**Camp 29** **- Royston Heath Camp, Royston, Hertfordshire**

Included in the 1945 ICRC camp list – Labour Camp. 29. Royston Heath Camp, Royston, Herts.

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| **1947 List** | | | | | | | |
| 29(G.W.C.) | Royston Heath Camp, Royston, Herts | E. | Priswar, Royston | Royston 2301 | Royston (L.N.E.R.) | Lt.Col.A.C.Foreman | 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 |
| TL 358 415 | 154 | 29 | Royston Heath Camp, Royston | Hertfordshire | 4 | German Working Camp | STANDARD type |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Location:** The NGR above is incorrect. According to local information and signs, the camp was located just west of the club house shown on the map, at approximately TL 347 408.  Royston Heath is the local name given to what is mapped as Therfield Heath. It is a common.  **Before the camp:** Common land.  **POW Camp:**  **1941** – opened with an initial capacity of 300 – but with plans to extend using 20% of the pows to build more Nissen huts, and the rest to work on local farms. The camp had a pow compound measuring approximately 350 x 150 feet, (107m x 45m) surrounded with double barbed-wire fencing. The British section at the front of the camp, next to the road for 80 staff / guards, was approximately 200 x 150 feet (60m x 45m). (Measurements MH55/1884).  At first, Italian pows were accommodated to work on farms in the counties of Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire and Essex.  **Late 1941** - Two members of the Corpo Aero Italiano (CAI – Italian Air Corps) were sent here, (5 others were sent to Barton Field Camp 26). The CAI had bases in Belgium. They took part in the Battle of Britain and the Blitz supporting the Luftwaffe from 24 October to April 1941, with 454 offensive and over 1000 defensive sorties, including bomber escorts.  **December 1941** - Some Italian pows were formed as a construction crew to build Trumpington Camp 45.  **1943** – Hostels listed for Italians; Newport - C.S.D. Arlesey - Buntingford. |  |
| Ordnance Survey 1955 |

**May and November 1944** - The camp was listed as an Italian Labour Battalion under the Eastern Command area, (WO 32/10737). During 1944 the Italians were gradually replaced by German pows .

Oversight and development of re-education activities and English teaching for German pows was carried out by PID (Political Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office) / COGA (Control Office for Germany and Austria – UK). Visits and reports were made. The standard of the reports varied greatly. The visitors took little interest in activities other than re-education, they rarely mention welfare, sports, games, pastimes, crafts, etc of the pows.

****< <https://www.hertsmemories.org.uk/content/herts-history/topics/world-war-two/italian-pows-at-harvest-2>

**June / July 1945** (date damaged on document) – Mr M Lyons visited to review re-education. Listed as a German Working Camp. This was an early visit from a member of PID and did not follow the later standard structure of reports.

Interpreter Officers (IO) – St.J Easton / S/Sgt Blaser

The commandant was satisfied with the work of the pows. Some pows had been transferred away from the camp and few C category (Nazi) pows remained.

The first visiting lecturer had recently given a talk on ‘*Democracy v. Totalitarianism’* to 750 pows. There was no suitable hall so the pows had stood throughout the presentation; it was regarded as a great success.

There was a library with 430 books, more were requested. An order was also attached for – music scores; ping pong balls; playing cards; German-English dictionaries; text books, especially for mathematics, and in German. Funds were available from the Welfare Fund built up from sales in the canteen.

**4 September 1945 –** A memo stated that there was a very good orchestra. It was suggested that it was good enough to give a concert for broadcasting on the BBC pow programmes or even on the Home Service.

**April 1946 –** 100 pows arrived from camps in the USA; a visiting lecturer commented that they had not settled down. They had been misinformed in the States that they were being returned to Germany and consequently their morale was low.

**May / June 1946** – There were further intakes of pows from Canada and Belgium. Similar groups from Canada often had a high number of category C pows having been captured early in the war and not seeing the devastation it had caused. Many of the 200 pows from Belgium were ex-SS and had been held in very poor conditions, many required medical treatment.

