**Camp 2****37 Coed Bel Camp, Lubbock Road, Chislehurst, Kent**

Included in the 1945 ICRC camp list – Labour Camp. 237. Co.Ed.Bel Camp, Lubbock Rd, Chislehurst, Kent.

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| **1947 Camp list** |
| 237(G.W.C.) | Co-ed Bell Camp, Lubbock Road, Chislehurst, Kent. | L.D. | Priswar, Chislehurst | Imperial 1697 | Chislehurst (S.R.) | Major F.W. Lynch M.C. | v/1452/2 |

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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 |
| TQ 430 699 | 177 | 237 | Co-Ed-Bel Camp, Lubbock Road, Chislehurst | Kent | 5 | GermanWorking Camp | Precise location not identified, NGRgiven for centre of Lubbock Road |

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Location:** NGR for Coed-bel house on Lubbock Road TQ 4305 7007.**Before the camp:** Built in 1865 by Welshman William Mostyn, the name is an adaption from Welsh. It was a private girls’ school from 1877. During the First World War the site was used as a nursing centre until 1919 when it reverted back to a school. The school relocated in 1940 and did not return to this site.**Pow Camp:** The house as well as the grounds were used to house Italian and then German pows.**Spring 1946 –** changed from an Italian Labour Battalion to a German Working camp.

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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. |

 |  |
| Ordnance Survey 1950 |

**1946** – Additional intake of many 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.

**9-14 August 1946** – Visit by members of the Segregation Section to review screening. Strength; 1 officer (the M.O.), 967 Other Ranks in HQ, 5 hostels, 0 billets.

Commandant: Lt Col C Harrison-Cooper MC. Camp leader: Fw Rickert (B-)

Interpreter: Capt H B Stadler Deputy C/L: None

The Commandant was ‘interested’ in re-education, that is not to say he was in any way actively involved. His correct and fair treatment was generally appreciated.

The Interpreter was Austrian.

Camp leader Rickert; aged 40, Nazi party member 1937-40 and the S.A. 1933 to 1939. “*Not a strong personality and easily swayed… Unsatisfactory*.”

German M.O. Oarzt Dr Bergmann (B+), aged 30, Sudeten German. Nazi Party member – “*In spite of his party record, this man impresses me as an honest convert*.”

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Political screening: | A+ | A | A- | B+ | B | B- | C | C+ | Others |
|  | 0 | 59 | 0 | 238 | 499 | 151 | 18 | 0 | 3 in hospital |

Many of the ‘youth’ (under-25) pows were ex-SS having been conscripted into that service towards the end of the war.

Very few re-education activities had started and there was a lack of recreation facilities at HQ.

Religion – Protestant padre, Ofhnr Ecker (A), aged 33, “*A very good type.”* Interest was low.

**Various days October 1946** – “*Start re-education.”* Strength; 1 officer, 907 OR.

No change to senior personnel. The Commandant was due to leave.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Political screening: | A | B+ | B | B- | C |
|  | 52 | 214 | 475 | 149 | 18 |

Morale was recorded as being “*steady.”* Bad news from home had a depressing effect.

349 pows were ‘youth.’ There was no special provision for them.

Re-education activities had barely started – hampered to some extent by the Commandant. He issued an instruction in August stating that; “*any attempt at political propaganda amongst PW or civilians or any attempt at undermining the discipline of PW was forbidden*.” The standard list of re-education activities was given:

Wochenpost and Ausblick – 100 / 50 copies respectively.

Library – 200 books at HQ; suggested they should also be circulated to the hostels. £20 from Welfare Funds (money raised mainly through sales in the canteen) to be spent on new books.

Newspapers – Extremely poor. Only 2 British newspapers received at HQ from COGA – none for the hostels. A “*few”* German papers had been received.

Lectures – started, but irregular and some hostels missed out.

Discussion groups – None; hoped to start.

Films – only YMCA films every 3 weeks. Poor in comparison to most camps.

Wireless – a set at all locations.

Camp magazine – none.

Press review – Satisfactory; regular reviews well attended.

English instruction – 205 pows studying in classes, some studying independently.

Other camp activities –

Religion – The Protestant padre visited the different sites and was considered to be excellent.

Education – No classes at HQ.

Theatre – None at HQ.

Orchestra - None at HQ.

**4 November 1946** - Camp magazine, 2nd edition; [Spiegel der Zeit : Halbmonatschrift des PW Wkg Camp 237 - The Wiener Holocaust Library](https://www.whlcollections.org/image/112865/)

**10 March 1947** – Camp magazine, 10th edition; [Spiegel der Zeit : Halbmonatschrift des PW Wkg Camp 237 - The Wiener Holocaust Library](https://www.whlcollections.org/image/112865/12/#topDocAnchor)

- Commandant Harrison-Cooper was replaced by Lt Col Wilson. No PID reports issued during his time, so no details.

