

Second World War Prisoner of War Camps in Leeds

Introduction

As part of our third year studies we were commissioned to write a Community History Workshop Project devised in collaboration with a sponsor. Out of the thirteen research projects available we picked Second World War Prisoner of War camps in Leeds. We were asked to primarily research into the PoW camp at Butcher Hill in Horsforth, on the outskirts of Leeds, providing an insight into life inside the camps as well as their impact upon the surrounding community. Analysis of the wider national network of camps will be used in order to contextualise life at Butcher Hill.

As ‘remarkably little substantive and scholarly work on the British camps... has been published in the United Kingdom’ (Appendix 14), oral testimony will be essential to this study. However there are also problems with finding original oral history from the people that actually witnessed the PoW camps in Britain; ‘most of these men have died and few camps survive, their role in British social and cultural history has been both under-valued and under-studied’ (Appendix 14). In order to compensate for the scarcity of secondary sources we were aware that it was going to be necessary to search archives for any existing primary sources, as well as conducting our own primary research.

Our sponsor was Gordon Henderson, a teacher at Abbey Grange School. We were to work with Mr Henderson in order provide a project that would be applicable within the community. The school was specifically interested in the subject as the Butcher Hill camp we set out to research was located nearby. After meeting Gordon for the first time we discovered that he intended to publish our findings and subsequent report on the schools website www.projectinspire.co.uk that could be accessed by students and the community. As a humanities college, the school has placed an emphasis on study in these areas, valuing the importance of local history in the community. Mr Henderson was keen for this particularly sparse field of study to be explored, and hoped that its historical contribution may be further distributed to archives around West Yorkshire.

‘To date, with a few notable exceptions, very little has been written about World War II Prisoner of War Camps in the British Isles...Even less work has been undertaken to identify the total population and location of the camps’ (Thomas, 2003, p. 4). Records of Butcher Hill do exist; there is even reference to it in the 1979 book *Thresholds of Peace* (Sanders, kg6gb, prisoner_of_war_mail). It was one of the larger, purpose built camps serving as the ‘main camp’ or ‘HQ’ to a number of smaller satellite camps and hostels (Appendix 13, National Archive FO939/313). Butcher Hill was registered as camp number 244 or 245 (varying between records and authors). The numbering of camps was necessary for military records, however this is not to say that the total number of camps can easily, if at all be defined, this has proven problematic to say the least, as illustrated in this Red Cross London office communiqué with Geneva;

‘We think it would be almost impossible to compile such a list...and any attempt would be very confusing and serve no useful purpose. Not only have numbers and locations of camps in Great Britain changed continually, but....it has frequently happened that a camp in the same location has had a succession of different numbers, and camp with same number has moved to a succession of different locations...’ (Appendix 14).

Recorded numbers have varied ‘with the numerical sequence of 1-1025 (British) conflicting with the Swiss 1-1206 or the German 1-1004, each of which include incomplete sequences and unexplained gaps’ (Appendix 14). Whilst the definitive number of camps, including all satellites, cannot be derived, there has been recent research into the number of substantive camps in the British Isles, with Roger Thomas concluding that there were 487 in total (Thomas, 2003).

‘Between 1941 and 1948 a Prisoner of War (PoW) Camp system was progressively established across the British Isles from Cornwall in the extreme south west of England to the Shetland Islands north of the Scottish mainland’ (Appendix 14). The main reason, in the early war years, behind only keeping small numbers of German PoWs in Britain was the threat of invasion. ‘As late as March 1944 there were never more than 1,750 Germans held in Britain’ (Appendix 14). Moreover many of the German prisoners were shipped off to many parts of the empire and to Britain’s allies, including South Africa, Canada and America. ‘Once the German prisoners had been interrogated and classified according to their political views - Grey, Black or White, they were transported to camps in Canada to obviate the risk of their release by enemy paratroopers’ (Thomas, 2003, p. 5).

The changing tide of the war both in Europe; the D-Day landings proved pivotal in the increase of German PoWs in Britain, and Africa provided the problem of housing Prisoners of War, in particular German PoWs. This is evident in the development of Butcher Hill camp in Leeds. Many of the purpose built camps were not erected until later on in the war to house the influx of prisoners, ‘It’s thought that the on Butcher Hill wasn’t built until 1944, when the allied troops were pushing the Germans back’ (Saville, 2005, p. 54). The change in the PoW population is distinct, as Table 1 demonstrates, the amount of German PoWs increased from 7,900 in June 1944 to 402,200 in September 1946 (Appendix 14), when the repatriation process began to take shape in terms of numbers. It was therefore evident to us that whilst focusing on Leeds history in regard to PoW camps, information would be primarily in reference to the post-war period.