**3 June 1946** – English Inspector’s Report by Mr J H Dagnall. Strength 1071. 7 classes with 180 pow pupils.

Commandant: Maj Curtis Lagersprecher: Baumann

The decision on how much emphasis was placed on re-education activities was entirely up to the commandant. Many opposed the work of PID as a distraction from the main purpose of the camp which was to provide labour. In most cases this led to the Commandant ignoring suggested activities and not assigning British staff to develop them. At Royston the hostility was expressed more openly:

“*English lessons have been discontinued for some weeks past, largely due to the almost hostile attitude of the Cmdt and Adjt to PID who literally did nothing to facilitate my work in the camp… they made no secret of this attitude, the excuse being a large number of billetees (285) and large intakes of new prisoners… the Cmdt is not interested in anything but labour*.” This attitude was also commented on by a visiting lecturer.

S/sgt Singer expressed support for PID aims; “*an efficient and forceful character… determined to re-start classes when circumstances permit.”* S/sgt Singer had recently arrived from a camp in Scotland. Doubts were raised about him by a lecturer as perhaps being too forceful – “*wants to be the ‘boss.’… Carries out instructions to the letter, but not in spirit… Interfered in the discussion…”*

**18 June 1946** – The issues with the IO S/sgt Singer were investigated. He had previously been at Gosford Camp 16 working under Henry Faulk who later became the head of the Pow Division of the Foreign Office developing re-education activities. Singer admitted that when he arrived at Royston he had badly misjudged the nature of the camp – he was more used to dealing with ‘C’ category pows, and had therefore made himself unpopular with some of the ‘A’ grade pows at the camp. This was accepted and the pows and commandant believed he had rapidly improved and was gaining the confidence of the camp. Later reports and comments indicate that he remained ‘*a forceful character.’*

**17 July 1946** – Two members of the Segregation Section for PID visited to conduct political screening and a general re-education survey.

Act. Commandant: Major D R E Shaw (in place 3 weeks) Camp leader: Ob Fw Baumann (B)

Interpreter: S/Sgt G Singer (at main) : S/Sgt Thomas (at Meesden) Deputy C/L: Fw Stamm (B)

German M.O’s: Dr S/Arzt Brosig (B) at main camp / Dr Wildberger (B-) at Meesden

Comments about S/sgt Singer were again very negative and it was stated that he was unsuitable for this camp.

Camp leader – Alfred Baumann (B), aged 37, a regular soldier from 1933, captured 1944 and had been leader here since September 1944. He had shown some Nazi tendencies, but then, “*became a good democrat.”* Ran the camp very well, no complaints about him.

Deputy – Fritz Stamm (B), aged 39, a commercial traveller, served in the army since 1939 as a pay clerk, captured 1944 and arrived at this camp in September 1944; *“..capable and efficient and is liked both by the British staff and the PW*.”

M.O. – Dr Hermann Brosig, (B), aged 40, a Sudetan German. Joined the Nazi party in 1938 and was called up in 1940 as a stretcher bearer. Later became an officer and served as M.O. on the Channel Islands. His family, including his elderly parents, had been expelled from Czechoslovakia. “*He is a very broken man.”*

About 80 pows were Volksdeutsche from Romania who had been drafted into the Waffen-SS. Many heard that their wives had been taken away to the USSR by the Russians. Most wanted to remain in the UK for as long as possible,

There were complaints about the food ration, especially when they were working very long hours at farms.

**15 to 17 August 1946** – O F Nash carried out a re-education survey. Strength – 3 officers, 1996 OR.

No change to senior personnel. 212 pows had recently arrived from camps in Munster.

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| Political screening: | A+ | A | A- | B+ | B | B- | C | C+ |
|  | 5 | 223 | 5 | 234 | 831 | 278 | 109 | 2 |

Major Shaw was seen as having a; “*heartening effect*” after the last commandant; however, he was not due to remain here for long.

S/sgt Singer was still in place – “*efficient but overworked… is very hostile to Germans but he rarely allows his feelings to interfere with his work*.”

Morale was recorded as low for those who had been at the camp since 1944. Pows from Munster had a higher morale, probably due to better conditions in this camp.

