**Camp 60** **- Overdale Camp, Skipton, Yorkshire**

Included in the 1945 ICRC camp list – Labour Camp. 60. Overdale Camp, Skipton, Yorks.

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| **1947 Camp list** | | | | | | | |
| 60(G.W.C.) | Overdale Camp, Skipton, Yorks | N. | Priswar, Skipton | Skipton 513/4 | Skipton | Lt.Col.K.C.Miller | 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 |
| SD 998 525 | 103 | 60 | Overdale Camp, Skipton | Yorkshire | 3 | German Working Camp | STANDARD type. Overdale caravan site |

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| **Location:** Just NE of Skipton  **Before the camp:** Farmland  **Pow Camp:** Italian pows up to at least 1945, then German pows.  **September 1944** - when the Churchill Barriers had been completed, the Italian pows from Rockworks Camp, Orkney (previously numbered Camp 60) were transferred to Overdale.  Memories of some Italian pows being great craftsmen, making cigarette lighters from old shell cases using just a hammer and nail and other odds and ends. The security was lax; although there were barbed wire fences, local children used to crawl under in order to swap badges, etc.  **16 June 1945 –** First German pows arrived. Italians placed in hostels and billets and then on to other camps before repatriation.  **June to November 1945** – Abridged record by Erwin Hettwer, born 1927 in Silesia. He joined the |  |  |
| 1954 | Ordnance Survey 1956 |

Luftwaffe in January 1945, and was captured in March. Transferred from Otley Camp to Overdale on 19 June 1945:

*“Here were barracks and the paths between the barracks were no longer a muddy field. The camp had been occupied before us by Italian POWs. They were now on their way home. Hans and I got into the same barrack. There were bunk beds, 2 high, with mattresses on a wire mesh support. Each bed had 2 blankets; we got a mess kit, plate and cutlery. We were shown how to make the bed. The mattress was to be folded in half. The kit bag placed on the head end. One blanket was to be folded in a way that it could be wrapped into the second blanket and then placed on the folded mattress. Spare shoes were to be cleaned and be placed, soles up against the folded mattress. A towel was to be folded, placed on the wire mesh at the foot end and the plate and cutlery placed on it. We had no problems following that, the barrack looked neat when we were at work.*

*For work we were split into groups, some were assigned to work on farms, others to dig drainage ditches and lay clay pipe drains. An attempt was made to assign a prisoner to each group, who could speak English. When asked who could speak English, I did not raise my hand, following the old army rule never to volunteer. But others were saying: "You went to high school, you should be able to speak English". So, I was assigned with 2 others to work on a farm. It was time to bring in the hay.*

*Before we were let loose at the English population, we were instructed on how to behave. There would be no fraternizing. Any conversation would be restricted to the subject required for the proper performance at work. We were not allowed to enter any premises and certainly not become friendly with our employers or others. Any disobedience would result in a removal from the workplace and incarceration in camp. The employers were informed of these requirements and also were told not to give us any food.*

*Fortunately, most people found that silly and we communicated like normal people. However, we stayed out of the farmhouse and ate our food in a room in the barn. They must have seen that we came with dry slices of bread or just some margarine scratched on them, because we found a bowl of lettuce leaves on the table where we ate.*

*We were driven to work in the back of a lorry with 2 guards armed with rifles. When the hay was in, we were assigned to the group that was putting in drainage pipes. We were driven out to the fields, got these long-bladed spades and were told to start digging along the lines that were laid out. An older guy was the foreman, but unfortunately he only spoke Chinese, or at least his mumblings in the Yorkshire dialect sounded to me like that. There was a hut with a stove where he made his tea and also some for us. But we also used it to toast our bread on the top plate. At least that gave it some taste.*

*Some time later I was assigned to another farm. Here we were to pull weeds from potato fields. When the owner noticed that I could speak and understand English, they kept me at the farm. I tended to those important chores like chopping firewood, cleaning out the pigsty and cooling milk. Next morning I was to prepare the milk cans for the pick up. I had not had a taste of fresh milk for months. There was a measuring cup nearby. I filled it with milk and drank it. As the cup had only a short handle, I really only skimmed the top, not recognizing, that it contained a lot of cream. Having had no or very little fat in my food for all this time and suddenly getting a cup of cream, played hell with my digestion. In the afternoon I had a fever and severe diarrhoea. I was admitted to the hospital barrack and treated for dysentery. Two days later I was ok again. I was reassigned to a group that was straightening out and cleaning a small ditch. It was not really hard work and as a bonus there were lots of blackberries growing along the ditch. We sure helped ourselves to them and I was also able to take some back for Hans. He mashed them and used them as jam on his bread.*

*During that time, we were issued postcards to write home. These cards had a special coating to prevent the use of invisible ink. A drop of water on the card would turn the wet area brown. I was writing home to my mother, but I never got an answer. Later I found out why. I mentioned in the beginning that I used to live in Silesia and Silesia was annexed by Poland after the war. They had changed the German names of the villages and towns into Polish and the Polish postal service refused to deliver anything with a German address. So, my mail went to a waste basket. Until 1947 I had no idea whether I still had a family, where they might be and if they were still alive. In Germany I was considered as missing in action. As I knew of no other relatives or acquaintances outside of Silesia, I had nobody else I could contact.*

*Hans was in luck. His relatives lived in the Eastern part of Bavaria and he had relatives in Switzerland. One day Hans got a parcel from Switzerland. I forgot the content but I still remember the letter from the British Customs. The letter said that in the parcel were cigarettes. The import of cigarettes was subject to a customs charge, but as a POW he had no money, they would allow it free of charge this one time. However, the letter was signed: "Your obedient servant". Imagine that, a British government office sending a letter signed like that to a POW. We were impressed.*

