**Camp 33** **- Dancers Hill, South Mimms, Hertfordshire**

Included in the 1945 ICRC Camp list – Labour Camp. 33. Dancers Hill, South Mimms, Herts

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| **Prisoner of War Camps (1939 – 1948) - Project report by Roger J.C. Thomas - English Heritage 2003** | | | | | | | |
| OS NGR | Sheet | No. | Name & Location | County | Cond’n | Type 1945 | Comments |
| TQ 236 994 | 166 | 33 | Dancers Hill, South Mimms | Hertfordshire | 4 |  | Guards' compound comprised of hutting, the prisoners' compound was chiefly tented & enclosed by a double wire perimeter. A further small prisoners' compound was situated to the southwest & contained only 5 tents, but was guarded by 2 watch towers. |

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| **Location:** Approximate centre of camp at NGR TQ 233 995. Across Dancers Lane from Dancershill Farm.  **Before the camp:** Agricultural land. | |  |
| **POW Camp:** The photo shows a large pow compound with a smaller guards’ compound at the front alongside St Albans Road. The large compound includes some huts, and the smaller rectangles were tents. The EH report mentions a smaller compound with watchtowers – presumably this was a high-security holding area.  Italian and then German pows.  Extracts from an article about the camp: “*During 1943 a camp for German prisoners of war was built just north of Dancers Hill Road on the St Albans Road outside Barnet…*  *The prisoners were housed in standard Ministry of War Production huts with an 18ft 6in span. The side walls were made of bituminised corrugated iron sheet with brick end walls which had a doorway in the centre and a window at each side.* |  |
| Google Earth history images - 1945 | OS 1960. The small square is an electricity pylon. |

*By later standards it was a small camp – the usual size was some 35 prisoners’ huts with 15 guard huts, but our camp appears to have had about 15 prisoner huts plus a cookhouse, grocery and product store, a dining hut, a recreation hut, ablution and latrine blocks, a sick bay and carpenter’s hut.*

*There was a double barbed wire fence with coils of wire between the outer and inner skins. Sewage and mains water came from the nearby St Albans Road. Contrary to popular myth there were no guard towers with machine guns and searchlights, probably because the prisoners were considered ‘low risk.’*

*…they were employed on the land, particularly on potato production. Other nearby fields grew corn. Under the terms of the Geneva Convention, the prisoners were paid 6 pence a day for their labour. After the War ended they were still paid the reduced rate which compared with the 7s 6d a day for members of the Agricultural Trades Unions. The unions were upset because their members were being undercut by cheap immigrant labour and the Germans felt strongly about equal pay for equal work. The dispute petered out in the spring of 1946 when the camp closed. For a brief period in the winter of 1944-45 a small group of Italian POWs were housed at the top of Bell’s Hill in Barnet; they worked on nearby farms.”*

Article by John Heathfield in the Friern Barnet Newsletter. Published by Friern Barnet & District Local History Society, Issue Number 67, November 2016.

The double barbed wire fence was probably removed – as most other camps, after the war.

Dancers Hill House may have been used as part of the camp, probably for officers and administration.

The pows built a model of Salzburg Cathedral which was at the gate to the camp. British Pathé 1948 Film - [P.O.W. MODEL TOWN - British Pathé (britishpathe.com)](https://www.britishpathe.com/asset/78579/) . The film records that it was built by Austrian pows in 6 months. Although the issue date of the film is June 1948 and shows pows building the model, it is known that they built it well before 1948, and the camp closed in 1946.

I believe that this camp is the hostel recorded for Scrubs Lane camp 32 as ‘South Mimms’ in July 1946 for a very brief time with a skeleton pow staff of 18, before it closed. (Possibly also attached to 122) - NOT CONFIRMED

My thanks to Paul Doyle for supplying information – especially on locating the correct position for the camp and aerial picture.

**Postal items:** Letter sheet - 1946 (May) POW to Argentina – this appears to be to a German family.

**Further information:**