**Camp** **239 Weston Acres Camp, Woodmansterne, Surrey**

Included in the 1945 ICRC camp list – Labour Camp.239. Westonacres, Woodmanstone, Banstead, Surrey.

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| --- |
| **1947 Camp list** |
| 239(G.W.C.) | Weston Acres, Woodmansterne, Banstead, Surrey | L.D. | Priswar, Banstead | Burgh Heath 3981 | Banstead | Lt.Col.H.St.G.Thoyts, M.C. | v/1453/2 |
| The entry above has been crossed out in blue crayon and the following details handwritten on. |
|  | *Shirley Church Road, Addington, Croydon, Surrey* |  | *Croydon*  | *Spring Park 2296/7* | *East Croyden* | *R.H. McGeorge* |  |

|  |
| --- |
| **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 265 585 | 187 | 239 | Westonacres Camp, Woodmansterne, Banstead | Surrey | 2 | German Working Camp | Two possible sites, other possibility is at TQ 265 595 |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Location:** Weston Acres on Woodmansterne Lane was the HQ (admin and postal address) located at NGR TQ 272 600.**Before the camp:** Farmland and open woodland. The local area had Canadian troops from 1940 to 1944.**Pow Camp: Late 1944 to May 1946** - 150 Italian pows, formed 239 Italian Labour Battalion accommodated in sites around the area. Italians then replaced by Germans.**1946** – Additional intake of many German 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.

|  |
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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 Italian pows in hostels, they were usually ignored by PID. |

**July 1946** - Camp magazine, number 3; [Die Neue Zeit : Lagerzeitug PWW. Camp No. 239 - The Wiener Holocaust Library](https://www.whlcollections.org/image/99725/) |  |
| Ordnance Survey  |

**8 to 16 August 1946** – Report on visit by 3 members of Segregation Section, PID, mainly concerned with political screening. Strength; 4 officers, 1529 Other Ranks.

Commandant: Lt Col Thoyt Camp leader: Ob.Fw Schicht (B)

Interpreter: Lieut F J Jeschke Deputy C/:: None

The Commandant was on leave, Major Platt-Higgins assumed command. The reception of the team from PID was *“frigid*” and co-operation was poor.

The Interpreter was Czech and had newly arrived at the camp.

Camp leader Schicht, was a regular soldier; “*very apathetic*,” though well thought of by the British staff, the visitors found him to be “*not really capable*.”

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Political screening: | A+ | A | A- | B+ | B | B- | C | C+ | Unknown |
|  | 7 | 78 | - | 223 | 735 | 276 | 166 | 21 | 27\* |

\* 13 of these were attached to Horley Military Hospital.

**3 / 7 September 1946** – Re-education Report. Strength; 0 Officers, 1645 OR. [Not known why officers were not recorded].

No change to senior personnel. German M.O. – Ass.Arzt Dr Bertlich (B+)

The reception was more friendly than for the previous visit. However, 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. The purpose of the camps was to hold pows and to set them to work when possible. If the camp was working and kept under control that was sufficient as far as many Commandants (and the War Office) were concerned.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Political screening: | A+ | A | A- | B+ | B | B- | C | C+ | Unknown |
|  | 7 | 78 | - | 224 | 732 | 277 | 166 | 21 | 140 |

Morale was recorded as very low. Main reasons given –

1. Lack of re-education.
2. “*Loose contact*” between HQ and hostels.
3. Poor living conditions – most sites were still tented, no recreation rooms, no electric light, etc.
4. Very strict military discipline.

The visitor added that most hostel leaders were “*badly chosen and uninspiring*.” Anti-British and anti-democratic ‘sentiment’ was in evidence.

About half the camp were ‘youth’ (under 25). They were not seen as a problem.

No pow had taken overall control of coordinating re-education activities, and it was believed the Commandant would not support this. The standard list was given:

Wochenpost and Ausblick – 300 / 0 copies respectively.

Newspapers – A range of British papers were received at all sites. Only 5-6 German papers were received monthly.

Library – 200 books – “*hopelessly inadequate*.”

Lectures – Keen interest shown if the right lecturer and subject were present.

Discussion groups – None.

Films – YMCA films every 3 weeks. Occasional films sent by COGA.

Wireless – a set at all sites.

Camp magazine – Fairly high standard, produced at Hinchley Wood Hostel.

English instruction – 460 pupils in classes at the larger sites.

Other camp activities –

Religion – A Protestant and RC padre conducted services. Some pows in hostels attended local churches.

Education – Examples were given of courses held at some hostels (see below).

Music – None at HQ as it was too small.

