**Camp 145** **- Normanhurst (Court) Camp, Battle, East Sussex**

Included in the 1945 ICRC camp list – Labour Camp. 145. Normanhurst Camp, Battle, Sussex.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1947 Camp list** | | | | | | | |
| 145(G.W.C.) | Normanhurst Court Camp, Battle, Sussex | E. | Priswar, Battle | Battle 258 | Battle | Lt.Col.A.C.Giles | v/1453/2 |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **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 712 152 | 199 | 145 | Normanhurst Camp, Battle | Sussex (East Sussex) | 5 | German Working Camp | Precise location not identified, NGR given for Normanhurst, Steven's Crouch, Battle |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Location:** NGR for Normanhurst Court is TQ 712 149.  **Before the camp:** Country estate. During WW1 part of the estate was used as a military hospital. Once the family left between the wars it was used as a girls’ school.  **Pow Camp:** Italian pows then a German Working Camp.  **25 June 1945** – PID Progress Report 122 listed German pows being transferred to Helingley (Hellingly) and Mayfield hostels.  **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 and 4 November 1945** – Visiting lecturer’s report; Dr Milch from London University. He lectured at HQ and 2 out of 13 |  |
| Ordnance Survey 1949 |

hostels – Bodiam and Robertsbridge. He stated that many of the 500 German pows at HQ had been transferred from Dunham Park Camp 189, and that the majority were ‘black’ pows (political grade C). As Nazis, or ex-Nazis, many of the pows were fearful for their future when they returned to Germany.

\*The pows were accommodated in the estate – “*It is regretted that the new commandant decided that the pows have to leave the Manor House they lived in up to now and have to stay in crowded smaller buildings while the manor house will only house some officers and offices.”*

Conditions at the 2 hostels were described as appalling – but no reasons were given.

He commented on the HQ having just 39 books for 500 pows, and 20 of these were ‘Oxford pamphlets.’ Bodiam had 6 books and Robertsbridge had 3 which had been smuggled in. There was no priest at HQ. There was a desperate lack of any teaching materials and the only newspaper received was the Daily Mirror.

**During 1946** – 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. Further pows arrived from camps in Belgium where they had experienced extremely bad conditions – many needed medical treatment due to malnutrition.

**4 and 21 April 1946** – Numbers 14 and 15 of the camp magazine ‘The Bridge’ - [Die Brucke : Lager 145 : Lagerzeitung fur Normanhurst, Bodam, Herstmonceux, Hollington, Horam, Eastbourne, Robertsbridge - The Wiener Holocaust Library](https://www.whlcollections.org/image/112109/)

|  |
| --- |
| 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. If there were still Italian pows in hostels, they were usually ignored by PID. |

**4 June 1946** – Visit to review re-education and screening of billetees. This was listed as the 4th visit by PID, but the first 3 reports are not in the National Archive file.

Strength; 1 officer, 2053 Other Ranks at HQ, 7 hostels and billets. A German working camp. 3 new hostels were due to be taken over from Camp 238, (Hadlow, Annan House and Hellingly).

Commandant: Lt Col Giles Camp Leader; San Fw. Dr Schwick (B+)

Interpreter: Capt Max E Le Reux (Lereux /Leroux) Deputy C/L: O/Fhr G Muller (B)

German M.O.: U/Arzt Dr Masch (C).

The Commandant was cooperative, but played no part in developing re-education activities.

The Interpreter was absent on leave; “*but I understand he is not interested in re-education and his German is rather poor.”* Later reports gave mixed views whether he was or was not involved in re-education activities, he was certainly not leading any.

The MO was later upgraded to B+, and it was stated that it was unknown why he was graded C in the first place.

The camp leader had been appointed on 9 May and was formerly leader at Bodiam; “*He is very efficient, intelligent and fully co-operative*.”

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Political screening: | A | B | C | C+ | Mass screened C | Unknown |
|  | 46 | 502 | 400 | 5 | 360 | 746 |

Most of the ‘mass screened’ were from US camps; this type of screening was basically information provided in written form to a variety of questions. It was recommended that the 5 pows graded C+ (Nazis) should be removed as soon as possible. There was no evidence of communism. There were strong anti-Russian sentiments.

Morale was regarded as ‘fair.’ Pows from the USA were still bitter about not having been repatriated. About 10% of pows had received no mail at all. News from the Russian zone was generally bad. Many of the hostels had minimal barbed wire and pleasant surroundings.

Pows from camps in Belgium were recovering; they had weighed on average 46kg, in comparison to 76kg of other pows.

