**Camp 184** **Llanmartin, Magor, Monmouthshire**

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| **1947 Camp List** |
| 184(B.C.) | Llanmartin Camp, Magor, Newport, Mon | E. | Priswar, Magor | Newport 71216 | Magor | Lt.Col.E.G.H.Clarke M.C. | v/202/2 |

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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 |
|  |  | 184 | Llanmartin Camp, Magor | Monmouthshire (Gwent) | Base Camp | Wales |  |

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| **Location:** NGR ST 386 890**Before the camp:** The camp at Llanmartin was originally built to house the US Army prior to the D-Day landings.**Pow Camp:** **1944** - Reported to have opened very soon after D-day.Italian pows were recorded here, but were increasingly placed in hostels prior to repatriation and away from German pows.**17 November 1944** – 3 Luftwaffe pows escaped:*“RESTRICTED - Herman LANGE / Thedor HOLZ / Herman AHRENDT**At about 22.00 hours on 17 November 1944 the above-named German PW escaped through the perimeter wire of 184 PW Camp. They were recaptured at HOLYHEAD whilst attempting to board a steamer for EIRE on the afternoon of 23 November 1944. During the night of 17/18 November 1944, the PW walked to CHEPSTOW. At the time one was wearing Luftwaffe trousers and a leather jacket, another was wearing dark blue trousers and a knee-length drab wind-jacket with zip fasteners, and the third was wearing complete Luftwaffe uniform without badges. One PW could speak poor French and fair English, by no means fluent or free from accent; another could speak very little English indeed; the third could speak only German…..* |  |
| *Ordnance Survey 1956* |

*….Their ‘passports,’ or Identity Documents, which were made whilst in the camp, were poor specimens. The ‘stamp’ was produced by placing a French franc under the card and taking a rubbing.”* (Wiltshire Record Office F5/530/3).



The pows changed a 1000-franc banknote at a branch of Barclays in Chepstow and bought train tickets to Birmingham. Lange sold his watch to the owner of a fish and chip shop for £12 and they travelled by train to Liverpool spending 2 nights in a YMCA hostel. In Liverpool they bought second-hand clothes and tickets to Dublin, posing as French volunteers. They travelled on to Holyhead and were arrested trying to board the steamer. During their travels they had shown their poor fake papers to various people, and had spent time in pubs and restaurants. (Further details taken from ‘*For Fűhrer and Fatherland’* – R De Normann – Sutton Publishing Ltd – 1996).

**November 1944** – Polish guards (No.8 PGC) were sent to the camp to replace many of the Pioneer Corps guards. (The Polish guards were withdrawn during 1946).

**19 April 1945 –** PID, Segregation Section, Progress Report 69. 353 A and B political category pows were sent from this camp to Royston camp 29. [A = anti-Nazi; B = middle; C = Nazi].

**2 May 1945 -** PID, Segregation Section, Progress Report 76. All ‘white’ (A) and ‘grey’ (B) pows had been removed. 590 ‘black’ (C) had been sent from Mile House Camp 8. “*Camp 184 is now an ‘all-black’ Camp and has been sealed off by arrangement with DPW.”* Department of Prisoners of War. These pows were distributed to other high security camps before August 1946.

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|  | A German magician called Ludwig Hanemann was held at Llanmartin in 1945 - 1946. He had been born in England to German parents and was moved to Germany as a boy. Hanemann was conscripted into the German Army and served as an NCO in the medical corps. Captured in France in 1944, he ended up as a pow at Llanmartin. He mainly worked on forestry tasks in the hills of South Wales. As an English-speaker, he was also used as an interpreter between the guards and other prisoners. When off-duty Hanemann found time to practice his magic. Via the YMCA, he contacted Lewis Davenport, the founder of L. Davenports Ltd., a London-based magic dealer, who knew Hanemann before the war.*“After 14 days the Y.M.C.A. man returned, called me into his barracks and placed two briefcases on the table: 'From Mr. Davenport.' They contained more than 50 packs of Players cigarettes. You cannot imagine what that meant in this situation. Cigarettes were worth more than money, because there was almost nothing to buy in the camp. But cigarettes were THE currency…”*Two weeks later he was sent a package of props - *a magic wand, silks, balls, playing cards, coins, boxes, nail writers, cups and balls, billets, envelopes, magician’s wax, and the list goes on.”* With his new props, Hanemann performed for his fellow prisoners a show called *Simlalabim*, appearing under the stage name, Punx. *"With Davenport’s material and some illusions that we built in the camp, I put together some two hour shows with professional lighting and music. I even had real posters painted. Admission was one penny. Above all, I developed my craft."* He also put on a performance for some local children.Further details - <https://magicatwar.blogspot.com/2021/09/punx-pow-magician-in-wales.html> |

