**Camp 185** **Springhill Lodge Camp, Blockley, Gloucestershire**

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| **1947 Camp List** | | | | | | | |
| 185(G.W.C.) | Springhill Lodge Camp, Blockley, Moreton-in-Marsh, Glos | S. | Priswar, Blockley | Broadway 252 | Moreton-in-Marsh | Lt.Col.J.Hassell, D.S.O. M.C. | 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 |
| SP 132 357 | 151 | 185 | Springhill Lodge Camp, Five Mile Drive, Blockley | Gloucestershire | 1 | Base Camp | Large complex of huts within a roughly octagonal double wire perimeter fence guarded by watchtowers |

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| NOTE: There is an excellent chapter about Camp 185 in Ian Hollingsbee’s book, ‘Inside the Wire.’  **Before the camp:** Built as workers’ accommodation in 1937. Used for British military use from the start of the war, possibly also US troops up to D-day.  **Pow Camp:** Nissen huts, wooden huts and brick-built buildings.  **Late 1944 to early 1945** - Italian pows recorded. They may also have been part of the construction team adapting the site for German pow use.  **September 1944** - Opened as a pow Base Camp. Described (October 1944) by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) as, *“one of the best fitted out we have visited.”* Capacity stated to be 7,500, but there were 2,350 when it opened. [7500 may have been a mistake as the Appendix to HQ Southern Command War Diary September 1945 stated 2500]. |  |  |
|  | 1948 - [OS Air Photo, 6 inch to the mile](https://maps.nls.uk/view/238921309) | Ordnance Survey 1955 |

The first pows in the Base Camp were mixed nationalities – 1140 Germans, 1200 Polish, 7 Dutch, 1 French, 1 Lithuanian, 1 Turk. 2 camp leaders, 1 German and 1 Polish were recorded in the first ICRC report. Mixed nationality camps were difficult to manage, and Article 9 of the Geneva Convention stated; ‘Belligerents shall as far as possible avoid bringing together in the same camp prisoners of different races or nationalities.’ In the next report only German pows were recorded, they were considered to be low-risk. An ex-guard stated that there were a few escape attempts, but they were not overly serious, and all were quickly recaptured. By **23 January 1946** there were 2134 pows.

**June 1946** – ICRC Report; 1872 pows in main and hostels. 200 pows had arrived from camps in Belgium in a severe state of malnutrition. 2 of these pows died in transit to hospital, 2 more died in the camp’s infirmary.

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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. |

**15-17 August 1946** – Report on re-education. Strength; 3 officers, 2448 Other Ranks. This was visit number 5 by PID, but the first 4 reports are not in the National Archive file.

The camp ceased to be a Base Camp 3 weeks earlier and became a German Working Camp.

Commandant: Lt Col J Hassell, DSO, MC Camp Leader: Gefr Wilhelm Biedorf (A+)

Interpreters: Capt W R Wolseley TD. Deputy C/L: Uffz Karl Dudek (A+) / Gefr Werner Nierhaus (A+)

S/Sgt H G Lennard German M.O.: S/Arzt Paul Leifert. (B)

Capt Wolseley started on 2 April 1946. He did not accept the value of re-education activities and expressed the view that this was best served by pows living among citizens to see the British way of life. In this, he was most certainly correct according to pow memories, diaries, etc.

S/Sgt Lennard was also new to the camp, having taken over from S/Sgt Wilchfort.

The camp leader was criticised in the next report - after he had left.

Apart from the German M.O., there were very unusually 2 German officers. They had arrived from Lydiard pow hospital 160 and stayed on; Hptm Paul Schmidt (B+) and Major Peter Hans Montagne von Lilienskiold.

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| Political screening: | A+ | A | A- | B+ | B | B- | C | C+ | Unknown |
|  | 6 | 90 | 0 | 28 | 384 | 29 | 209 | 0 | 1705 |

There had been large transfers of pows during the previous 3 months. About 2,900 arrived; 2,100 from camps in Germany and Belgium, another 800 from other camps in the UK. Transfers out had been about the same number.

Morale was poor and deteriorating. The main reason, as elsewhere, was slow repatriation and lack of news as to when they might go home. Other factors included not being able to send money home from the small amounts earned, restrictions on concessions to walk out of camp (no reason given), and being forbidden to fraternise with local citizens.

There had been 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. It was recorded that there had been 1 suicide and 1 attempted suicide amongst these pows.

The pows worked very long hours for the harvest.