*One day a new batch of prisoners arrived. They were POWs coming from the USA and had thought they were on their way home. Instead, they had to serve more time in England. They had been prisoners for quite a while. We admired their uniforms. Black shirts, black pants, no patches, just PW printed in white on the shirts and pants. After many years in prison, these guys knew all the tricks. It did not take them long to figure out a way to get out of the camp. With British guards carrying loaded rifles patrolling the fence, they made it out at night, milking cows in the fields. We wondered how they were able to get some fresh milk, but they did not tell.*

*The war being over, with no place to escape to, because Germany was occupied by Allied troops, the British camp administration had a clever idea. They established a camp police made up of POWs. They were now patrolling the fence at night and they caught prisoners trying to sneak out of the camp. Getting caught was not all that bad, 3 days in the calaboose was the usual punishment. So instead of being in a large barrack, they had a single room, the food was coming from the guard's kitchen and they had to work by moving coke in wheelbarrows approx. 50 feet from one heap to the other. Nobody cared how much was in the wheelbarrow or how fast you were moving. This was easier than the work outside.*

*Some prisoners were stationed permanently on farms but they were allowed to come back to camp to visit. One of them talked to me and told me that the farmer had a daughter, not quite 16 years old. She was always trying to be close to him. It happened as expected, her mother found them together. The mother was afraid, that the daughter might be pregnant and took her to see a doctor. The doctor diagnosed that she was not pregnant, but noticed that she was not 16 as yet. He had to report it to the authorities. The prisoner was charged with having intercourse with a minor. Old Bailey in their powdered wigs came to town. A British officer was appointed as his defence council. He pleaded guilty and received a "severe" punishment. They ordered him to be deported to Germany. It meant that he was sent home, while we stayed imprisoned for another 3 years.*

*As working prisoners, we were getting paid, 2 shillings per week. It was not really money, more like coupons that could only be used for purchases in the camp. One could buy toiletries, pencils, cigarettes but no food. My first purchases were a toothbrush and toothpaste. I did not need to buy a razor and blades, as I did not need to shave as yet. On July 07, I turned 18 years old. My birthday present was a second helping of soup in the evening. In all the time I spent as a POW, I had never seen anybody from the Red Cross and we certainly did not get any support or parcels from that organization. But others cared.*

*It was the Salvation Army that came, asked permission to take us to their hall for a coffee. Prisoners, that gave their word of honour not to escape were allowed to leave on a Sunday afternoon and were treated to coffee and cookies. But it was also different to walk out of the camp not in formation but strolling down the road side by side with the Sally Ann members while they tried to talk to us. Later they came and delivered used books to the camp library. The first book I read was "The Count of Monte Christo". I was amazed that I had no problem reading it. The Salvation Army has remained my favourite charitable organization and I have been supporting it over the years.*

*At the beginning of November, Hans was told that he was going to be transferred to a hostel with about 60 to 70 other prisoners. I went to the German camp leader and asked to be transferred with him. The answer was a straight "No". Yet, I got lucky. They needed one of the prisoners to stay in camp. I was put on the list of transfers but was informed that I had to work in a limestone quarry near Clitheroe. I did not care. We were transferred on November 09, 1945.”*

Full story - <https://www.pegasusarchive.org/pow/erwin_hettwer.htm>

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

**1 December 1945** – English Inspector’s Report.

His reception was, “*Cooperative but inhospitable. The mess is small, but guests are obviously unwelcome. The Commandant was absent on leave.”*

The Inspector gave talks about learning English, visited the hostel at Gisburn, and tested and instructed pow teachers.

**April 1946 –** The last Italians were transferred for repatriation.

**16/17 April 1946** – English Inspector’s Report.

The camp was described as; “*quite comfortable and the staff pleasant and helpful*.”

Continual movement of pows in and out of the camp was causing problems when trying to organise activities. Pows from camps in the USA arrived - it does not state this, but they generally had a very low morale as they had been misinformed in the States that they were being returned to Germany.

**24-27 April and 6 May 1946** – PID visitor. Strength; 3 officers, 1230 Other Ranks.

Commandant: Lt Col C W Hughes Camp Leader: H/Fw Grunert (B)

2nd i/c: Major Ball Deputy C/L: O/Fw Apfel (C)

Interpreters: S/Sgt Carey German M.O.: Dr Schiele (Unscreened)

S/Sgt Eyre Dental M.O.: Dr Hosang (Unscreened).

Commandant – on leave. 2nd i/c was due to leave.

S/Sgt Carey was a German refugee, new to the camp and keen on developing re-education. S/Sgt Eyre was assisting; he may have been at this camp when the Italians were here, as it was commented in other reports that his Italian was better than his German.

The camp leader admitted that he had not declared being a member of the Nazi Party. He had joined as he was in the Schupo (State police). This placed his position as C/L in doubt - he offered his resignation which was turned down. The visitor declared that; *“He is a modest character and keen on re-education… I recommend leaving his grading as B.”*

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| Political screening: | A+ | A | B | C | Unknown |
|  | 4 | 22 | 611 | 447 | 149 |

This was a high number of C category pows (36%) in comparison.

The visitor considered morale to be generally good, but the continued movement of pows was unsettling. 235 pows had been transferred out of the camp. During March and April, 299 had been received – all B or C. 100 of these recent arrivals were SS sent from a camp in Belgium where conditions had been very poor – many were ‘youth’ pows (under-25) and had not been given a choice about joining the SS. “*Atrocity stories*” received from the Russian zone were causing distress.

45% of the pows were youth, but were not considered to be a particular problem.

Camp activities had barely started. The visitor helped to arrange cultural and political committees to develop these. The standard list was given:

Wochenpost and Ausblick – 280 Wochenpost received.

Newspapers – British papers obtained locally. Some German and Swiss papers were received occasionally. The pows wished for more.

Library – 150 books – *“inadequate*”. This included books for the hostels.

Lectures – Regular for main and hostels.

Discussion groups – “*Brains Trust”* formed with teams of British staff and pows. The political committee hoped to start more discussions based on leaflets from PID.