**April 1946** - Records of an Italian pow show part of the camp, probably a separate hostel, was still inuse as a transit camp for some Italian pows being repatriated.

**August 1946** – Holding officers who were initially from Crewe Hall (191), Llanover Hall (200) and Lodge Moor (17) camps. Reports noted that there were few political category A ‘white’ officer pows. The camp also received officers who were sent from camps in the US and Canada, who had expected to be sent back to Germany.

**November 1946** - Camp magazine, Number 1; [Die Aussprache : Zeitschrift des Lagers 184 - Llanmartin - The Wiener Holocaust Library](https://www.whlcollections.org/image/112094/)

**16 December 1946** - The Bishop of Berlin visited prisoner of war camps in Britain, including Llanmartin. The South Wales Argus reported that he answered various written questions during his visit. I wonder how inspiring his visit was? He told the pows that many people back in Germany, "*had given up hopes of ever reviving a standard of life worth living*". He added that many were saying, *"What is the good of trying to do anything? We build our country, then comes a war and it is destroyed, we build again and the same thing happens".* He said that everyone should fight that attitude by being good Christians. Prisoners asked him to dispel any ideas the German people may have that they were in fact not prisoners and that: *"their life was so good it did not amount to confinement*".

**Christmas 1946** - Some of the people at Caerleon organised events and activities for the pows. Caerleon Town Hall was used for the pows to hold services and meet local people. There is an account of a local citizen, John Jones, breaking *into* the camp by invitation of Captain Winterfeldt on Christmas Day:

*“…Winterfeldt was waiting under an oak tree out of sight of the gate. He had a prisoner uniform with him. John recalls the scene: "Put this on" Winterfeldt said. Thrusting a pass into his hand he said: "just keep your mouth shut when we go through the guard post." The guard barely looked up at the pair, which was just as well as John recalls: "the picture on the pass looked nothing like me." Also, he admits: "Who would be daft enough to escape into a PoW camp?"*

*The prisoners welcomed their guest in typical German fashion. "The room was full of officers and when Captain Winterfeldt introduced me, they all stood to attention and clicked their heels, then burst out laughing. It seemed that everyone, apart from the authorities, knew about my presence."*

*John remembers how festive the men's spartan home had been made. "We were in a Nissen hut which they had painted to a very high standard with murals or religious scenes like the Madonna and child. They used the hut as a Lutheran and Catholic chapel."*

*They then sang hymns in German in a scene which John clearly recalls nearly 70 years on. "I heard carols sung like I had never heard them sung before; with great harmony and an awful lot of emotion. The service closed with the singing of "Holy night, Silent Night" in German. I saw six-feet tall German officers, standing with tears running down their faces as they sang".* (Report from the South Wales Argus).

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

**9 – 15 March 1947** – Re-education and Screening visit. Strength; Officers 1515, Other Ranks 299. This was visit number 2, number 1 is not in the National Archive file.

Commandant: Lt Col E G H Clarke Camp leader: Col Kalberlah (B)

Interpreter: Capt P Walker Deputy C/L: O.Lt Brandstetter (A)

 German M.O.: St.Arzt Blaimer (A)

The Commandant was not interested in re-education (most were not). He agreed to let pows go on outside visits, to release 3 huts outside the barbed wire for activities, to instal a camp radio, and allow more materials to be purchased.

The Camp leader was proving to be “*insufficiently active*” – it was intended to have him replaced.

The deputy C/L, was also German interpreter, and was regarded as the, “*power behind the scene… an excellent diplomatic organiser of cosmopolitan outlook*.”

