

# Prisoners of War in Ickleton and Chrishall Grange

Rachel Radford, 2020/21

(Version 3. Work in progress)

## Background

### *Italian POWs*

From July 1941, Italian prisoners captured in the Middle East were brought to the UK. The Geneva Convention allowed POWs to work providing they were not doing anything directly linked to the war effort, dangerous, excessive or unhealthy. They were a useful source of labour which was in short supply on the home front. POWs with particular trades and skills were sent where they could be used best. Others were used in unskilled work, many in agriculture.

Italy surrendered after Mussolini's fall in September 1943 and in May 1944 the provisional Italian government agreed on a 'co-belligerent' status supporting the Allied war effort. The Geneva Convention did not cater for countries changing sides during a war but 100,000 Italians volunteered to work as 'co-operators', signing a declaration that they would be willing to perform work beyond the terms of the Geneva Convention such as loading ammunition for British troops. They were organised in Italian labour units without supervision and benefited from higher minimum pay, free movement within a radius of two miles from their camp and could mix with local people. Some were billeted on farms rather than remaining in the camps.



"Italian prisoners working on the land" – © IWM Art. IWM ART LD 1833

The POWs' clothing had red circles or black patches on the legs and backs which marked them out as prisoners. The rumour was that these were to be used as targets should they try to escape!

After the end of the war in Europe, the Government decided that all Italian POWs were to be repatriated and refused requests to remain permanently. Repatriation started in December 1945 and was largely completed by the end of July 1946. Only some 1400 men who had been released from POW status and become contract workers remained in the UK, nearly all employed in agriculture. There was another issue though. POWs had been forbidden to "establish relations of an amorous or sexual nature" with women in the UK and such relations were punishable by

imprisonment and loss of privileges. However, some children had been born, others were on the way and promises of marriage had been made. Some women wrote to the Government complaining of desertion and some wanting to go to Italy to marry. There were 30 to 40 requests by former POWs to return and settle in the UK and some did so.

### *German POWs*

German POWs who had been captured by the British were initially sent to Canada. Later some went to the USA. This was largely due to food shortages in the UK. Large numbers of German prisoners arrived in the UK from the summer of 1944 following the D-Day landings in France. Initially there was a reluctance to use them as labour but by March 1945, 70,000 were working. "British-owned" POWs in Canada and the US, were transported back to the UK during 1946. According to the Geneva Convention, POW status only ceases with a peace treaty but, while Germany had signed an unconditional surrender in May 1945, a peace treaty wasn't signed until 1990 after the reunification of Germany! As a result, POW status did not end for German POWs but, the Allies informally agreed to repatriate all POWs held in Europe, by December 1948.



