**Camp 139** **- Wolviston Hall, Wolviston, Co.Durham**

Included in the 1945 ICRC camp list – Labour Camp. 139. Wolviston Hall, Billingham, Co.Durham.

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| **1947 Camp list** | | | | | | | |
| 139(G.W.C.) | Wolviston Hall, Wolviston, Billingham, Co.Durham | N. | Priswar, Billingham | Wolviston 249 | (Blank) | Major R.H.McGain | v/1452/2 |

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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 |
| NZ 454 258 | 93 | 139 | Wolviston Hall, Wolviston, Billingham | County Durham (Cleveland) | 5 | German Working Camp | Hostel |

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| **Location:** Wolviston is a village on the NE edge of Billingham.  **Before the camp:** Country hall and estate.  **Pow Camp:** Italian collaborator Pows listed from 1944 until at least September 1945, then a German Working Camp.  **1943** – Camp opened. I have seen Pow mail to Italy dated February 1943.  **November 1944** - The camp was listed as an Italian Labour Battalion in, (WO 32/10737).  **1 August 1945** - an urgent memorandum was sent to this camp, and others, about maintaining records of Italians who were classed as ‘co-operators’. At this point many, sometimes all, of the Italian pows were in hostels / billets.  **3 September 1945** – Progress report 153 recorded a new hostel for Italian pows at ‘Kirk Leatham, S/L Site with a capacity of 120. (FO 939/383).  **December 1945** - 447 German pows recorded at the camp. [1]  **1946** - During the year there was an additional intake of pows from camps in the USA. Most had very low morale as they had been misinformed in the US that they were being repatriated. Instead, they found themselves in working camps in the UK. |  |
| Ordnance Survey 1954 |

**14 May 1946** – 1st edition of the camp magazine – 8 pages; “*Ritt in die Zukunft”* (Ride Into The Future). A short introduction was by the camp commandant; “*This paper is an experiment. It is not large, but that may change if it is popular. I have great hopes that it will help you, teach you, entertain you….*

A brief summary of the camp and hostels was given. The HQ had only recently been changed from an Italian co-operator camp to a German Work Camp. There were still some Italians remaining – they were most likely accommodated in billets or a separate hostel. It was stated that German; “*drivers, cleaners, cooks and other functionaries carry out their work conscientiously and thoroughly.*” To encourage future contributors to the magazine, cigarettes were given out if their work was published.

[Der Ritt in die Zukunft : Zeitung des Kriegsgefangenenlagers 139 - The Wiener Holocaust Library](https://www.whlcollections.org/image/112845/)

**17 September 1947** – 10 pows being transported from Thorpe Hall Camp (250) to Wolviston were killed when a train hit their transport lorry. (Report under Eden camp 83/250)

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

Known Camp Commandants:

1947 Major R H McGain (Possibly Robert Henry McGain of the Pioneer Corps, who died 25 November 1947).

**After the camp:** Residential area.

**Further Information:**

[1] <https://diocesehn.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Northern-Catholic-History_No.-37_1996.pdf>

**Hostels**

**Billingham**

**Bishop Middleham**

Memories place it in the old brewery buildings. “The brewery was well used during the war: for an Irish regiment preparing to go to war; for Italian POWs; for German POWs; for Home Guard meetings some of the pow's worked on uncle jacks (Davison) farm Highland Farm during the day and were billeted in the brewery.”

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| **Cowpen Bewley**  Location from local memories – NZ 473 242 |  |
| Ordnance Survey 1952 |

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| **Coxhoe Hall,** Coxhoe, C.Durham. NZ 322 357. NGR for hall; NZ 331 358  Listed in English Heritage report as Camp 139b – may have been a satellite camp rather than a hostel.  Requisitioned to be used as a barracks for British troops. Became a pow camp towards the end of the war.  “*We are told that the prisoners formed a community of their own holding cultural events and concerts.  A band was formed and performed at concerts and other events and they played numerous games and remained very active.  Many of them attended the Roman Catholic Church at Cornforth.  Marie Routledge, nee Ellerby lived at Coxhoe where her father was a hairdresser.  She recalled a troop of Italians marching down ‘The Avenue’ one Christmas singing carols on their way to church – “they sounded lovely.”*  *The prisoners worked in the local community and were assigned varied tasks many of which were concerned with food production.”* <https://coxhoehistory.co.uk/2023/03/21/prisoners-of-war-coxhoe-hall-ww2/>  After the war the hall fell into disrepair and was demolished in the 1950’s. |  |
| Ordnance Survey 1951 |