462 pows were ‘youth’ (under-25) in the main camp, and a further 250 in the four hostels. They were not regarded as a problem and it was hoped a ‘youth group’ for discussions would be arranged.

Re-education activities had barely started in the hostels. The standard list was given for the main camp:

Wochenpost / Ausblick – 150 / 100 copies, some were sent to the hostels.

Newspapers – a wide range of British papers were received from COGA, but not sufficient for a camp of this size. Only a few German and Swiss papers were being received.

Library – insufficient, more requested.

Lectures – regular, with mixed reception depending on the quality of the speaker and the title.

Discussion groups – held weekly by different groups.

Films – supplied by YMCA; there were complaints that they were often too old.

Wireless – British stations could be heard, but German station reception depended on weather conditions.

Information room – Showed exhibitions of text / pictures on a theme, currently ‘Economic geography.’

Camp magazine – just starting.

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|  | Picture plan of the camp produced by a German pow. With thanks to Chipping Campden History Society, (see website details below).  Press review – a summary of the news was issued weekly.  English instruction – separate report.  Other camp activities –  Religion – RC padre, San.Uffz Heinrich Enck (B), *“pleasant but in the Commandant’s opinion inclined to be lazy*.” Unnamed protestant padre. 250/300 RC and 100/200 protestant pows attended Sunday services, but attendance was declining.  Education – Classes for agriculture (20-25 pows), chemistry (40-50), physics (25-30), advanced maths (10-15), biology (30-40), general commerce (15-20), Russian (5-10), French (5-10), lettering (10-15), music theory (5-10).  Theatre – Regular performances  Orchestra – 26 members with a good reputation.  **1 September 1946** – Camp Magazine, No.1*;* [*Der Zwischen Ruf : Lagerzeitung Springhill Camp : PW-Camp 185 - The Wiener Holocaust Library*](https://www.whlcollections.org/image/112996/) Began with a short explanation of the title - *Ein zwischenruf ist die extreme kurzform eines vortrags oder einer ansprache - An interjection is the extremely short form of a lecture or speech.* Back page details a series of lectures, concerts and theatre performances to be performed. |

**14/30 November 1946** – Re-education report and separate Screening Section report. Purpose of visit - Screening of pows; Investigate C.O.’s complaints about COGA lecturers. Strength; 2 officers, 1884 OR.

Commandant: Lt Col J Hassell, DSO, MC Camp Leader: Fw Georg Mueller (B)

Interpreters: S/Sgt Weiss. Deputy C/L: O/Fw Max Gundermann (B)

As was the case in most camps, the commandant had no interest in re-education. Commandants were not required to promote re-education, which was developed by the Foreign Office – the camps were under the control of the War Office. Though not promoting the aims of PID, he did not obstruct activities.

The new camp leader had been hostel leader at Over Norton. Aged 41, he had been a German history lecturer. “*Good type who is very keen on re-education.”*

Comments about the previous camp leader were made. *“A very strong personality in the camp and suffered no one to oppose his views*.” Despite having been graded as (A), evidence showed that he had been “*agreeable and friendly to the British and yet expressing very anti-British opinions in a series of lectures.”* He had spoken out against COGA lecturers and attendance fell to almost nil, while his own lectures had audiences up to 500. He also wrote an article against COGA lecturers which was blocked by the vistor from PID before publication. The Commandant stated he had not seen the article. No further action recorded.

Deputy C/L Gundermann, aged 31, ex-policeman and professional soldier. “*No very outstanding personality but quite suitable for his post.”*

There were 2 Turks and five Hungarians in the camp – they were due to be transferred.

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| Political screening: | A+ | A | A- | B+ | B | B- | C | C+ | Unknown |
|  | 1 | 17 | 1 | 67 | 1030 | 209 | 556 | 3 | 2 |

30% C grades (Nazi) is a higher number than most camps. The 3 C+ pows would soon be removed. A ‘camp parliament’ and discussion groups were set up to try to encourage political and democratic thinking.

Overall morale was recorded as poor – due to slow repatriation, bad news from Germany, and “*an atmosphere of stern militarism as a result of the C.O.’s attitude.”*

Repatriations had started, but this meant that many of the A grade (white) pows had left – and they were often the leaders for camp activities.

**26/28 March 1947** – Re-education report. Strength; 3 officers, 1767 OR.

One change to senior personnel – the interpreter had left and not been replaced.

