**Cam****p 235 Gorhambury Park, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire**

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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 |
| TL 110 076 | 166 | 235 | Gorhambury Park, Hemel Hempstead | Hertfordshire | 5 |  | Precise location not identified, NGR given for centre park. English heritage site. |

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| **Location:** Near to St Albans.  **Before the camp:** Country estate  **Pow Camp:**  **December 1945 –** Camp formed.  **February 1946** – First pows arrived.     |  | | --- | | 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. |   **10-13 July 1946** – Re-educational survey. Strength; 1 officer (the M.O.), 1107 Other Ranks.  This was listed as the 2nd visit – the first was in March 1946, but is not in the National Archive file. Accommodation at HQ was partly in tents.  Commandant: Lt Col Miller [R M Millar] Camp leader: Oberfaehnrich Gerd Franke (A, est B+)  Interpreter: S/Sgt M Eisenberg Deputy C/L: Walter Rode (B)  German M.O.: O/Arzt Dr Otto Spreitzer (B-) |  |
| Ordnance Survey 1960 |

The previous Commandant was Lt Col Williams; he had been in place for just 2 months and was demobilised at the start of this visit. He had been the 2nd Commandant, the first, unnamed, was stated to have been frequently in hospital.

Commandant Millar, just started, he had previously been at Brookmill Camp 168.

Major Clemshaw, 2nd i/c, was also new to the camp and was indifferent to re-education.

Interpreter Eisenberg recorded as; “*very efficient and keen on his work*.”

There had been many other changes in British personnel and the visitor stated the camp needed time to settle down.

*“The camp was formed in December 1945, but PsW did not arrive until Feb 1946. They were received from camp 95* [Batford] *and were mainly rejects of that camp, men of low intelligence, poor physical condition and men who were otherwise undesirable.”*

Camp leader Franke was a sailor; “*makes an honest impression,”* but, “*He is not a very strong type and probably not an active factor in re-education*.”

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| **Numbers of pows:** | Hostels | | | | | Billets |
| HQ | Chorley Wood | Holtsmere End | Felden | St Albans | Northchurch |
| 231 | 469 | 101 | 88 | 74 | 49 | 96 |

There had been one more unnamed hostel transferred to another camp in the past few months.

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| Political screening: | A | B+ | B | B- | C |
|  | 29 | 31 | 501 | 66 | 129 |
| Estimated: | - | 352 | | | |

Morale was “*reasonably high*.” Many pows had arrived 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. Positive factors were conditions in the camp, the removal of barbed wire and improved postal services. There were no ‘ardent’ Nazis. There were some communists, but they were not militant.

Very few re-education activities were occurring. The standard list was given;

Wochenpost and Ausblick – Wochenpost in adequate numbers, Ausblick not received.

Newspapers – Some British papers donated by the British staff; no regular supply due to lack of funds. Some German papers were sent by PID.

Library – Inadequate.

Lectures – occurring, but infrequent. More requested.

Discussion groups – None.

Films – Only YMCA shows at HQ and hostels.

Wireless – Sets at HQ and hostels. BBC news in German regularly heard, other programmes were of little interest – “*may be partly due to the fact that none of the installations are really good.”*

Camp magazine – None.

Press review – None.

English instruction – classes at all hostels.

Other camp activities –

Religion – Protestant padre, pow Schliebitz; “*rather colourless*” held at service at HQ and 1 hostel each Sunday with a small congregation. RC pows were able to attend a local Catholic church.

Education – None.

Theatre – one group at Chorley Wood.

Orchestra – no instruments available.

**Summer 1946** – The HQ was transferred to become a hostel for ‘The Arches,’ Felden, (that site then took the number 235). Also transferred were the hostels at Chorley Wood, Holtsmere End and Northchurch. By **November 1947** – Gorhambury had become a hostel for Batford Camp 95. Closed Spring 1948.

**After the camp:** Private, occasionally open to the public.

**Further Information:**

1 report contained in National Archive file FO 1120/233 – used above.

**Hostels**

**Chorley Wood.** 20-30 Nissen huts in the grounds of Chorleywood House, + some outbuildings used. TQ 035 971.

**April 1946** – newly taken over by this camp. Many pows from camps in the USA - with very low morale. Further pows transferred from Camps in Belgium where they had experienced extremely poor conditions.

**7/1946** – Hostel leader; none. Previous leader became the overall camp leader.

**Summer 1946** – attached to The Arches Camp 235

**11/1947** – attached to Batford Camp 95.

**Felden**

**7/1946** – Hostel leader; Georg Schade (B)

Became ‘The Arches’ Camp 235.

**Holtsmere End**

*“When the war started there was a big searchlight near where we lived. This three acre site was off Holtsmere End Lane. It had machine gun posts, a guard house, kitchens, mess hall, dormitories all surrounding the searchlight. This site was originally manned by the Royal Engineers from the end of July 1939. After about a year the men were replaced by the ATS (women) with the exception of the man who ran the electric dynamo. On nights when they were not looking for German planes, they used to aim the searchlight vertically up. This combined with other units were a kind of signpost system for our bomber planes that were based in Lincolnshire. When the German raids became less frequent it was closed down and the buildings used as a German prisoner hostel.*

*The Germans were sent to different farms depending on where they were needed. They didn’t try to escape though there was no one guarding them on the farm. We used to give them all an extra ration of tea to keep them going and when I was hedging I used to put a bag of potatoes in the estate car and we cooked them in a fire.”* <https://hemelatwar.org/Text.html>

**7/1946** – Hostel leader; Oskar Lemaire (B-)

**Summer 1946** – attached to The Arches Camp 235

**Northchurch.** SP 976 085.

Previously with Batford Camp 95 and Hartwell Camp 36.

**7/1946** - Hostel leader Gericht (B).

**Summer 1946** – attached to The Arches Camp 235

**St Albans**

Previously with Batford Camp 95

**7/1946** – Hostel leader; Manger (A)