**Camp** **240 (& 285) Hawkstone Park, Weston, Shropshire**

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| --- |
| **1947 Camp List** |
| 240(G.W.C.) | Hawkstone Park, Weston Shrewsbury, Shropshire | W. | Priswar, Wem | Wem 127/8 | (Blank) | Major G.T.W. Collins | 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 |
| SJ 567 288 | 126 | 240 | Hawkstone Park, Weston | Shropshire | 4 | German Working Camp | Site occupied by a golf course. See Camp no.285 |
| 285 |

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Location:** Site of NGR marked X.**Before the camp:** **Pow Camp: 1944/1945 -** It was co-located with the US Army Disciplinary Training Centre No 7 (aka Western Base Section Guardhouse). I have seen 1 report that US guards were also deployed in the pow camp.**By February 1946** – Hawkstone was an independent pow camp numbered 285 with a British Commandant. **February 1946** – 150 pows arrived from camps in Canada. Pows from Canada were often C grade (Nazis); they had been captured early in the war and many retained their Nazi ideology.**May / June 1946** - Additional intake of 300 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. |

**8 June 1946** – Camp magazine number 8; [Stacheldrahtpost : 285 : Hawkstone Park camp - The Wiener Holocaust Library](https://www.whlcollections.org/image/112875/) |  |
| Ordnance Survey 1957 |

**Mid August 1946** – Hawkstone became a satellite camp for Adderley Hall Camp 240.

Living conditions were described as being very neglected, but were being improved.

**26 to 28 August 1946** – PID separate report from the main camp. Details only applied to Hawkstone;

Strength; 2 officers, 696 Other Ranks – at satellite, 1 hostel administered by Hawkstone, and billets.

Officer i/c: Major Thomas [Commandant at Adderley Hall; Lt Col Attoe]. Camp leader: Hpt.Feldw Haacks (B)

Interpreter: S/Sgt Macfarlane Deputy C/L: Oberwachtm Schleicher (A)

 German M.O.: Ob.Arzt Jung (C) / Dentist: Ltn Nebel (C).

Major Thomas had been Commandant at Adderley, he was transferred to Hawkstone when it became a satellite camp.

The Interpreter was German, formerly a waiter at the Carlton. Posted from Adderley.

The camp leader was a regular soldier who had been held in pow camps in the USA – “*without much drive or imagination.”* Regarded as unsuitable and often obstructive, it was recommended he be replaced.

Deputy C/L, a builder; “*reliable, but without personality*.” Also regarded as unsuitable and to be replaced.

The doctor and dentist were both “*exercising a Nazi influence”* – it was recommended that they be removed at soon as possible.

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| Political screening: | A+ | A | A- | B+ | B | B- | C | C+ | Unscreened |
|  | 1 | 25 | 2 | 12 | 90 | 4 | 82 | - | 480 |

Morale was recorded as poor. This was partly due to frequent changes of Commandant (5 since February 1946), a feeling of neglect, and poor mail deliveries. 60 pows from the Russian zone and Poland had received no mail at all. Many pows received bad news from home. Efforts were being made to improve morale, including reduced barbed wire fencing and increased activities.

173 pows were ‘youth’ (under 25). They were regarded as a special problem as attempts to form a discussion group for them had failed. It was suspected that the Camp Leader had intentionally set up the group with an unsuitable leader.

A committee of 15 pows (Arbeitsgemeinschaft) was established to organise further activities. The standard list of re-education activities was given:

Wochenpost and Ausblick – 180 / few copies respectively.

Newspapers – A range of British papers was delivered. 5 copies of German papers were received every 3 to 4 weeks.

Library – extremely poor with just 150 old books. More urgently requested.

Lectures – started, with mixed reception. Urged that lecturers with a “*strong personality*” should be sent.

Discussion groups – one group had collapsed after its leader was repatriated. There was some opposition from the German staff to setting up new groups, but it was hoped the new organising committee would overcome this.

Films – YMCA films fortnightly. Some films were sent on by Camp 679 at Wem, Shropshire, but they were mainly ‘wild west’ shows and not very popular.

Wireless – one set with 2 loudspeakers. It was not very good as German stations could not be received. From camp magazine >

Camp magazine – Good, with 50 copies produced.

Press review – A poorly presented review given weekly. A wall newspaper in the dining room with poorly selected articles.

English instruction – only 5 students in an advanced class, but it was thought many others studied privately.