**6 April 1947** – Camp magazine 11th edition; [Spiegel der Zeit : Halbmonatschrift des PW Wkg Camp 237 - The Wiener Holocaust Library](https://www.whlcollections.org/image/112865/28/#topDocAnchor)

**24,25, 28 April 1947** – General Survey of Re-education. Strength; 1 officer, 903 OR.

Commandant: Major Lynch Camp leader: Fw Karl Schlenz (A)

Interpreter: Capt H B Stadler Deputy C/L: None

 German MO: Oberarzt Dr Luitfried Bergmann (B+)

Major Lynch started in March 1947; it was believed he would be co-operative with re-education aims.

Camp leader Schlenz, aged 46, married, 2 children, Protestant, shop assistant. Nazi Party member in 1938. He had been leader at Ravensbourne and was upgraded to (A). “*Although a senior NCO, he is not of the disciplinarian type and shows much human understanding in running the camp…. An active anti-Nazi*.”

The German MO’s wife was in the Russian zone, but he wanted to go to relatives in the American zone.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Political screening: | A | B+ | B | B- | C |
|  | 5 | 195 | 501 | 201 | 2 |

16 pows were appealing against their grades – the better the grade, the sooner repatriated, in theory. 180 pows repatriated to date.

Morale was “*fairly high.”* Most pows were engaged in building works. Conditions had improved and there were pleasant surroundings. New regulations allowed the pows to leave camp and there were less restrictions on fraternisation - many had developed friendships with the local citizens. Negative factors included irregular mail, bad political and family news from Germany, especially the Russian zone. Political progress was developing slowly. Most pows were politically apathetic.

1/3 of the camp were ‘youth.’ They were mostly apathetic and difficult to motive to take any interest in political activities. Many needed basic education lessons as they had been disrupted for many years.

Changes to activities –

Newspapers – British papers were adequate, paid for by the Welfare Fund. 1 Swiss paper was received and circulated. Occasional copies of papers from Germany, except the Russian zone.

Library – 900 books, more needed.

Lectures – regular at all sites.

Discussion groups – at all sites except Bromley which was too small. Mixed interest.

Films – Fortnightly at all sites except Bromley (they came to HQ). Gaumont British films charged 6d which was considered too much. YMCA only charged 3d, but many of their films were old.

Wireless - HQ – 2 sets

 Beckenham – 3 sets

 Bromley – 1 set

 Eltham – 1 set

 Ravensbourne – 2 sets and 1 extension speaker.

BBC light programme and pow broadcasts were very popular. Some German stations could be received.

Camp magazine – fortnightly, 150 copies of 8 pages.

Press reviews – at all sites except Bromley.

Education – French and Russian classes at HQ.

10 member orchestra at HQ.

Football and table tennis were the main sports.

**7/9 July 1947** – Re-educational Survey. Strength; 1 officer, 848 OR.

1 change to senior personnel; Heinz Huehn, previously leader at Beckenham, had become Camp Leader.

The Commandant was supportive and encouraged re-education activities.

Screening figures; A 6 / B 843.

Morale was “*reasonably high.”* There had been delays to repatriations which caused disappointment, but these were resolved. Pows with families believed that they should have been released before others. There were generally good relationships with the British staff. Many pows due to be returned to the Russian zone requested a transfer to the British zone.

Interest in re-education activities declined with better weather and being able to leave camp. Changes –

Newspapers – Increased number of German papers, mainly being sent from home.

Discussion groups – at Beckenham and Ravensbourne.

Films – Gaumont were replaced by Travelling Films Ltd, and then these were stopped as the pows were not prepared to pay 6d. C.O.I. films were popular.

Entertainment – Football matches had been played against local teams.

Outside contacts – Pows had very good informal relationships with many local civilians. Formal contacts were established with –

Salvation Army at Bromley and Catford.

Peace Pledge Union at Petts Wood and Orpington.

Anglican Church Welfare at Eltham.

Toc-H at Bromley for discussion evenings.

Heinrich Heine Club – discontinued.

Society of Friends.

Labour Party at Lewisham.

World Student Relief.

No further reports in the National Archive file.

It is believed the camp closed before the end of 1947 when it became a hostel for government engineering apprentices under the Royal Ordnance Apprentice Scheme.

Known Camp Commandants:

1946 Lt Col C Harrison-Cooper MC.

1946 Lt Col Wilson

1947 Major F W Lynch M.C. (I think he was from the King’s Regiment).

**POW NUMBERS**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Open |  |  | With other camps |  |  | Unknown |  |  | Not open |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Before 1946 | 8/1946 | 10/46 | 4/1947 | 7/1947 |
| Co-ed Bel HQ |  | 61 | 58 | 54 | 44 |
| Ravensbourne Sat | Was Camp 233 | 462 | 429 | 314 | 355 |
| Beckenham |  | 295 | 340 | 467 | 368 |
| Bellingham |  | 70 |  |  |  |
| Bromley |  | 12 | 12 | 12 | 12 |
| Eltham |  | 68 | 69 | 57 | 70 |
| Billets |  | 0 | ? | ? | ? |
| TOTALS |  | 968 | 908 | 904 | 849 |

**After the camp:** Used for a while as a hostel by the Ministry of Defence. Old Coed-bel house demolished. 2020 Residential area.