30% of pows were ‘youth’ (under-25); 20% were under 20. This was not seen as a problem and there were no special arrangements.

Transport between the camp and hostels was difficult and so interchange of activities was not occurring. The standard list of re-education activities was given:

Wochenpost and Ausblick – 1 copy of Wochenpost per 10 men. More required.

Newspapers – A wide range of British papers were received. “*Too many Austrian and not enough German newspapers are received*.”

Library – adequate.

Lectures – regular visits

“Brains Trust” – at main camp.

Films – YMCA and COGA newsreels

Wireless – Good installation.

Camp magazine - *Umschau* (Review).

Press review – Daily news broadcast at 20.30.

English Instruction – popular at main camp.

Other activities –

Religion – Protestant padre, Hans Groos (A) – no party record, “*a very beneficial influence.. especially on the young PW.”;* RC Padre, Gottfried Jaeger (A) – “*excellent type with no party record… very popular…”.* There were regular services and visits to the hostels and satellite.

Education – Various classes including French, Russian, German, shorthand, bookkeeping. Lack of text books.

Theatre – Performances given.

Orchestra – 15 man band giving light concerts.

**2 September 1946** – English Inspector’s Report. 7 classes with 127 pows.

Commandant: Lt Col Foreman Camp leader: Fw Stamm (B) (was deputy).

The previous leader had been transferred to Chrishall hostel. Many activities had ceased due to harvest.

**25 November 1946 –** English Inspector’s Report. 7 classes with 76 pows (numbers falling). No changes to senior personnel.

**1946** – Memories – “*Ernst-Wilhelm Peters, known as Peter, was a prisoner of war at the Heath’s Camp 29 for around six months, only being let out to work as a labourer on farmland and in the town before being granted partial freedom around Christmas that year.[1946]*

*Apprehensive about the hostility he might face as the former-enemy, he was actually met with kindness and warmth from the North Herts community, something which has stayed with him forever.*

*He told the Comet: “We arrived by train in May or June, little did I know that this small town would be the beginning of a complete change of life for me.*

*“Every morning at 8am, we assembled outside the gate to wait for the lorries that would take us to farms to work. We were driven back to camp at dinner time. The only snag was that we were behind the wire, and could only observe ordinary life from there.”*

*Peter’s English improved tremendously throughout his time working on farms, but he hadn’t been free to roam about until Boxing Day 1946. He said: “We had a very pleasant surprise when Major Shaw allowed us to go to town for a few hours – limited freedom at last. A friend and I donned our best uniforms, and walked out through the gate without being stopped by the sentry.*

*“We saw an elderly gentleman in High Street dapperly dressed coming towards us. He smiled and said: ‘frohe Weihnachten’ – which means Merry Christmas. Just imagine our surprise! He said he learned German as a youth working in our country. He then invited us for a cup of tea.”*

*Peter met his future-wife Edna when he went along to the town’s summer fair in 1947.”*

*From -* [*https://www.thecomet.net/news/22383596.german-pow-peter-recounts-gaining-festive-freedom-building-new-life-north-herts-beds-second-world-war/*](https://www.thecomet.net/news/22383596.german-pow-peter-recounts-gaining-festive-freedom-building-new-life-north-herts-beds-second-world-war/)

**8 / 11 January 1947** – O F Nash carried out a survey of re-education. Total strength; 3 officers, 1404 OR.

Commandant: Lt Col A C Foreman Camp leader: Ofw Fritz Stamm (B)

Interpreter: S/Sgt Thomas (previously at Meesden) Deputy C/L: PW Edwin Kordt (B+)

German M.O’s: Dr S/Arzt Brosig (B) at main camp / Dr Wildberger (B-) at Meesden

The commandant was reported to have little confidence in COGA methods of screening and re-education. It was reported that he imposed a strong military discipline which was resented.

S/sgt Singer was no longer listed. S/Sgt Thomas was “*very efficient,*” but due to be demobilised.