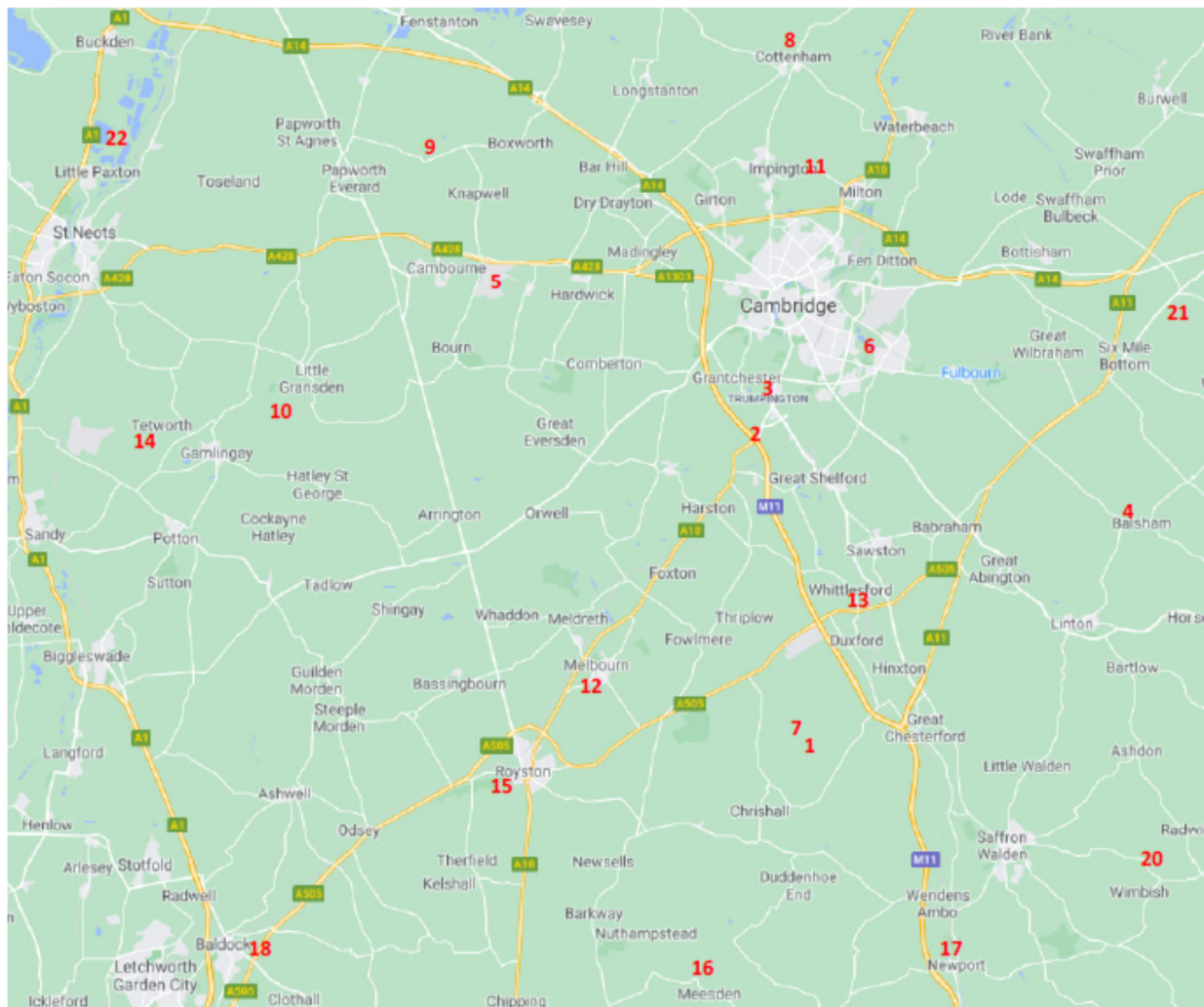
A German POW camp somewhere in England – © IWM D 26718

The Government put much emphasis on re-education of German POWs. This was intended to promote freedom of speech, political and racial tolerance, democracy and show the evils of the Nazi regime. POWs were interviewed to assess their political views and divided into three broad classifications: A, meaning anti-Nazi, B, the individual held ambiguous views and C, a committed National Socialist. The classification determined how soon they would be repatriated. Repatriations began in September 1946 at which time there were over 400,000 German POWs housed in hundreds of camps all over the country.

In late 1946, civilians were allowed to invite German POWs to their homes for Christmas. By late 1947 restrictions on them were almost completely removed and POWs could leave their camps, mix with civilians, visit cafés, cinemas and attend church services. When an initial ban on "romantic liaisons" was lifted, 796 marriages between German POWs and local women took place immediately. Many more followed. The repatriation of all German POWs in the UK was completed by July 1948, but nearly 25,000 chose to stay on as civilian workers, some because of relationships with British women and some because their homes were in the Soviet sector after the war.

## POW Camps at Ickleton and Chrishall Grange

The map below shows the various POW camps in our region and the list below also shows those that were hostels or satellites of main camps. The main camps had various satellites and hostels at different times and in different locations in villages some distance from them. Some camps became hostels and some hostels moved between different main camps as the numbers of POWs changed.



19

1. POW Camp 607 Ickleton Grange
2. POW Camp 45 Trumpington (later POW Camp 180)
3. POW Hostel 45 Anstey Hall
4. POW Hostel 45 Balsham (POW Hostel 29)
5. POW Hostel 45 Bourn
6. POW Satellite 45 Cherry Hinton (previously POW Camp 150)
7. POW Satellite 45 Chrishall (previously POW Camp 270, POW Hostel 128, then & later POW Hostel 29)
8. POW Hostel 45 Cottenham
9. POW Hostel 45 Elsworth
10. POW Hostel 45 Gransden
11. POW Hostel 45 Histon/Impington (probably previously POW Camp 1025)
12. POW Hostel 45 Melbourn
13. POW Satellite 45 Whittlesford
14. POW Hostel 45 Woodbury (probably previously POW Camp 561 Old Woodbury Hall)
15. POW Camp 29 Royston Heath
16. POW Satellite 29 Meesden (previously POW Camp 128)
17. POW Hostel 29 Newport
18. POW Hostel 29 Baldock
19. POW Hostel 29 Redhill
20. POW Camp 180 Radwinter North (later POW Satellite 45, POW Hostel 180)
21. POW Camp 71 Lower Hare Park
22. POW Camp 141 Beeson House, Little Paxton

The 2 camps in our immediate area were Camp 607 at Ickleton Grange (numbered 1 on the map) which housed Italians and the camp at Chrishall Grange (numbered 7 on the map) which housed Germans (in Duxford Parish). As noted in the list, the camp at Chrishall Grange was attached, at different times, to camps 29 and 45. As can be seen from the aerial view below, the 2 camps were close together. POWs from both camps worked on local farms.

