw.Stabsober | 535246 | | Assistant | : | WILHELM Kurt | Stabsfw. | 530401 | | Compound B | : | HERRMANN Helmut | Stabsfw. | B4428 | | Assistant | : | BRAND Fritz | Fw. | B73904 | | Compound C | : | HOFFMANN Fritz | Oberfw. | 535781 | | Assistant | : | WENNINGER Karl | Uffz | 533328 | | Compound D | : | RIKALL Bruno | Stabsfw. | 537130 | | Assistant | : | LEYDECKER Edwin | Fw. | 536622 |   General description (See previous reports)  A great number of improvements have been made since our last visits. Flower-beds have been laid out, paths constructed etc. The camp looks clean and tidy. The huts in the Compounds are very close together, and there is, therefore, not much room for exercise. The Compounds are self-contained. The inmates are not allowed to mix with men from other Compounds.  Huts  Total : 123   |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | Compound | A | B | C | D | | Living (67 to 72 men) | 12 | 12 | 14 | 12 | | Small (average 30 men) | 2 | 1 | - | - | | Camp Leader’s office | 1 | - | 1 | 1 | | Kitchen | 1 | - | 1 | 1 | | Not in use | 1 | - | - | - | | Camp Leader’s and Artisans (living) | 1 | - | - | 2 | | Dining | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | | Theatre | 1 | - | - | 1 | | Ablution | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | | Latrine | 2 | 2 | 2 | 4 | | Sickbay | - | 1 | - | 1 | | Shower-bath | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | | Recreation (plus theatre) | - | 3 | 1 | - | | Sickbay, staff etc | - | - | 1 | 1 | | Canteen | - | - | 1 | - | | Stores | - | - | 1 | 1 | | Church | - | - | - | 1 | |  | 31 | 30\* | 31 | 31\* |   *[\* Incorrect numbers in these 2 columns ; either huts missing or the totals are wrong – perhaps due to ‘Note’ below].* |

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| Note: Numbers of huts are subdivided and used for Artisans, etc (not specially mentioned above). For example, there are special rooms or huts reserved in every compound for use as sickbay or First-aid Posts, barbers, etc.  The POW: About 10% were captured before D-day. Last big batches came in March, since then only small groups have arrived.  Bedding: 1 sleeping bag and 1 blanket have been issued.  Convention: at disposal of Camp Leader.  Sanitary installations: some improvements have been made, and others are still under way. Latrines: water borne system. Hot and cold shower-baths. Only sufficient to enable one hot shower-bath per man per week.  Food: a further reduction has been made in the ration scale. No complaints. Bills of fare on date of visit:   |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | |  | Compound A |  | |  | Breakfast: | Oatmeal, bread, marmalade. | |  | Dinner: | Sweet soup with currants. | |  | Supper: | Bread, margarine, ham, tea. | |  | Compound B |  | |  | Breakfast: | Porridge, marmalade | |  | Dinner: | Cabbage, potatoes, meat (Eintopf) *[stew]* | |  | Supper: | Bread, margarine, cream cheese, tea. | |  | Compound C |  | |  | Breakfast: | Bread, marmalade, tea. | |  | Dinner: | Peas (Eintopf) | |  | Supper: | Oatmeal, soup, bread. | |  | Compound D (7.6.45) |  | |  | Breakfast: | Tea, bread, margarine, marmalade. | |  | Dinner: | Bean soup with mutton and pork. | |  | 3 p.m. | Tea | |  | Supper: | Oatmeal soup made with milk, bread, sausage. |   Camp Infirmary: (see last report)  Two additional huts are under construction, one of which will be used as an isolation ward.  a) Medical officers and doctors:   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  | BLAHA Johann | Stabsarzt. | B161018 | |  | HAAS Friedrich | Oberarzt | 518761 | |  | GROSCHE Fritz | Ass.Arzt. | A763217 | |  | LENGELING Gunther | Ass.Arzt. | B34773 | |  | MEIER Ernst | Unterarzt. | A774819 | |  | MOSER Fritz | San.Sdt. | A966918 | |  | b) Dental surgeon  URBACH Friedrich Stabsarzt A814699  c) P.P. *[Protected Personnel]*  Officers 5  Other ranks 9  14  d) Medical supplies: sufficient  e) General medical inspection: once a month  f) Dental work: carried out by German dental surgeon.  g) Average number of daily attendance on sick parade:  h) Infirmary: 40 beds available (in 3 wards) occupied on date of visit: 25  i) Cases in Camp infirmary:   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | neuritis | 1 | conjunctivitis | 1 | | impetigo | 2 | cystitis | 2 | | tonsillitis | 2 | urticaria | 1 | | bronchitis | 6 | hoarseness | 1 | | dermatitis | 2 | heart trouble | 2 | | distortion right ankle | 1 | liver | 1 | | distortion spinae | 1 | rheumatism | 1 | | inflammation left foot 1 | | | | |  | | | |   - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -  25  ==========  j) Serious cases: none  k) Contagious cases: none  l) Epidemics: none  m) Deaths   |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | 17.4.45 | REISS G | Obergefr. | 536716 | Tumour of stomach | | 21.4.45 | SCHWARZ Heinrich | Fw | 853906 | Bullet wound in head | | 3.5.45 | WOHRLE H | Uffz. | 536888 | T.B. | | 31.5.45 | SCHEEFE Walter | Gefr. | 536210 | Stomach ulcer. | |

