**Camp 231** **Redgrave Park Military Hospital, Diss, Norfolk**

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| **1947 Camp List** | | | | | | | |
| 231(Hospital) | 231 P.W. Hospital, Redgrave Park, Diss, Norfolk | E. | Priswar, Diss | Diss 280 | (Blank) | Major G.W.I.Thomas | v/1416/1 |

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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 054 773 | 144 | 231 | Redgrave Park Hospital, Diss | Suffolk | 4 |  | Military Hospital. Some footings remain |

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| **Location:** Pow Camp 56 Botesdale was very close by – just across the lake at the bottom of the map.  **Before the camp:** Large country estate and hall. Used as a hotel and country club in the 1930’s.  < The Military Hospital –  Approximately 35 Nissen huts that housed wards, headquarters, a dispensary, operating rooms, and laboratories.  Memorial at the park – “*Redgrave Park: 65th General Hospital U.S. Army*  *During World War II, the 65th General Hospital, a reserve unit of Duke University, Durham, North Caroline USA, was located here on the grounds of Redgrave Park.*  *Of Nissen Hut construction, supplemented by ward tents, the hospital had 1456 beds and served from February 10th 1944 to August 20th 1945 as the major hospital centre for the surrounding U.S. 8th Air Force. In addition, after D Day, June 6th 1944, it treated thousands of wounded soldiers moved here from the war on the continent*.” |  |
| Ordnance Survey 1958 |

**Pow Camp:** A fenced-off section of the military hospital was used to treat pows of all ranks.

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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. |

**17/18 June 1947** – Re-educational survey. Strength; 22 officers, 728 Other Ranks. This was recorded as visit number 1 – much later than at other camps.

Commandant: Major W Thomas Camp leader: Uffz W Haumer (B)

Interpreter: S/Sgt N Slater Deputy C/L: Fw R Kint (B)

German M.O.: O/Felarzt Dr H Schiepe (B-)

The Commandant and adjutant were said to be keenly interested in re-education. The Commandant taught the advanced English class. Major Thomas was in charge of the pows on a daily basis and administration, a separate commanding officer was in charge of medical aspects and daily life of the patients.

The interpreter received heavy criticism; “*useless. He is neither a good interpreter (his English and German are poor) – he is Belgian - nor does he appear capable and willing to assist in our work. Furthermore, he resorts to bullying his German clerks as I was told by the adjutant*.” Despite a request to have him replaced, he remained here until 1948.

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| Political screening: | A | B+ | B | B- | C+ |
|  | 4 | 134 | 467 | 144 | 1 |

31 pows were appealing against their political grades – the better the grade, the sooner repatriated, in theory. 685 pows repatriated to date.

The pows engaged in medical work were overworked. Some were “*discontent*” at having been brought to the UK from camps in Belgium and Germany. Of the 22 officers (doctors and patients) they showed “*a considerable degree of self pity, and try to keep up the appearance of an unreal military atmosphere.”* Most pows were politically apathetic.

255 pows were ‘youth’ (under-25). They were not regarded as a problem.

There was little interest in re-education activities, especially by those pows working long hours. The standard list was given:

Wochenpost and Ausblick – Separate appendix.

Newspapers – just 5 English daily papers. No German papers.

Library – “*Adequate*.”

Lectures – Few interested, only 40 attended the last lecture.

Discussion group – None.

Films – YMCA films fortnightly.

Wireless – “*Adequate*.” All the wards had loudspeakers.

Press review – Given daily, but “*rather poor.”*

English instruction – Separate appendix.

Information room – No exhibitions.

Other camp activities –

Religion – Protestant Uffz G Klinzing (B-), aged 45, joined the F.M.S.S. in 1935 – “*politically ignorant, but keen at his work*.” [FMSS, Förderndes Mitglied der SS was a member of the Allgemeine SS who did not take part in active duty, but instead contributed financially to the SS.] 10% of protestants attended services. There was a Bible class. A RC padre visited fortnightly.