Other camp activities –

Religion – RC padre, Titus Goetzmann had been transferred from the main camp. 40-50 pows attended his services. Protestant padre Heinrich Kuenich, also from the main camp held weekly services with about 50 pows. Both padres visited Camp 679. Neither padre was considered to be good at making personal contacts with pows.

Education – attempts to start classes had collapsed. The main reason given was long working hours.

Entertainment – A theatre group of 12 players gave variety performances. An orchestra with 10 members played ‘swing’ and ‘serious’ music.

**End 1946** - When Adderley Hall Camp closed towards the end of 1946, Hawkstone became independent once more and took the camp number 240.

**5 January 1947** – Camp magazine; [Der Querschnitt : Lagerzeitung des Arbeitslagers 240 Hawkstone Park - The Wiener Holocaust Library](https://www.whlcollections.org/image/112840/)

**10-12 March 1947** – Visit to organise re-education. Strength; 1 officer, 634 OR.

Officer i/c: Major P Collins Camp leader: Willy Schuermann (B+)

Interpreter: None Deputy C/L: Erich Kaufels (B+)

 German M.O.: St/Arzt Huerhwohl (A) / Dentist: Hugo Bechinger (A)

The new Commandant started in February. He showed an active interest in pow welfare and re-education. In this and the next few reports the Commandant had the first initial ‘P’ – after that it was recorded as ‘G W,’ which I believe was correct.

The camp leader was a music teacher - “*highly intelligent, politically sound leader… a profound thinker and a most likeable personality*.” He was due to be repatriated the following month.

The Deputy C/L, aged 30, was politically upgraded during this visit. He had been a pow in Canada. *“A sound type.”*

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Political screening: | A | B+ | B | B- | C |
|  | 7 | 71 | 461 | 36 | 60 |

184 pows were appealing against their political grades (all of the C grades and 124 B’s) – the better the grade, the sooner repatriated. 305 pows repatriated to date.

Morale was not good for the following reasons:

1. Frequent changes of Commandants – 8 so far.
2. No interpreter.
3. Adverse weather conditions and a ban on fires.
4. Disagreements between the wishes of the pow committee and the military command.
5. A pow sent to the Training Centre returned and tried to start a rival faction and undermine the pow committee. He was being removed from the camp.

It was believed that the new Commandant, if he was allowed to remain, would soon be able to overcome these issues.

28% of the pows were ‘youth.’ A good youth group had started and there were no serious problems.

Changes to activities –

Library – much improved with 1500 books.

Discussion groups – re-started with 50 pows attending.

Camp magazine – 145 copies produced.

Press review – much improved and appreciated.

Information room – Adequate. Held exhibitions of text and pictures on a theme, currently “*Mensch oder Type*” produced by Camp 101. Pows were preparing their own exhibition materials.

Religion – a new Protestant padre, Haug (A) was more active and his assistance in promoting camp life was regarded as “*most valuable.”* Services were held in the village church and there were excellent relationships with local clergy.

Education – Classes for Russian, economics and shorthand.

**22 April 1947** – A brief visit and report concerning a new Camp Leader and re-grading. Strength not given.

The deputy leader, Kaufels, was elected as the new Camp leader subject to approval which was given.

The exhibition prepared by the pows was considered to be very good and worth photographing for distribution to other camps.

Merrington Green hostel had recently been taken over from St Martins Camp100.

**24/27 June 1947** – Visit to “*assist re-education.”* Strength; 1 officer, 940 OR.

Officer i/c: Major P Collins Camp leader: Erich Kaufels (B+)

Interpreter: S/Sgt Stewart Deputy C/L: W Kansy (B)

 German M.O.: St/Arzt Huerhwohl (A)

The new interpreter was “*young, inexperienced and unlikely to be of any use in re-education*.” He was soon replaced.

The new deputy C/L, aged 32, office worker – “*satisfactory.”*

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Political screening: | A | B+ | B | B- | C |
|  | 11 | 123 | 698 | 107 | 2 |

20 appeals pending. Looking at the number of C grades, and in comparison with other camps, most appeals were successful. 364 pows repatriated to date.

Morale had improved to “*quite good.”* Slow repatriations were a negative factor, while greater freedoms to leave camp were having a positive effect.

An informal election was held in the camp based on German election parties. The SPD came top with nearly 50% of the votes. There were 146 spoiled votes which the visitor believed was a reaction to the pow committee, rather than being anti-democracy.