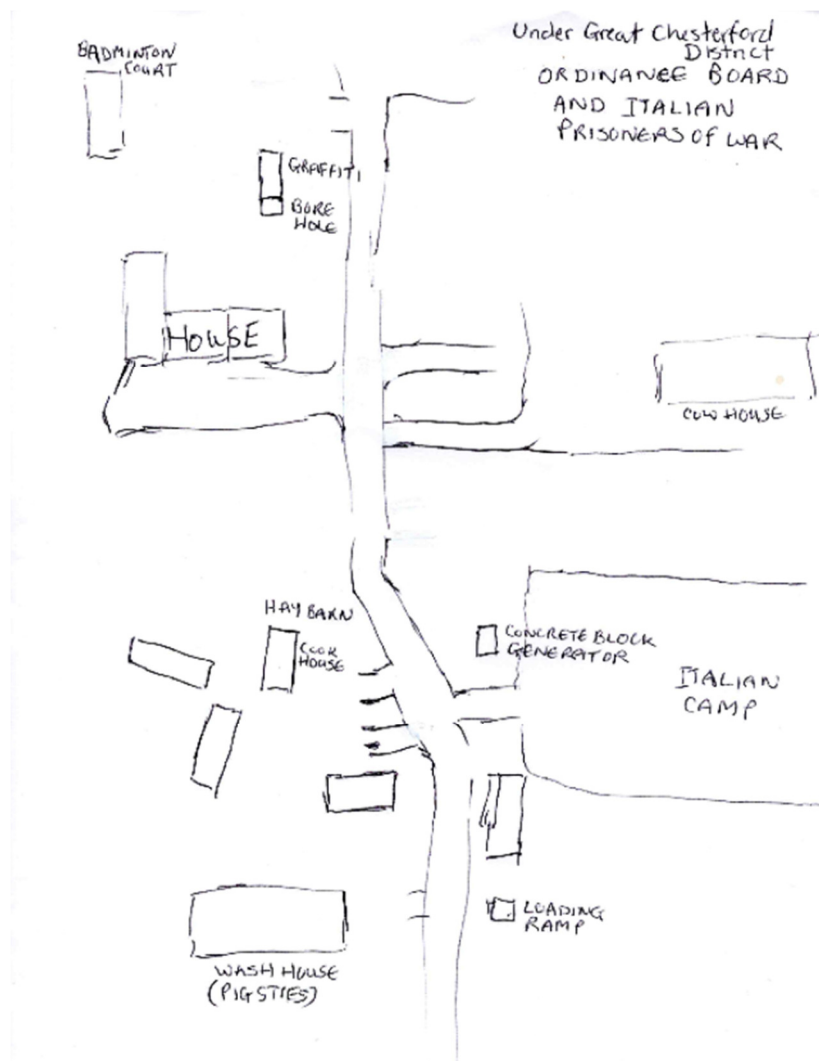


### POW Camp 607, Ickleton Grange

Ickleton Grange was owned by Claude Frankau. He was working and living in London during the war where he was Director of the Emergency Medical Service for London and the Home Counties. The service had overall responsibility for the care and treatment of the thousands of casualties injured in bombing-raids. He was knighted for his services in 1945.

There is little official information about Camp 607 at Ickleton Grange. It is described as a “Hutted Camp” “situated in woodland” and an Italian Working Camp ie it housed Italian POWs who were working locally. The Italian POWs would all have been repatriated by summer 1946 and the Camp does not appear in a Government list of POW camps in February 1947 suggesting it had closed before then. Also, present at Ickleton Grange was the Ordnance Board but how many personnel they had and where they were housed, is not known. It is thought some officers were billeted at the house.

Few camp buildings remain today but many of the concrete bases are still there. The present owners (grandchildren of the owner at the time of the war) have put together the plan of the camp on the following page.