‘Youth’ pows (under-25) – only 10% at HQ; 40-50% at hostels. There was no special provision for them.

Re-education activities were generally poor, hampered by lack of accommodation and materials. A number of pows from the Russian zone did not participate, “f*earing consequences on returning home*,” one pow commented that; “*it might not pay having shown oneself to be in favour of Western democratic ideas*.”

The standard list of activities was given:

Wochenpost and Ausblick – 350 / 140 copies respectively.

Newspapers – Very poor; the only British papers were passed on by British staff. A few German papers received.

Library – only 400 books for over 2000 pows.

Lectures – regular.

Discussion groups – a group of 20/30 pows met – “*on too high level to attract the mass of P/W*.”

Films – NOT at HQ (DC electricity) or Herstmonceux (no electricity), but shown at other hostels.

Wireless – unsatisfactory at HQ due to electric supply interfering with reception. Sets at hostels except Wadhurst and Herstmonceux Place.

Camp magazine – Supplies of paper, ink and stencils urgently needed.

Press review – halted as it had been badly handled + needed British papers to be ordered.

English Instruction – 420 students. Lack of materials for classes.

Other camp activities –

Religion – Protestant padre Reinhold (A) was posted to this camp on 31/3/1946. He was slowly gaining the confidence of pows and attendance at services was increasing. He also visited the hostels. RC civilian padre from Hastings visited the camp and hostels irregularly.

Education – small classes for shorthand, book-keeping, Spanish and maths at HQ – all lacking materials.

Theatre – a stage in the dining hut. Monthly variety and operettas performed.

Orchestra – 8 members playing light and swing music; a quartet playing “*serious music*.”

**August 1946** – Comments on the gypsum mine (Mountfield) where pows from Bodiam, Hurst Green and Robertsbridge worked. “*A constant source of trouble as the mine is most backward in social and safety conditions. The British miners are cowed and put up with conditions”* [because of the pay], the Germans “*work without any equivalent relief in pay and food.”* Troubles were occurring with pows refusing to work in the mine. Recommendations were made to improve pay, food, working conditions and place pows on a 3 month rota. As the year progressed more pows from other hostels were employed at the mine – possibly in response to the idea of having a rota?

**26 August 1946** – A letter was sent signed by the Commandant regarding visiting lecturers. He made various statements –

German lecturers – “*no lecturer should be sent who has adopted an English name*” i.e. German refugees. The main complaint was that some tried to pass themselves off as actually being English, which was resented. “*It is in particular a mistake to send German or Austrian Jewish refugees… anti-semitism is so deep in Germans… On the other hand, a German Jew who spoke openly as such would most likely have a good hearing if he did so in a dignified manner.”*

British lecturers – “*What the German pows really want to hear are British Officers and civilians…* [not refugees]. *At the moment many of them feel that everything at* [COGA] *is in the hands of German and Austrian refugees, mainly Jewish, to whom everything concerning their re-education has been delegated – and they do not like it*.”

Unusually a strong follow-up was issued on 10 September by Lt Col H J Fraser, POW Division. The assertions made were challenged – as well as whether these were actually the views of pows, or his own. It was pointed out that the letter was written when a Training Advisor (TA) from PID who was Hungarian and a ‘half-Jew’ was visiting the camp. It was pointed out that all previous criticisms of lecturers had been confined to their delivery or subject matter. “*I am of the opinion that the Commandant of 145 is himself an anti-semite and it is possible that the letter is prompted more by his anti-semitic feelings than by a genuine interest in the re-education of his PWs.”*

A visit to the camp was made and a report issued on 21 October. It was found that the letter had in fact been written by the Interpreter, Captain Le Roux – though supported by the Commandant. The remarks arose because so many lecturers and TA’s were foreign and an image was given that COGA was under their control. “*The Commandant and IO struck me as being perfectly sincere in their desire to rectify this impression*.” 2 recommendations were made – 1. All pows at the camp should be politically screened; 2. “*All lecturers again be instructed that they must introduce themselves frankly… and… So far as possible, English men be sent to lecture at this camp on the next two or three occasions…*” Further notes were issued to ensure that lecturers were introduced by including their place of birth and background.

In one of the reports, it was noted that there were anti-British feelings in the camp – this was repeated later in various reports.