Films – supplied by PID and YMCA. Entertainment films wanted.

Wireless – HQ and hostels had sets, but reception was not very good.

Camp magazine - *Lagerzeitung* (Camp newspaper). A typewriter and paper supplies were needed.

Press review – expected to start soon.

English Instruction – small classes at each site. “*English For All*” was in demand.

Other activities.

Religion – Protestant padre, K Schulz. RC service held by visiting Jesuit padre from Leeds. Services were held at HQ and hostels.

Education – only an agricultural class. More expected soon.

Theatre – a group performed mainly variety and ‘light’ plays. Goethe’s ‘Faust’ had been performed and was very successful. Playscripts needed.

Orchestra – 8 members with instruments playing light music.

**10/13 June 1946** – Visit to check re-education and interview candidates for the special training camp. Strength; 2 officers, 1287 OR.

A new commandant – Lt Col White M.C. had been in post for 2 weeks, previous service in India.

Interpreter S/Sgt Carey left the camp.

Many of the C grade pows were upgraded, this happened in many camps. The first batch of 31 pows were sent to Ure Bank Camp 247 prior to repatriation.

Morale was recorded as ‘fairly good.’ “*The camp is in very pleasant surroundings and the accommodation is reasonably comfortable*.”

Youth pows were1/3, down from 45%, so presumably more had been transferred out of the camp.

Most re-education activities had improved. There were more copies of – Wochenpost, Ausblick, newspapers, and books (770). Discussion groups were flourishing. Entertainment films from YMCA were being shown. The wireless was stated to be excellent with an amplifier and four speakers. The magazine suffered from lack of paper.

Religion – Skipton Parish Church could be used for services on Sundays. The camp had an organist who used to play at Poznan Cathedral. 80-100 RC attended services in Skipton each Sunday.

Education – only the agriculture class was listed.

Entertainment – a theatre group with 45 members was very popular. A 10 member orchestra gave weekly performances. A recently formed choir, sang mainly folk songs.

**19/22 December 1946** – English Inspector’s Report. Total strength 1829. 32 pupils in 3 classes in HQ.

A new commandant – Lt Col K C Miller R.A. A new Lagersprecher (Camp leader) – Schaeffer, he had been hostel leader at West Marton.

**10 – 13 June 1947** – Re-educational survey. Strength; 2 officers, 1113 OR.

Commandant: Lt Col K C Miller Camp Leader: Fw Ludwig Schaeffer (B+)

Interpreter: S/Sgt C Eyre Deputy C/L: Fw Hans Bogner (B+)

German M.O.: O Stabsarzt Dr Hans Schiele (B+)

The camp leader had been in place since November 1946. He had briefly been a member of the Hiter Youth in 1939, but had then been called up. He had not been a Nazi Party member, he carried out his duties ‘satisfactorily.’

The deputy C/L, was “*one of the leading personalities*,” and took an active part in discussions.

The study leader, Martiny, aged 22, was “*highly intelligent, a law student and anti Nazi,”* but his age meant that he lacked “*the authority that goes with age and experience*.”

Simplified screening was in use: A 2 / B 1113. 50 appeals against screening had been heard, and all had been allowed. In theory, the better the screening, the sooner repatriated – the high number of accepted appeals was reflected in many other camps. 187 pows repatriated to date.

As was the case in most camps – “*The**British staff as a whole is completely uninterested in re-education*.” The commandant was on leave. The adjutant was found to be obstructive, this was slightly unusual, most just ignored re-education. He also boasted that; “*he will only have people from our section when it suits him*.” (The War Office was in charge of the camps, not the Foreign Office). The visitor recommended that the adjutant be removed – he was not. The interpreter wrote an occasional article for the magazine, but that was all. It was hoped that S/Sgt Eyre would be allowed to visit the hostels to organise some English classes and other activities.

Morale was recorded as; “*not particularly good.”* The main reason for this was said to be depressing letters from home about poor conditions in Germany. Although this would be one of the reasons, the main one was always the pows desire for repatriation. The re-education visitor also stated that the lack of re-education was a factor leading to general apathy. He went on to state; “*There is a wave of self pity and destructive criticism which makes them disinclined for any form of re-education.”*

Now recorded that about 25% were ‘youth’ – and that they were a problem as, *“they are obstinate and disinclined to any form of re-education.”*

Attendance at re-education activities was ‘small’ – partly due to apathy, but also to the increased freedoms pows had to leave the camp. The standard list was given with newspapers, library, films, and wireless - described as “*adequate*.” Lectures, discussion groups and English lessons had small attendances. The camp magazine was criticized as not being representative of the camp as the editor did not want, “*the standard of his paper lowered by inferior contributions*.”

Information room – this had just started and exhibition materials were sent by the Visual Section of PID – however see note in next report.

Outside contacts – two teachers from Ermysteds Grammar School visited to give classes for English.

Other activities –

Religion – 10% of pows showed an interest. Most went to churches in the town. Protestant padre – Gefr Wollenweber held Sunday services in the camp. Catholics attended services in the town.

Education – only English and agriculture classes.

Entertainment – no theatre or orchestra recorded. Football and handball were popular.

**22/26 July 1947** – Survey of re-education / Progress report - just 1 month after the last. 2 visitors, 1 a trainee. Strength; 3 officers, 1194 OR.

No changes to senior personnel. The commandant and S/Sgt Eyre (aged 52) were on leave.

Screening: A 1 / B 1196. 229 repatriated to date. Morale was considered to be ‘fair.’

The visitors were well received by the adjutant – and given every help required. They believed that the actual running of the camp was in his hands – “*He is an old soldier, a typical Yorkshireman, not interested in re-education, but is co-operative*.” They later met the 2nd i/c making the comment, *“he was in charge of Rudolph Hess during the war for over a year.”*

The young study leader was found to be idle and it was recommended he be removed from his post. His replacement was Uscha. Martin Korb, aged 41, but there were doubts about his abilities and he had been a Nazi party member.