Aerial photo December 2007



House

Cow House

Bore hole

Hay Barn  
Cook House

Pig Sties  
Wash House

area of POW huts

Football field



**Bore Hole:** this was constructed by the army. After the war, part of the building to the left was demolished to allow machinery in to deepen the bore hole. Inside the building is some faint graffiti drawn by Italian POWs who supported the Roma football team. Water was piped down the drive to the various Camp buildings.



**Badminton Court:** this building was used for the storage of food and was guarded by 2 soldiers. Note the no smoking sign in English and Italian.



**Cow House:** built in the 1950s on top of a concrete pad where a Camp building had stood, possibly one used by the guards and officers.

**Hay Barn:** built on top of the concrete base of the Cook House. Hot and cold water pipes remain and, nearby, the concrete bases of ancillary buildings. The Cook House used coal or coke and there is an ash heap nearby. Many empty jars, including of Bovril and Brylcreem, have been found in the heap.





Concrete base of the generator



Concrete base of a building



The Nissen huts in which the POWs were housed, were in the area known as Long Plantation. The bases of the huts have virtually all been cleared over time. All that remains are some sections of concrete and rubble around the periphery.

Concrete rubble from the base of one of the POW huts.

A trench was made for the concrete footings of the huts with a concrete raft laid within them for the interior. There was also a concrete base for the stove which heated the hut.



Pig Sties: built in the 1950s on the concrete base of the Wash House.

In the area to the front, it is possible to see the outlines of brick partitions and the outlet from a WC. A drain can be seen running from front right to the rear of the site. This is a sizeable area and suggests a large number of men were housed here.

It is said that there was little fencing around the camp as the Italian POWs had little desire to escape.

### ***Camp Life and Work***

Some of the prisoners worked on local farms including at Rectory Farm, Ickleton.

Marian Wedd Spence, whose family farmed the Home Farm at Audley End, vividly remembers going to Chrishall Grange as a little girl to pick up Italian workers for harvest. The route she describes is via the southern track into the Chrishall Grange woods as shown on the aerial photo. Perhaps this was a back way into the Ickleton Grange Camp or perhaps the number of Italian POWs increased at some point so they used part of the Chrishall Grange Camp as additional accommodation. We just don't know.

Marion says the POWs were very kind to her, took every opportunity to talk to children and made 2 large wooden replicas of war planes which are still in her family. They went to collect the POWs in a green open lorry with straw bales for the men to sit on. Back at the farm, the Italian workers helped with the harvest. Her family had been awarded special rations of large blocks of cheddar cheese and enormous sandwich loaves to feed the POWs.

Andrew Drury's father and uncles were in the Chrishall Home Guard and used to guard the Italian POWs. "They marched them from the Camp to the farms in the mornings to start work. Many times the POWs asked the guards to buy cigarettes for them. They seemed happy and did not try to escape as they were well fed. The guards sometimes teased the POWs by telling them that the large red circles on the back of the prisoner clothes was to be used as target practice!"

Prisoners also worked transporting munitions from Chesterford station to the stores along the sides of the local lanes such as Coploe Hill, Elmdon Hill, Grange Road, Royston Lane. These were small open-ended Nissen type huts covered in camouflage netting. The POWs sat on the back of the lorries and there would be one or two guards with them. They were often heard happily singing or shouting as they travelled along. Very sadly one Italian lost his life when he forgot to duck as the lorry went under the railway bridge by Chesterford station. Royston Lane was built by the Army to help with this movement of munitions between the station, the stores and the airfields and also so a search light could be taken up to the heath every evening.



Remains of a brick ramp to help the POWs get on to the backs of lorries.

Incidentally, a group of boys caught stealing detonators from the munition dumps were fined at Linton Magistrates Court. The late Graham Igglesden found a small detonator, took it home and while cleaning it up in his garden, it exploded. He actually got compensation for the loss of a number of his fingers – perhaps not very equitable!

An event still well known, is a football match between the Italian POWs and Ickleton Football Club on the village rec. Unfortunately, Ickleton FC seem to have overlooked the fact that the POWs did not have a lot to do in their spare time other than play football so were rather good at it. Apparently,



the number of goals scored by the Italians got to an embarrassing level! It is said that some of the Italians did scissor kicks and that they might have had one, or even more, professionals on the team. At half time the goal keepers changed sides as both were getting rather bored, particularly the Italian goalie!

View towards the area where the POWs practised their football.