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| P.P. Walks: are permitted  Complaints: none  General state of health of POW in words of Senior Medical Officer: Good (Gut)  General state of nutrition of POW in words of Senior Medical Officer: Good (Gut)  Clothing and uniforms: issues complete, excepting socks and trousers. About 50% of the POW are in possession of complete uniforms.  Labour: there is not much opportunity for work on date of visit, however, about 180 POW were employed on various jobs.  Canteen: none. Welfare fund: £20.0.0  Religious activity:  a) Protestant: no Chaplain in Camp. Services held from time to time by British Chaplains. On 10.6.45 services were held in all Compounds by Dr. H. Golzen of the Scottish Church (who lost his right arm during the last war whilst fighting as a German soldier).    b) Roman Catholic: Chaplain: JAMAR Hans, Gefr. Services are held in all compounds.  Camp libraries: Compound A = 294  Compound B = 200  Compound C = about 200  Compound D = 150  Musical activity:  Compound A: orchestra DTC (Deutsche Theater Comrie) 8 members. Instruments: - violins 3, accordion 1, trumpet 1, saxophone 1, clarinet 1, jazz 1.  We heard part of a concert given by this band at the Camp infirmary on Sunday afternoon (10.6.45). The orchestra played exceedingly well (most members are professional musicians). The members intend to keep together as a band after their release. All the orchestral scores have been written by hand.  Compound B: Instruments available: - violins 3, trumpets 2, accordion 1, cello 1, guitar 1, jazz (self made) 1.  Compound C: no instruments. |  | Compound D: instruments available:   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  | Bought | Self made | Total | | violins | 1 | 5 | 6 | | mandolins | 1 | 4 | 5 | | guitar | 1 | 3 | 4 | | jazz | 1 | - | 1 | | xylophone | - | 1 | 1 |   Theatre groups: there are theatres in each compound with all kinds of improvised material, scenery etc.   |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | Members: | Compound A: |  | 20 |  | |  | Compound B: |  | 18 |  | |  | Compound C: | about | 20 |  | |  | Compound D: |  | 40 |  |   Camp choirs:   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | Members: | Compound A: |  | 30 | |  | Compound B: |  | 36 | |  | Compound C: | about | 30 | |  | Compound D: |  | 32 |   Educational activity   |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | Classes | Pupils | | | | | Compound | A | B | C | D | | English | 210 | 196 | 150 | 112 | | French | 14 | 16 | - | - | | Architecture | 30 | - | - | - | | Course for professionals | 36 | - | - | - | | Shorthand | 165 | 97 | 50 | - | | Mathematics | 12 | 84 | 100 | 73 | | History of art | 15 | - | - | - | | History of literature | 27 | - | - | - | | German | - | 71 | 50 | - | | Geography | - | 46 | - | - | | Book keeping | - | 52 | 50 | 65 | | History | - | 66 | - | - | | Spanish | - | 52 | - | - | | Gardening | - | 24 | - | - | |