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| Political screening: | A | B+ | B | B- | C | Unscreened |
|  | 4 | 185 | 622 | 235 | 110 | 242 |

128 appeals had been made against screening results – the better grade, the sooner repatriated, (in theory). 468 pows repatriated to date.

Morale was recorded as low – mainly due to slow repatriations and bad news from home. The relaxation of fraternisation rules had a good effect.

The standard re-education activities list was very similar to the previous. Some had been affected by repatriations. Changes: there were small discussion groups; an Information Room with exhibitions had been developed.

Other activities –

Religion – The RC priest San Ogefr Gottfried Jaeger (A) received a very different review from August 1946 – “*fanatical catholic, very outspoken with strong political views which give offence to the more socialistic element in the camp*….” Despite this, later in the report it stated he was a very good influence. RC services were held in the local church, but pows resented that the commandant required them to march in formation to church, with an escort. Protestant services were well attended.

Education classes were given for Spanish, drawing, and building.

Theatre and orchestra groups continued at the main camp (very good) and Meesden (good).

**29 April – 2 May 1947** – Oliver Nash carried out another re-education survey. Strength; 2 officers, 1422 OR.

No changes to senior personnel.

Simplified screening was in place. A 2; B 1243; C 179. Screening was dubious in many cases – 16 appeals had been heard, all were successful, this was similar to other camps. 594 pows repatriated to date.

In the main camp there was little interest in re-education by the British staff other than efforts by S/Sgt Thomas. Morale was ‘fairly low’ due to; slow repatriations, little work, bad news from home, and the strong military discipline in the camp.

Few changes to the standard list of re-education activities: a low welfare fund resulted in fewer newspapers; more library books from COGA; decreasing number taking English lessons. Most pows preferred to go out of camp rather than join in with organised activities, other than sport.

**May onwards** – In various reports submitted by lecturer’s, a more positive image of the camp was given than those by PID. Pows attended lectures and contributed to lively debates. Although there were some comments about strict adherence to rules, it also appeared that the pows recognised that these were fairly applied. The commandant and his staff, other than IO S/sgts, were not interested in promoting re-education, but they did not hinder their development either. There were comments from some visitors that the main camp and Meesden were very efficiently run with excellent conditions. The one negative factor was always speed of repatriation.

**7 May 1947** – English Inspector’s Report. Total strength 1436. 4 classes with 38 pow pupils.

Title block for camp magazine – July 1947 – in file FO 939/297 (also contains 2 other editions) >

**15/18 July 1947** – Oliver Nash + trainee carried out a re-education survey. Strength; 1 officer, 1187 OR.

Commandant: Lt Col A C Foreman Camp leader: Uffz Herbert Malcher (B+)

Interpreter: S/Sgt D Hoffmann / S/Sgt Riemer Deputy C/L: Ofw Richard Koch (B+)

German M.O’s: Dr S/Arzt Max Brosig (B) at main camp / Dr Adolf Wildberger (B-) at Meesden

S/sgt Riemer was; “*a self styled Palestinian with a strong BEN HECHT leaning, whose youthful lack of discretion has caused some discontent among Ps/W. His activities are however being curbed by the C.O.”* (Ben Hecht was a Jewish American writer who supported establishing a national home in Palestine.)

New camp leader – Herbert Malcher, aged 33, captured on the Channel Islands – “*Honest, not very energetic.”*

New Deputy C/L – Richard Koch, aged 33, bricklayer – “*stupid, typical German NCO.”*

Morale remained ‘fairly low.’ Positive factors were greater freedoms, and hopes for the Marshall Plan. Organised outings to Cambridge were having a noticeably good effect. Outside contacts were often the most positive factor for attitudes towards the British and to democracy.

Hardly any change to the list of re-education activities.

**10-12 September 1947** – Oliver Nash and a trainee visited for another re-education report. Strength; 2 officers, 1562 OR.

A new interpreter replaced S/sgt Riemer – S/sgt Naphtalie, “*no influence on re-education.”*

New Deputy C/L: Ofhr R Stallinger (B), aged 26, student of forestry, had attended the special training course at Wilton Park. “*Quite pleasant*,” but had not developed any activities.