Further difficulty arises in establishing what types of camp existed and where Butcher Hill fitted in. 'Defining exactly what constitutes a Prisoner of War camp is difficult because of the immense variety of types, sizes, and classes of buildings used' (Thomas, 2003, p. 4);

'...the early periods saw camps established in existing buildings in requisitioned country mansions and castles, hotels, boarding schools, industrial mills and even race-courses, from late 1942 camps were purpose-built from prefabricated concrete, sectional timber and corrugated iron huts' (Appendix 14).

This is evident in the Leeds area, with the Butcher Hill camp being the largest, purpose built camp, with numerous satellite camps and hostels, including Post Hill Hostel and the Westfield Hostel. The number of prisoners incarcerated at Butcher Hill fluctuated, with around 500 prisoners at any one time. Most of the satellite camps held between 100 and 200 prisoners, however there were some large exceptions, like the Huddersfield Hostel which held in excess of 400 prisoners (Appendix 13, National Archive FO939/313). Other examples of this setup are described in Thomas's research; 'In May 1946 Camp 81 (Pingley) was responsible for 1862 prisoners, 984 of whom were housed at the camp and the remainder were either billeted out, or lived at one of four hostels' (Thomas, 2003, p. 7). This illustrates how PoW camps formed small pockets around the country, clusters of satellites feeding off one main camp, also highlighting a common prisoner of war experience, at least in terms of accommodation.

Life inside the Prisoner of War camps

Life inside the Prisoner of War camps involved a variety of scheduled activity and regimes. However spare time was afforded to the prisoners, allowing for the participation in more informal activities, either as individuals or as groups. Extensive records of camp activity and welfare were recorded by the Territorial Army and to a lesser extent by the Red Cross. Regular visits to the camps documented the activity and progression of the prisoners in what appears to have been a key initiative, the political re-education of the German Prisoners.

Screening

Upon arrival in Britain, prisoners were subject to a screening process consisting of an interview and an interrogation in order to ascertain how politicised or radical a prisoner was. The interviews were carried out by military interpreters such as Philip Wilson's father. Speaking German, French and Italian fluently, George Wilson conducted regular interviews with prisoners at the Knostrop camp in East Leeds (Appendix 6). The conclusions drawn by the interpreter determined how a prisoner would be classified and ultimately where and for how long they were to be incarcerated. The classifications were based on letters and denoted by coloured patches worn on their uniforms;

‘White patches (‘A’ ‘A-’) were for prisoners with no loyalty or affiliation to the Nazis. A grey patch (‘B+’ ‘B’ ‘B-’) meant that the prisoner, although not an ardent Nazi, had no strong feelings either way (mitläufer). Hard-core Nazis and almost all Waffen SS and U-Boat crews wore a black patch (‘C’ or ‘C+’)’ (Sanders, kg6gb, prisoner_of_war_mail).

Generally speaking, the more extreme prisoners were sent further north, with the most ardent Nazis sent to the Scottish Highlands.

Work Inside the Camps

One of the key reasons for the increased prisoner of war transportation to Britain after the D-Day landings in 1944 was, for the non-officer class at least, for the purpose of work. For the most part this was conducted with white and grey rated prisoners, outside of the camp perimeter, labouring on farmland, building sites or clearing snow in the winter, this will be elaborated upon later. However, many of the prisoners partook in creative activity, be it making slippers from sugar sacks for extra money (Gluth, 2000, p.10) or wood working toys and sewing boxes as gifts for women and children (Hodgson, 2009, Appendix 11). Some 'Politically reliable' Germans played a role in the everyday running of the camp, supporting the commanding officer in his duties and keeping other prisoners in check. In the later years of the PoW camps there have even been accounts of role reversal, Paul Gluth recalls from his time in camp 39 at Coleshill, 'our camp commander found out that the soldiers guarding us were stealing equipment from the camp, so he confined them to the barracks and made us [PoWs] guard the camp entrance (Gluth, 2000, p.11). This demonstrates an unexpected level of trust between officer and prisoner, questioning the accepted or expected norms of a Prisoner of War Camp.