**10 – 21 January 1947** – Re-education report. Strength; 3 officers, 1479 OR.

Commandant: Lt Col Thoyt Camp leader: Ob.Fw Schicht (B)

Interpreter: Capt Hilton Deputy C/:: None

 German M.O.: Obarzt Hausmann (B)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Political screening: | A | B | C | C+ |
|  | 14 | 1281 | 166 | 21 |

160 pows were appealing against their grades, the better the grade, the sooner repatriated, in theory. 138 pows repatriated to date.

Generally fair morale. Negative factors – slow repatriation, rigid discipline, poor clothing, poor cigarettes, bad news from home. Positive elements included good relationships between the British and German staff and with local civilians.

Changes to activities –

Library – 40 to 300 books at each site and an exchange system.

Lectures – had become irregular; more requested.

Films – alternate weekly shows by YMCA and COGA. A price reduction for COGA films was requested as only 25-30 attended.

Wireless – some sites had sets with loudspeaker systems.

Camp magazine – temporarily ceased due to lack of supplies. It was hoped it would soon restart.

Press reviews – held at the larger sites.

Religion – Protestant Padre Soyeaux (B) held services and Bible classes and was well regarded. He took a service for 400 pows at a local church on Christmas Eve. Otherwise, interest was low.

Entertainment – Theatre groups and orchestras at Hinchley Wood, Laleham, Billet Road and Banstead. Some groups visited the smaller hostels.

**10/12 June 1947** – Report on Re-education. Strength; 2 officers, 1266 OR.

Commandant: Lt Col McGregor Camp leader: Fw. Brauer (B+)

Interpreter: Capt Hilton Deputy C/: O/Fw Kressner (A)

 S/Sgt Goodman German M.O.: Obarzt Dr Hausmann (B) at Banstead / Dr Bertlich (A) at Staines.

The new Commandant was fully co-operative.

Capt Hilton showed a keen interest in re-education. The S/Sgt was an, “*intelligent and likeable youngster.”*

The previous camp leader, Schicht, had been deposed as being “*too easy going*.”

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Political screening: | A | B+ | B | B- |
|  | 7 | 227 | 727 | 307 |

29 appeals pending. No details given of how many appeals were successful; in most camps, most were. 511 pows repatriated to date.

Morale was fair – improved by speedier repatriations. Pows had permission to leave camp up to 10 p.m. and many had good contacts with civilians. News from Germany and the failure of the Moscow Conference had a depressing effect. Most pows were politically apathetic.

Changes to activities –

Library - 1700 books

Lectures - being held monthly, but most pows preferred to leave camp in their free time.

Camp magazine – restarted with 130 copies monthly.

Religion – there was no RC padre.

Education – no classes.

Outside contacts – Apart from informal links with local civilians, formal links had been established with;

The Society of Friends

Rotary Club, Toc-H, WEA.

Purley County Council

There had been educational visits to London.

**5, 8, 10-12 September 1947** – Re-educational Survey. Strength; 2 officers, 721 OR. Numbers reduced due to repatriations, transfers to other camps and to Scotland for the harvest. The future of the camp was in doubt.

There was a new Camp leader; Fw Nuernberg (B-); “*pleasant, but without any great personality*,” he was expected to be temporary. [He took over as leader at the new C239].

The new deputy; Schicht (B+), had previously been the camp leader.

Simplified screening figures were given; A 3 / B 720. Number of pows repatriated to date; 90 sick, 600 others. Morale was fairly high, but older pows with families were desperate to get home.

Changes to activities –

Newspapers – The Welfare Fund no longer purchased newspapers. Some pows bought their own papers and some were passed on by the British staff. Some German and Swiss papers were being received.

Press reviews – all ceased.

English instruction – ceased.

Religion – RC priest from Camp 122 visited.

Additional outside contacts –

Visits to Coulsdon and Staines Council meetings, Police Court at Feltham, concerts at the Albert Hall, Houses of Parliament, Society of Friends, Youth Club in Heston.

The Salvation Army had visited.

**Late Autumn 1947** – Weston Acres HQ site closed; 4 hostels and some personnel were transferred to the new HQ at the Shirley Church Road site, Addington, which then took the camp number 239.

Known Camp Commandants

1946Lt Col H St.G Thoyts, M.C. from the Lincolnshire Regiment.