**Saturday 07 September 1946** - Bexhill-on-Sea Observer - *Doing More Good in this Country P.O.W.s Told*

*“Bearing signs of severe treatment he received in a Nazi concentration camp, Dr Asmussen - the well-known German pastor and theologian - recently accompanied the Bishop of Chichester on a visit to the prisoner-of-war camp at Normanhurst, near Battle. A large number of Germans listened with keen attention as Dr. Asmussen told them their work during the harvest period meant help for their families in Germany. He said that although they must long to see their loved ones they were probable doing more good by working in this country in view of the present difficult period in Germany. The Bishop and Dr. Asmussen were shown around the camp by the commanding officer, and they conversed with several of the men.”* \*

**12 November 1946** – Segregation Section report.

No changes to senior personnel, other than no deputy C/L listed.

Comments on the camp leader - “*an outstanding personality and an excellent influence… a qualified medical man although not officially recognised as such owing to the loss of his International Red Cross papers… he desires to defer his return to Germany for 6 months… the contented and democratic atmosphere throughout the various hostels of this camp is directly traceable to the first class personality of this senior camp leader.”* It was suggested he should be regraded as A+.

Political screening:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | A+ | A | B+ | B | B- | C |
| HQ |  | 13 | 91 | 167 | 38 | 4 |
| Hurstmonceux |  | 7 | 33 | 46 | 11 | 2 |
| Hurstmonceux Place |  | 8 | 46 | 69 | 19 | 8 |
| Robertsbridge |  | 6 | 10 | 19 | 4 | 1 |
| Hurst Green |  | 7 | 33 | 70 | 13 | 3 |
| Bodiam |  | 12 | 37 | 30 | 11 | 9 |
| Wadhurst |  | 11 | 51 | 105 | 40 | 26 |
| Hollington | 1 | 4 | 30 | 58 | 27 | 21 |
| Hadlow |  | 3 | 30 | 42 | 9 | 10 |
| Horam |  | 23 | 72 | 82 | 16 | 4 |
| Annan |  | 19 | 70 | 60 | 24 | 9 |
| Hellingly |  | 1 | 5 | 9 | 2 | 2 |

The number of C grade pows was hugely reduced from when the Germans first arrived. This was mainly due to regrading, though some hard-core pows were transferred to other camps.

A high number of youth pows – 906, of whom 366 were 21 and under. They were concentrated in Hollington and Wadhurst.

**Saturday 26 April 1947** - Hastings and St Leonards Observer – German P.O.W. Choir.

*An enthusiastic reception was accorded to the choir from 145 German Prisoner of War Camp, Normanhurst Court, conducted by Erich Jacobs, when they gave a concert at Mount Pleasant Congregational Church on Saturday. The church was packed with a crowd of about 500 people, benches and chairs being put in the aisles when the seating accommodation was found to be inadequate. The Rev. Derrick A. Barber (minister) presided.*

*Introducing the programme, Dr. W. Schwick, the chief German camp-leader, said: "I hope that this concert will do something towards helping our two countries understand each other better." Mr. Barber said that they had a spirit there that would heal the troubles of the world. The choir, which comprises some 50 voices, sang extremely well and gave a variety of popular classical items. Rudolf Weh (bass) contributed "Song of the Evening Star" from "Tannhauser," and "O Isis and Osiris" (Mozart), and Alfred Goericke (trumpet) gave a fine performance in "Ave Maria" (Schubert), Erich Volandt accompanied several items on the organ and gave solos including Praudium and Fugue in G (Bach) and Fugue in C (Buxtehude). An enjoyable item was a rendering of "Air" (Bach) by Heins Seifert (cello*).” \*

**29 April to 3 May 1947** – General re-education survey. Strength; 1 officer, 2292 OR at HQ, 10 hostels + billets.

A new deputy C/L; Fw Treugebrot (A). He had requested that his repatriation be delayed.

The camp staff from 1017 and 670 Company, recently disbanded, had been transferred to this camp and took up various positions as hostel leaders, etc.

Simplified screening numbers in place: A+ 1; A 6; B 2165; C 121. 360 pows were appealing against their grades; the better the grade, the sooner repatriated, in theory. There was no information about how many appeals were successful – in most camps, most were. 628 pows repatriated to date.

****General standards of morale were recorded as high, due to good administration and relationships with British staff; pleasant surroundings and ample sport. The exceptions were Wadhurst and Hurst Green. Complaints were made about the price of goods in the canteen, particularly cigarettes. Letters from home and slow repatriation had a depressing influence.

Positive relationships with local civilians were being developed. The camp choir and orchestra put on concerts in local churches in Hastings and in neighbouring hospitals.