Re-education activities were ‘extremely limited.’ There were several reasons for this - lack of interest by both British and German staff – pows preferring to spend their leisure hours with British families in town – very long hours gathering the harvest (10.00 to 21.00 hours) – the poor study leader. The standard list of activities was nearly the same as the previous report, except;

Camp magazine – publication had ceased.

Information room – the PID display materials had, “*not yet been touched.”*

Formal outside contacts – Small groups had visited public meetings of the Labour Party, and the UN Association. Most pows had good relationships with local people.

There was no scope for development of activities during harvest time. A request was made to allot more than one full-time pow to develop activities – this was refused – War Office orders only required 1.

**30 September – 2 October 1947 –** Re-educational survey. Strength; 3 officers, 1054 OR.

Commandant: Lt Col K C Miller R.A. Camp Leader: Fw Erich Werner Futterer (B+) [was hostel leader at Gisburn].

Interpreter: S/Sgt G Eyre Deputy C/L: Fw Hans Bogner (B+)

Assisted by ‘Otto’ a German pow. German M.O.: O/Arzt Bergmann (B+) / Dentist: M/Ob St Arzt Hosang (B)

For the first time a commandant was not on leave during a visit. He was described as, “*helpful and does not put obstacles in our way in regard to re-education*.”

The new study leader had not proved to be successful, but there was no-one else to take over.

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| Screening: | A | B+ | B | B- | 308 pows repatriated to date. |
|  | 1 | 143 | 614 | 299 |  |

Morale was considered to have ‘*improved considerably.*’ This was mainly due to the change of camp leader and increasing contacts with civilians. Of all ‘activities’ mentioned by pows in memories and diaries, it was always local contacts that had the most positive effects and often led to continued contact after repatriation. The visitor made the usual statement that morale, especially for youth pows, would be better if only re-education activities were developed further. Few signs of Nazism were detected.

The standard list of re-education activities:

Newspapers – adequate + Hansard weekly edition received.

Library – 1594 books.

Lectures – regular; last two very successful.

Discussion groups – none

Films – adequate

Wireless – Satisfactory. Popular programmes; BBC News in German and English, and news from German stations.

Camp magazine – ceased.

Information room – exhibition materials about ‘London’ had arrived, it was stated that; “*the PsW appear to be very interested*.” However, in the next report, over 6 weeks later, it was recorded that in fact it had not yet been shown and was found in the Interpreter’s Office.

Religion – a new camp padre; Leut Dieterich (B)

Education – small classes for English Instruction - 35 pupils in 3 classes in the main camp according to the next English Report. The two teachers from the grammar school had stopped coming. There was 1 pupil at Hellifeld hostel – with no lessons at all in the other hostels. S/Sgt Eyre gave classes for English history, but these were limited as they were given in English.

From this report it was not re-education activities that were needed, but entertainment - this report did not mention any theatre, orchestra or choir.

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

**18-22 November 1947** – Re-educational survey. Strength; 2 officers, 1045 OR.

No change to senior personnel.

Screening was stated to be; “*all B.”* 370 pows repatriated to date.

There was little change to the last report. A mathematics class had started. There was a new theatre group and it was rehearsing for a Christmas play.

Some formal outside contacts had been established as well as informal links to families. Small groups of pows were able to attend – council meetings, Commonwealth party discussions, WEA, Evening Institutes and court sittings.

**1-5 March 1948** – “*Final check.”* Strength; 1 officer, 631 OR.

Commandant: Major J J Crabtree, M.C., R.P.C. Camp Leader: Fw Erich Werner Futterer (B)

Interpreter: S/Sgt G Eyre Deputy C/L: None

German M.O.: A/Arzt Dr Hans Dobeneck

The new commandant was highly regarded by the staff and the visitor.

700 pows repatriated to date.

This was the first and only time the visitor attended this camp. He stated that in his opinion this camp had, “*always been a happy one*” and especially with the new commandant. He reported that the pows viewed the British, “*with appreciation and liking.”* Apparently 70% held this pro-British attitude – the other 30% were even more strongly pro-British having been “*influenced chiefly by re-educational measures and outside contacts.”* The visitor had spoken to 70 ‘representative’ pows to gain these ideas. I have not seen in any other camp report such extreme positive views - they are highly dubious. Previous comments about the lack of re-education activities had clearly not been seen by him.

A Dr Eckart had visited the camp for three days to talk about resettlement issues. Contacts had been made in Skipton with – Commonwealth Party, Labour Party, Methodists, Council, WEA. Other contacts – Barnoldswick WEA, University of Sheffield. Mr Stanton who came to give mathematics lessons to 8 pows.

There were no further reports, the camp would have closed shortly after this.

**Known Camp Commandants:**

c.1946 Lt Col C W Hughes

c.1946 Lt Col White

c.1947 Lt Col K C Miller R.A.

c.1948 Major J J Crabtree, M.C., R.P.C. from the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment / Royal Pioneer Corps.

**Camp and hostels + number of pows where known:**

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

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|  | Pre 1945 | 12/45 | | 4/46 | 5/46 | | 6/46 | 12/46 | 6/47 | 7/47 | 10/47 | 11/47 | 3/48 |
| Main | Italian |  | |  | 766 | | 797 | 730 | 809 (1) | 637(2) | 598 (3) | 594 (4) | 455 |
| Gisburn | Italian |  | |  | 78 | | 78 | 58 | 71 | 77 | 57 | 61 | 51 |
| West Marton |  |  | |  | 100 | | 96 | 56 | 56 | 65 | 51 | 68 | 43 |
| Hellifield | Italian | Italian | |  | 115 | | 143 | 91 | 81 | 80 | 58 | 70 | 64 |
| Huddersfield |  | | | | | | | 330 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Stirley Hill |  | With C91 / Huddersfield | | | | | | 92 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Lindley Hill Moor |  | With C91 / Huddersfield | | | | | | 62 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Cliffe Hill |  |  | With C91 / Huddersfield | | | | | 90 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Shelf Hall | With C91 / Huddersfield | | | | |  | | 130 |  |  |  |  | With C53 |
| Weston Lane | Camp 164 | | | | | | | | 98 | 89 | 93 | 92 |  |
| Billets |  |  | |  | 174 | | 174 | ? | ? | 225 | 171 | 139 | 19 |
| Total | ? | ? | | ? | 1233 | | 1289 | 1829 | 1115 | 1197 | 1057 | 1047 | 632 |

(1) Including billetees. (2) + 24 in hospital. (3) + 29 in hospital at Otley. (4) + 23 in hospital.