Changes to activities –

Library - 1800 books.

Discussion groups - more popular with attendance at times rising to 120.

Education – Economics classes had ended; a higher mathematics class had started.

Entertainment – The theatre group and orchestra continued and were considered to be very good. The most popular sports were; football, handball, table tennis and boxing.

Outside contacts – The only formal visits were to Shrewsbury Borough Council. Informal contacts were also difficult to establish due to the isolation of the camp.

**11-15 August 1947** – Survey of re-education. Strength; 1 officer, 858 OR.

1 change to senior personnel – a new interpreter S/Sgt MacAlister.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Political screening: | A | B+ | B | B- | C |
|  | 9 | 119 | 641 | 90 | 0 |

No further appeals against grading. 567 pows repatriated to date; many were termed as ‘crock,’, i.e. sick and injured pows.

Morale remained “*fairly good.”* Negative factors included a temporary delay in repatriations; bad news from the Russian zone; and, dissatisfaction with a new order that required weekly parades. Most pows were apathetic towards politics, but the fear of the ‘Russian Ogre’ was increasing. It was felt that the western powers were not able to curb Russian excesses and demands. In the visitor’s opinion – “*This point of view panders to the German tendency to wallow in mental masochism…”*

30% of pows were ‘youth.’ The youth group continued to work with those that were interested.

Changes to activities –

Library – 2000 books.

Films – the film company had failed to appear for the last 2 sessions, but were back to normal by the next report.

Outside contacts – Shrewsbury Council and Magistrates Court. A ‘Christian Fellowship’ group near Merrington visited and held a social evening for 30 pows.

There were plans to make Hawkstone a satellite camp for Sheriff Hales Camp 71 – but instead, this camp was increased in size.

**2-3, 6-8 October 1947** – Re-educational survey. Strength; 1 officer, 1103 OR.

No change to senior personnel. Relationships between pows and the British staff were generally good.

The Interpreter, S/Sgt MacAlister, was absent on a 6 week course. *“Although conscientious and hard working, his attitude towards Ps/W has been unduly harsh, probably due to the treatment which members of his own family received in concentration camps.”* The report went on to state he had a “*brutal attitude, seasoned with unnecessary recourse to violent language.”* However, no recommendations were made due to his absence and that he was due to leave the army before the end of the year.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Political screening: | A | B+ | B | B- | C |
|  | 7 | 175 | 760 | 162 | 0 |

612 pows repatriated to date. Morale improved with speedier repatriations.

Changes to activities were very minor - the camp magazine had increased to 250 copies.

**15/18 December 1947** – Re-educational Survey. Strength; 1 officer, 1032 OR.

Officer i/c: Major P Collins Camp leader: W Kansy (B)

Interpreter: None Deputy C/L: H Winninghoff (B)

 German M.O.: St/Arzt Huerhwohl (A)

The new Camp Leader was appointed the previous week; he had been deputy. Aged 32.

The deputy C/L, aged 31, “*pleasant and intelligent, self confident type*.”

Simplified screening figures were given; A 5 / B1028. 868 pows repatriated to date.

A number of ‘minor’ situations had arisen. Pows had been sentenced for including forbidden articles in parcels – this had been subject of a special report in November. The previous accounts officer had mistakenly forbidden pows to purchase dictionaries in the belief they were being resold for higher prices in Germany. The use of lights in huts during the daytime had been forbidden – this rule was now changed.

A number of activities were affected as leading pows were repatriated.

Education – only Russian classes continued.

Entertainment – The theatre group had ceased; the orchestra / band continued.

**22/25 March 1948** – Routine Survey. Strength; 1 officer, 1050 OR.

Officer i/c: Major G W Collins Camp leader: O Klotz (B)

Interpreter: None Deputy C/L: E Dickmeiss

 German M.O.: St/Arzt Merlinius (B)

The camp was operating more as a transit camp as other camps closed and their pows were transferred here prior to repatriation.

Screening figures: A 2 / B 1049. 1550 pows repatriated to date.