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| |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | Mechanics | - | 12 | - | - | | Electrotechnics | - | 22 | - | - | | Driving | - | 16 | - | 40 | | Nature study | - | - | 50 | - | | Agriculture (fruit and vine cultivation) | - | - | 60 | 40 | | Political economy | - | - | 30 | - | | Music | - | - | 50 | - | | Building and metal work | - | - | 25 | - | | Drawing and painting | - | - | 20 | - | | German (grammar) | - | - | - | 53 | | German (literature) | - | - | - | 46 | | German (history) | - | - | - | 112 | | Arithmetic | - | - | - | 40 | | Chemistry | - | - | - | 22 | | Wireless technic | - | - | - | 18 | | Study of motors | - | - | - | 60 | | Technology | - | - | - | 18 | | Technical drawing | - | - | - | 45 | | Commercial training | - | - | - | 15 | | Russian | - | - | - | 47 | | Tailoring | - | - | - | 14 |   Sports: one football ground is available (2 days per week per compound)  Film: none  Radio: only two are now in use.  Correspondence: same situation as mentioned in last report. Almost no incoming mail for present inmates.  Complaints: none  Requests:  a) The Camp Leaders desire for all Compounds:  - Books  - Footballs, hand and fistballs, football bladders.  - Uniforms Compound A and C as many as possible.  Compound B = 300  Compound D = 600 and 50 overcoats  - for educational activity: textbooks and works which can be used for the classes; exercise books, pencils, erasers, ink, pens, drawing paper. |  | - for theatres. Material for stage decorations and costumes (cloth, paint for scenery, grease-paint, etc).  - for camp orchestras. Musical scores of every description, classical, popular, operettas, etc.  - for camp choirs. Books of folk music.  - for camp artists. Water colours, brushes, drawing paper, sketch books, drawing pens, oil colours, canvas, charcoal.  - Musical instruments, bows for violins.  b) Camp Leader A Compound desires:  - Books on architecture and history of art.  - Material for technical drawing: drawing board 80 x 120 cm, square, compasses, rulers, slide-rules, technical tables, square-rules of 45o and 30o  c) The Medical Officers desire:  - for the camp infirmary: cigarettes, games.  - for themselves: works on “Innere Medizin, Pharmakologie, Chirurgie, Zahnheilkűnde, Dermatologie mit Atlas, Hals, Nasen-Ohren, Kinderkrankheiten, Geburtshilfe,” and any kind of modern medical literature.  [*Internal Medicine, Pharmacology, Surgery, Dentistry, Dermatology with Atlas, Cervix, ‘ear-nose-and-throat’, Childhood diseases, Obstetrics]*  Escapes: 3 men out 10.3.45, recaptured 12.3.45.  Discipline: on the whole, good.  General impressions: The camp has improved in every respect since our last visit. The POW seem to be more content and look well. In time it will perhaps be possible to send out parties for walks, and so get them out of their compounds.  - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - |

**August 1945** - The authorities realised there were too many hard-line black Nazis concentrated in this one camp and some were moved to Camp 165, Watten. Sulzbach, on seeing the results of his work with re-education, commented that, “*We have the chance of a life-time to re-educate all POWs… The soil is prepared for the adoption of a new way of life*.”

**16 August 1945** – pow Kurt Zimmermann, aged 21, died of appendicitis, later reinterred at Cannock Chase German Military Cemetery.