Political Re-education Policy

The political re-education of prisoners of war has been cited as 'the raison d'être' of the camps (Appendix 14). Aside from the domestic demand for labour that was eased by prisoner man power, Britain was primarily concerned over the Nazi state of mind, placing precedence on nurturing the value of democracy. Re-education and de-nazification policy served, both as a safe guard against future emergence of European fascism, and as a means of preparing Germans to return home and regenerate the socially, economically and politically devastated post war Germany.

Re-education was an official policy of all the camps across Britain, however there were clear disparities in the way in which this policy was implemented. Prisoners at Butcher Hill seem to have been, by comparison to some camps, quite fortunate in terms of commanding officers and educational provisions. Of his visit to the camp between 28th and 31st July 1947, Dr. H. L. Gottschalk noted ‘the great advantage of having a British officer full of understanding and interest...Major Learmouth knows how to treat his men and give them all the material necessary for their political education’ (Appendix 12, N A, FO939/313).

As the main camp, Butcher Hill received a number of provisions to augment the re-education process. There was access to literature with a Library that was ‘well stocked and in good use’, with over 2000 volumes (Appendix 13). One visitor was encouraged to hear a prisoner cite the theory of a world government as a solution to totalitarianism, as proposed in Reves’s *Anatomy of Peace* (Appendix 12), a sign that the access to literature was effective on some levels. Inmates had access to a range on English language newspapers. Articles that were deemed to be of political interest or importance in the English newspaper were sometimes translated to allow for a greater readership. From 1947 there was some provision of German language newspapers, with the delivery of *Woche* in small numbers (Appendix 13). The intention appears not only to have been for the content, but in order to try and spark debate amongst prisoners. Debating societies formed, although not always popular among the prisoners, sometimes as few as fifteen prisoners would attend; they offered a forum for exchange on topics ranging from domestic camp issues to more political debates on socialism and totalitarianism.

One of the more active elements to the re-education programme was the programme of regular visits from scholars and professors, giving lectures and chairing debates on a range of social, economical and political theories. After visiting all the neighbouring hostels, they used to compile a report on how the lectures were received at each camp, commenting on the level of political interest and as to how the prisoners were progressing. Attendance to the lectures ranged from 50 to 100 and was influenced by factors such as particularly 'splendid weather' or a 'delay in announcing the lecture' (Appendix 12). Thus it would be difficult to derive many conclusions as to their success or impact based upon attendance alone. A variety of speakers visited the camps and offered their services, including Professor Happold of Leeds University, who was 'most valuable in making contacts with the official bodies in Leeds'; Recruiting academics to educate the prisoners English, Maths, Book Keeping and Shorthand (Appendix 13).

Provision was also made so that the prisoners had access to a wireless radio; they received transmissions from radio Hamburg. This introduces a key dimension to the re-education programme. The ultimate ambition of the project was to enable the German prisoners to be repatriated, reformed characters, ready for the challenges of post-war Germany. For this reason it was important to keep the prisoners, to a degree, informed of German affairs and culture, so not to alienate them and complicate their resettlement. On this basis, there was the introduction of cinema, showing German films such as; *Dick & Dof* and *Spiel Im Sommerwind*. It was not just the silver screen that made an appearance, by 1947 main camp and all of the hostels were equipped with stages, allowing the theatre group and the camp bands to perform by way of thanks to local hospitality (Appendix 13). The Huddersfield Hostel was reputed to have been particularly enthusiastic about treading the boards, although the theatre group at Butcher Hill had to close in September 1947 due to the repatriation of its most prominent members.

Butcher Hill was by and large reported to have had more than adequate provision for the duty of re-education, and in the most, reports were of ‘good camp morale’ and ‘deep rooted democratic feeling’; however H.A. Kluthe warned in his report of December 1947 that ‘one should not be too complacent about morale in a “model” camp’, ‘letters from home spread alarm and despondency [among the prisoners] over Germany’s economic future’. A problem and perhaps flaw in the re-education process pre-empted by Dr. S. Kissin’s observation of a ‘strong and growing feeling of resentment caused by the present catastrophic situation inside Germany’ during his visit in April 1947 (Appendix 12). This suggests that the programme was not wholly successful in its capacity of German education, leaving the prisoner some what in the dark as to development in their homeland.