There were 2 compound leaders – Hptm Goebel and Hpt Angermann, who were co-operative and good at their jobs, but, “*they lack sufficient personality*.”

A “Hostel leader” was recorded – Uffz Willi Timm (B). But there was no further reference at all to this hostel, (no name, numbers, location……).

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| Political screening: | A | B | C | C+ |
|  | 44 | 1309 | 459 | 2 |

Low morale was recorded due to:

1. *“Somewhat cold treatment by the British staff.”*
2. Poor supply of welfare and canteen items.
3. Lack of faith in the camp leader.
4. Fuel crisis, bringing many educational activities to an end.
5. Slow repatriation.
6. Bad news from Germany.
7. Seclusion of the site.

The only positive factors listed were walking out of camp and development of further activities by pows from the training centre at Wilton Park.

The standard list of re-education activities was given:

Newspapers – a very wide range of British papers. No foreign papers.

Library – 1600 books. A range of other books requested.

Lectures – regular and generally appreciated.

Discussion group – there was a general political group and ten ‘working groups’ holding discussions.

Films – YMCA every four weeks, but considered to be low quality.

Wireless – Not adequate. No transmissions during the day due to lack of fuel.

Camp magazine - Die Aussprache monthly / Llanmartin Echo weekly / A daily wall newspaper.

English instruction – separate appendix.

Information room – none.

Other camp activities -

Religion – RC 25%, services by a British priest; Protestant 65%, camp padre, Lucius, they attended services in Llanmartin church; Atheists 7%, Deists 2%; Baptists 0.1%

Education – Classes for languages, philosophy, law, medicine and biology; technical subjects, architecture, pharmacy and agriculture.

Entertainments – A large, active theatre group. 2 symphony orchestras, 2 dance bands, literary cabarets, song and ballad recitals, and gramophone record transmissions.

**5 – 11 June 1947** – Re-educational survey. Strength; 1349 officers, 285 OR – of which 46 were attached at Pembroke Docks, and 1 at Camp 48. No hostel listed.

The Commandant was proving to be obstructive. Any concessions had to be fought for. He placed a ban on visits to Newport and even restricted some pow contact with local families.

There was a new camp leader, Gen.Major Walter Bruns. He was not considered to be successful. Some pows believed that a General should not be working for the British, while others disliked that he should be in charge at all as a supposed, converted, Nazi supporter. He was replaced at the end of the month.

A new deputy leader; Uffz Karl Pruess.

No political screening figures were given. 19 were appealing against their grades, (the better the grade, the sooner repatriated, in theory).

Morale was still low. General conditions were poor; barbed wire was still in place, even between the 2 compounds; there were restrictions on leaving the camp that did not apply to other camps; and, “*liberal use of bad language*” by British NCOs. Many pows were found to be arrogant, unco-operative and anti-British.

The report stated that 1460 pows had been repatriated to date – but this is higher than the number given 3 months later.

About 12% of pows were ‘youth’ (under-25). They were not considered to be a problem.

Changes to activities –

Films – Gaumont British and YMCA films shown.

Wireless – in addition to radio programmes, the speaker system was used to broadcast translations of news and some lectures.

Religion – a Catholic and Protestant working group provided occasional lectures to the camp.

**26 August – 4 September 1947** – “*Re-educational survey and to investigate truth of recent adverse reports about this camp*.” Strength; 996 officers, 207 OR including 21 OR detached at Pembroke Dock.

Commandant: Lt Col E G H Clarke Camp leader: Oberstltn Hans Georg Biedermann (B)

Interpreters: Capt Bardens Deputy C/L: Compound 1, Hptm Hans Goebel (B) / Compound 2, Hptm Karl Angermann (B+)

 S/Sgt Hallett OR’s, Uffz Karl Pruess (B)

 German M.O.: St.Arzt Adolf von Geiso (B-) / St.Arzt Hermann Ruetz (B-)

The Commandant continued to be obstructive.

The Camp leader was aged 32, married, protestant, a professional soldier since 1934. A general staff officer in Norway when captured. He had been graded as C+, but was upgraded to B in March 1947. Although he was not considered to be a suitable leader, there was no one better to replace him.