**Hart.** NZ 469 351.

< Various huts in location 1948 - [raf\_58\_b\_59\_vp2\_5561 - Aerial Photo | Historic England](https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/archive/collections/aerial-photos/record/raf_58_b_59_vp2_5561)

Italian and then German pows remembered.

**May 1946** – articles in the camp magazine were written by contributors from this hostel.

Hart village in WW2 with pictures of objects made by pows:

<https://teesarchaeology.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/TheHeritageofHart2010_WWII_complete-compressed.pdf>

**Kiora Hall** (Norton). NZ 425 218.

Site was an AA Battery and later PoW Camp adjacent to Kiora Hall.

Memories: “*The first we knew of the Italian Prisoners who came in secret overnight was singing coming down Junction Road, we all stopped amazed as those smiling Italians marched past us singing their heads off with one Soldier on a bike his rifle strapped to his back behind them. They peeled off to work in various places mainly the market gardens as food production was high priority. We got so used to them we got blasé about it, they marched down to the Church Sunday mornings though they were mainly Catholic and livened up the choir.*

*They left we were told long after to Canada where a lot died when the ship taking them was sunk by a U boat*. [The SS Arandora Star was sunk 2 July 1940 – but that was far too early for this camp and it was carrying c.700 Italian internees, not pows.]

*We then got the Germans, same routine same jobs same marching down Junction Road with a couple of Guards on bikes, peeling off to their work places, one worked in the blacksmiths on the Green at Norton, I believe married the daughter who had been the blacksmith’s striker and stayed here. Some worked on the coal chutes at Norton Station filling bags of coal for the various coal merchants who took coal from there. Three worked for my pal Dennis Goldsborough’s dad and took turns going with him to deliver coal around the houses, it was rationed by the way. He would take them home with him at lunch time and they would all eat round the kitchen table talking away as if it was all normal. Holiday times I would often be there for lunch as my parents were both on war work. To say I was a little shocked at it all as to me they were the enemy why were they not trying to escape? That did not last long as I found they were the same as us, not Nazi’s just young men who did not want to be shot at and we had them until the war ended.  
We then got the displaced people, Poles mainly, but you name it we had them, a lot married local girls and settled here.”*

[picturestocktonarchive.com/2013/10/17/kiora-hall-roseworth-2002/](https://picturestocktonarchive.com/2013/10/17/kiora-hall-roseworth-2002/) Memories from Frank P Mee.

**Kirkleatham.** Previously a search light site.

Archaeological assessment for a business park revealed the possible structural remains of a POW camp and ring ditch of unknown function – at NZ 590 225.

< 1948 - [raf\_541\_23\_rp\_3128 - Aerial Photo | Historic England](https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/archive/collections/aerial-photos/record/raf_541_23_rp_3128)

**September 1945** – Hostel opened for Italian pows with a capacity of 120.

**May 1946** – mentioned in the camp magazine as building a theatre, with costumes and props, and writing playscripts.

**Manor Farm** (Hartlepool)

Location? Google search gives; “Manor Farm, Dene Garth, Hartlepool, TS27 3HS” – but, there are other ‘Manor Farms,’ including ones close to Kirkleatham and Hart.

**Rift House,** Hartlepool

On the Rift House Recreation Ground – NZ 499 308.

**Sedgefield**

**May 1946** – Mentioned in the camp magazine; an Easter sports festival had been held.

**Usworth** (Sunderland) – Capacity 100. Probable location - Havannah (Blackfell) Camp, off Village Lane. NZ 292 573 (area alongside Great Usworth).

**May 1946** – mentioned in the camp magazine as a new hostel with 100 pows arrived from the US. (May have held Italians before this).

**1 July 1946** – administration transferred from Wolviston Hall Camp 139 to Harperley Camp 93.