**Camp 199** **Ystrad Camp, Carmarthen, Carmarthenshire**

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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 |
|  |  | 199 | Ystrad camp, Carmarthen | Carmarthenshire |  | Base Camp | Wales |

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| **Location:** The HER description states; “*A prisoner of war base camp established following the evacuation of the camp in 1944 by the United States Army*.”The military camp was recorded at SN 3994 1915 alongside Ystrad farm and woods.**Before the camp:** Site used by Royal Marines, a Belgian battalion, and the US Army 38 Infantry Regiment, 2nd Battalion Regimental Combat Troops.**Pow Camp:** **20 October 1944** – Recorded as opened. Italian pows were recorded before Germans arrived.**11-16 June 1945** – Report on Visit to Camp 199 to screen pows – approximately 3 officers and 1500 Other Ranks. This was recorded as the first PID visit.Commandant; Lt Col G R Howe / Interpreter: Capt S Coffman, RASC.*“This is a hutted camp, built in a park one mile from the town of Carmarthen. It was occupied by American troops before it was converted into a PW Camp in October 1944. The present population fills it comfortable. Huts are well spaced and living conditions good. Guard duties are performed by Polish troops. There have been no escapes from this camp.**Six hundred PW are employed daily away from the camp, building huts, removing defence works, and on general manual labour. None are employed in agriculture, but, commencing on 18th June, 1945, a further three hundred PW will be employed, mainly on agriculture.”* |  |
| Ordnance Survey 1964 |

Previous internal political classifications of the pows were rejected by the visiting team as inaccurate.

Camp leader; Stfw Reinhold Krause. Born 22.4.95. Soldier and army administration. “*Harmless type, but rather weak*.” Class B.

Deputy C/L; Stfw Otto Fritz. Born 29.08.04. Soldier then tax officer. “*Gives an impression of reliability. Has no constructive political ideas.”* Class B.

Police chief; Marine Ass. Paul Schumacher. Born 6.5.95. Soldier then printer. “*Makes a good impression. Very energetic in his work. Suitable for police employment in Germany*.” Class A.

Medical Officer; Stabsarzt Dr Josef Ketteler. Born 30.10.06. Member of Hitler Youth – “*Military Nazi Views*” Class C.

Medical Officer; Stabsarzt Dr Leo Rupp. Born 16.8.10. “Rather colourless. Politically not constructive and lacking in judgment.” Class B.

Protestant padre; Kriegspfarrer Helmut vom Berg. Born 24.1.01. “*A definite personality. His anti-Nazi attitude rests on moral conviction*.” Class A.

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| Political screening: | A | B | C | C+ | Total |
| Other Ranks | 81 | 1012 | 240 | 111 | 1444 |
| Officers | 1 | 1 | 1 |  |  |

Political atmosphere – An unusually frank and detailed description of the camp was given; *“The corpse of Nazism still stinks in this camp. A few believe it can be revived; another group would like to see it finally buried and forgotten, but are not quite capable of the task; the dull minority want to get away from the smell and look for a lead, for they are drones, the ignorant, and the bewildered believers.*

*Until April 1945 the Nazis were aggressive. Anyone who [was] expressing doubts was threatened by a Rollkommando of paratroops. There are about 500 paratroopers, and their grip was particularly strong because nearly all belonged to the 2nd Fallschirmdivision and so formed an organized body in the camp under their own NCOs. Some were employed as Camp Police and were not removed until early May.*

*The last Nazi demonstration took place on 20th April (the Fuehrer’s birthday) when an improvised Nazi flag was nailed to a flagpole. When anti-Nazis made to take it down they were threatened with physical violence and paratroopers formed a barrier between them and the flagpole. The incident closed when the Commandant ordered the removal of the flag, and the British Provost Staff took it away. The Nazis salute was used until the end of April.*

*Now the ardent Nazis are cautious in action and utterance… the collapse of Germany has removed the sting from their threats… The filth thrown up by the end of the Nazi regime has shocked and revolted many… the horrors of the concentration camps, the cowardly dead and the snivelling survivors of the Nazi hierarchy, the daily accumulation of evidence pointing to corruption and deceit – all these are working strongly on the minds of youngsters who have known nothing but Nazism.*

*The effect of radio and newspaper reports of the concentration camps has been consolidated by the circulation of the booklet ‘KZ’*”

Some of the Nazi comments were – *“It is quite clear that those people were killed by Allied Terror Bombers”* – *“The English ought to remember all those people they murdered in India.”* This is before the compulsory showing of the film about concentration camps in pow camps. Many others had their political beliefs shattered.

“*But true wrath is rare. Their main worry is that they and their families may be held responsible by the Allies for these excesses.”*

A group of anti-Nazis created a statement – (translated); *“I declare my support for a ‘free, democratic Germany’ and pledge to fight National Socialism and its ideology with the utmost vigor”* – only 192 signed.

At this stage many ex-Nazis were prepared to become communists if they were due to return to the Russian zone. Russian language classes were increasing in size. This would soon change as bad news from families in the Russian zone got through.

The importance of procedures to identify possible war criminals was emphasised by the visitors to the British staff.

A summary of educational activities was written by the German organiser of studies:

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| English | 118 | German | 102 | Mathematics | 102 | French | 46 | History | 118 | Stenography | 78 |
| Physics |  82 | Latin |  12 | Geography |  80 | Chemistry | 89 | Spanish |  10 | Biology | 65 |

**28-30 September 1945** – Progress report and check screening. Strength; 272. As a base camp pows were being transferred away to other camps.