The Commandant ran the camp on strict military lines, but was due to retire.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Political screening: | A | B | C | Unscreened |
|  | 4 | 1342 | 423 | 1 |

406 pows were appealing against their political grades, (the better the grade, the sooner repatriated, in theory). 90 had already been heard with 88 successful – this high number of accepted appeals was reflected in most camps. It was expected that the number of ‘blacks’ (C grade Nazis) would have a major reduction if rescreening was carried out. 230 pows repatriated to date.

Overall morale had improved slightly due to some greater freedoms being allowed – though not as much as in other camps. Postage to/from Germany was an issue – many Christmas parcels had still not arrived. It was stated that anti-British feeling was slight, and when it did occur it was formed by complaints about the food situation in Germany. 80% of the pows were said to be anti-Russian.

30% were youth pows. The main concern was how to get them involved in re-education activities as most were apathetic. The separate youth discussion group was not successful and had ended.

Re-education activities continued, but were adversely affected by the strict conditions. Pows commented that they were expected to be, “*soldiers by day and democrats in the evenings”* – and that the British rejection of militarism was insincere and hypocritical. Activities in the hostels were less than in the main camp.

Changes noted to activities –

Library – 2000 books, but many of them duplicates. Hostels received books only when transport was available.

Films – YMCA and Gaumont British at main camp, only YMCA at hostels. Gaumont Films were preferred though they charged more for admittance.

Camp magazine – 300 copies fortnightly. At first, many articles were considered too intellectual, but the current mix was seen as more appropriate.

Press review – fortnightly; becoming less popular as pows able to read/listen to the news on their own.

Religion – A protestant padre, Hans Mueller (A+). No RC padre, a visiting padre came fortnightly.

Education – Classes for agriculture (15 pows), maths (8), law (2), Russian (8), shorthand (15), Latin (6).

Entertainment – 25 member orchestra playing mainly light music; 8 member theatre group; 25 member choir.

**Various days July/August 1947** – Re-education report. Strength; 2 officers, 2233 OR.

Commandant: Lt Col J Fowler-Essen Camp Leader: Uffz Augustin Bauer (B)

Interpreters: S/Sgt Falkenfleck Deputy C/L: O/Fw Max Gundermann (B)

German M.O.: o/Arzt Hans Wiedemann (B+).

The new Commandant was found to have a “*decent*” attitude to the pows and he was generally well-liked, but he was “*aloof”* and had little interest in re-education.

The new interpreter had a little interest in re-education.

The new camp leader had been the temporary hostel leader at Red House. Aged 45, senior tax inspector, married, RC, had been a member of the Nazi Party. He was selected for this role by the previous camp leader, but the visitor had major doubts about him – *“Politically negative type who wants watching carefully. He likes power and shows little enthusiasm for democracy. Intelligent and capable; a ‘yes-man’ to the British staff.”* He believed political screening was unfair.

Simplified screening figures were given – A 27 / B 2208. No further appeals. Note all C grades either upgraded or transferred, however the visitor still thought many were politically ‘black,’ including 1/3 of all youth pows. 486 pows repatriated to date.

Morale was recorded as ‘fair,’ but fluctuating.

Many activities had suffered as leaders were repatriated and the pows working long hours during harvest. Changes –

Library – 1400 books in main. Overnorton had its own access to a private library of 1000 German fiction books. Sudeley Castle kept its stock of 1634 books. The ICRC had sent a new supply of books.

Films – Travelling Films had replaced Gaumont British.

Camp magazine – reduced to 250 copies. Sudeley Castle’s magazine was to merge with the main camp.

Religion – Protestant padre Mueller, aged 45, was described as a “*good type.”* A new RC padre, Uffz Heinrich Kleppe (A), aged 32 had come from Old Windmills Camp 653 - “*Seems decent but is very reserved*.” Hostels were visited monthly. Pows were able to attend local churches.

Education – reduced; French (10), Russian (6), biology (8), stenography (10).

Formal outside contacts – A group visited Oxford. 30 pows attended a performance at the Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford.

**18/21 November 1947** – Re-educational survey. Strength; 3 officers, 1619 OR.

No change to senior personnel.

Screening; A 6 / B 1616. 994 pows repatriated to date.

Morale continued to be fair. No evidence of Nazism, though many were strongly nationalistic. There were major anti-Russian feelings. The Training Centre at Wilton Park was looked on with suspiscion by pows at this camp – many would not volunteer as there was a rumour that Russia regarded it as a training camp for spies.

The number of ‘youth’ pows was small as the majority had been transferred to camps in Sctoland during the summer. Those reamining were not seen as a problem and there was no special provision for them.