The Italians were on the receiving end of a fair bit of teasing and, perhaps, rather unkind behaviour by some of the local lads. Stones were catapulted at the roofs and windows of their Nissen huts and, in the winter, snowballs hurled as they passed by on the backs of lorries.

POWs would often walk to Ickleton village in the summer and a man called Sgt Cooke, probably one of the guards, would go to the pub to play whist. The POWs went round the village selling sandals and slippers they had made out of rope and string and various handmade trinkets.

It is said that some Italians were 'quite friendly' with one or two village girls. One rumour had it that an Italian POW used to attend church with a farmworker, his wife and a baby who looked remarkably like the POW. The POW, who had dark curly hair, sported bright yellow gloves!

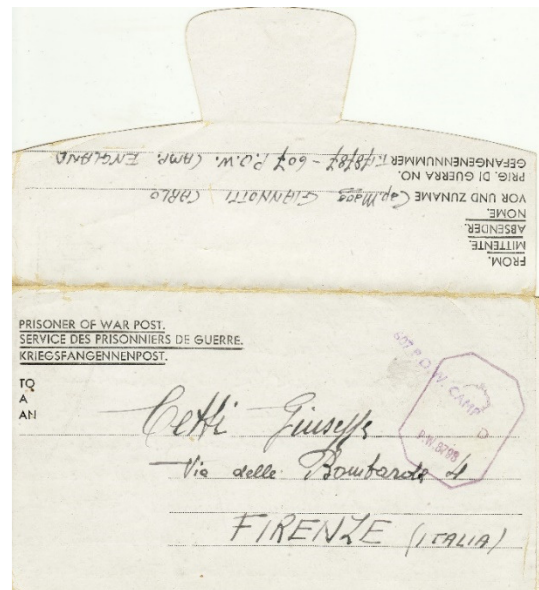
### ***Closure of the Camp***

We do not know when the camp closed but it was probably when the repatriation of the Italian POWs was completed. Given the closeness of the camp at Chrishall Grange, there was probably no need to use Ickleton Grange to house German POWs.



17-10-45 Caro Beppino - Nell'ultima lettera di mamma ho avuto il piacere di trovarci un tuo scritto. Gustuluto voglio sperare che t'ha bene; di salute intendo dire, poiché solo con piacere che il morale è sempre alto. Perché farla d'andare in Montedomini? Peccato che si chiama così! Se si chiamasse Montedonne ci verrei anch'io! Ma forse vuole alludere al tempo che intercorrerà fra il ritiro delle truppe e la disponibilità ecc ecc... È vero che quando si mandano a casa, è sempre tardi; ma non tanto da trovarlo la dose alta.

La tua scritta morale, e cioè: i fichi col salame ecc. ecc. ha suscitato lo appetito e siccome la lettera l'ho ricevuta alle 11 am circa, cioè un ora avanti il pranzo che è stata come un aperitivo. Ed ora si manda un'altra mia fotografia. Tu era tuo padre, ma al mio sorriso commerciale, che non sono magro come mamma crede (kg 64,400 netto! Saluti a Rifredi, Baci a mia Ida. Baci a mamma e a Lillo Carlo



17 October 1945 Dear Beppino [diminutive of Giuseppe] - In mother's last letter I had the pleasure of finding something written by you. First of all I hope that you are well, health-wise I mean, because I see with pleasure that your spirits are still high. Why are you talking about going to Montedomini [a district of Florence]? Too bad it's called that. If it were called Montedonne I'd come too! But perhaps you're hinting at the time that will pass between "the withdrawal of the troops, the availability etc etc ..." It's true that when they send us home it's always late; but not so late to find it where you said.

[Missing photo]