Camp Magazine

Perhaps one of the most surprising activities undertaken by the prisoners at Butcher Hill was the production of their own in-house magazine. *Die Bruccke* was produced on a weekly basis from about mid-1946 onwards, printing in the region of thirty copies every Saturday. Whilst impressive, Butcher hill was not the only camp to produce such a paper, there were over 300 *Lagerzeitungen* or camp newspapers in Britain. Some of which were so professionally written they were circulated on a national scale; for example, the Featherstone Camp (no. 21) in Northumberland, published seventeen national issues of *Die Zeit am Tyne* between 1946 and 1948 (Appendix 14).

The magazines title is an alternative or misspelling of ‘Die Brücke’, meaning ‘The Bridge’. Inspiration was derived from a group of German expressionist artists of the same name who formed in Dresden in 1905. The group are also the namesake for the Brücke Museum in Berlin.

The magazine was set up by a member of the British camp staff, Major Learmouth, as part of the re-education programme, allowing for the acquisition of new skills and acting as an organ of expression for prisoners in the camp. Dr. Rudolf Moenkemeyer was the ‘very keen and capable’ first editor of the magazine (Appendix 13), and although the initial print run was small, the magazine’s popularity soon grew among the prisoners. Accordingly, recommendations can be seen in the TA inspection reports that more paper should be provided for this cause. Once this request had been granted the print run increased to one hundred copies per week, widening its distribution and thus forming ‘a medium of exchange of views between the hostels’ (Appendix 13).

A man recorded only as Vaupel was another editor of *Die Bruccke*. During his time as editor he also took control of what used to be the weekly news conference in the camp. He abandoned these meetings, preferring to produce the Daily Newssheet instead, however this was short lived before scaling down to a weekly news report given by Vaupel in person.

Unfortunately there was a copy of the magazine appended to one of the camp inspection reports; however this could not be obtained.

Conclusion

There is an emerging impression as to what life was like for German PoWs at Butcher Hill. We should be wary of generalisations at this stage; however there appears to have been some level of common experience. Of course there were disparities between camp facilities, ranging from Sullivan’s description of ‘a huge adult education centre, with its law school and language school, numerous vocational and cultural courses and political study groups’ in Northumberland (Sullivan, 1979, p.153), to the smallest of hostels, containing only 50 prisoners and almost wholly reliant upon their main camps provisions. But aside from material provision, many of the camps treated the prisoners in a similar, humane way, illustrated in Paul Gluth’s Memoirs of his experience, moving between several PoW camps over a period three years. Whilst in Britain he was adequately fed and amicably treated, which is more than he could say for his incarceration in Europe (Gluth, 2000, pp. 8-12).

Impact on Surrounding Communities - Life outside the Camps

Prisoners Work

Every Prisoner could work if he so wished and would usually be detailed to do farm work, which would involve hedging, ditching, harvesting, and construction work or clearing bomb damage (Appendix 6, 10, 14). During their working hours they would (if working on a farm) be under the direct command of the farmer to whom they were employed. Of course, the prisoners were not forced to work in British camps. The Geneva Convention of 1929, states that prisoners of war must be treated humanely without any adverse discrimination and that their medical needs must be met. The Geneva Convention also covers the type of labour that a prisoner of war may be compelled to do, taking facts such as age and health into consideration, unhealthy or dangerous work could therefore only be done by a PoW who volunteered for such work.

However given the choice, many German prisoners of war chose to work rather than sit around the camp doing nothing on a day to day basis. Derek Plumber recalls the Butcher Hill prisoners working at Woodside Quarry, which is a small single track gauge railway which was used to pull trucks on. The PoWs job was to take the 'overburdens' from the top of the sandstone and dump it in Bridge Quarry, next to the railway station (Appendix 2). A local lady, Joan, from Wynford Avenue also recalls that when the war ended, the German Prisoners from Butcher Hill camp went to work at Rawson's farm at the end of Moor Grange Road. Joan and her friends used to go and help a German prisoner named Herman, with the cows and remember him being a 'lovely' man (Appendix 2). Jeane Macpherson remembers her mother hearing that the prisoners from Butcher Hill Camp were allowed out to do gardening and other farm work. Jeane's mother filled out a form and they sent 'this fellow to us' as Jeane recalls (Saville, M 2005).