**18 & 19 August 1945** – Mr James Grant (PID - English Language Inspector), made a report on his visit to the camp – it was not his first: “*when I went back to Comrie, and found that the situation had changed very markedly…*

*Compound A had been emptied – the greys going south and the blacks going to Wick.* [Watten]

*Compound B had only 500 men in it, and*

*The other two compounds were rather below strength.*

He found Compound B to be depressing. The leader called, Rűcker, stated that the lack of mail from home, and the removal of half the pows from the compound, had been upsetting. He was described as being; “*very energetic*” and was trying to start up an orchestra and theatre group.

**25 September 1945** – pow Christian Munz, aged 32, was killed in a motor accident, later reinterred at Cannock Chase German Military Cemetery.

**22 October 1945** - Cowden hostel became an independent German Working Camp - numbered 242. Separate details.

**11 November 1945** - Sulzbach had convinced over 3,500 pows at the camp, with few resisting, to make the following oath:

“*Never again shall such murder take place! It is the last time we will allow ourselves to be deceived and betrayed. It is not true that we Germans are a superior race; we have no right to believe that we are better than others. We are all equal before God, whatever our race or religion. Endless misery has come to us, and we have realised where arrogance leads.*

*In this minute of silence at 11 a.m. on this day, November 11, 1945, we swear to return to Germany as good Europeans and to take part, as long as we live, in the reconciliation of all people and the maintenance of peace*.” (Quoted in several books).

[Herbert Sulzbach was transferred to the officers’ camp (18) at Featherstone Park where he had further success in his methods.]

**21 November 1945** – ICRC Inspection Report by M Bieri. Commandant - Lt Col D E M Fielding. Strength; 824 Germans, 10 Austrians. Discipline was noted as good, with no escape attempts since the last report.

**December 1945** – there was a carol service in the village, where 150 POWs joined locals.

Although there were few opportunities for the pows to work in the local area, as security was gradually decreased, work parties were sent out further afield to be employed on construction of houses and roads, forestry and on farms. There were many cases of German pows forming strong relationships with the local people, and some who later married local girls.

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**22-25 March 1946** – Visit by W G W Aston from PID, in order to look at “*Upgrading of deserving Ps/W – Re-education and progress*”. Permanent strength – German pows - 4 officers, 1014 O.R. – during this visit there were also 2898 pows from camps in USA in transit to other camps.

Commandant: Lt Col D E M Fielding, OBE. Camp leader: Fw Pusch, Walter (A) D Compound

Interpreter: Capt P H Blake (Austrian) O/Fw Hoffmann, Fritz (B) C Compound

(Since 4 March – regarded as forceful and overly aggressive) Deputy C/L: Uffz. Tilgen, Peter (B) D Compound

German M.O.: Ass Arzt Dr Groesche (C) / & Dr Lengeling (B)

Dentist: Stabarzt Urbach (C)

The C compound leader, Hoffmann, was described as a military type and considered to be senior overall. He mainly dealt with Pows in transit. The D compound leader, Pusch was concerned with the working pows.

1018 pows held in Compound D – pow staff of 31 in compound C – these were soon combined. 57 billetees had been transferred to Cowden Camp 242.

Simplified screening - permanent: A 25 / B 575 / C 369 / Unscreened 29. Despite earlier clear-outs of many C pows, this is a higher percentage than most camps.

Ex-USA in transit: A 42 / B 2452 / C 402 / Unscreened 2, in hospital.

Morale was regarded as being ‘*fairly low’*. This was mainly due to; a. the influence of 270 U-boat pows arrived from a camp in Londonderry. They were mostly C grade and had to be separated from the main body of pows; b. Uncertainty over repatriation, though there were signs that this was proceeding; c. Anxiety over conditions in Germany and their future. The pows in working compound D were considered to be largely anti-Nazi and fairly satisfied.

The pows from camps in the USA were in compounds A, B and C. Like elsewhere, these pows had low morale as they had been misinformed in the States that they were to be returned to Germany. 103 were Austrian. Many other pows from the States would pass through this camp during the next few months.

There were 370 youth pows (under-25) – 220 of which were from U-boats. To this time no special arrangements had been made for them, but the visitor hoped a youth leader would be of benefit, and possibly a youth parliament be established in the near future. The 220 U-boat youth were regarded as a political problem.

Despite the need for good re-education activities, these were slow to develop at the camp. The main reasons were antipathy by some pows, especially c grades; lack of materials; lack of suitable, heated accommodation. British staff showed little interest and were generally too busy with administration. The standard list of re-education activities was given:

Wochenpost and Ausblick – separate appendix.

Newspapers – wide range of British daily papers and weeklies paid for from the Welfare Fund. Some German papers were also received, (no details).

Library – used as a reading room, with 2500 books, including 390 English teaching books. More books needed.

Lectures – regular. Held in a hut that could only accommodate 130. The u-boat personnel had; “*distinguished themselves as politically unripe and fanatical*” at a recent lecture.

Discussion Groups – twice monthly with 100 to 150 pows. Not many youth attended. Pows were reserved in giving their opinions due to mistrust.

Films – The compulsary film concerning Concentration Camps had been shown in September 1945. There had been no further films until a couple of days earlier.

Wireless – set in a guardroom controlled by British staff. A loudspeaker was in each compound in unheated huts that could only hold 80 pows. This needed to be improved.

Camp magazine – First issue in production – *Der Wille: Lagerzeitung Camp No.21* (The Will. Camp news). Later issued fortnightly.

Press review – a handwritten news summary was displayed on a wall. It was of little interest.

English Instruction – 125 pow pupils. 2 of the teachers were considered as being politically unsound - this needed to be investigated further by an English Inspector.

Other activities.

Religion – Evangelical pastor, Lt Siefkes (B). About 10% of compound D, and 20% of the other compunds, attended services. There was a small Bible study group.

The RC padre had an attendance of about 120 pows at Sunday services. Small meetings held each evening. Both padres visited Camp 242.

Education – had declined considerably since the ICRC inspection in June 1945: Maths – 20 / French – 5 / Russian 6 / Latin 20. A painting class was due to start if materials could be obtained.

Theatre – 2 theatre groups; 15 pows for classics, and 25 in variety. A small theatre with room for a standing audience of 120.

Orchestra – 10 performers with 12 instruments. Mainly light and chamber music, some classical. Some poetic evenings with musical accompaniment. A folk choir of 25, and chapel choir of 18.

**16 May 1946** - an ICRC inspection by Major F Bieri, found the camp to be, ‘*a very good, well run camp’*. Strength 3429, including about 2000 in transit – held in 4 compounds.

Nationalities – 2699 Germans / 154 Austrians / 1 each of Pole, Italian, Slovak and Rumanian.

**7/10 June 1946** – Mr W G W Aston returned in order to 1. Screen Waffen SS PW; 2. Investigate Padres’ activities; 3. Re-education and progress. Strength; 4 officers, 3256 OR – of which 550 were in working compound D, the rest were in transit. The 3260 pows in transit were from camps in the USA or Belgium.

The report concerns the pows in Compound D. The only changes to senior personnel were German M.O. Dr Groesche, replaced by Unterarzt.Dr Schott, Paul (C prov).

The numbers in Compound D had been reduced, and 200 U-boat personnel had been transferred. Simplified screening – A 20 / B 320 / C 82 – remainder provisionally graded.

The commandant and IO showed interest in re-education, however, it was stated that the IO was; *“apt to force his personal ideas on the PW by harangue and vindictive argument.”* This attitude caused distrust about democracy for many pows.

Morale was still regarded as low due to slow repatriation, news from home, and the IO causing resentment. The visitor had spoken to 10 pows who felt that “*they were being victimized as criminals, but this was partly due to a more rigid discipline*.” The camp leader thought 250 of the pows were “*truly democratic*”, 50 still Nazi’s, the rest politically indifferent. No communist tendencies were noted.

Youth - With the removal of the u-boat youth, there were just 80 left. A youth leader had been appointed and 3 others were organising youth activities, mainly weekly discussions. 50 youth were engaged in education activities. This was regarded as an improvement.

A new cultural committee had 8 members and met weekly. The visitor attended a meeting and the IO was also present - it did not go well. Mr Aston stated that the IO began haranguing the committee and became over excited to the extent that the visitor closed the meeting. He stated that the IO was having an adverse affect on re-education.