The accounts officer Captain Bell, was entrusted with welfare arrangements and was trying to establish further outside contacts.

Simplified screening – A 2; B 1562. Morale was considered to have improved to ‘*fairly high’* due to good treatment, conditions and increased repatriations.

**28-30 October 1947** – F C French carried out a re-education survey. Strength; 2 officers, 1300 OR.

1 change to senior personnel - Interpreter: only S/Sgt D Hoffmann listed. Comments on individual personnel were made – either very similar, or identical to, previous reports.

Morale recorded as good in main and hostels. “*Discipline is strict but fair*.”

The standard list of re-education activities:

Newspapers – ample supply of British papers. German papers were adequate. 2 Swiss papers also received.

Library – 2000 books, adequate.

Lectures – Regular. Good attendance.

Discussion groups – 120 men would meet after each lecture.

Films – Regular from YMCA and Travelling Films. Pows able to attend the cinema at Royston.

Wireless – Good installations and reception.

Information room – Regular exhibitions sent by COGA. Included the hostels.

Press reviews – None. Information room and wireless were considered sufficient.

Camp magazine – 300 copies of 16 sheets, fortnightly.

Education – English only. Other subjects were being considered.

Other activities –

Religion – same protestant and RC padres – both a good influence. Hostels visited. Pows also visited Royston Church and Methodist Chapel.

Entertainments – Only an orchestra remained which visited the hostels. A theatre group from Chrishall visited the main camp.

Sport – Ample facilities for football and table tennis.

Outside contacts – Visits to Royston Police Courts, Cambridge Council meetings, tours of London.

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

**2 / 3 December 1948** – Final English Inspector’s Report. Strength 1201. 4 classes in main with 28 pupils. 15 had lessons at Cambridge University. Some studied privately.

New Commandant: Lt Col E J Tucker New Lagersprecher: H Malcher.

**1 January 1948** – Death of Walter Michalski – recorded in camp magazine as due to a tragic accident. Walter was 20 years old from East Prussia. He was buried at Saffron Walden Cemetery on 7 January 1948, service by the protestant padre Hans Groos and other pows. Recorded for Saffron Walden, but I cannot find a record with the CWGC.

**6-10 January 1948** – Oliver Nash returned for the final re-education survey and to look at “*Civilianisation*.” Strength; 1 officer, 1077 OR.

Dr S/Arzt Max Brosig had been repatriated; Dr Adolf Wildberger at the main camp, previously at Meesden.

Good overall morale – due to Christmas freedoms and signs that all would be repatriated soon.

Re-education activities were slowly coming to a halt as leaders of the activities were repatriated. A small German literature class had started.

It was recommended that the RC priest should be repatriated as soon as possible due to his increasing bad temper and grumbling. He had been offered repatriation in July, but had declined.

A theatre group and an orchestra continued to provide light entertainment. Football could not be played on Sundays as the pitch was outside the camp on common land.

**9 March 1948** – Final report submitted by a visiting lecturer.

**There are no further reports in the National Archive files.**

Known Camp Commandants:

c.1944 Major J.R.McCormac (Camp WE V/1264/2)

c.1946 Major A Curtis

c.1946 Major Shaw

1946 -1947 Lieutenant Colonel A C Foreman.

1947 – 1948 Lt Col E J Tucker

Camp and hostels + number of pows where known:

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

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|  | Italian | | German | | | | | | | | | | |
|  | 1941 | 1943 | 6/46 | 8/46 | 9/46 | 11/46 | 1/47 | 4/47 | 7/47 | 9/47 | 10/47 | 12/47 | 1/48 |
| Main | Cap.300 |  | 729 | 866 | 863 | 646 | 638 | 676 | 588 | 537 | 643 | 634 | 552 |
| Arlesey |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Buntingford |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Newport |  |  |  | 60 | 60 | 50 | 64 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Redhill |  |  | 60 | 57 | 56 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Meesden |  |  | Camp 128 | 545 | 450 | 480 | 441 | 472 | 323 | 288 |  |  |  |
| Chrishall |  |  | C270 ? | 177 | 177 | 120 | With C45 | | | 362 | 313 | 276 | 297 |
| Baldock |  |  |  |  |  | 50 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Balsham |  |  | With other camps | | | | With C45 | | | 63 | 52 | 44 |  |
| Billets |  |  | 278 | 294 | 295 | 300 | 264 | 276 | 277 | 314 | 294 | 255 | 229 |
| Total |  |  | 1071 | 1999 | 1901 | 1646 | 1407 | 1424 | 1188 | 1564 | 1302 | 1201 | 1078 |