1947 Lt Col McGregor.

**After the camp:** 2020 Weston Acres is a retirement home

**Further Information:**

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

IWM – Private papers of Captain F Hilton. Felix Hilton was an agent of the SOE operating behind-the-lines in France and Belgium from 12 June 1944. Diary notes cover his time as an interpreter at Weston Acres Camp. Catalogue – Documents.14095

**POW NUMBERS**

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

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Pre 8/1946 | 8/1946 | 9/1946 | 1/1947 | 6/1947 | 9/1947 | After |
| HQ |  | 40 | 40 | 42 | 43 | 38 |  |
| Hinchley Wood | Was C275 | 502 | 491 | 526 |  |  |  |
| Long Ditton |  | 77 | 51 |  |  |  |  |
| Elm Road, Chessington |  | 79 | 78 | 43 | 75 | 57 | To new C239 |
| Billet Road, Staines |  | 259 | 273 | 266 | 330 | 267 |
| Laleham Road, Staines |  | 224 | 232 | 215 | 265 | 201 |
| Banstead |  | 352 | 355 | 284 | 433 | 116 |
| Whitton (Twickenham) |  |  | 64 | 62 | 68 | 44 |
| Horley Hospital |  | 13 (1) | 50 | ? | 54 |  |  |
| Millbank Hospital |  |  | 11 | 11 |  |  |
| Billets |  | 0 | ? | ? | ? | ? |  |
| TOTALS |  | 1533 | 1645 | 1482 | 1268 | 723 | - |

Not known if billetees were included in the above figures. None were recorded. (1) Included in figures above.

**Satellite camps and Hostels**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Banstead.** Located at Park Farm on the Banstead Wood Estate. The farm is NGR TQ 266 583.The main buildings were located around the Park Farm buildings.Tented accommodation and some Nissen and wooden huts.The camp was surrounded by a barbed wire fence, with a sentry box at the entrance, but reports talk of limited numbers of guards.**8/1946** – Hostel leader; O.Fw Kressner (B); “*lacks interest in political matters.”* **9/1946** – same leader. Classes held for; German, Russian, Spanish, shorthand, bookkeeping, electrical engineering and maths. There was a small band playing “*light classical and swing music.”***1/1947** – same leader, he had deferred his repatriation for six months. **6/1947** – Listed as a satellite camp after Hinchley Wood closed.O/C Capt Durham – previously based at Hinchley Wood. Camp leader – Uffz Schiller (B+).Morale was low; to a large part this was blamed on the bullying attitude of the Company Sergeant Major Watkins. Steps were being taken to get him posted. [He was later moved to Ravensbourne hostel with Shirley Church Camp 239].The band had ceased, there was an attempt to restart it. The theatre group continued. No football ground.**9/1947** – Only referred to as a hostel. Same leader.  |  |
| Ordnance Survey 1962 |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Pre 8/1946 | 8/1946 | 9/1946 | 1/1947 | 6/1947 | 9/1947 | After |
| Banstead |  | 352 | 355 | 284 | 433 | 116 | To new C239 |

**Further information:**

1947 aerial photo – [raf\_cpe\_uk\_2116\_v\_5141 - Aerial Photo | Historic England](https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/archive/collections/aerial-photos/record/raf_cpe_uk_2116_v_5141)

World War II: The Banstead Wood Camp – John Sweetman, Banstead History Research Group, 1995

Two articles about Banstead and postal history – Forces Postal History Society, No 291, Spring 2012, by Peter High; and No 294, Winter 2012, by Peter Burrows.

Photograph of the Park farm site in the early 1950’s - [www.bansteadvillage.com/picture/number57.asp](http://www.bansteadvillage.com/picture/number57.asp)

**Chessington, Elm Road**

Memories place it at the spot where the library is now located – TQ 180 645. 1947 aerial photo shows the location was not as tightly built as today - [raf\_cpe\_uk\_2101\_v\_5079 - Aerial Photo | Historic England](https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/archive/collections/aerial-photos/record/raf_cpe_uk_2101_v_5079)

“*Just around the corner, next to our local shopping parade there was a Prisoner Of War camp, which was occupied by Germans and Italians at different times. It was very outstanding the variation in the camp between the Germans and the Italians. When the Germans were there the camp was kept in very good order with the German eagle in the form of a mosaic made from bomb damaged roof tiles, bricks and bits and pieces picked from around the area, for the Germans would go out and garden and do odd jobs for the local people. When the Italians occupied the camp it was run down and generally messy with the prisoners sitting around outside the huts most of the day. The local library stands on the site today*.” <https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/95/a2115695.shtml>

**8/1946** – Hostel leader; Ob.Fw Andres (B+), “*Good type – No political affiliations.”* 6/1947 – same leader.

**9/1947** – Hostel leader; Fw H Nowak (B+)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Pre 8/1946 | 8/1946 | 9/1946 | 1/1947 | 6/1947 | 9/1947 | After |
| Elm Road, Chessington |  | 79 | 78 | 43 | 75 | 57 | With new C239 |

**Hinchley Wood.** Previously independent Topsite Camp 275.

**8/1946** – Hostel leader; Fw Roedl (B-); Czech, “*Realises the error of his ways. He is anxious to make amends. Not a particularly impressive type.”*

The interpreter, S/Sgt Stewart was found to be “*most unsuitable*” and a separate report was issued.