**After the camp:** Became a hostel, then a caravan site. Now a residential area.

**Further information:**

National Archives – FO 939/141 60 Working Camp, Overdale Camp, Skipton, Yorkshire. Dated 1945-1948. Used above.

The Germans We Trusted – Pamela Howe Taylor, 2003 Lutterworth Press – various references to Overdale.

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

IWM – Oral history by Klaus Fritz Hermann Steffen includes his stay at Overdale. [*https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80012309*](https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80012309)

**Satellite Camp**

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| **Huddersfield** (Believed to be on Fieldhouse Lane off Leeds Road.) SE 162 188.  Location – I believe that the corner of the camp is shown on the 1948 photograph.  **September 1946** – After major flooding, German prisoners of war from the Leeds Road P.O.W. camp assisted in the rescue by boat of workers trapped in the nearby I.C.I. works.  **19/22 December 1946** – English Inspector’s Report. Just one entry that Overdale had; “*taken over a satellite camp at Huddersfield including the latter* |  |  |
| Aerial photograph 1948 | Ordnance Survey 1955 |

*camp’s four hostels at Stirley Hill, Lindley Hill, Cliffe Hill and Shelf Hall*.”

The statement is ambiguous – did it mean it had taken over a satellite camp – or had it taken over a main camp which then became a satellite to Overdale? No camp number given for this site.

(Early 1948 – Butcher Hill Camp 244 became a hostel to Sandbeds camp 53 - With Huddersfield hostel, 161 pows).

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|  | Pre 1945 | 12/45 | 4/46 | 5/46 | 6/46 | 12/46 | 6/47 | 7/47 | 10/47 | 11/47 | 3/48 |
| Huddersfield |  | | | | | 330 |  |  |  |  | C53 |

**Hostels**

**Cliffe Hill**

**June 1946** – a hostel with 99 pows, attached to Post Hill Camp 91.

**19/22 December 1946** – One entry that Overdale had; “*taken over a satellite camp at Huddersfield including the latter camp’s four hostels at Stirley Hill, Lindley Hill,* ***Cliffe Hill*** *and Shelf Hall*.”

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Pre 1945 | 12/45 | 4/46 | 5/46 | 6/46 | 12/46 | 6/47 | 7/47 | 10/47 | 11/47 | 3/48 |
| Cliffe Hill |  |  | With C91 / Huddersfield | | | 90 |  |  |  |  |  |

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| **Gisburn.** c.9 miles from the main camp.  Location – NGR SD 858 496. Briggs and Duxbury drawing of the proposed prisoner of war camp at 'Gisburn Corner House Cafe’  <https://www.oneguyfrombarlick.co.uk/>  Previously held Italian pows.  **9 November 1945 to May 1948 –** Abridged story of Erwin Hettwer: “*We arrived at a building that had been called the Corner House Café, located at A59 and the exit to Barnoldswick. It had at one time served as a café, but was changed to a POW hostel to be used by Italian POWs. It was gated with a single barbed wire fence around it. Just outside the gate was a creek* [Stock Beck]*. The building held 2 large and several smaller rooms. The largest room was used as a bedroom, equipped with double bunks, the same as the ones used in Skipton. The other large room was used as a mess hall, but it also had a table tennis table and a snooker table. A German sergeant was camp leader. He had a separate and lockable room, as it also held the little camp store.* | |  |
| Ordnance Survey 1956 |
|  | *A British sergeant, a lance corporal and private were assigned as administrators and their bedrooms were in a separate area of the building.*    *We were taken by truck, dropped off on the road and walked to the quarry. The quarry workers worked on piece work… paid by the number of lorries they loaded… POWs could not be forced to work piece work, so 2 prisoners were assigned to one worker and each would fill 2 lorries.*  *There was no time to get bored after returning from work. The manufacture of toys had begun. Miraculously small hand tools appeared. We also found a gold mine, the local garbage dump. Old tool handles were sliced into wheels for cars and trains, tin cans were hammered into shapes and the British army donated, without their knowledge, boards from empty ammunition boxes, which were stored in the unused part of the limestone quarry. Old potato sacks were washed dyed and turned into slippers. The proceeds from the sales were of course in English money. We were getting rich. We also found discarded shoes. They*  *needed repair and a polish, but we had the time and ended up with shoes.* | |
| 1946 |

*Another way of getting proper money was by barter. I bought Woodbine cigarettes which sold in the camp for 10½ pence per pack and sold them to the guards or fellow workers in the quarry for ten pence. I lost half a penny on the deal, but I had it now in English money. The store in Gisburn sold small loaves of bread for four and a half pence, so a package of Woodbines could be turned into 2 loaves of bread. On the way to work we asked the driver to stop at the store. I had collected money from the others, hopped out of the truck and bought the bread, which of course was against any rules we were supposed to follow.*

*With Christmas Eve [1945] approaching, a farmer allowed a prisoner to get a small spruce tree from his bush. We were able to buy some candles and saved the tin foil from the cigarette packages for decorations. Everybody purchased a small item from the camp store, wrapped it and it went into a bag as presents.*