PoWs often came across much hostility when outside the camp, especially when British people became enraged that the Germans were seen as taking their jobs. Due to large scale bombing in Britain, there became somewhat of a housing crisis. Construction work was carried out by the prisoners as within some ranks, there were tradesmen, who before the war, worked in the construction industry. They were paid the current union rates of pay which worked out at around three and six shillings for a 48 hour week. As a result, many repairmen in London went on strike and in Newcastle, men volunteered to work two hours per day extra rather than receive help from PoWs (Fortune City - *German Prisoners of War in Britain*). Many People recall seeing PoWs at work, David Hanson remembers the PoWs from Knostrop Camp in North Leeds clearing the snow on the main road, after the particularly bad winter of 1947. He recalls, many of the PoWs in Afrika Corps Uniform, noting that the uniforms, 'were hardly suitable for the arctic condition' (Hanson, 2009, Appendix 6).

Table 1: German PoW in the United Kingdom: quarterly returns from March 1941 to June 1948 (Appendix 14).

Date	Total	% Working	Date	Total	% Working
1941 March	550	-	1945 March	156,100	25.3
June	950	-	June	207,000	25.6
September	1,700	-	September	208,950	33.4
December	1,850	-	December	211,300	56.4
1942 March	1,150	-	1946 March	265,000	79.4
June	200	-	June	385,450	77.4
September	300	-	September	402,200	84.9
December	550	-	December	355,200	70.5
1943 March	900	-	1947 March	305,800	65.0
June	650	-	June	267,250	60.1
September	650	-	September	220,000	64.1
December	1,100	-	December	155,700	50.0
1944 March	2,550	5.0	1948 March	82,800	40.0
June	7,900	5.0	June	2,790	30.0
September	90,000	10.0			
December	144,450	13.5			

By 1946, 22,000 prisoners were involved in construction work in Britain and around 169,000 prisoners were involved in agricultural work. At one time it was considered that one quarter of the total workforce in Britain came from PoW labour (Fortune City - *German Prisoners of War in Britain*).

Relationships and Marriage with British Girls

Life outside the camp for many young PoWs consisted of sneaking out and meeting with local girls. Many prisoners' accounts recall either going on bike rides through local villages or going for evening walks. Jo Hodgson tells how her Father, who was a PoW at Butcher Hill Camp in Leeds, met her Mother on his Evening walks along Norris Lane, where she lived with her parents (Appendix 11). Many Prisoners accounts consist of meeting a girl in their local village or town, and then after the war, being allowed to marry.

During the war it was illegal for British girls to be with German PoW. However fraternising with the locals was most certainly a recurring theme in the history of German PoWs. In a commons sitting on July 1947, Mr Skeffington-Lodge brought the attention to German Prisoners of War being allowed to marry British girls. He uses a specific example, of a 22 year old PoW, Werner Wetter, who had been imprisoned for 12 months for having affairs with a British girl, and consequently getting her pregnant. Werner Wetter, the prisoner in question, wanted permission to marry the mother of his child and Mr Skeffington-Lodge argues that his sentence is 'ridiculous', and that if British Soldiers were allowed to marry German girls, then German soldiers should most certainly be allowed to marry British girls.(HC Deb. Vol 439, col 2013-9).

Eventually, the post-war government decided to lift the ban on fraternisation and marriage, an event which caused wide spread controversy within the media and around Britain as many families and local communities saw it as, 'fraternising with the enemy'. David Hanson remembers the couple who lived opposite his family home, when he was young a boy, called Else and Glen. Else described by David as 'soft hearted' was taking cups of tea 'backwards and forwards' to some German PoWs, who was shovelling the bad snow of 1947, when her husband Glen 'learnt that she was fraternising with the enemy he went mad and through her out' (Appendix 6). Günter, a German Prisoner from Otley Camp in Leeds, remembers only ever being able to see his girlfriend at night, as the relationship had to be kept a secret, 'in the evening she rode her bike to the perimeter fence and threw jam cakes and cigarettes for me' (Appendix 15).