Slight discrepancies in totals were often due to pows in hospital or in detention.

**After the camp:** In 1948 the huts were used for emergency housing by Royston Urban District Council

The site as it is now: <https://repatriatedlandscape.org/england/pow-sites-in-eastern-england/pow-camp-29-royston-heath/>

**Further information:**

National Archives –

FO 939/113 29 Working Camp, Royston Heath Camp, Royston, Hertfordshire – dated 1945-48. Used above.

FO 939/297 – same details as above. Used above.

MH 55/1884 - Medical inspection and selection of camp sites for Italian prisoners of war coming to this country.

Short video with one woman’s memories of the camp: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wsoB6Ukz52k>

The German Federal Archives have a copy of the camp magazine.

**Satellite Camp**

**Meesden.** Previously Camp 128.

**July 1946 –** C.O. Capt Laws, 2nd i/c Lieut Hobach – both stated to be supportive of re-education activities.

Camp leader; Ob Schirrmeister August Huben (B), aged 31, regular soldier from 1934, no party record. Deputy Obfhr Ernst Gries (B), aged 25, salesman, called up in 1940.

M.O. Oberarzt Dr Adolf Wildberger (B-), aged 41, joined army in 1943 and was an MO in the Channel Islands. Member of Nazi party and the SA. Stated that he was no longer a Nazi, but the screening team kept him as B-.

**August 1946** - Mainly German pows + 96 ‘Transylvanian Germans.’ High morale.

20% were youth pows.

Good range of newspapers. Films from YMCA and Gaumont British. Battery wireless frequently out of use. English Instruction – popular

Education – Various classes including French, Russian, German, shorthand, bookkeeping. Lack of text books.

Theatre – Variety performances given.

Orchestra – band giving light concerts.

**January 1947** – CO still Capt Laws. Hostel leader Ernst Gries, (B) had been deputy, aged 26, was a clerk, satisfactory, but “*sincerity doubtful.”* Interpreter S/Sgt Travies was described as, “*quite ineffective*.”

Deputy leader; Uffz Paul Scheel (B), aged 32, draughtsman, joined NSDAP in 1933, but B grading was accepted.

The site had an electric generator. It was stated that the wireless was being replaced with one working from the mains – however all follow up reports still record a battery wireless.

**May 1947** – same C.O. and camp leader. Interest shown in re-education activities. 120 pows were Romanian Volksdeutsche with a very uncertain future.

The theatre group continued, but the orchestra had disbanded.

**July 1947** – Camp leader Uffz Hans Prinz, he had been hostel leader at Newport.

**September 1947** – same camp leader.

Morale considered to be ‘rather low’ mainly due to the uncertain future for the Volksdeutsche. Only half of these pows had been issued new certificates of nationality by the Romanian government – however, even they had not been given any information as to their future.

The camp was isolated and had few outside contacts.

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|  | 1941 | 1943 | 6/46 | 8/46 | 9/46 | 11/46 | 1/47 | 4/47 | 7/47 | 9/47 | 10/47 | 12/47 | 1/48 |
| Meesden |  |  | Camp 128 | 545 | 450 | 480 | 441 | 472 | 323 | 288 |  |  |  |

**Hostels**

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| **C.S.D. Arlesey** (Central Supplies Depot).  Memories place the site at the cement works, now closed: “*the CSD depot was built during the war to the right of the cement works (looking from Hotchin Road) with the pub Prince of Wales to the right of the main gate.”* This gives an approximate NGR of Tl 190 353.  Probably attached to another main camp after 1943.   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  | Italian | | German | | | | | | | | | | | |  | 1941 | 1943 | 6/46 | 8/46 | 9/46 | 11/46 | 1/47 | 4/47 | 7/47 | 9/47 | 10/47 | 12/47 | 1/48 | | Arlesey |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  |
| Ordnance Survey 1960 |