A book was being produced containing pictures painted by pows of places in East Sussex together with a short history of the county – it was hoped this would be published by the YMCA for presentation to repatriated pows.

The picture was painted by pow Heinrich Engelhard of Normanhurst in August 1947. The title ‘*Zur Erinnerung’* = ‘as a memory.’ I think this might have been part of the book mentioned. Another German artist, Matthias Hess, was also held at Normanhurst.

Some re-education activities had developed, but had lately suffered from improved freedoms to leave the camp and from the repatriation of some study leaders.

Wochenpost and Ausblick – separate appendix.

Newspapers – A range of British papers received in HQ and hostels. Only a few German papers were reaching the camp.

Library – Adequate.

Lectures – Only 2 since Christmas. The pows in this camp seemed to be incredibly sensitive even to single words in comparison to other camps. An example was given that pows stayed away from a lecture about ‘Music and Humanity’ because they disliked the word ‘humanity.’ “*My children are suffering from undernourishment, I am held a PW and can’t help them, and then you propose to talk about ‘Humanitaet’*.”

Discussion groups – In HQ and all hostels in various forms.

Films – YMCA visited HQ and all hostels – Gaumont British only visited the larger sites. There was criticism of the quality of British films.

Wireless – Adequate.

Camp magazine – “*a flimsy publication, both in size and content*.”

Press review – at all sites, weekly or fortnightly, usually with discussions after.

English instruction – Separate appendix.

Information room – None.

Other camp activities –

Religion – Low interest. Adequate facilities and pows able to visit local churches. HQ had its own chapel dedicated by the Bishop of Chichester.

Education – Many small classes, including preparation for the Abitur.

Entertainment – A fine choir with 70 members. 2 orchestras of a high standard at HQ giving concerts at hostels, neighbouring camps and local churches, etc. HQ also had a theatre group performing at a high standard.

**May 1947** – Visiting lecturer’s comments about differences between HQ and most of the hostels. In HQ there were small attendances at lectures; *“Criticism in the main camp and its nearest hostel Hollington is bitter and very much anti-British, during the lecture and much more after it.”* Whereas, *“The visit to all the other hostels is simply a pleasure*” – with attendance at 90 – 100%. These concerns were repeated by a lecturer in July stating that it was worse here than in any other camp he visited.

**11-15 August 1947** – Re-education progress report. Strength 0 Officers, 2136 OR. [The MO with a rank of Unterarzt was not counted as an officer in this report].

A new Commandant; Lt Col Joy. He was new to pow work and interested in re-education.

The only screening figures given were: ‘A+ 1; A 3.’ The rest were presumably B. No appeals pending. C.800 pows repatriated to date.

Morale still considered to be generally high.

One pow, Einfinger, was an Untersturmfuehrer of the SS – he was regraded as C+ and was awaiting transfer to a different camp. *Untersturmführer* was the first commissioned SS officer rank, it would be interesting to find out how he ended up in a camp for Other Ranks.

Changes to re-education activities:

Newspapers – more German papers and some Swiss papers were being received.

Lectures – continued to be infrequent. Perhaps due to previous reports and comments?

Discussion groups and Press reviews – most had ceased due to good weather and a preference for leaving the camp.

Films – Travelling Films had replaced Gaumont British. Office of Information films were well received.

Wireless – some sets were poor, the one at Herstmonceux needed repairs.

Changes to Other Camp Activities –

Education – Most classes had been curtailed during the summer months.

An exhibition of pow arts and crafts was to be held at the TocH in Hastings.

Outside contacts – apart from good informal contacts with civilians, no formal links had been developed.

**Saturday 30 August 1947** - Hastings and St Leonards Observer - Speedboat Accident to German P.W. Swimmer.

“*The Adjutant of 145 German P.W. Camp, Normanhurst Court, near Battle, Sussex, asks that anyone who witnessed the above accident near Hastings Pier on 17th August, 1947, will be good enough to write giving the fullest possible details. Witnesses writing in are particularly requested not to forget to give their full name and address*.” \*

**Saturday 06 September 1947 -** Hastings and St Leonards Observer - German P.O.W. Choir.

*“All who enjoy first-class choral singing and instrumental music are assured of a great treat in hearing the 145 German P.O.W. Camp Choir and soloists in a concert which is to be given at Robertson-street Congregational Church next Saturday, September 13, at 7 pm. Music by Geilsdorf, Handel, Beethoven, Schubert, and others, will be sung or played. Admission to this concert will be free, but a silver collection will be taken. Programmes, which may be had from members of the church, are 1s. each.”* \*

**29 September – 3 October 1947** – Re-educational survey. Strength; 0 officers, 1878 OR.

No changes to senior personnel.