*As a special favour we were allowed to attend midnight mass at the Roman Catholic Church in Barnoldswick, if we gave our word of honour to return right after mass. It was a cold night and we did not have overcoats, but most of us walked the 2 miles to attend mass. We were not sure what to expect from the parishioners, so we stayed in the back of the church. The catholic mass is the same in both countries which made us feel at home. At the end of the mass, as the lights were extinguished and only the tree lights were lit, they sang : "Quiet Night, Holy Night" At the end, the priest came forward and said that they had some friends with them in church that night, and that they might like to sing it in their own language. We did sing: "Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht" and we were quite touched by that kind offer. As soon as the lights came on, we were surrounded by people wishing us a Merry Christmas and wanting to take us home with them. But we had given our word of honour and reluctantly had to leave. And this is how I always remember the people of that area, kind and hospitable.*

*One evening, the German camp leader came to me and told me that he is assigning me to kitchen duty. On the evening of the last working day at the quarry, we stopped again at the store in Gisburn and I went in to make some purchases. I was served by two beautiful teenage girls. I told them, that this was my last day outside of the camp and I would not be able to come to the store anymore as I was going to be a cook. When I left and said good night, one of the girls said : "Gute Nacht". I was surprised because her pronunciation was perfect. I smiled and left.*

*The job in the kitchen was easy, cooking porridge was no problem, washing dishes, peeling potatoes required no special talent and preparing the simple meals at night was easy to learn. But being cooped up behind barbed wire all the time, with only the same people to communicate in the evening, never seeing anything else but the surroundings of the camp through the barbed wire, were starting to take its toll.*

*While most of the others were getting mail and had heard from their families I felt all alone. We had no idea how long our imprisonment might last. It was nearly one year since the war was over and yet not one prisoner had been sent home. And if I would be sent home, where would I go? I no longer had a home, Silesia now belonged to Poland. What would I do? I needed 3 more years just to get my high school diploma. The idea of suicide did not seem such a terrible way out. Then one night, one of the older prisoners working in Gisburn said to me, that the daughter of his employer told him that she knows me and whether I am still in camp. Of course, I did not know who he was talking about, but he mentioned, that she was in high school and taking German. Then it dawned on me, the girl from the store. And by sending a note a beautiful friendship started. I was able to improve my English and she tried a bit of German, but mostly we used English to communicate. The thoughts of suicide were wiped out by one note from a friendly girl. I now had somebody that liked me although I had nothing to offer her, no dates no dances, no flowers, just letters. But what her letters did for me in this darkest time of my life, I will always cherish.*

*We did have guards in camp, a sergeant and two lower ranks. I guess they had rifles with them, but they were there as overseers or administrators. Most of the evenings one stayed behind and the other 2 went into town to have a beer or perhaps a date. There was Taffy from Wales, Jock from Scotland and our sergeant from Ireland. Taffy was a junior snooker champion and he showed us how to play snooker and Jock became centre forward in our soccer team. The Irish sergeant was so proudly Irish, that if we wanted to get his goat, we called him English. His face would become beet red and he would explode.*

*The one I will never forget was Corporal Hartman. He was older than Taffy and Jock, was married and had a 6 year old daughter. While the others went out every night on a rotating basis, he only went out on payday, went to the pub for a beer and a chat with the lads and came back. As the guards’ quarters were next to the kitchen we talked to each other a lot. When I kidded him that the other guards had lots of girlfriends in town, he replied: "Erwin, they have lots of girls and yet they have none. I have a wife and daughter and they belong to me alone".*

*One day he told me that on the weekend he would be alone, the others being away and on furlough and his wife and daughter were coming to visit him. This was against the rules and would we keep it quiet. Of course we did, but having a child in camp got the people excited. Most had children at home, which they had not seen for a long time. The toy manufacture started, people wanted a present for the little girl. It was like a family celebration. In the afternoon Corporal Hartman wanted to take his wife and the girl and show them the neighbourhood. The little girl did not want to leave and told him that she would rather stay with the Germans. It made us so proud and we were sorry when they left and hugged us. He was eagerly waiting to be demobbed and to get back to his family. When he finally got his demobilization papers, he came into the kitchen, papers in hand and jumped clear over the kitchen table. But on the day he left, he hugged us and had tears in his eyes. We lost a friend.*

*One evening two of the guards brought two young ladies to their quarters and they were going to stay the night. Just that night a jeep came into the camp carrying an officer and his driver for a surprise inspection. I saw them coming, dashed into the guards’ quarters, locked the girls into the guards’ washroom while the guards were fixing up their rooms. We quickly agreed that the washroom was locked because the toilet was blocked and would be repaired next day. It worked; the girls were not found out and they were quite grateful for the warning.*

*A small change was introduced in 1946. Those prisoners employed in the camp, were allowed to leave the camp and walk up to 5 miles away from the camp, but the non-fraternization rules still had to be followed, no entering of villages, premises or talking to civilians. It got me out of the camp and if somebody stopped and talked to me and I mentioned that I was not allowed to talk to them, they just laughed and said that these were silly army rules and had nothing to do with them. I started making friends outside. I also got more daring and walked into the town of Barnoldswick. Every time I did that, it seemed to become a small adventure.*

[Erwin met a family called the Sheldrakes.] *We had nice evening together and I got an open invitation to drop in any time. I liked Mrs. Sheldrake, she was such a motherly type and I missed my own mother. Their son Bill was about my age and about my size. One evening he told his parents that he was going to take me out. He put some of his clothes out, I changed into civilian clothes and we went to his club. We had a beer, played some snooker, I talked to his friends and although I could not hide my German accent, nobody seemed to care.*

*Mrs. Sheldrake knew that I had not found my family yet and tried to convince me to stay in England. She was going to find a good wife for me. Some time later we were indeed offered to stay on as civilian workers. The hostel would be converted into a rooming house, the workers would be paid 4 pounds/week plus free room and board. I was to stay on as their cook and would earn 5 pounds/week. I signed a contract to stay for one year and was offered a job in a hotel kitchen after the year. Mrs. Sheldrake was happy for me.*