**Further Information:**

National Archives - FO 1120/234 – ‘Re-educational survey visit reports for camps 236 to 239’ – used above.

**Satellite Camp**

**Ravensbourne.** Previously independent ‘Summer House’ Camp 233.

**8/1946** – Still mainly tented accommodation.

Camp leader; Fw Schlenz (B), aged 45, a commercial employer, Nazi Party member 1938-40. “*An ordinary type, who appears to have little political sense,”* satisfactory.

**10/1946** – same leader. The camp had 2 S/Sgt interpreters – but both had left. Pows able to attend local churches. Small classes for Spanish, French and bookkeeping. There was a small theatre group and orchestra.

**4/1947** – Camp leader; St O/Bootsmaat Walter Schneidereit (B), aged 36, married, 1 child, Protestant, sports teacher and lorry driver, then professional soldier. “*No Nazi record, but without political convictions.”*

A time through the hard winter was still spent in tents – the camp was then hutted.

Education classes for French, mathematics, shorthand, engineering, building, agriculture, German, geography and arithmetic.

There was a 240 seat theatre and a 16 member theatre group performing mainly variety shows. HQ and Bromley pows were guests, Beckenham showed no interest, and Eltham was too far away. There was a 25 member choir.

**7/1947** – Camp leader; Uffz Andreas Kirn (B), “*Honest, prepared to help.”* The previous leader, Schneidereit, had been deposed for “*disciplinary reasons.”*

Education classes for French, engineering, building and mathematics.

**Late 1947** – Ravensbourne listed as a hostel for Newlands Camp 125 and then (October) Shirley Church Road Camp 239 with 505 pows.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Before 1946 | 8/1946 | 10/46 | 4/1947 | 7/1947 |
| Ravensbourne Sat | Was Camp 233 | 462 | 429 | 314 | 355 |

**Hostels**

**Beckenham**

**8/1946** – Tented accommodation.

Hostel leader, Stfw Schmitz (B-), ex police, transferred to army in 1935, captured in Tunisia in 1943, had been held in US pow camps. “*Very efficient as a Lagersprecher, but politically untrustworthy and unpopular with the Commandant*.” Reports from US authorities were highly negative. Intimidation was suspected at this hostel – it was decided to remove him as soon as possible.

The deputy leader, Uffz Neckermann, aged 26, “*He should be carefully watched*.” Also to be removed.

**10/1946** – Tents due to be replaced by huts. Despite previous comments, the same leader.

A small library with 100 books. British RC and Protestant padres visited on Sundays. Classes for German (35 pows), Arithmetic (47) and starting Russian.

**4/1947** – Hostel leader; Oberfeldwebel Heinz Huehn (B), aged 34, married, 2 children, Protestant, laboratory assistant. Politically a socialist. “*Makes an excellent impression*.”

A time through the hard winter was still spent in tents – the camp was then hutted. No education classes.

**7/1947** – Hostel leader; Fw Wilh Mueller (B+), farmer. “*Rather cautious… not greatly interested in re-education.”*

The British officer in charge, Capt Plater, stated that he “*was not fond of Germans and would stand no nonsense from them.”* There was no follow-up to this as he was due to be demobilised. It is remarkable that this was commented on at all; it was likely, understandably, to have been the attitude many British held at that time, and was certainly the attitude that most Commandants held.

French education classes.

(Local memories place a camp at Worsley Bridge Road; I have no evidence this is correct for this hostel. It is close to the location of Summer House Camp 233 and so could possibly have been a hostel for that camp – again NO evidence for this).

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Before 1946 | 8/1946 | 10/46 | 4/1947 | 7/1947 |
| Beckenham |  | 295 | 340 | 467 | 368 |

**Bellingham**

**8/1946** – Hostel leader; Owm Huehn (B), aged 33, artisan. Satisfactory.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Before 1946 | 8/1946 | 10/46 | 4/1947 | 7/1947 |
| Bellingham |  | 70 |  |  |  |

**Bromley.** Hutted camp.

**8/1946** – Hostel leader; Fw Heinz Willert (B-). “*Colourless individual, surly, awkward and not very intelligent. Not a very effective leader.”*

**4/1947** – same leader, upgraded to (B), but continued negative comments; “*Opportunistic type… seems to be still tainted with Nazi ideology.”* No education classes.

**7/1947** – Hostel leader; Fw F Weber (B+)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Before 1946 | 8/1946 | 10/46 | 4/1947 | 7/1947 |
| Bromley |  | 12 | 12 | 12 | 12 |

**Eltham.** Hutted camp.

**8/1946** – Hostel leader; Ofw Walter Woll (B+), aged 28, storeman, “*quiet and reasonable type*.” In Hitler Youth 1936-38. Pows able to attend local churches.

**7/1947** – same leader. No education classes.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Before 1946 | 8/1946 | 10/46 | 4/1947 | 7/1947 |
| Eltham |  | 68 | 69 | 57 | 70 |