Screening figures: A+ 1; A 3; B 1874. 1127 pows repatriated to date. 28 pows released as civilians.

This report stated that, “*anti-British feeling is practically non-existent”* – this goes against other reports.

Very few changes to re-education activities. The camp magazine had improved. English instruction had all but ceased.

Entertainments – “*The choir continues to be much in demand; so is the dance band, and the prisoners that accompany it*” – a comment on German pows fraternising with local girls which was then allowed.

**4-7 November 1947** – Re-educational survey. Strength 1 officer, 1679 OR.

No change to senior personnel.

No screening figures given. 1269 pows repatriated to date. 34 ‘Civilianised.’

High morale. Negative factors included bad news from families in Germany, and dismantling of some German factories.

Very little change to re-education activities. 2 copies of Hansard were being supplied, 2 more requested. Still no Information Room, materials sent by the Visual Education Section were displayed in the dining hall. Still no formal outside contacts developed.

Education – only a Spanish course at HQ listed.

**6/10 April 1948** – Re-educational assessment. Strength 1 officer, 674 OR.

Commandant: Lt Col Joy Camp Leader; Fhnr H Rother

Interpreter: Capt Max E Leroux Deputy C/L: O/Fhnr Alfred Schmidt

German M.O.: o/St/Arzt Dr Franke.

General comments – “*Although treatment of Ps/W in this camp has always been most liberal, the comparative neglect of re-education proper is apparent in the outlook* [of] *the Ps/W with whom I spoke. The majority are quite ignorant about the most basic of political events leading up to the 39-45 war and display an astonishing distrust in the honesty of British intentions.”*

Particular negative attitudes arose from those who worked in the gypsum mines; “*where conditions of work were hard and contact with the British civilian was mainly confined to foul mouthed and unfriendly work mates.*” Other general complaints related to pay and length of captivity.

Positive aspects were friendly civilians and good conditions in this camp.

**Mid April 1948** – Normanhurst was listed with just 50 pows as a hostel for Walderslade Camp 117. Heinz Rother remained as hostel leader.

I have seen an account that two POWs from Normanhurst shot themselves - one at Pigknoll Farm, the other at Wilson's Farm, but I have not been able to confirm this.

Known Camp Commandants:

1946/7 Lt Col A C Giles (I think he was with the Royal Warwickshire Regiment).

1947 Lt Col C N Joy

**After the camp:** House demolished in 1951. Camping site.

**Further Information:**

National Archives FO 939/310 - 145 Working Camp, Normanhurst Court Camp, Battle, Sussex. Dated 1945 – 1948. Used above.

IWM have copies of the camp magazine No 41 (September 1947) and 44 (November 1947) – LBY E.J.338.

\* News articles from - <http://sussexhistoryforum.co.uk/index.php?topic=1573.0>

**POW NUMBERS**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Open |  |  | With other camps |  |  | Unknown |  |  | Not open |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | < 1945 | 1945 | 1/ to 5/ 46 | 6/1946 | 11/1946 | 4/1947 | 8/1947 | 10/1947 | 11/1947 | 4/1948 |
| Main |  | c.500 |  | 499 | 313 | 395 | 435 | 453 | 386 | 552 |
| Bodiam |  |  |  | 297 | 99 | 226 | 172 |  |  |  |
| Robertsbridge | With C86 | c.70 |  | 133 | 40 | 95 | 70 | 122 | 112 |  |
| Eastbourne |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Hellingly |  |  |  | With C 238 | 19 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Mayfield |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Hollington |  |  |  | 292 | 141 | 239 | 210 | 166 | 142 |  |
| Herstmonceux |  |  |  | 98 | 99 | 90 | 86 | 93 | 92 |  |
| Hampton Park |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Horam |  |  |  | 209 | 197 | 177 | 160 |  |  |  |
| Wadhurst |  |  |  | 250 | 233 | 200 | 200 | 237 | 221 |  |
| Herstmonceux Pl |  |  |  | 153 | 150 | 200 | 183 | 218 | 207 | 113 |
| Hadlow Down |  |  |  | ? | 94 | 88 | 71 | 31 |  |  |
| Annan / Halland |  |  |  | ? | 182 | 190 | 190 | 189 | 176 |  |
| Hurst Green |  |  |  |  | 126 | 193 | 150 | 168 | 167 |  |
| Billets |  |  |  | 123 | ? | 200 | 194 | 201 | 177 | 10 |
| TOTALS |  |  |  | 2054 | 1693 (1) | 2292 | 2136 | 1878 | 1680 | 675 |

(1) + billetees.