*The Collapse of Non-Fraternization did not go with a big bang, it just gradually crept in. As soon as the rest of the prisoners were allowed to leave the camp in their spare time, contacts with the civilian population increased. Most of the prisoners had learned to communicate in English, although writing was another story.*

*The minister [Baptist Church in Burnley] asked the guards whether two English speaking prisoners could join them at a meeting. A fellow prisoner and I were chosen to attend. They wanted to do something special for us and held the meeting in a café known for its fine teas. Afterwards these good-hearted ladies came by the camp once in a while and dropped off some goodies, much appreciated also by the other prisoners.*

*I had given up listening to the names called when mail arrived in camp, but in 1947 my name was called. I looked at the envelope, but I did not recognize the handwriting. It turned out, the letter was from an uncle of mine. He managed to find my mother as he was able to get the new Polish address. She told him that I was still missing. He wrote to the Red Cross, got my card with the address of my camp and contacted me. He also sent the new Polish address for my mother to me and sent my address in England to her. From that time I received letters from her and I wrote back, but it took 14 years until we saw each other again.*

*Perhaps the most stressful thing on our minds was not knowing when we would be free. It felt like being sentenced to an indefinite prison term. Although nothing was officially told to us, in 1947 we heard through the grapevine that the release of prisoners had started.*

*I had signed up to stay another year in England after our release. Early in 1948 plans were made to convert our hostel into a rooming house. The double bunks were to be replaced with single beds, the barbed wire fence torn down. The 1-year contract would be binding; people would have to stay at the job with the pay they contracted for. After the year they would be free to change jobs or go back to Germany.*

*However, it was not supposed to be. About February 1948, we were told that only a certain number of German prisoners had been allotted for staying in Yorkshire and that number had already been filled. We would be sent back to Germany. I did not know whether to be elated or to be sorry. I knew I could not go home, as my former home was now in Poland. I had no real skills to support myself, as I had been drafted before I had even finished high school. The only relatives I had in Germany were my uncle and my brother, living in one room in a house partially damaged by bombs.*

*It also did upset my "foster mother", the sweet and kind Mrs. Sheldrake. She was going to write to the government to let me stay. I assume she had already picked out a girl she was going to introduce me to. I never told her, that secretly my heart already belonged to another girl - my pen pal, Mary.*

*In April 1948 most prisoners were moved from the hostel back to the camp in Skipton. I had to say goodbye to my buddy Hans. About half a dozen men including myself stayed to help in the clean up. A few civilian workmen came to cut down the barbed wire fence and to do some inside renovations. I have to admit to feeling melancholic when it was time to leave and move back to Skipton.*

*In the beginning of May we were moved to a pre-release camp in Nuneaton, Warwickshire.”*

Full story and pictures for Erwin Hettwer - <https://www.pegasusarchive.org/pow/erwin_hettwer.htm>

**May 1946** – Hostel leader; Owm G Belz (est B). No electricity supply – films were shown in the Church Hall and the wireless was an unsatisfactory battery operated set.

**June 1946** – same hostel leader but upgraded to (A).

**June 1947** – Hostel leader; Fw Erich Futterer (B-)

**October 1947** – Hostel leader; Uffz Graetz (B-)

**March 1948** – same leader

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|  | Pre 1945 | 12/45 | 4/46 | 5/46 | 6/46 | 12/46 | 6/47 | 7/47 | 10/47 | 11/47 | 3/48 |
| Gisburn | Italians |  |  | 78 | 78 | 58 | 71 | 77 | 57 | 61 | 51 |

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| **Hellifield Peel.** c.6½ miles from the main camp. Location SD 859 555.  Held Italian pows before 1946  Memories *- ‘When I was between eight and ten years old, I would walk down to Hellifield Peel with lads of a similar age to look at the POW Camp at the Peel, where initially Italian Prisoners of War were housed. I’m not sure how many prisoners were housed there. Possibly between 50 to 150 or so. The lower ranks lived in dark brown conical tents which were pitched on the lawns surrounding the Peel itself. The house in those days was at least in a reasonably good condition. In the house itself the higher ranking soldiers were housed. The tents would not have been very comfortable during the winter months. The Italians were at all times very friendly, and seemed to enjoy meeting children whom they would talk to – some in very good English. I think they were just glad to be out of the war.*  *We took very small denomination coins down to them and they very skilfully made rings and other ornaments. In my case a metal submarine was created, which I kept for many years before it disappeared. One prisoner made a very good sketch of the Peel and the camp itself, which I kept for many years until it also sadly vanished. Most of the prisoners appeared to come and go as they pleased and many working locally, mainly on farms. They even had a football team which played against Hellifield, whom they always beat quite easily! Some prisoners could well have been professional players back home in Italy. I never heard of any trying to* |  |

*escape, which initially would seem to have been an easy task. They seemed on the whole to be quite a contented group – happy to be out of danger and looking forward to the end of the war.*

*After the Italians went home, they were replaced with a similar number of Germans. This was a different scenario altogether. We only visited them at odd times, and found them distinctly aloof and unfriendly. A marked contrast to the amiable Italians. They were well guarded and they did not have the relative freedom enjoyed by their predecessors. Nevertheless, many still worked in the area. Again, mainly on farms. Anyone walking past the Peel on the public footpath these days would be totally unaware of its use as a POW Camp in the second world war, as nothing remains of the camp.’*

Brian Shorrock, Hellifield Herald, December 2023 / January 2024 - <http://www.hellifieldherald.org.uk/DecJan2324singlesheets.pdf>

Swimming parties took place in the Ribble at Halton West bridge. Sadly, one Italian pow was drowned there.