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. Some visitors simply gathered whoever was around and asked them to give a show of hands to the questions, some asked a ‘selected’ group – most did not state how the data was gathered or the numbers involved. In this camp the survey was carried out 3 times in 3 months – the results, for what they are worth (nothing?) were:

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Attitudes to British. | Hate | Dislike | Distrust | Indifference | Benefit of doubt | Liking |
| March: | 0% | 10% | 15% | 15% | 25% | 35% |
| April: | 0% | 0% | 7% | 23% | 7% | 63% |
| May: | 0% | 0% | 4% | 15% | 6% | 75% |

Outside contacts - It was noted; “*Hospitality, except from the more questionable type of female, has not been widespread in this rural area.”*

No ‘Resettlement officers’ had visited the camp.

**20/23 April 1948** – Routine survey. Strength 0 officers, 1142 OR.

Officer i/c: Major G W Collins Camp leader: O Klotz (B)

Interpreter: None Deputy C/L: H Schroeder (B)

 German M.O.: A/Arzt H Guldin (B+)

No screening figures. 1561 pows repatriated to date.

A resettlement team had at last visited the main camp and hostels. They gave a brief talk, invited questions and were available for “*private consultation*.” 120 out of 700 pows at main camp attended.

Some pows wished to settle in the UK, however there were limits to the numbers allowed. *“Apart from feverish efforts being made by PsW married to British women to find employment and attempts by others to persuade female acquaintances into marriage, no new aspect of the resettlement problem came to light.”*

Camp magazine – continued and was the only re-education activity mentioned.

**19/21 May 1948** – Final survey. Strength 1 officer, 1083 OR.

1 change to senior personnel – a new Camp Leader; R Ewald (A).

Screening figures; A 4 / B 1080.

The camp was being wound up. The last edition of the magazine had just been published.

Known Camp Commandants (there were 8 of them):

1946 Major Thomas.

1947Major G.T.W. Collins, from the Royal Warwickshire Regiment.

**After the camp:** HER records it as being a golf course. In very dry weather, the outline locations of a number of the huts can be seen across the 3rd, 4th and 5th fairways.

On 27 January, 1949, a skeleton was found in woodland near Hawkstone, and was identified as 39-year-old SS man Wilhelm Fradrich, who had gone missing from the nearby prisoner-of-war camp on 13 May, 1948.

Forensic checks on the body did not match known hair colour and at the inquest the coroner recorded an open verdict on what he described as an unidentified adult male.

It was speculated that another SS man, perhaps fearing retribution on his eventual return to Germany, had murdered a fellow prisoner, made it look like suicide, and stolen his identity. [A story I have seen repeated in at least 4 other locations].

A local resident recalled that rumours at the time had a somewhat different explanation. The prisoner was employed in the gardens at Hodnet Hall where he struck up a friendship with the head keeper's daughter, and asked her to marry him – all a ruse, it was suggested later, to enable him to remain in Britain. [Interesting to relate this to the comment made in the April 1948 report above]. The girl's father opposed the marriage and demanded that the camp Commandant confine the prisoner and expedite his return to Germany. A few days later the man was found to have gone missing, and after some initial searches it was decided by the authorities that he had returned to Germany using a different identity or was on the run in the UK. The gossips suggested that, after escaping, the prisoner had gone to collect his girlfriend but had been killed by her irate father and his body hidden on the estate and only moved to where it was found when the whole family left the area, hence the missing bits of his skeleton. When the bones had been collected from under the tree were pieced together it was found that both his hands and feet were missing. It was decided they must have been eaten by foxes. *"If the police suspected this then nothing came of it as I'm sure if any arrests had been made it would have been the talk of the village.”*

Details and 1949 news article - <https://www.shropshirestar.com/news/nostalgia/2022/05/16/enduring-mystery-of-a-death-in-paradise/>

**Further Information:**

National Archives FO 1120/235 – Re-educational survey visit reports for camps 240 to 246. Dated 1 Jan 1946 – 31 Dec 1948. Used above.

IWM have copies of the magazine dated January 1947 and January 1948.

**POW NUMBERS**

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

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | As C285 | 8/1946 Sat | C240 - 3/1947 | 4/1947 | 6/1947 | 8/1947 | 10/1947 | 12/1947 | 3/1948 | 4/1948 | 5/1948 |
| Hawkstone |  | 608 | 560 | ? | 647 | 580 | 490 | 594 | 689 | 700 | 687 |
| Cheswardine | With C71 | 39 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Merrington Green | With C100 | 120 | 120 | 105 | 95 | 11 | 98 | 104 | 101 |
| Atcham |  |  |  |  |  |  | 138 | 82 | 36 | 37 | 20 |
| Cluddley |  |  |  |  |  | With C71 | 210 | 154 | 134 | 178 | 184 |
| Acton Burnell | With C84 | 6 | 7 | 6 |
| Ludlow |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 60 |
| Billets |  | 49 | 75 | ? | 174 | 174 | 171 | 192 | 88 | 46 | 26 |
| TOTALS |  | 696 | 635 | ? | 941 | 859 | 1104 | 1033 | 1051 | 1142 \* | 1084 |

\* + 4 detachments - Altcar 40; Chester 16; Middlewich 10; Wrexham 4. No reasons given for these groups.