**Hostels**

**Bodiam**

**December 1945** – visiting lecturer attended. Pows able to attend the local church.

**Early 1946 (undated**) – many pows working in the gypsum mine.

**June 1946** – Visiting lecturer’s notes – morale was good. There was a new hostel leader. The hostel was decorated with many flowers for Whitsun. “*The position of the house and the grounds is particularly favourable… About 100 work underground but I did not notice any special bitterness.”*

**4 June 1946** – Hostel leader; F Műller (B). Pows disliked working in the mine – cases of sickness and small accidents were frequent. Some discussion group meetings were held and pows were building an open air theatre.

**August 1946** – some pows in tents. No reason given.

**May 1947** – Hostel leader Maat Mueller (B) (same as 6/46?). **August 1947** – Same leader.

**September 1947** - ‘*The Times,*’ 13 September, 1947 reported that a lorry carrying hop-pickers fell from ‘the narrow bridge at Bodiam, into the River Rother about 10ft. below.’ 14 people were taken to hospital, some with serious injuries. Some were rescued by German POWs who were working in the adjoining field.

‘*Evening Standard,’ same day -*

***Thank you Germans -*** *Hop-pickers – many of them women from those parts of East London which suffered most in Hitler’s blitz – are today talking of raising a fund for German prisoners of war.*

*Object of the fund: to say “thank you” to four Germans for the way they went to the rescue of hop-pickers who were thrown into the River Rother when the lorry in which they were riding crashed into the parapet and toppled over a bridge at Bodiam, near Hastings, last night.*

*‘****Grand Job’*** *- Said one of the hop-pickers today: “The Germans did a grand job. They waded into the water to help people out and gave their own dry clothes to the injured. They also helped the police raise the lorry to free a man who was pinned under it. So, we’d just like to show that English gratitude means something.”*

<http://www.bygonebodiam.co.uk/BodiamBridgeAccident1947.html> [More info]. One detail referred to the pow site as being150 yards away from the accident at the bridge.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | < 1945 | 1945 | 1/ to 5/ 46 | 6/1946 | 11/1946 | 4/1947 | 8/1947 | 10/1947 | 11/1947 | 4/1948 |
| Bodiam |  |  |  | 297 | 99 | 226 | 172 |  |  |  |

**Eastbourne**

**Early 1946** (Undated) – Lecturer’s report; “*Appalling external conditions; hut icy cold; mud; men grave and depressed. British unemployed in Eastbourne remonstrated against their presence and group had to be reduced under that pressure. ‘Why are we kept here when there is unemployment in this country?’* “

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | < 1945 | 1945 | 1/ to 5/ 46 | 6/1946 | 11/1946 | 4/1947 | 8/1947 | 10/1947 | 11/1947 | 4/1948 |
| Eastbourne |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Hadlow Down / House.** TQ 547 242.

**June 1946** – Visiting lecturer’s comments – “*Ps/W are well-housed and appear fairly contented if somewhat dull.”* A new hostel leader. No reading or sitting room available.

**September 1946** – Lecturer’s comments – 85 men engaged in agriculture, good morale. “*The hostel itself is a country house…. Redecorations and repairs etc are being carried out by the Ps/W.”*

**May 1947** – Hostel leader; Ogefr Reichenberger (B). **August 1947** – Same leader, upgraded to (A). Had its own theatre group.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | < 1945 | 1945 | 1/ to 5/ 46 | 6/1946 | 11/1946 | 4/1947 | 8/1947 | 10/1947 | 11/1947 | 4/1948 |
| Hadlow Down |  |  |  | ? | 94 | 88 | 71 | 31 |  |  |

**Halland (Annan House).** Annan House shows at TQ 509 177 on old OS maps, and as Annan Court on modern maps.

**June 1946** – Visiting lecturer stated that the hostel was well run.

**May 1947** – Hostel leader; Stfw Siebenhuhner (B)

**August 1947** – Hostel leader; Fw H Buhrtz (B) October 1947 – same leader.

**November 1947** – Hostel leader; Fw Franz Reichenberger (A); previously leader at Hadlow.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | < 1945 | 1945 | 1/ to 5/ 46 | 6/1946 | 11/1946 | 4/1947 | 8/1947 | 10/1947 | 11/1947 | 4/1948 |
| Annan / Halland |  |  |  | ? | 182 | 190 | 190 | 189 | 176 |  |