**Baldock.** Huts.

Local memory – “*it might have been at the top of Woodland Way, it was a displaced person's camp after and then used for homeless people until it was redeveloped about 25 years ago.”* (Approx NGR TL 251 323). (Alternative location was Page Close – TL 248 329). Agreed that the entrance was on London Road.

Almost certainly attached to a different camp before, and maybe after, this single entry.

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|  | 1941 | 1943 | 6/46 | 8/46 | 9/46 | 11/46 | 1/47 | 4/47 | 7/47 | 9/47 | 10/47 | 12/47 | 1/48 |
| Baldock |  |  |  |  |  | 50 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

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| **Balsham.** Previously attached to Trumpington Camp 45 where a listing recorded it as (Green House) Balsham. Converted stables and huts. 25 miles from the main camp.  *“..the POWs were housed in the stables/outbuildings behind the House on the Green. This house is next to what used to be the village school then, now a private house, as is the House on the Green… just behind The Prince Memorial Shelter, often called the bandstand*.” Approximate NGR TL 586 508.  **September 1947** – hostel leader, Hermann Hohnenkamp (B-), aged 34, Health Insurance employee, member of SA and Nazi party, “*Opportunist.”*  No electricity. Battery wireless. Pows attended Chrishall hostel to view films.  **October 1947** – same hostel leader.   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  | 1941 | 1943 | 6/46 | 8/46 | 9/46 | 11/46 | 1/47 | 4/47 | 7/47 | 9/47 | 10/47 | 12/47 | 1/48 | | Balsham |  |  | With other camps | | | | With C45 | | | 63 | 52 | 44 |  | |  |
| Ordnance Survey 1960 |

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| **Buntingford**  Almost certainly attached to another camp after this single entry. Approx NGR TL 369 292 – “*near to the depot.”*   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  | Italian | | German | | | | | | | | | | | |  | 1941 | 1943 | 6/46 | 8/46 | 9/46 | 11/46 | 1/47 | 4/47 | 7/47 | 9/47 | 10/47 | 12/47 | 1/48 | | Buntingford |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  |
| Ordnance Survey 1960 |

**Chrishall**. Huts. 12 miles from the main camp. Chrishall Grange – TL 445 427; land used alongside, to E of the Grange.

**July 1946** – A high percentage of U-boat, paratrooper and Luftwaffe members. Many still with Nazi beliefs.

**August 1946** – Hostel leader S/Masch. Rudolf Kose (B), aged 45, regular soldier 1922 – 1938, joined the party in 1939. Became a Post Office official until call-up in 1941 to the navy. Previously found to be satisfactory. Padre Dr Hardorp (B) – not a success, he also visited Meesden.

“*Chrishall Hostel, originally HQ of 270 Camp, was formed in August 1945, and there have been few changes in camp personnel*.” ??? Chrishall is 35 miles away from Luton Airport the name used by Camp 270 in 1945 according to English Heritage. However, the camp at Chrishall Grange was built by the USAAF in 1943 as accommodation for their personnel at RAF Duxford, 5 miles away, (NOT Luton).

The visitor stated that the hostel leader was; “*a bad influence and have arranged with the C.O. for him to be deposed and transferred to a HQ working party*.” Overall low morale mainly due to the leader’s anti-British attitude. He was replaced by ObFw Alfred Baumann who had been leader of the main camp.

40% were youth pows. No films. Wireless satisfactory. There had been no mail for 7 weeks, probably due to the change of main camp.

Theatre – Variety performances given. Orchestra – just 2 violins, an accordion and some zithers.