**22 January 1946** - First German pows arrived from Wollaton Park Camp 166 and Shady Lane Camp 167.

**May 1946** – Hostel leader; Ofw F Daehn (est C). He was a ‘Justiz Ob. Inspector’ (“acting as poor man’s lawyer”). Nazi Party member 1933 – 1939 as ‘Blockleiter’ – and a member of the ‘Juristenbund’ (member of Nazi Lawyers Association). “*A jovial type of NCO and is keen on re-education but he could be replaced by a more suitable man*.”

There was no electricity – films were shown in the Co-operative Hall and the wireless was an unsatisfactory battery operated set.

**June 1947** – Hostel leader; Fw Ludwig Dillmann (B). A large number of “*youthful discontents*” were lodged at this hostel.

**July 1947** - About 75% were youth pows – “*Many of these youngsters are rather turbulent, mentality is low and interest in mental activities is limited, especially through tiredness caused by heavy quarry work*.” They were engaged in hay making at the time of this report.

**March 1948** – same leader.

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|  | Pre 1945 | 12/45 | 4/46 | 5/46 | 6/46 | 12/46 | 6/47 | 7/47 | 10/47 | 11/47 | 3/48 |
| Hellifield | Italian | Italian |  | 115 | 143 | 91 | 81 | 80 | 58 | 70 | 64 |

**After the camp** – a home for displaced persons, abandoned, and later featured in Grand Designs Channel 4 (2007).

**Lindley Hill (Moor) –** Crosland Road, Lindley.

**15 September 1945** – Listed with Post Hill Camp 91

**June 1946** – still attached to Post Hill.

**19/22 December 1946** – One entry that Overdale had; “*taken over a satellite camp at Huddersfield including the latter camp’s four hostels at Stirley Hill,* ***Lindley Hill****, Cliffe Hill and Shelf Hall*.”

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|  | Pre 1945 | 12/45 | 4/46 | 5/46 | 6/46 | 12/46 | 6/47 | 7/47 | 10/47 | 11/47 | 3/48 |
| Lindley Hill |  | With C91 / Huddersfield | | | | 62 |  |  |  |  |  |

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| **Shelf Hall**. In the hall, stables and park. SE 124 282.  Reported that the Hall was in use by the army up to 1944. Then held Italian pows.  **May 1946** – German pows. Attached to Post Hill Camp 91.  **19/22 December 1946** – One entry that Overdale had; “*taken over a satellite camp at Huddersfield including the latter camp’s four hostels at Stirley Hill, Lindley Hill, Cliffe Hill and* ***Shelf Hall***.”   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  | Pre 1945 | 12/45 | 4/46 | 5/46 | 6/46 | 12/46 | 6/47 | 7/47 | 10/47 | 11/47 | 3/48 | | Shelf Hall | With C 91 / Huddersfield | | | | | 130 |  |  |  |  | With C53 | |  |

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| **Stirley Hill.** SE 151 131  Site of the Leeds H16 Heavy Anti-Aircraft Battery with two gun emplacements.  Report of fatal accident involving Italian pows at Kaye Lane / Wheatroyd Lane.  **c.1944/5** – Held Italian pows.  < German pows – wooden huts in the background.  **15 September 1945** – Listed with Post Hill Camp 91  **June 1946** – still attached to Post Hill.  **19/22 December 1946** – One entry that Overdale had; “*taken over a satellite camp at Huddersfield including the latter camp’s four hostels at* ***Stirley Hill,*** *Lindley Hill, Cliffe Hill and Shelf Hall*.” |  |
| Ordnance Survey 1956 |

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|  | Pre 1945 | 12/45 | 4/46 | 5/46 | 6/46 | 12/46 | 6/47 | 7/47 | 10/47 | 11/47 | 3/48 |
| Stirley Hill |  | With C91 / Huddersfield | | | | 92 |  |  |  |  |  |

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| **West Marton**. c.9 miles from the main camp. SD 892 504.  **12 April 1946** - First German pows arrived from the main camp and Wollaton Park Camp 166. (May have held Italians before this).  **May 1946** – Hostel leader; Fw L Schafer [Schaeffer] (est B). He was a teacher, RC and took part in RC youth movements. Joined the SA (Brown shirts) for a short time in order to continue teaching. Came from a camp in the USA.  There was no electricity – and so no films, and the wireless was an unsatisfactory battery operated set.  **June 1946** – same hostel leader, but graded (B+) |  |  |
| Plan of the hostel | Ordnance Survey 1955 |

**June 1947** – Hostel leader; Uffz Wilhelm Schroeder (B-)

**November 1947** – same leader. The hostel was still without electricity.

**March 1948** – Hostel leader; Bruno Mayer (B-)

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|  | Pre 1945 | 12/45 | 4/46 | 5/46 | 6/46 | 12/46 | 6/47 | 7/47 | 10/47 | 11/47 | 3/48 |
| West Marton |  |  |  | 100 | 96 | 56 | 56 | 65 | 51 | 68 | 43 |

**Weston Lane** (This was Weston Lane Camp 164 at Otley, Yorkshire – another nearby site, Camp 245 continued nearby).

**June 1947** – Hostel leader; Fw Willi Ulrich (B)

**July 1947** - Recorded in report that this site was the old Camp 164.

**November 1947** - same hostel leader, he was described as; “*uneducated, lacks personality and is not efficient enough to lead this rather unruly hostel.”* It was hoped he would be replaced.

80% of the pows were ‘youth’ and this was regarded as a problem. “*The men are suspicious of propaganda which seems to be their idea of politics. The majority are lazy and unruly. Something has to be done to rouse them from their mental apathy*.” Suggestions were – change the leader, send a number to the special youth camp, create more activities and outside contacts.

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|  | Pre 1945 | 12/45 | 4/46 | 5/46 | 6/46 | 12/46 | 6/47 | 7/47 | 10/47 | 11/47 | 3/48 |
| Weston Lane | Camp 164 | | | | | | 98 | 89 | 93 | 92 |  |