**Hampton Park.** (I wonder if this was Hampden Park in Eastbourne?)

**April 1946** – visited by a lecturer.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | < 1945 | 1945 | 1/ to 5/ 46 | 6/1946 | 11/1946 | 4/1947 | 8/1947 | 10/1947 | 11/1947 | 4/1948 |
| Hampton Park |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Hellingly**

**25 June 1945** – PID Progress Report 122 listed German pows being transferred here.

**June 1946** – pows transferred from Camp 238 to Hellingly.

**June 1946** – Visiting lecturer’s comments – a small hostel, pleasantly housed, a country house. A new hostel leader; Beer, previously at Horam.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | < 1945 | 1945 | 1/ to 5/ 46 | 6/1946 | 11/1946 | 4/1947 | 8/1947 | 10/1947 | 11/1947 | 4/1948 |
| Hellingly |  |  |  | With C 238 | 19 |  |  |  |  |  |

**Herstmonceux.** (1 memory stated it was by Herstomonceux Football Ground.)

**Early 1946** (Undated) – Lecturer’s report – “*most depressing external conditions, a bare room with petrol lamps. Boredom and homesickness are rife.”*

**June 1946** – Hostel leader; St Fw Kueberling. Still no electricity.

**26 October 1946** – electric supply provided.

**May 1947** – Hostel leader; Hfw Vogt (B). **November 1947** – Same leader.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | < 1945 | 1945 | 1/ to 5/ 46 | 6/1946 | 11/1946 | 4/1947 | 8/1947 | 10/1947 | 11/1947 | 4/1948 |
| Herstmonceux |  |  |  | 98 | 99 | 90 | 86 | 93 | 92 |  |

**Herstmonceux Place.** 10 minutes walk from the small camp at Herstmonceux.

**17 May 1946** – hostel opened. Later comment made that the huts were old and in bad condition.

**8 June 1946** – Visiting lecturer’s comments – “*This is a new camp, still waiting for a radio… papers, books*,” etc.

Many of the pows had been transferred from Camps in Belgium where they had experienced extremely poor conditions – the lecturer commented that they were “*now in fairly good shape.”*

**June 1946** – Hostel leader; St/Fw Prager (B)

**May 1947** – Hostel leader; Ofw Ruell (B)

**August 1947** – Hostel leader; Fw Kurt Franke (B); had been a member of the Nazi Party since 1932; “*He makes an open and honest impression, is a rather simple type and carries out his duties satisfactorily.”* **November 1947** - same leader.

**April 1948** – Hostel leader; Uffz H Wiesel; previously leader at Wadhurst.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | < 1945 | 1945 | 1/ to 5/ 46 | 6/1946 | 11/1946 | 4/1947 | 8/1947 | 10/1947 | 11/1947 | 4/1948 |
| Herstmonceux Pl |  |  |  | 153 | 150 | 200 | 183 | 218 | 207 | 113 |

**Hollington**. A country house – Hollington Hall aka The Grove/Grove House. TQ 783 104.

*“On the outskirts of hastings was a large prisoner-of-war camp at Grove House, in Hollington, housing Germen and Italian prisoners of war. (This is now the Grove School). During light summer evenings we would walk to the camp with a football and play football with the prisoners. Goals were built from old railings and nets were fashioned out of old chicken wire. By the time the war was ending, many 'youngsters' were returning from evacuation, and quite a lot played football against the prisoners.”*

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/15/a1899615>

**April 1946** – lecturer reported that pows were having to get up at 5.30 in the morning to work in a mine.

**June 1946** – Visiting lecturer’s comments – he had been warned that this was a particularly bad camp, but did not find it to be so. *“They are extremely well housed, in a beautiful` position, but have work they dislike (mining). However, they seem to have been treated wrongly in the past.”*

**June 1946** – Hostel leader; Fw Buchmeier (B+), new. Low morale with shift work in gypsum mine. Literary evenings twice a week, German newspapers read out on Sundays.

**May 1947** – Hostel leader; Ofw Bade (B). 15 pows gave up their free time to help rebuild a Hastings church destroyed by a V1 (St Leonards). A visiting lecturer commented that there was a “*most snobbish, unreasonable Kulturwart* [study leader] *and a bitter camp leader.”* **November 1947** – Same leader.