**November 1945** – Transferred to Camp 128 Meesden.

**Late 1946** - Transferred to Camp 45 Trumpington.

**September 1947** – Transferred back to Royston. Hostel leader Uffz Anton Hoidn (B), aged 28, Student, Nazi party member from 1940 - “*rather cynical but pleasant and helpful.”*

Good morale – “*pleased at being transferred from camp 45*.” Good theatre group.

**October 1947** – same hostel leader. The site was recorded as “*very lonely, but the Ps/W there lead a free and easy life*.” Had its own library.

The theatre group from Chrishall visited the main camp.

**January 1948** – same hostel leader.

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|  | 1941 | 1943 | 1945/46 | 8/46 | 9/46 | 11/46 | 1/47 | 4/47 | 7/47 | 9/47 | 10/47 | 12/47 | 1/48 |
| Chrishall |  |  | C270 - 128 | 177 | 177 | 120 | With C45 | | | 362 | 313 | 276 | 297 |

**Further Information**

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

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| **Newport** (Essex, Near Saffron Walden – about 15 miles from the main camp). Huts, (probably just 3).  *“..situated on Frambury Lane on the north side of the Lane, off the High Street. It occupied part of Hitch Common and extended west beyond the terrace of Victorian houses known as Pond Cross Cottages.”* Approx NGR TL 519 336.  Site built in July 1941 by the Bristol Aircraft Factory, intended to be used for the Women’s Land Army, but re-purposed as a pow camp.  “*Armed guards were in charge of the POWs and the whole site was surrounded by a high fence with two sets of locked gates. We have been told that at first discipline was strict and very little contact was allowed between the prisoners and the local people, but gradually things became more relaxed and the Italians could stroll about the village. The children, in particular, made friends with the Italians, who were probably the first foreigners many of them had seen, and even crept into the camp to be given nuts, chocolate and mugs of cocoa. On Sunday mornings the Catholic priest would come over from Saffron Walden to say Mass at the camp…”* After the war, when the Italians went home….” *They were replaced by German POWs who also worked for local farmers but were more strictly controlled and much less friendly.”* Extract from ‘A Village in Time,’ pp 159-160 – Published by Newport News, 1995.  **1943** – listed as a hostel with Italian pows.  Almost certainly linked to another main camp between 1943 and 8/46. |  |
| Ordnance Survey 1960 |

**August 1946 –** Hostel leader O/Maat Otto Nipperdey (A), aged 46, ran an inn, “*a typical rotund and jovial Gastwirt*”, no party record. Also described as; “*a nonentity.”*

30% were youth pows.

Supplied with newspapers from Meesden Satellite 3 times a week. No films. Wireless poor and under the control of British personnel.

**January 1947** – Hostel leader Hans Prinz (B), aged 34, electrician, member of SA 1933 to 1936 then NSDAP in 1938 – “*Opportunist, willing to co-operate*.”

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|  | Italian | | German | | | | | | | | | | |
|  | 1941 | 1943 | 6/46 | 8/46 | 9/46 | 11/46 | 1/47 | 4/47 | 7/47 | 9/47 | 10/47 | 12/47 | 1/48 |
| Newport |  |  |  | 60 | 60 | 50 | 64 |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**After the camp** – occupied by ex-Polish servicemen. Now residential area.

With thanks for location and additional information to David Evans, History Editor for Newport News.

**Redhill.** 10 miles from the main camp. Permanent building. Reported that the hostel was opened in April 1946 – but probably open before that.

**August 1946** – Hostel leader O.Fw Felix Seifert (A), aged 51, had a retail wireless shop, no party record – “*an excellent type of man.”* High morale.

40% youth pows. 6 pows from Canada were seen as having a bad influence on the youth pows. YMCA and COGA newsreels. Wireless poor and under control of British personnel.

A visiting lecturer at the same time had a very different view of the camp – “*not a pleasant camp and the atmosphere struck me as depressive, nasty and repulsive*.” – he reported that many still held on to the Nazi ideology.

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|  | 1941 | 1943 | 6/46 | 8/46 | 9/46 | 11/46 | 1/47 | 4/47 | 7/47 | 9/47 | 10/47 | 12/47 | 1/48 |
| Redhill |  |  | 60 | 57 | 56 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |