**Camp 171** **- Bungay Base Camp, Bungay, Suffolk**

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| **1947 camp list** | | | | | | | |
| 171 (B.C.) | P.W. Base Camp, Bungay, Suffolk | E. | Priswar, Bungay | Bungay 82 | Ditchingham | Lt.Col.H.O.Daniel T.D. | V/202/4 |

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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 |
| TM 325 866 | 156 | 171 | Bungay Base Camp, Bungay, Beccles | Suffolk | 4 |  | Former RAF airfield. Precise location not identified, NGR given for feature  centre |

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| **Location:** Bungay is 9 km west of Beccles. Many ex-RAF huts all round the airfield could have ben used. Camp 273 very close. Botesdale Camp 56 also had a hostel called Bungay in 43/44 .  **Before the camp:** Airfield  **Pow Camp:** Three large compounds used for transit of pows.  POW Unit 171 was previously based on the Isle of Man under Commandant H O Daniel who then continued as Commandant at Bungay. It is important to note that entries for him at the Isle of Man gave praise for his support in the development of activities and camp life for internees and then pows. However, the records below are entirely negative – which aspect is true – can both be?     |  | | --- | | 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. |   **20/22 November 1946** – Visit by a member of the Segregation Section of PID mainly for political screening. This was a base/transit camp – the majority of pows were only passing through. |  |
| Ordnance Survey |

Strength; 739 Austrians, 61 Germans.

Commandant: Lt.Col H O Daniel Camp leader: F/W Matthias Moers (A)

Interpreters: S/Sgt H Scott Deputy C/L: U.Offz Hermann Kurginski (B+)

S/Sgt H Wolff German MO: Ob.Arzt Dr Ernst Hartmann (B+)

Both interpreters were proficient in English and German.

Camp leader Moers, aged 35, had been leader since May 1946. He attended a ‘Democratic School’ in USA, and joined Wehrmacht in 1940. Became an anti-Nazi, “*owing to the brutalities of which he gave details perpetrated by SS and SPA in his home district. Sharp and forward type.”*

The deputy leader was aged 33. In place since June 1946. “*A good impression, but has not much personality*.”

There were mixed views by the British staff about the German MO, aged 33. Most MO’s had a Nazi record – “*has probably seen the error of his views originally held. He is not a pleasing type.”*

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| Screening results | A+ | A | A- | B+ | B | B- | C | C+ | Not known | Total |
| Austrians | - | 21 | - | 19 | 269 | 14 | 406 | 9 | 1 | 739 |
| Germans | - | 13 | - | 22 | 16 | 1 | - | - | 7 | 59\* |

\* Not known why strength stated 61 / but screening = 59.

The Germans were held in a separate ‘hostel’ from the Austrians. The hostel was not named, so it might have been a separate compound or a separate site.

As this was a transit camp, re-education activities were not reviewed – however it was requested that a wireless be sent for the permanent pow staff.

**18-23 January 1947** – Repatriation and Progress report. Strength 1 officer (the MO); 39 Other Ranks + unknown number passing through. German pows, the Austrians had been transferred to other camps.

Commandant: Lt.Col H O Daniel Camp leader: U.Offz Hermann Kurginski (B+)

Interpreters: S/Sgt H Scott Deputy C/L: -

S/Sgt H Wolff German MO: Ob.Arzt Dr Ernst Hartmann (B+)

Despite this camp having such a small permanent number of pows, it was stated that the Commandant was not interested in re-education (most were not), but also, *“has done much to hinder it,”* (most just ignored it). It was noted that the RSM in charge of administration had a similar attitude.

The camp leader had been deputy. He was described as *“a nonentity*.” He asked to be relieved of his post.

Comments about the administration of the camp were a lot stronger than usual – “*Morale could hardly be worse.”* The main negative factors were:

1. Attitude of British staff.
2. “*Administrative inefficiencies*” which led to poor living conditions; e.g. overcrowding and no heating in the compounds for 3 days. The pows were forbidden to go to bed early to keep warm.
3. Pows were not allowed to leave the camp without an escort because, “*they were seen talking to men from a neighbouring working camp.”*
4. Prohibition and discouragement of re-education activities. The Commandant had forbidden lectures, debates and discussions on political or religious subjects.