Commandant: Lt Col G R Howe Camp leader: S/Fw Krause

Adjutant: Capt Loring Deputy C/L: Not listed

Interpreters: Captain S Coffman; S/Sgt Popper; S/Sgt Ellis

The Commandant and I.O. were said to be supportive of re-education.

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| Political screening: | A+ | A | B | C | Unscreened |
|  | 1 | 11 | 121 | 73 | 64 |

With high numbers of pows transferred in and out of the camp, the team found it difficult to assess the political complexion of the camp as a whole. No communists were recorded in the camp.

The report indicates that earlier troubles had settled down. Although it was a Base camp, most pows were working. 5 NCOs had refused to work and these had been transferred.

Camp activities were difficult to organise because of fluctuating numbers. No re-education activities were listed. The visitors organised a small committee of pows in the hope of getting things started.

Other activities –

Orchestra: 8 instruments, music provided by the British staff.

Theatre: suspended, hoped to restart.

**24 February 1946** – Visiting lecturer’s report. 7-800 pows attended the lecture on ‘The Meaning of Democracy.’ There had been a large intake of 840 pows from camps in Canada just a few days earlier – many had low morale as they thought they were being returned to Germany. Pows from Canada were often C grade. They had been captured early in the war and had retained their Nazi ideology. Some pows still refused to attend any lectures stating they were propaganda.

**30 March 1946** – Visiting lecturer’s report. Gave some background details;

*“…an excellent camp with regard to the interest of the Commandant Lt Howe on re-education of the Ps/W (They nickname him: Grand Pa.)*

*“Excellent is Staff Sgt Interpreter Popper, who spent 14 months at Dachau concentration camp. He is adored by most of the Ps/W for his helpfulness, justice and good advice.*

*“There is a kind of daily camp paper (on the wall), a weekly [paper], there are concerts etc. There are many workshops, not just for killing the time but for training Ps/W for their future life if they want to learn a trade. Even a piano maker is there. Food is plentiful and excellent.*

*“Nevertheless; there are many hard-boiled Nazis intriguing against a fair number of antiNazis.”*

**15 April 1946** – Camp magazine: [Der Leuchturm : Halbmonastschrift Lager 199 - The Wiener Holocaust Library](https://www.whlcollections.org/image/99703/)

**May 1946** - Additional intake of pows from camps in the USA and Belgium. Pows from the US usually 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. Many pows from camps in Belgium had suffered extremely poor conditions.

**24/27 June 1946 –** Re-education report + re-screening. Strength 61 officers, 1109 OR – of which 147 are ‘permanent’ staff.

Commandant: Lt Col G R Howe Camp leader: S/Fw H Kummer (B+)

Interpreter: Captain S Coffman Deputy C/L: S/Fw O Fritz (B)

 German M.O.: S/Arzt J Ketterler (B-); A/Arzt A Lechner (B-)

The Commandant and IO continued to support re-education activities.

The previous camp leader had been repatriated on medical grounds.

Since February 1946 over 5000 pows had passed through this Base camp. Most of these had previously been held in Canada, USA and Belgium.

Morale was generally low due to slow repatriations and bad news from home.

A high number of recent pows had been ‘youth’ (under-25). Of these many were conscripts to the SS and were seen as an urgent problem. However, in this camp they only stayed a few days before being sent on to other camps.

Although most of the pows were in transit, there were serious efforts to provide some re-education activities. The standard list was given:

Wochenpost and Ausblick - Separate appendix.

Newspapers – 25 copies of 7 different British papers were delivered. Only 1, usually very old, German newspaper from the British zone arrived fortnightly.

Library – 1500 books, about 500 of these were textbooks.

Lectures – Not frequent. Some of “the blacker intakes,” (i.e. C grade Nazis) had heckled lecturers and attempted to break up meetings.

Discussion groups – Regular meetings were held.

Films – Shows provided fortnightly by the YMCA. Some newsreels, but often too old to be of interest.

Wireless – 1 set with 2 additional loudspeakers. Difficult to receive German stations. Main interests were the BBC News in German, pow broadcasts and details of the Nuremburg trials.

Camp magazine – High quality, ‘Der Leuchtturm’; 150 copies fortnightly – 100 copies for the camp, 50 sent to London for distribution to other camps. More paper and stencils required. This magazine was continued when Ystrad was taken over by Llandarrog camp 102.

Press review – held, but not too a high standard.

Wall newspaper – changed fortnightly.

English Instruction – Difficult to organise with pows being transferred.

Other camp activities –

Religion – Protestant and RC padres in the camp. Services and Bible classes held.

Education – Only 1 class of 9 studying Biblical knowledge.

Theatre – None.

Orchestra – 8 members gave weekly performances of light or classical music. Sheet music requested.

**July 1946** – Ystrad listed as a hostel for Camp 102.

**After the camp:** Residential area / sports ground.

**Further Information:**

National Archives FO 939/338 – 199 Base Camp, Ystrad Camp, Carmarthen, South Wales. Dated 1945 – 1946. Also contains camp magazines for Camp 102; October, November 1947 and Christmas 1947.

‘*Twentieth Century Military Sites: Second World War and later Camps and Ranges’* – by Alice Pyper and Marion Page - Dyfed Archaeological Trust – 2015.

US 1944 US Aerial Photograph, Medmenham Series M1272;

Catalogue entry - [22 - Church Records of the Evangelical congregation at camps 199, 102, 252 and 70, all in South Wales - 1946-](https://www.thcatalogue.org.uk/calmview/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=W%2fSGG%2fA%2f5%2f5%2f22)1948