**Hostels**

**Acton Burnell.** Condover, Shrewsbury, Salop. Transferred from Sheet Camp 84.

**3/1948** – Hostel leader; R Detjen (B)

**4/1948** – Hostel leader; B Esser (B). **5/1948** – same leader.

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|  | As C285 | 8/1946 Sat | C240 - 3/1947 | 4/1947 | 6/1947 | 8/1947 | 10/1947 | 12/1947 | 3/1948 | 4/1948 | 5/1948 |
| Acton Burnell | With C84 | 6 | 7 | 6 |

**Atcham.**

**10/1947** – Hostel leader, H Gaertner (B-), aged 38. Member of Nazi Party since 1930; “*Sly and unreliable; not a good influence*.” Improvements had been made to the accommodation.

**12/1947** – Previously listed as a hostel, in this report as; “*Atcham Detachment.”*

**3/1948** – Again, as a hostel. Hostel leader; E Poetsch (B-). **5/1948** – same leader.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | As C285 | 8/1946 Sat | C240 - 3/1947 | 4/1947 | 6/1947 | 8/1947 | 10/1947 | 12/1947 | 3/1948 | 4/1948 | 5/1948 |
| Atcham |  |  |  |  |  |  | 138 | 82 | 36 | 37 | 20 |

**Cheswardine.** Market Drayton, Salop.

**8/1946** – Hostel leader; Ob.Feldw Altkoester

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | As C285 | 8/1946 Sat | C240 - 3/1947 | 4/1947 | 6/1947 | 8/1947 | 10/1947 | 12/1947 | 3/1948 | 4/1948 | 5/1948 |
| Cheswardine | With C71 | 39 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |



**Cluddley.** SJ 632 102.

**12 June 1947 –** pow Albin Gross committed suicide by hanging, in the woods near Wrockwardine. He was buried at Stafford Cemetery.

**10/1947** – Recorded as having been transferred from Camp 71. Hostel leader; H Trenkner (B). Senior primary school teacher. Joined the Nazi Party in 1935. Had been based at the Channel Islands. “*Quiet and serious but uninspiring*.” He was soon replaced.

**12/1947** – Hostel leader; A Kraft (B), aged 48, “*very capable with a pleasing manner.”* He had been a hostel leader at camp 71.

**3/1947** – Hostel leader; K Polenz (B). **5/1948** – same leader.

Ordnance Survey 1954 >

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | As C285 | 8/1946 Sat | C240 - 3/1947 | 4/1947 | 6/1947 | 8/1947 | 10/1947 | 12/1947 | 3/1948 | 4/1948 | 5/1948 |
| Cluddley |  |  |  |  |  | With C71 | 210 | 154 | 134 | 178 | 184 |

**Ludlow**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | As C285 | 8/1946 Sat | C240 - 3/1947 | 4/1947 | 6/1947 | 8/1947 | 10/1947 | 12/1947 | 3/1948 | 4/1948 | 5/1948 |
| Ludlow |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 60 |

**Merrington Green.** Very isolated.

**April 1947** - taken over from St Martins Camp 100.

**6/1947** – Hostel leader; M Nastold (B), appointed 3 weeks earlier. A clerk. He had been based in the Channel Islands. Joined the Nazi Party in 1932, however, he was regarded as; “*Reliable, pleasant and doing his best to foster re-education.”* Pows had not been allowed to visit Shrewsbury, the Commandant now changed this. **5/1948** – same leader.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | As C285 | 8/1946 Sat | C240 - 3/1947 | 4/1947 | 6/1947 | 8/1947 | 10/1947 | 12/1947 | 3/1948 | 4/1948 | 5/1948 |
| Merrington Green |  | With C100 | 120 | 120 | 105 | 95 | 11 | 98 | 104 | 101 |