Simplified screening figures were given; A 4 / B 35 / B- 1. There was 1 appeal against a given grade, (the better the grade, the sooner repatriated, in theory).

The standard list of re-education activities was given and further demonstrated the officious, petty-minded nature of the Commandant;

Wochenpost and Ausblick - separate appendix.

Newspapers – none.

Library – small, but reasonably good.

Lectures – none.

Discussion group – not allowed.

Films – YMCA and COGA films shown.

Wireless – Forbidden! A private set belonging to a pow was confiscated and a request to use it in the camp hospital was refused.

Press review – a daily press review started when this visit took place, it was doubted it would continue after.

English instruction – separate appendix.

Information room – an exhibition about ‘Germany Today’ had been displayed in the repatriation office.

Other camp activities –

Religion – Services were held by a local C.of E. clergyman.

Education – none.

Entertainments – none.

The concluding remarks were damning – “*inefficient administration, bad living conditions, excessive numbers of idle and ill-disciplined British guards and the hostile and unreasoning attitude of the commandant can hardly fail to make a lamentable impression on prisoners who have come to appreciate the fairness which they have hitherto received…. It is rumoured that this camp is to be closed which would be the best thing that could happen to it.”*

PID was part of the Foreign Office, but Pow camps – and their Commandants - were under the control of the War Office, and so many reports were simply not passed on or acted upon. In this case it appears that notice was taken, albeit slowly.

**8/9 April 1947 –** A brief survey of re-education was conducted alongside a separate ‘special report’ on conditions in the camp. The special report referred to obstructions to re-education and poor administration - unfortunately, it was not included in the National Archive file.

Strength; 0 officers, 103 OR on the ‘permanent’ pow staff. The staff had been increased from 40 to 100. 100’s, sometimes 1000’s of pows were passing through this camp during repatriation.

Commandant: Lt.Col H O Daniel Camp leader: Kreutzer (B-)

Interpreters: S/Sgt H Scott Deputy C/L: -

S/Sgt H Wolff German MO: Stabsarzt Stellmacher (C)

The Commandant was on leave.

The new camp leader was regarded as, “*conscientious and although at times querulous, seems capable of handling the heavy assignments.”*

Screening figures; B 87 / C 16. There was no explanation why C graded pows (Nazis) had been sent to this camp.

It was expected that activities would begin to improve – perhaps they knew the Commandant would soon be departing?

Wochenpost and Ausblick – sufficient copies.

Newspapers – 2 copies of 5 daily papers were paid for from the welfare fund, (money raised through sales in the canteen). No German papers.

Library – Satisfactory.

Lectures – None

Discussion groups – None

Films – Only YMCA films fortnightly.

Wireless – 2 sets, but under the control of the British staff. The Commandant’s reason for not giving control to the pows, as in other camps, was that pows might, *“be tempted to steal parts.”*

Press review – Extracts selected by the Camp Leader were posted on a board. Some were read out to pows being repatriated.

English instruction – none.

Information room – none.

Other camp activities – no change.

**1-2 July 1947** – Re-educational survey. Strength; 1 officer; 102 OR on permanent pow staff. Up to 1500 pows on their way to repatriation were held here for up to 2 weeks.

Commandant: Lt.Col S H Atkins Camp leader: W Kreutzer (B+) had been B-.

Interpreters: S/Sgt H Scott Deputy C/L: Uffz H Kurginsky (B+) had been leader in January.

S/Sgt H Wolff German MO: Stabsarzt Stellmacher (B) had been C.

Reception had been “*very friendly,”* The new Commandant was not expected to place any obstacles to re-education, and; “*He restricts military discipline to normal requirements*.” The attitude of the RSM was under review by the Commandant.