The standard list of re-education activities was given – but just 2 months after the last report, there was little difference. There was a regular supply of films from PID every 2 weeks, but these were in English; YMCA sent entertainment films every three weeks. The magazine was issued regularly. The two teachers suspected of being politically unsound had been replaced.

Religion - Protestant padre: Leut. Siefkes, Karl (B) / RC padre: Gefr. Jamar, Ludwig (B). Concerns had been raised that the two padres were ineffective and not a great success. The commandant wished to replace them and the visitor agreed. It is surprising that this was put as a special purpose for this visit.

In his conclusions, Mr Aston again stated that the IO was a major problem. However, in his recommendations he put the removal of the two padres, but did not list the removal of the IO.

**4 & 5 November 1946** – After each lecture, the visitors and the camp submitted reports. Paul H Emden gave a few details of the camp in his report as he found it, “*one of the most interesting camps”* he had visited. He found the intellectual standard to be very high.

*“The canteen is adorned with excellent paintings; there is a theatre equipped with costumes and stage furniture; they have an orchestra and there is always a good and informative exhibition.”* The camp and study leaders had spoken to Mr Emden to ask him to raise in London that more lecturers were needed – the commandant had also previously raised this in correspondence. They also stated that the camp was seen in a false light with not much interest in re-education. Mr Emdon agreed with their opinion and stated; “*Comrie Camp is full of life and endeavour*…”

Comments by other lecturers also indicated that political attitudes were improving.

**28/31 January 1947** – P H MacDonald from COGA carried out a re-education survey. Strength; 3 0fficers. 852 OR. 134 of these were in billets. No more pows in transit. Half of the pows had been transferred from Cowden Camp 242.

There were two changes to the German senior personnel : Camp leader: O/Fw Hoffmann, Fritz (B) [previoulsy C Compound leader]

Deputy C/L: Fw Schmidt (B)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Political screening: | A | B+ | B | B- | C | Unscreened |
|  | 10 | 18 | 608 | 17 | 112 | 90 |

23 pows had appealed against their political grades – in theory, the better the grade, the sooner the repatriation - 14 allowed, 9 rejected. 127 more appeals were pending.

Just 40 pows had been repatriated from this camp to date – a low number in comparison to many camps.

The visitor stated that there had been friction between COGA and the commandant previously – something that had not been related in previous reports. He considered that there was now a clearer understanding and good terms.

Captain Blake, the IO, was still in place, “*but does not now intervene so actively… he has a good understanding of re-educational problems and gives shrewd assistance from the interpreter’s office, but has realised that his personal appearance at camp activities is not welcomed by the PsW, amongst whom he is not popular*.”

Mr MacDonald gave brief descriptions of the German seniors:

The camp leader had been a soldier since 1929. “*He presents a now unfamiliar figure in a Wehrmacht uniform with badges of rank and polished jackboots, but I could find no evidence that his attitude is unduly militaristic or his discipline harsh.”* He was considered to be fair, and gave assistance to those organising re-education activities.

The deputy, “*is a self-seeker who joined the NSDAP in 1931; he has little influence in the camp*”. He worked as a clerk in the labour office.

The previously expressed fear that a negative view of the camp persisted and they were penalised for this, lowered morale. Considering how slow repatriations were carried out for this camp, they may have been correct. The visitor screened those previously unscreened and gave them a high grade. The information that 200 ‘black’ C grade U-boat personnel had already been repatriated before many other higher grades in this camp was explained – but it is doubtful the reasons were accepted. The main cause for higher morale in many camps was contact with local civilians – but this camp was in a sparsely populated area with few opportunities.

15% of the pows were youth. Weekly youth group meetings were taking place for about 25 pows. It was recommended that 18 C grade youth were sent on courses at the youth pow camp, Radwinter Camp 180.

There were few changes to re-education activities. Films were still sent by YMCA, and now also Gaumont British. The wireless had been removed from British control and was now in the canteen with loudspeakers in the recreation room and dining hall. Hamburg was the most popular station.