As pows were given greater freedom to leave camp when not working, and repatriations speeded up, the pows had very little interst in re-education activities.

Wireless reception had improved and German stations could be picked up.

Education – classes in main camp only for French, art and agriculture.

Entertainment – the theatre and orchetra continued, but they were unable to visit hostels due to petrol restrictions. A variety show playing for British troops was allowed to perform for the pows. Chess, skittles and card tournaments were held in main camp.

Outside contacts continued to be meagre, mainly due to the isolation of the main camp. 50 pows had visited Birmingham to attend a football match. The vicar of Chipping Campden had visited the camp several times.

**March 1948** – Springhill was recorded as a satellite camp for Leckhampton Camp 263

Known Camp Commandants

1946 / 1947 Lt Col J Hassell, D.S.O. M.C.

1947 Lt Col J P Fowler-Esson, from the Hampshire Regiment.

**After the camp:** Became a Polish settlement camp administered by the National Assistance Board. 2019 the latest OS map still shows ‘Camp (dis)’.

**Further Information:**

[www.chippingcampdenhistory.org.uk/wp-search/springhill](http://www.chippingcampdenhistory.org.uk/wp-search/springhill)

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

Inside the Wire – Ian Hollingsbee - 2014 – The History Press.

<https://www.polishresettlementcampsintheuk.co.uk/springhill01.htm>

**Numbers of pows**

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|  | Open |  |  | With other camps |  |  | Unknown |  |  | Not listed / not open |

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|  | 10/1944 | 8/1946 | 11/1946 | 3/1947 | 8/1947 | 11/1947 |  |
| Main | 2350 | 1762 | 1177 | 1030 | 931 | 666 | Sat for C263 |
| Bodicote | With C87 / 31 | 225 | 213 | 230 | 179 | 178 |  |
| Chipping Campden | With C31 | 64 | 59 | 55 |  |  |  |
| Overnorton Park | With C31 | 292 | 258 | 270 | 218 | 184 | With C43 / 25 |
| Red House | With C87 | 98 | 141 | 150 |  |  |  |
| Horley | With C31 | | 38 | 35 | 35 |  |  |
| Sudeley Castle Sat. | Was Camp 37 | | | | 483 | 357 | Sat for C263 |
| Barford |  |  |  |  | 126 | 14 |  |
| Stanton | With C142 and 37 | | | | 57 | 45 |  |
| Bicester |  |  |  |  |  | 3 |  |
| Billets | ? | ? | ? | ? | 206 | 175 |  |
| TOTALS | 2350 | 2451 | 1886 | 1770 | 2235 | 1622 |  |

**Satellite camp - Sudeley Castle (aka Winchcombe).** Previously independent Camp 37.

**8/1947** – Camp leader; Fw Anton Erdle (B+), aged 27, RC, “*Good type*.” He was unhappy about the way the camp was taken over, but no reasons given. General low morale.

**11/1947** – same leader.

**1948** - Became a satellite camp to Leckhampton Camp 263.

**20 January 1948 -** Sudeley camp/hostel closed.

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|  | 10/1944 | 8/1946 | 11/1946 | 3/1947 | 8/1947 | 11/1947 |  |
| Sudeley Castle Sat. | Was Camp 37 | | | | 483 | 357 | Sat for C263 |

**Hostels**

**Barford**.

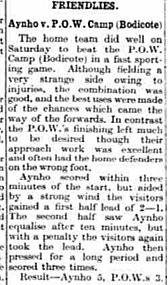
**8/1947** – Hostel leader; Hfw Edo Frerichs (B), aged 34, professional soldier, married, protestant. There were good contacts with Quaker group in Banbury.

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|  | 10/1944 | 8/1946 | 11/1946 | 3/1947 | 8/1947 | 11/1947 |  |
| Barford |  |  |  |  | 126 | 14 |  |

**Bicester**

There were a number of camps around Bicester. I am guessing that with just 3 pows, they were there to prevent squatters.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 10/1944 | 8/1946 | 11/1946 | 3/1947 | 8/1947 | 11/1947 |  |
| Bicester |  |  |  |  |  | 3 |  |



**Bodicote** (nr Banbury, 30 miles from main). Huts. Previously attached to Byfield Camp 87 and Ettington Camp 31. NGR SP 461 380.

**7 August 1946** – Hostel taken over from Byfield Camp 87.

**8/1946** – Hostel leader; O/Schrm. Josef Seiterle (B), appointed May. He had been held in pow camps in Canada – a motor mechanic and fitter – *“intelligent, open and frank… he makes a favourable impression.”* 67 pows were ex-SS and the visitor requested they be screened as soon as possible. No wireless set - but soon to receive one.