Education – Some medical and political lectures were held.

**21 August 1947** – Re-educational survey. Strength; 22 officers, 714 OR – 547 patients / 189 administrative and medical staff.

Commandant: Major W Thomas Camp leader: Uffz W Haumer (B)

Interpreter: S/Sgt N Slater Deputy C/L: Fw R Kint (B) [or Kind].

German M.O.: O/Felarzt Dr H Schiepe (B-)

No change to senior personnel.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Political screening: | A | B+ | B | B- | C+ | Ukrainians |
|  | 4 | 138 | 438 | 133 | 1 | 22 |

The visitor requested that a Training Advisor be sent to develop re-education activities.

Morale was recorded as “*fairly good.”* The camp was isolated, but staff pows were able to walk out in free time. Bitter feelings developed between the pow medical staff and the new British medical officer in charge (Col F Holmes OBE, RAMC) as he insisted that they pay for breakage of any equipment.

Medical staff pows remained over-worked and there was little scope for developing re-education. Changes to activities –

Lectures and Press reviews – transmitted by speakers to the wards.

Religion – a new RC padre; Gefr M Meyer, aged 43, educated in Rome, “*has common sense*.” He stated that 30-40% of RC pows attended services. Protestant padre Klinzing no longer listed, instead; Fw W Wilke, aged 41, provided services attended by 50 pows.

**1/3 December 1947** – Re-educational survey. Strength; German ‘permanent’ staff: 20 officers 184 OR Unknown if Ukrainians were included in these figures.

Patients: 3 “ 381 “

No change to senior personnel.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Political screening: | A | B+ | B | B- |
|  | 1 | 93 | 388 | 106 |

It was noted that this was a “*difficult camp.”* There was friction between the medical staff and the administrative staff. Col F Holmes created further resentment as he would not allow convalescent patients to walk out of the hospital. No reasons were given for this – it was allowed at other pow hospitals.

There was also tension between the 20 German officers and Other Ranks. It was noted that the officers were, “*as arrogant as they ever were before*.”



Changes to activities –

Newspapers – only 3 British newspapers received. Still no German papers.

Camp magazine – some experienced pows from Abergwili Hospital Camp 252 had been transferred here and a camp magazine started.

Library – 1800 books, but these could not be used by patients with infections such as TB. It was requested that some other books be provided for them.

Information room – held an exhibition on ‘Political Caricature.’

Outside contacts were limited to some links to local churches and occasional football matches.

Entertainment – a Ukrainian Balalaika orchestra from Botesdale Camp 56 had entertained patients.

< **23 December 1947** - The caption for the picture is ‘*Leaders of the Ukrainian P.O.W. camp.’* Note the sign in English and German for ‘No Parking’- Ambulances Only’.

Anna Sochocky has written of her father at the camp – “*While he waited to be processed and released, my father worked as the Chief Medical Officer at the British camp located near the Norfolk village of Redgrave until the end of 1948. He received his Aliens Order Certificate of Registration on New Year’s Eve that year. Government officials interviewed my father for the final time on December 4, 1950, in Ipswich, England. Redgrave Park, more of a processing camp, really, with a labyrinth of Nissen huts penned in by barbed wire, was only a few miles from my mother’s childhood home. Camps like Redgrave Park dotted the English landscape for years after the armistice, but few remnants of these camps remain today.”* Her father is in the centre of the photograph in civilian clothes, I wonder if the man next to him in the centre is the Camp Commandant, Major G.W.I.Thomas?

**Christmas 1947** – Camp magazine; [Sprechstunde : Lagerzeitschrift 231 Mil. P.W. Hosp. Diss, Norfolk - The Wiener Holocaust Library](https://www.whlcollections.org/image/112872/)

Contains a memorial page for POW Albert Solltischek who died 11 December 1947. He was later reinterred at the Cannock Chase German Military Cemetery.

**26/27 January 1948** - Re-educational survey. Strength; ‘Permanent’ staff: 22 officers 163 OR Ukrainians were included.