Religion – There were two well-equiped chapels. Protestant padre: Leut. Siefkes, Karl (B) no change, despite recommendations. He had joined the NSDAP in 1931 and was, “*not a good influence*”. A new RC padre: Ogefr Grunert (A) took an active role in the cultural life of the camp.

General education activities had declined further. There were small classes for engineering, Latin, and German language/literature.

A French language course was run by Fw Kroeger, but the visitor found him to be highly undesirable – “*an opportunist who had hitherto concealed that he was running a Nazi cell in Malaga during the Spanish Civil War*.”

**16 February 1947** – a visiting lecturer reported that there were about 540 pows.

**May 1947** - Comrie became a satellite camp for Castle Rankine Camp 64 – about 35/40 miles away. The Commandant at Comrie, Lt.Col. Fielding, was transferred to become Commandant at Castle Rankine. Details below are contained in National Archive file FO 939/145 which relates to Castle Rankine with some additional notes for Comrie.

**2/7 June 1947** – From re-education report for main camp: Strength 597 pows. The camp leader continued to be Ofw Hoffmann – “*ex-regular who appears capable*.” Activities were increasingly affected by repatriations, otherwise there was little change except the two magazines for the main and satellite camps were amalgamated – “*Denny Comrie Rundschau”* (Review). Regular football matches between pows and other local teams were noted.

**26/29 June 1947** – English Inspector’s Report. 606 pows. 3 classes with just 20 pow pupils.

**20-24 October 1947** – Re-education report. 986 pows. Many of the new pows had been transferred from camps in England and morale was generally low. The joint magazine was issued monthly and was popular. The theatre group had ended due to repatriations. Musicians from Comrie had been transferred to the main camp to form a good orchestra – there were monthly concerts, but also transport problems bringing pows to the main camp.

**10/13 November 1947** – English Inspector’s Report. 897 pows. 2 classes with just 12 pupils.

There are no more entries for Comrie after November 1947. The main camp at Castle Rankine also closed and the administration, (including Commandant Fielding) were transferred to Cowden Camp which took the number 64, (Cowden started as a hostel for Comrie, then became independent camp 242).

Known Commandants:

15 June 1944 - ? Mentioned in ICRC report that this was a new commandant’s first day.

27 March 1945 – November 1945 - Lieutenant Colonel Archibald Kennedy Wilson CBE; ex-police officer, including Chief Constable of Liverpool.

November 1945 - ? - Lieutenant Colonel Darcy Evelyn Mills Fielding O.B.E.; from the York & Lancaster Regiment.

The frequent nonsense story made about so many camps that Rudolf Hess stayed there is repeated for Comrie. STV had a headline (14 April 2010): “*During the Second World War, Cultybraggan, near Comrie, held some of the most notorious Nazis – including Hitler’s deputy Rudolf Hess*” – and The Sun, under the headline, “*Hi-De-Heil*” reported that; “*Old Nazi POW camp in Scotland which once held Hitler’s deputy Rudolf Hess is to be transformed into luxury hotel.*”

The following email from Peter R McNaughton gives an accurate account:

"*…Rudolph Hess never stayed at Camp 21 in Comrie. He did, however, stay at Buchanan Castle some 40 miles away, near Buchlyvie. The father of a friend of mine was the one who captured him. The story goes that Mr. Clark was at a soiree in the evening and heard the crash. On looking out he saw flames coming from a crashed aircraft on the hillside.*

*He was dressed in a tuxedo and strapped on his Sam Brown belt with revolver over it and went to investigate. He came across this figure moaning and staggering around. He drew his revolver and then took the man to the house where the soiree was being held. There the prisoner was handed over to the military police. It was only later that he realized that his revolver was not loaded! And only much later that he found out that his prisoner was, in fact, Hess.*