Even with wide spread hostility, British girls continued to marry their German Prisoners. There have been several accounts of PoWs getting married and still having to abide by the camp rules and regulations. Many accounts suggest that any PoW getting married must have to be back at their camp by 10 o'clock in the evening. A much publicised case, in 1947, of Heinz Fellbrich, who married June Tull, recalls having to report back to his camp in Highfield, Southampton by 10pm or he would have faced solitary confinement (Thelma Etim - BBC - *Wedded to 'the enemy'*). This must have been regulation for all of the camps in Britain, as Günter, again cites having to be back in camp before the 10 o'clock on his wedding night, to which he begrudgingly adhered (Appendix 15).

Church and Religion

Roman Catholic faith was very strong in Butcher Hill camp, 37% to 40% of the personnel in the camp were Roman Catholic, of which 40% regularly visited the well-cared for church within the camp. The Roman Catholic padre, Dr Biedermann was said to have 'personality' and was very much liked within the camp, as was the Protestant padre Mr Klingelhofer, seemed equally successful. One Catholic Service was held a week within the camp and the Protestant padre visited once a month. A lay Preacher, held another service and bible class about once a fortnight (National Archive FO939/313).

Every Sunday morning, across the country, the PoWs would be marched to Church. Many described this as a 'pleasant and relaxed' experience, and were often just glad to escape the walls of the prison camp. Elaine Savage recalls marching up Low Lane alongside the PoWs to St James Church every Sunday. Many Prisoners told her 'they had little girls like her at home, which of course they were worried about' (Appendix 2). Mick Grubb recalls the Prisoners marching 'down to Horsforth and they'd go to the bottom of Broadgate Lane and Catholics would go up left and the rest would go to St James' Church. Mick also remembers as a child walking alongside the prisoners with 'pretend wooden guns', to 'make sure they didn't escape!' (Saville, M. 2005).



POWs marching to Church

Going to Church every Sunday in a local community, helped the Prisoners of War become more familiar with Christian and Catholic families. Despite hostility from certain families, many were very accepting, and often made family friends for life. Derek Plumber at St James Church was a local choir boy, and remembers 20 Prisoners of War marching into Church and sat together at the morning service and sang one hymn heartily to a tune 'Austria' which they obviously knew well. Derek also recalls one of the Prisoners playing the Harmonium every week (Appendix 2). Another account by John Stuart also recalls at St Mary's Catholic Church, Midnight Mass in 1945, the Butcher Hill prisoner's choir sang and another Prisoner played the Harmonium, 'the story went that he had been the organist at Cologne Cathedral before the war, I don't know if it is true, but boy he could make that little harmonium hum' (Appendix 6). Elaine Savage also remembers the Prisoners reading lessons in church in 'remarkably good English' (Appendix 2).

Christmas Spirit

At Christmas, families were asked at Church if they would take one Prisoner into their home for Christmas dinner. This suggest another appeal of the church to Prisoners, religious families were evidently more compassionate and forgiving, making it easier for them to accept the German PoWs. Jeane Macpherson, recalls the Christmas of 1944, in which her mother asked special permission for their Gardener, Josef Marwen, a German Prisoner at Butcher Hill, for him to go and spend Christmas Day with them at their house. Jeane remembers all sitting 'listening to the King's speech at 3 o'clock in dead silence, when they played the national anthem he was the first one of the family to stand up, and shook hands with the rest of the family when it had finished'. Jeane's mother was 'quite overcome and thought that this was amazing that a German PoW should stand up to attention on hearing the national anthem. Josef was even allowed to stay the night on Christmas Day, making Jeane believe 'his behaviour was obviously exemplary' (Saville, M. 2005). Thelma Thompson also remember her friends mother 'taking one in', called Rolf, and he 'used to go nearly every night after to see her' (Saville, M. 2005).

Another account given by Gavin Kilpatrick from Winnborne in Dorset remembers very well, the German PoW, Heinz that worked for his father as a gardener, for a small wage, that the Prisoners could earn. Heinz very soon became a good friend of theirs, and Gavin remember him being, 'almost an extra member of the family'. Heinz and another Prisoner was even invited round the Kilpatrick family house for the Christmas Holiday, and Gavin recalls, them 'being given presents from around the tree' and them bringing a 'different dimension to the traditional themes'(Gavin Kilpatrick - BBC Website - *Heinz the Prisoner of War*). Another account which is by Josef Kox, a German Prisoner of War at Purfleet, Essex remembers Christmas of 1946, round a British family's house as 'a very nice and moving affair', that he shall never forget (Epping Forest District Museum - BBC Website - *A German POW Remembers*).