Doubts were expressed that the MO should have been upgraded from C. He retained many Nazi ideas and was considered to be a; “*Sly individual, great self-pity. Bad type although without influence.”* The Commandant was not satisfied with his services as a M.O. and asked that he be replaced.

Screening figures – A 2 / B+ 28 / B 51 / B- 22. 15 pows from the permanent staff repatriated to date. Morale had increased and the new Commandant had created, “*an atmosphere of self respect and ease.”*

Efforts were being made to develop some activities with the neighbouring camp. This camp was isolated and contact with the public was “*almost impossible.”*

Uffz R Marquart (A), aged 22, had been appointed as study-leader. There were some improvements to the standard list of activities:

Newspapers – some German papers received, but more requested.

Library – only 700 books for the 1500 pows frequently held here.

Lectures – started with visiting lecturers sent by COGA.

Discussion groups – held when each new intake of pows arrived.

Films – inadequate. Films only shown when on loan from Ellough Airfield Camp 258.

Wireless – 2 of the 3 compounds had sets. The report did not record who controlled the sets.

Press review – Daily with news read in each compound.

English Instruction – None.

Information room – All compounds had a room to display exhibitions, but the quality was not good. One current exhibition just had plans of houses.

Other camp activities –

Religion – RC and protestant ministers from Camp 258 attended fortnightly.

Education – None; not practicable in this sort of camp.

Entertainment – Concerts were given by an orchestra from Camp 258. Table tennis and football were popular.

**25/26 August 1947** – Re-educational survey. Strength; 0 officers, 121 OR.

Commandant: Lt.Col S H Atkins Camp leader: None.

Interpreters: S/Sgt H Wolff Deputy C/L: Uffz H Kurginsky (B+)

German MO: None.

The camp leader had been taken ill and was not expected to return.

There had been no further complaints about the RSM. The MO and one of the interpreters had left.

Screening figures – B+ 29 / B 67 / B- 25. There was 1 more appeal against grading. 11 more pows repatriated. Morale was described as “*remarkably good”* with a vast improvement created by the new Commandant. There was concern that the lack of a camp leader may cause difficulties.

There were few changes to re-education activities: the information room exhibitions had greatly improved, and it was hoped a camp magazine would start.

Pows from the permanent staff had visited Bungay Council and Norwich where they were guided by a member of the Society of Friends.

**16-17 October 1947** – Re-educational survey. Strength: Permanent staff – 1 officer, 131 OR / Repatriates – 36 officers, 1016 OR (this figure varied greatly).

Commandant: Lt.Col S H Atkins Camp leader: Uffz F Ortmanns (B)

Interpreters: S/Sgt H Wolff Deputy C/L: Uffz H Kurginsky (B+)

German MO: St.Arzt Dr W Franz (B-)

The new camp leader was aged 37, an accountant, RC, “*reasonable, co-operative, congenial personality.”* He had been at Camp 258.

There was a new study leader – Carstenson, considered to be a success.

Morale continued to be very good, with a great deal of praise for the new Commandant.

Changes to re-education activities –

Newspapers – larger numbers of German papers being received, but not enough for all the repatriates.

Library – expanded to 1500 books.

Films – YMCA and COI films.

Press reviews – twice weekly with about 200 pows attending.

Other camp activities

Religion – A pow protestant lay minister assisted the visiting padre and also held discussion groups. There was a RC discussion group led by 2 pows who had been held in concentration camps.

Outside visits continued to Bungay council. Pows were able to visit a ‘rest centre’ at Bungay which had been set-up for pows from this camp and 258.

The overall conclusion was that this was now a good camp. The British and German staff worked well. *“The new CO will not tolerate any interference, as was experienced in the past.”* Repatriates were given a sense of “*some security and hope*.”

Known Camp Commandants;

1946 Lt Col H O Daniel T.D. from the Kings (Liverpool Regiment) / Pioneer Corps.

1947 Lt.Col S H Atkins

**After the camp:**

**Further Information:**

National Archives FO 1120/230 – Re-educational survey visit reports for camps 165 to 175. Dated 1 Jan 1946 to 31 Dec 1948. Used above.