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|  | < 1945 | 1945 | 1/ to 5/ 46 | 6/1946 | 11/1946 | 4/1947 | 8/1947 | 10/1947 | 11/1947 | 4/1948 |
| Hollington |  |  |  | 292 | 141 | 239 | 210 | 166 | 142 |  |

**Horam.** Local memories place it at The Grange TQ 576 170.

**April 1946** - visited by lecturer.

**June 1946** – Hostel leader; Fw Beer (C) – recommended he be replaced. Many pows from Belgium and USA.

**May 1947** – Hostel leader Ofaehnr Ditter (B)

**August 1947 –** Hostel leader; Fw Georg Vierneisel (B).

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|  | < 1945 | 1945 | 1/ to 5/ 46 | 6/1946 | 11/1946 | 4/1947 | 8/1947 | 10/1947 | 11/1947 | 4/1948 |
| Horam |  |  |  | 209 | 197 | 177 | 160 |  |  |  |

**Hurst Green**

**August 1946 –** comments in lecturer’s report. “*A new hostel, country house with good facilities*.” Another lecturer stated that some pows were working in the gypsum mine.

**May 1947** – Hostel leader; Fw G Beer (B+) – was this the same person at Horam and recommended for replacement? Low morale recorded due to shift work in mine.

**August 1947** – Same leader. Low morale continued and there were many minor crimes. Pows were sometimes sent here as a disciplinary matter.

**November 1947** – same leader.

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|  | < 1945 | 1945 | 1/ to 5/ 46 | 6/1946 | 11/1946 | 4/1947 | 8/1947 | 10/1947 | 11/1947 | 4/1948 |
| Hurst Green |  |  |  |  | 126 | 193 | 150 | 168 | 167 |  |

**Mayfield**

**25 June 1945** – PID Progress Report 122 listed German pows being transferred here.

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|  | < 1945 | 1945 | 1/ to 5/ 46 | 6/1946 | 11/1946 | 4/1947 | 8/1947 | 10/1947 | 11/1947 | 4/1948 |
| Mayfield |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Robertsbridge** (on George Hill / what is now Heathfield Gardens).

**1943 to 1945** - Robertsbridge listed as a hostel for Stanhope Camp 86.

**December 1945** – visiting lecture attended. He found a lack of supervision by the Staff Sergeant in command. The pows were fraternising with local girls who came to the fence of the camp.

**June 1946** – Visiting lecturer’s notes – “*well kept – their guard too works with them in the garden, sees to the flowers, etc. so that the whole place looks friendly. They appear happy.”*

**June 1946** – Hostel leader; H/Fw Porr (B+)

**October 1946** - A lecturer stated that some pows were working in the gypsum mine.

**May 1947** – Hostel leader; Fw Pesch (B) – previously leader at Wadhurst. **August 1947** – Same leader.

**October 1947** – Hostel leader; Fw Georg Vierneisel (B), previously hostel leader at Horram. **November 1947** – same leader.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | < 1945 | 1945 | 1/ to 5/ 46 | 6/1946 | 11/1946 | 4/1947 | 8/1947 | 10/1947 | 11/1947 | 4/1948 |
| Robertsbridge | With C86 | c.70 |  | 133 | 40 | 95 | 70 | 122 | 112 |  |

**Wadhurst Park** – in the grounds of Wadhurst Hall.

**May 1946** – Visiting lecturer.

**June 1946** – A lecturer described the hostel as being new, with many items (telephone, papers, etc., to be delivered. “*It is strangely situated, under huge trees….* [he suggested some trees should be cut down]*… It would give them a chance of having a dry camp. At present it is depressing, and drowned in water and mud.”* He mentioned a chess tournament and poetry readings. Most of the pows had been held in camps in the USA.

**June 1946** – Hostel leader; O/Fw Pesch (B-)

**May 1947** – Hostel leader; Hfw Senzek (B+). Very strict discipline imposed in this hostel due to lack of discipline beforehand, this resulted in poor morale.

**August 1947** – Same leader. Morale restored as strict regime was eased. Had its own theatre group.

**October 1947** – Hostel leader; Fw Willi Besch (B+)

**November 1947** – Hostel leader; Uffz Hans Wiesel (B+); “*a mature level headed man with a fine sense of humour.”*

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|  | < 1945 | 1945 | 1/ to 5/ 46 | 6/1946 | 11/1946 | 4/1947 | 8/1947 | 10/1947 | 11/1947 | 4/1948 |
| Wadhurst |  |  |  | 250 | 233 | 200 | 200 | 237 | 221 |  |