The church, in all its denominations, was a key element in the social life of Prisoners, Peter Gluth recalls that ‘Joyce [the women he had met whilst clearing unexploded bombs in Birmingham] and I became friendly with members of the local Methodist church and enjoyed all the church related activities’ (Gluth, 2000, p.11).

Sporting Activities outside of Camp

There were many activities to pass the time but sport among prisoners was very popular inside and outside the camp. Football was of particular interest and in the Territorial Army visits of 1947, reports that every hostel in Leeds had its own football team, and ‘frequently played against British teams’. Peter Jeffrey recalls the Butcher Hill Camp having a football team, ‘which were damned good’, as ‘they played all the local teams and beat em’. Brian Gilson also remembers them coming up on to the ‘rec’ to play and saying ‘they had a brilliant football side’. Among the community, Brian recalls many rumours about the team’s goalkeeper being a German International player before the war. Brian remembers them coming up on a Saturday afternoon, ‘the whole camp would come out, and walk up the far side of the road, they had one or two guards with them’ (Saville, M. 2005).

Another account by Paul Gluth remembers his camp becoming friendly with Charlton Athletic Football Club, Paul remembers that ‘one morning in February, 250 PoWs from the camp went and cleared all the snow from the grounds. It was match day and they were the only club to have a clear pitch in the whole country’. On 14th February, Paul also recalls, being transferred to a bomb disposal camp for 35 days, the PoWs travelled round Croydon looking for unexploded bombs, and it was here where his new camp ‘got friendly with Fulham Football Club’ (Appendix 10).



German Prisoners being taken to a football match at West Ham United's Boleyn Ground in London.

Conclusions

From an analysis of Butcher Hill it can be said that the reality of life on both sides of the fence was considerably different to what could be called a common perception of Prisoner of War camps. It has been argued that post-war media and popular culture is to blame for 'creating a persistent and dominantly negative perception of Germany' (Appendix 14). Indeed this is a feasible statement; it would not come as a surprise to learn that the countless *Great Escapes* and *Guns of Navarone* didn't formulate negative 'German' stereotypes in the minds of the British. Indeed Günter's recalls how 'there was a war film on every night and we were always the baddies...of course', this would in turn fuel ridicule the following morning at work (Appendix 15). However this is not a debate for now, what's important is that PoW camps were surprisingly different to common perceptions, however they may have been formed.

It cannot be suggested for one moment that prisoners had an easy ride, the camps were tough, physical and a long way from an uncertain home. What can be said on the other hand is that there was at least a positive approach towards the imprisonment, focusing on re-education rather than punishment. Similarities in prisoner experience have been ascertained to a degree; however with limited sources from former Prisoners of War it would be hard to draw a definitive conclusion.

As for the impact felt on the surrounding communities, it can surely only have been a positive one. You only need look at their legacy in such areas for this to be apparent. Using our example, North West Leeds, there is an abundance of Anglo-German relations, for example; the German language congregation held monthly at St. Luke's Lutheran church in Headingley, the Wharfedale German Circle and the Headingley Anglo-German Society, the numerous Leeds residents for whom Butcher Hill was a formative memory, engrained forever, lest we forget the numerous PoWs who remained here after their release, married English women and raised families in this country. These are not the results of a devastating experience, quite the opposite. In the words of Günter, 'I like it here, and I like it here more than I can tell you' (Appendix 15).

Methodology

At the beginning of our project we were informed by our tutor Janet Douglas that we would find a lack of secondary material on our chosen subject. This became apparent to us immediately as there was no relative literature concerning Prisoner of War camps in Britain during World War Two at both Leeds Metropolitan and Leeds University libraries. Furthermore the Leeds Central Library did not have any information on Prisoners of War or the camps in Leeds save for a page in a children's book about Leeds in the war. The librarians at the Central Library advised us to contact the West Yorkshire archives for information.

We contacted the local West Yorkshire archives in the hope that they would have some source material on the camps or possibly a collection of oral material for us to consider. Unfortunately we were informed that the reports on the camps had all been centralised to the National Archives in Kew and there was no information locally. However after meeting our sponsor Gordon Henderson we had a few contacts to local historians and societies that could help supply an oral history for our project.