*The following day, much to his embarrassment the Duke of Hamilton, a Spitfire pilot in Edinburgh, was asked to go and identify him. Apparently, Hess had met him in Berlin in or around 1936. Hess thought that by naming him and suggesting he knew him, that the Duke could identify him and would lead him to Churchill. Hess, of course, was a lunatic. He had apparently hoped to come to an arrangement of stopping the War. The following day he was sent to London where he was incarcerated in the Tower of London until he was flown to Nuremberg.*

*The article that everyone quotes was in either the Daily Mail or the Daily Mirror. As with many rags the reporter jazzed up the article with this comment. [That he was held at the POW camp]. Rudolph Hess was never in Comrie Camp (Camp 21) but was in Scotland for only two nights. The first when he was captured (or gave himself up) and the second at Buchanan castle in Bucklyvie near Kippen and Loch Lomond in Stirlingshire.*

*The first group of prisoners in Comrie camp were Italians from the Western desert campaign. They were given pinkish/mauve togs to wear. They eventually were shipped to other camps. The very first prisoner in the camp in late 1939/early 1940 was a sergeant from the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. He had gone AWOL from Stirling Castle as he was concerned about the health of his pregnant wife. He was marched under escort right up Dalginross in Comrie. Much to the amazement of the local people!*

*You may be interested in knowing that I was born in Drummond Street in Comrie in February 1944. I have just completed a rather extensive article on the life of the late Helmut Stenger who was a POW in Comrie Camp from late 1943 to late 1946.*" (See <https://www.highlandstrathearn.com/table-of-contents/20th-century/helmut-stenger-a-german-friend>)

**After the camp:**

The site was taken over by the Ministry of Defence. In the 1970s, the two prisoner compounds to the W side of the site were demolished, and an assault course and firing range were constructed on part of that area. The groundworks of the demolished huts can still be seen.

Acquired in 2007 by the Comrie Development Trust. There is multiple use of the site including a museum, allotments, rental space for small business and light industry. Some huts have been converted to accommodation. There seems to be repeated financial and management issues with the camp.

An ex-pow, Heinrich Steinmeyer, left £384,000 to the village when he died in 2014. (Or, SecretScotland he “bequeathed about £110,000 / or BBC £400,000 / or Author’s Note in ‘Black Camp 21’ £430,000).

The site as it is now - <https://repatriatedlandscape.org/pow-sites-in-scotland/pow-camp-21-cultybraggan/>

**Further information:**

Camp21.org.uk – Cultybraggan Camp History Project – Site with many, varied resources about the camp. Some resources are limited to researchers – for access, contact email [c21@silvest.co.uk](mailto:c21@silvest.co.uk)

‘Camp 21 Comrie’ – Valerie Campbell – Whittles Publishing - 2017.

National Archives –

FO 939/106 and 295 – 21 Working Camp, Comrie Camp, Perth – dated 1945/1947 – used above.

FO 939/145 - 64 Working Camp, Cowden camp, Comrie, Perthshire. Dated 1945-48 – used above. Most details in this file concern Castle Rankin Camp 64.

WO 208/3530 – Notes of subversive activities at POW Camp Comrie, Scotland – dated 1944 Sept – 1945 Feb.

WO 208/4633 – 21 POW Camp, Comrie, Perth, Scotland: death of German POW – dated 1945 Apr-Sept.

Historic Environment Scotland -  [http://canmore.org.uk/event/910856 /](http://canmore.org.uk/event/910856%20/)  [http://canmore.org.uk/event/847829](https://canmore.org.uk/event/847829)

‘Execution at Camp 21’ filmmade for Channel 4’s Secret History series, 1998. The story of the murder of Wolfgang Rosterg by Nazi hardliners.

Several pages of details in ‘Churchill’s Unexpected Guests’ – S Jackson – 2010 - The History Press

### The Imperial War Museum has copies of the magazine dated February and May 1947. Ref LBY E.J. 441.

### ‘*Black Camp 21’* – Bill Jones – Polygon – 2018. This book is fiction, based on events mainly at Devizes and Comrie. Though fiction, I would guess that it captures the ‘black’ nature of the camps and some of the pows held there, very well.