The camp dentist, Ob.Ltn Eugen Michael was based here. Member of Hitler Youth. “*Suffers from an Anti-Russian mania. Deplores the present treatment of pow in England and America*.”

The Camp magazine was published from this site.

**9/1946** – same leader. *“Bad living conditions and lack of electric light.” “This is the only hostel where the presence of a democratic group is effectively in evidence*.” Classes held for German and French. There was a small band playing “*light classical and swing music*.”

**1/1947** – Listed as a satellite camp. Same leader, ex member of SA and Nazi Party, “*Dull type, unlikely to influence re-education*.”

Officer in charge: Capt Durham. Interpreter: Sgt Dominitz.

Had its own ‘Information Room’ showing text / pictures on a theme such as ‘German Politics of Today.’

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Pre 8/1946 | 8/1946 | 9/1946 | 1/1947 | 6/1947 | 9/1947 | After |
| Hinchley Wood | Was C275 | 502 | 491 | 526 |  |  |  |

**Horley Hospital**

**1/1947** – Hostel leader; Haerter (B); “*Intelligent and reliable.”* Number of pows not listed.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Pre 8/1946 | 8/1946 | 9/1946 | 1/1947 | 6/1947 | 9/1947 | After |
| Horley Hospital |  | 13 (1) | 50 | ? | 54 with Millbank |  |  |

**Long Ditton.** Only 500 yards from the Hinchley Wood Hostel and able to participate in its activities.

**7/1946** – Recorded as being opened.

**8/1946** – Hotel leader; H.Fw Badtke (B-); regular soldier, Nazi Party member 1933/34. “*Harbours a great fear of Russians.”* **9/1946** – same leader.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Pre 8/1946 | 8/1946 | 9/1946 | 1/1947 | 6/1947 | 9/1947 | After |
| Long Ditton |  | 77 | 51 |  |  |  |  |

**Millbank Hospital**

**1/1947** – Hostel leader; Wingert (B)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Pre 8/1946 | 8/1946 | 9/1946 | 1/1947 | 6/1947 | 9/1947 | After |
| Millbank Hospital |  |  | 11 | 11 | 54 with Horley |  |  |

**Staines, Billet Road.** TQ 044 720.

**8/1946** – Hostel leader; Fw L Schmidt (B+), “*quite keen on re-education… no political affiliation.”*

**9/1946** – same leader. Education classes held for German, French and Russian.

**1/1947** – Hostel leader; Mueller (B), ex-camp police, unpolitical. Classes for German and French.

**6/1947** – same leader. A camp orchestra and theatre group had started.

**9/1947** – same leader. The orchestra gave a concert at the Methodist church.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Pre 8/1946 | 8/1946 | 9/1946 | 1/1947 | 6/1947 | 9/1947 | After |
| Billet Road, Staines |  | 259 | 273 | 266 | 330 | 267 | To new C239 |

**Staines, Laleham Road**

**8/1946** – Hostel leader; Gefr Karl-Friedrich Matthews (C); aged 22, “*most unsuitable… inexperienced, immature and apt to make difficulties*.”

**9/1946** – same leader; “*the type of young Nazi with brains and personality who, if redeemed, could do excellent work, whilst constituting a permanent danger if left in his present state of mind. The hostel is thoroughly disillusioned; all are US prisoners. They live under very poor conditions.”* Mainly tented, there was no room large enough to hold meetings / lectures, but the Commandant stated he would see if two Nissen huts could be built and joined.

**1/1947** – same leader, this time described as “*unpolitical”* and expected to be regraded to (B); “*runs a difficult hostel efficiently.”* Tents replaced by huts.

**6/1947** – same leader. There was a very active sports group.

**9/1947** – Hostel leader; Ogfr W Meinhold (B)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Pre 8/1946 | 8/1946 | 9/1946 | 1/1947 | 6/1947 | 9/1947 | After |
| Laleham Road, Staines |  | 224 | 232 | 215 | 265 | 201 |  |

**Whitton (Twickenham)**

**7/1946** – Recorded as being opened.

**9/1946** – Hostel leader; O.Gefr Tenten (A).

**1/1947** – Hostel leader; Wolf (B). 6/1947 – same leader.

**9/1947** – Hostel leader; Ofw G Kressner (A). The leader and the Sgt i/c were “*at loggerheads, due to alleged malpractices on the part of the latter.”* The Commandant promised to keep the situation under review.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Pre 8/1946 | 8/1946 | 9/1946 | 1/1947 | 6/1947 | 9/1947 | After |
| Whitton (Twickenham) |  |  | 64 | 62 | 68 | 44 | With new C239 |

Possible location - TQ 133 739