Our sponsor found numerous books and articles regarding Leeds in World War Two, which included a couple of chapters from a book by Mark Saville, a local historian. We contacted the author with the initial aim of finding more local contacts. The dialogue between ourselves and Mark (Appendix 1) gave us useful local contacts and a previously unpublished DVD recording of an interview with Gunter, a German PoW from Otley camp (Appendix 15).

Among the contacts generated through our interaction with Gordon and Mark was that of BBC Radio Leeds. After Abbey Grange school was contacted about participating in a radio interview about their Remembrance Day activities we received an e-mail about appearing on the radio to discuss our project (Appendix 3 & 4). Initially very little came of this, however, we were persistent and managed to secure a further radio interview and plea for information. We were interviewed live on radio on the breakfast show on the 18th of December and received numerous e-mails and phone calls, recorded in the aforementioned Appendices.

Having established that there were limited secondary sources, we further pursued oral testimony. Contact was made with Neil Hudson, a journalist at the Yorkshire Evening Post and editor of the Yorkshire Diaries section. Being December he was particularly interested in the Christmas elements to our existing research, a story ran in the Saturday 19th of December issue of the paper, outlining the project and requesting any information from the public. The response to this article was pleasing (Appendix 6).

We also contacted the Saint Luke's Lutheran Church, which provides a German language congregation in Headingley (Appendix 9). We were invited to attend a service and interview people afterwards. Unfortunately the service ran once a month and did not fall particularly well for us (we only discovered about the congregation in December) to conduct any interviews. We also e-mailed the Wharfedale German Circle with little success in terms of response (Appendix 8).

In early December we acquired numerous Territorial Army reports (Appendix 13) from the National Archives at Kew on Butcher Hill and the surrounding camps. These proved to be an excellent primary source for our project. They provided us with a brilliant insight into life in the camp and covered subjects such as education, entertainment, religion and sport. Furthermore the reports from the Territorial Army considered the influential benefits of outside contact upon the prisoners. They included accounts of prisoners leaving the camp to attend church services as well as civilians inviting prisoners for tea and Christmas lunch. Moreover we also attained a list of lecture notes on the re-education of the German POWs (Appendix 12).

In completing our project we utilised the Territorial Army reports, the lecture notes and the numerous phone and e-mail responses we received to the advertisement of our project in the local press. Our reliance on these oral testimonies obviously has some limitations in their authenticity but in cross referencing these with others from around Britain, as well as the reports from the National Archives we believe we can validate their use. Moreover we incorporated as many secondary sources as possible to help create a backdrop to the oral history sources we had.

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Appendices.

- Appendix 1 - Email contact with Mark Saville starting 15th October 2009.
- Appendix 2 - Email contact with Gordon Henderson starting 25th November 2009.
- Appendix 3 - Email contact with Sally Young at BBC Radio Leeds starting 9th November 2009.
- Appendix 4 - Email contact with Andrew Edwards at BBC Radio Leeds starting 8th January 2010.
- Appendix 5 - Email contact with Neil Hudson at the Yorkshire Evening Post starting 14th December 2009.
- Appendix 6 - Email response to the Yorkshire Evening Post article 20th-26th December 2009.
- Appendix 7 - Email contact with Paul Steel starting 8th December 2009.
- Appendix 8 - Email contact with the Wharfedale German Circle starting on 1st December 2009. No direct reply, but we did receive email contact from the members of the Circle.
- Appendix 9 - Email contact with St. Luke's Lutheran Church starting 14th December 2009. German language congregation based in Headingley.
- Appendix 10 - Paul Gluth, 2000, *My War Experience*.
- Appendix 11 - Telephone interviews in response to our advertisements on BBC Radio Leeds and in the Yorkshire Evening Post.
- Appendix 12 - Lecturers reports on the re-education programme of German POWs. The National Archives, Kew. FO939/313.
- Appendix 13 - Territorial Army reports on the West Yorkshire camps. The National Archives, Kew. FO939/313.
- Appendix 14 - *Revisiting the past: German Prisoners of War and their legacy in Britain*. www.veda.fsv.cuni.cz/doc/KonferenceRCS/plen_hellen.doc
- Appendix 15 - DVD interview with a surviving POW from Otley camp.