**11/1946** – Hostel leader; O/Gefr Paul Utermann (B), aged 32, metal roller. “*No personality and seemed very subdued”* - recommended that he be replaced. **8/1947** – still the same leader, described as a; “*Very poor type and politically quite negative.”* It was expected he would be removed soon (he wasn’t). A small class for French. Good contacts with Quaker group in Banbury. **11/1947** – same leader.

November 1947, Banbury Guardian >

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|  | 10/1944 | 8/1946 | 11/1946 | 3/1947 | 8/1947 | 11/1947 |
| Bodicote | With C87 / 31 | 225 | 213 | 230 | 179 | 178 |

**Chipping Campden** (3 miles from main camp). Huts. Approx NGR SP 152 386.

**30 July 1946** – Hostel taken over from Ettington Park Camp 31

**8/1946** – Hostel leader; H/Fw Ede-Erich Frerichs (B). Had its own wireless set. **11/1946** – same leader, aged 33, professional soldier. Recommended he be replaced. **3/1947** – same leader

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|  | 10/1944 | 8/1946 | 11/1946 | 3/1947 | 8/1947 | 11/1947 |
| Chipping Campden | With C31 | 64 | 59 | 55 |  |  |

**Horley House, Banbury.** Previously listed with Ettington Camp 31. NGR SP 417 442.

**11/1946** – Hostel leader; Fw Alfred Uhlmann (B), teacher – “*New to the job and not settled yet.”* **8/1947** – same leader, aged 32, elementary school teacher, married, protestant, Nazi Party member; “*Has quite sincerely changed his political outlook.”*

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 10/1944 | 8/1946 | 11/1946 | 3/1947 | 8/1947 | 11/1947 |  |
| Horley | With C31 | | 38 | 35 | 35 |  |  |

**Over Norton Park** (Overnorton, nr Chipping Norton, 12 miles from main camp). Huts.

**30 July 1946** – Hostel taken over from Ettington Park Camp 31

**8/1946** – Hostel leader; O/Fahnr Georg Mueller (B). He had taken over from a leader that the Commandant had removed as he was unsuitable. Had its own wireless set.

**11/1946** – Hostel leader; O/Fw Gottfried Wind (B), aged 34, clerk. Started 10 days earlier – “*No great personality but is trying hard.”* It seems that he resigned or was removed from this position as there was a new leader in the next report. However, he re-appeared as a temporary leader at Horley Hostel in August 1947.

**3/1947** – Hostel leader; O/Fw Kobbe (B+). **8/1947** – same leader, aged 34, ex policeman and soldier; “*Good type*.”

**11/1947** – Hostel leader; O/Gefr Otto Danzer (B), aged 25, printer’s clerk, single, protestant – “*rather lacks personality but has a decent outlook.”*

**1948** - Attached for a short time to Harcourt camp 43, then to Lodge Farm Camp 25.

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|  | 10/1944 | 8/1946 | 11/1946 | 3/1947 | 8/1947 | 11/1947 |  |
| Overnorton Park | With C31 | 292 | 258 | 270 | 218 | 184 | With C43 / 25 |

**Red House** (Bodicote, 30 miles from main camp). “*A private house in the village standing in its own grounds and with a large garden.”*

**7 August 1946** – Hostel taken over from Byfield Camp 87.

**8/1946** – Hostel leader; O/Gefr Walter Krauss (B). No wireless set.

**11/1946** – Hostel leader; Uffz Herbert Pechauf (B), aged 26, clerk. “*Intelligent and keen.”*

**4/1947** – Hostel leader; Uffz Bauer (B) – temporary.

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|  | 10/1944 | 8/1946 | 11/1946 | 3/1947 | 8/1947 | 11/1947 |
| Red House | With C87 | 98 | 141 | 150 |  |  |

**Stanton.** Previously with Brockworth Camp 142 and then Sudeley Castle Camp 37. Possibly located near Stanton Court – SP 067 343

**8/1947** – Hostel leader; OGefr Josef Remlinger (B), aged 34, painter, married, RC, member of the SA in 1933. “*Uninspiring*,” it was hoped he would soon be replaced. **11/1947** – same leader. No films could be shown as electric supply was battery 110V, D.C.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 10/1944 | 8/1946 | 11/1946 | 3/1947 | 8/1947 | 11/1947 |
| Stanton | With C142 and 37 | | | | 57 | 45 |