Compound 1 leader, Goebel, aged 39, married, protestant, professional soldier. Cheerful but non-political, (which did not suit the visitor).

Compound 2 leader, Angermann, aged 33, married, protestant, worked in family business. Member of the Nazi Party. *“An ex convinced nazi whose complete conversion is doubtful.”*

O.R. leader, Pruess, aged 33, divorced, protestant, in confectionery trade. “*Simple soul with a decent outlook.”*

MO Geiso, aged 36, single, protestant. “*Most unpleasant individual.”* Depressed by his poor prospects of repatriation.

MO Ruetz, aged 40, married, RC. “*Very poor type indeed.”* Also depressed awaiting repatriation.

The study leader, O/Ltn Richard Adams (B-), aged 41, married, protestant, lawyer. A member of the Nazi Party and it was recommended he be replaced as soon as possible.

Screening figures; A 14 / B 1187 / C+ 2. 969 pows repatriated to date.

There were many complaints and grievances, some of which were detailed;

Pows working in the camp as staff were not allowed to have their pay converted to sterling – and thus unable to buy items outside the camp. However, pows not employed in the camp were allowed to leave at 10 a.m. each day, and many worked surreptitiously for civilians and were paid secretly in sterling.

The Commandant was regarded as excessively strict and a “*German hater.”* Barbed wire remained and he continued to ban pows from going to Newport. One pow’s account (not in this report):

“*Walking out one day I passed some Welsh roadworkers. The first time they just greeted me. The next time it was, ’How’s that Commandant up there? Bit of a swine, isn’t he?’ The next time one of them came round, very delicately, to the question of food which was short at the time and, standing apart from the others, said quietly, ‘When are you coming again? I’ve talked to my wife…’ A few days later, so that the others didn’t have to notice, he gave me a sandwich. I thanked him and he said, ‘In this country we have a saying: the poor help the poor.’ This man then invited me home and for the first time I ate with a family. I wanted to pay him back. There were some officers very clever with their hands and I exchanged some cigarettes for a lovely little wooden car. But how was I to get it out of the camp? The Commandant said that all the wood used in the camp was ‘King’s property,’ including all the toys we made. He used to put his sergeants out on the road to see if we didn’t have any contraband on us. So, I reached my friends by taking a roundabout way through a wood and gave them my little present.*” (Kurt Schwederski in Thresholds of Peace).

Due to the adverse conditions and the Commandant, it was felt that no political progress was being made, many pows retained their Nazi ideology.

Changes to activities –

Newspapers – adequate supplies of British, German and Swiss papers.

Library – 5573 books (1384 in English).

Films – Travelling Films Ltd had replaced Gaumont British.

Camp magazine – a fourth publication had joined the others; ‘Onlooker’ a paper for English students.

Education – a wide range of classes were due to restart after a summer break.

Entertainment – A ‘Culture week’ was being organised to celebrate the camps anniversary as an officer’s camp.

Outside contacts – a few, limited formal visits had been allowed; small groups attended a meeting of Newport Town Council, a ‘pre-fab’ housing estate, three hospitals, three schools, a technical college, the town library, and a United Nations Association rally in Newport. No mention was made of informal contacts with local citizens.

**September 1947** – 95 junior officers transferred to Pensax Hostel (Sheet Camp 84) to allow them to volunteer to work on farms.

The cells at Llanmartin were without lights after dark which caused a protest – it was dismissed.

**January 1948** – Listed as a hostel for Mardy Camp 118.

Known Camp Commandants:

c1947 Lt Col E G H Clarke M.C. from the East Surrey Regiment.

c1948 Lt Col D- (reference did not use his full name).

**After the camp:** The Underwood Estate was developed from the camp. Some of the huts were still visible until the early 1990s when they were demolished. Part of the site was used for storage by the Post Office.

**Further Information:**

National Archives - FO 1120/231 – ‘Re-educational survey visit reports for camps 177 to 186’. Used above.

Thresholds of Peace – M B Sullivan – 1979 – Hamish Hamilton

The German Federal Archive has a copy of the camp magazines *Die Aussprache, Echo and The Onlooker.*

IWM has a copy of Echo dated June 1947. Ref LBY E.J. 390