Patients: 4 “ 382 “

No change to senior staff.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Political screening: | A | B+ | B | B- | Ukrainians |
|  | - | 95 | 298 | 86 | 92 |

118 pows repatriated since 1 December 1947.

Morale was ‘fair.’ All previous issues, especially the friction between the administrative staff and medical staff, continued. Col Holmes would still not allow convalescent pows to leave the hospital despite requests from the pows, Major Thomas and the PID visitor. There does not seem to be any valid reason for Col Holmes’ obstruction – limiting fresh air and exercise to convalescing pows was even medically questionable.

**11/13 March 1948** – Re-educational survey. Strength; ‘Permanent’ staff: 18 officers 137 OR

Patients: 7 “ 337 “ About 50% were Ukrainian.

1 change to senior staff – the “*useless*” interpreter had been replaced by S/Sgt Hoffmann; “*appears competent and interested*.”

Col Holmes finally allowed convalescent pows to take walks out of camp. Many of the medical staff were resentful at being detained in the UK, especially as about half of the patients were Ukrainian.

A survey was conducted in camps still open at this time concerning pow attitudes to the British, (following a PID circular dated 25.2.1948). It was pointless, carried out far too late and in totally random ways. In this camp, 20 random pows were selected and asked to give written answers to questions. For what it is worth (little), the results were:

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Attitude to UK | Hatred | Dislike | Distrust | Indifference | Benefit of doubt | Liking |
| This report: | 10% | 10% | 25% | 20% | 15% | 20% |
| Next report: | 10% | 12% | 30% | 10% | 28% | 10% |

**20 May 1948** – “*Short report*.” Strength; ‘Permanent’ staff: 15 officers 180 OR (29 Ukrainians)

Patients: 8 “ 209 “ (90 Ukrainians)

Commandant: Lt Col Homes [or Holmes] Camp Leader: O/Fw Kind

2nd i/c: Major Thomas Deputy C/L: -

Adjutant: Capt Clark German M.O.: Not listed.

Interpreter: Lt Bockbinder

Although senior in rank, the medical officer in charge was not usually listed as Commandant.

This report was conducted by a different visitor to the previous one. He seems to have had no idea that the useless survey had already been conducted, and carried it out for a second time, this time with just 11 randomly selected pows. See results above.

A lecture about resettlement problems had been given – far too late to be of much use - it was considered “*satisfactory*.”

All activities were being wound down and few were mentioned;

Camp magazine – last edition published this month.

Library – good with 2000 books.

Films – ceased. Pows were able to visit film shows at the cinema for British troops (AKC).

Outside contacts – some pows had visited Cambridge.

Religion – Protestant padre, civilian v.Baussnarn; “ *a rather depressing man.”* RC Padre, Mayer.

This was a pointless report – even the visitor stated it was, “*of too short duration to be precise.”*

**1948** - Some very senior German officers were held here, including Field Marshalls Erich Von Manstein, (30 April 1948 – 16 August 1948); Gerd von Runstedt, (4 May 1948 – 23 July 1948); and Walther von Brauchitsch, (uncertain dates mid 1948).

Some Pows were sent back to Germany using Red Cross hospital trains from Diss station.

Known Camp Commandants:

c1947 Major G W I (or W) Thomas.

**After the camp:** The hall was demolished in 1946.

**Further Information:**

National Archives FO 1120/233 – Re-educational survey visit reports for camps 230 to 235. Dated 1 January 1946 to 31 December 1948. Used above.

1’50” video of the military hospital - <http://digitaldukemed.mc.duke.edu/sixty-fifth/life.html>

[www.annasochocky.com/single-post/2016/04/13/Tucked-between-the-pages-of-history](http://www.annasochocky.com/single-post/2016/04/13/Tucked-between-the-pages-of-history)

The Imperial War Museum has copies of the journal – dated Christmas 1947 and January 1948. Ref LBY E.J. 419