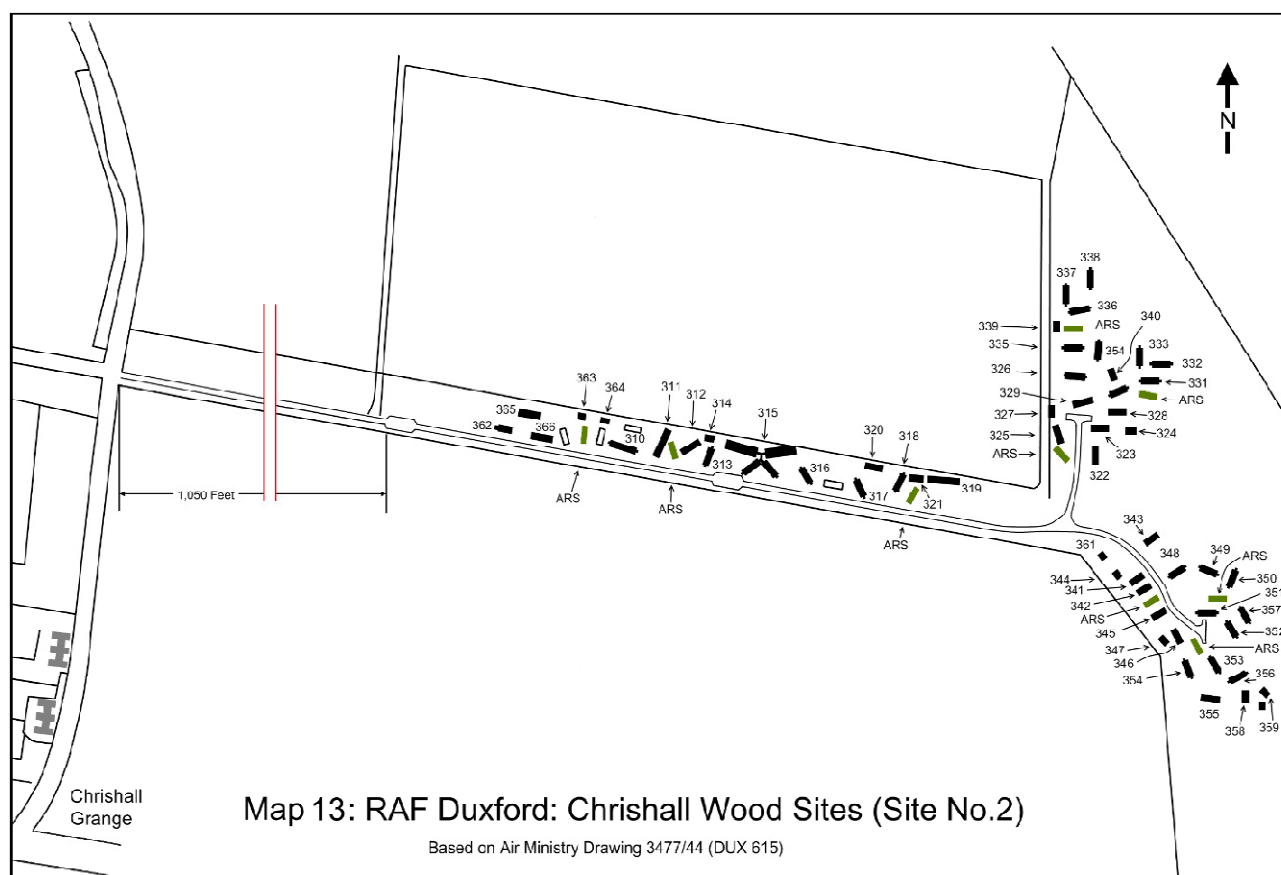
Your normal message, namely: the figs and salami etc, has whetted my appetite and since I received your letter around 11am ie an hour before lunch it was like an aperitif. And now I'm sending you another of photograph of me. You can see, beyond my commercial smile, that I am not as thin as mum believes 64.4 kg [10st 2lb] on the nose! Say hello to Rifredi [a district in Florence]. Kisses to Aunt Ida. Kisses to mum to you and Cirillo.

Carlo (Cap. Magg. Carlo Giannotti)

It is good to see from these letters that the POWs were treated and fed well but sad that some of them had to wait so long for post and news of their loved ones.

## Chrishall Grange Camp

The camp in Chrishall Grange woods was built by the USAAF in 1943 as accommodation for some of their personnel based at RAF Duxford during WW2. This plan of the USAAF Camp is from 1944:



Key to the USAAF buildings/structures:

ARS	Air Raid Shelter		339-340	Latrines & Drying Room	Brick
310	Administration Offices	Nissen	341-343	Officers' Quarters for 4	Nissen
311	Sergeants' Recreation Room	Nissen	344	Latrines (buckets)	?
312-313	Barrack hut - E.M's	Nissen	345-346	Sergeants' Quarters for 8	Nissen
314	PX & Latrines (Buckets)	Brick	347	Latrines (buckets) & Sergeants' Drying Room	Brick
315	Mess	Brick & Nissen	348-356	Barrack hut for 12	Nissen
316	Sick Quarters, Dental Centre	Nissen	357	Latrine (buckets) & Armoury	Brick
317	Supplies Depot	Nissen	358	Latrines (buckets) & Store	Brick
318-319	Ablutions & Showers	Nissen	359	High Level Water Tank	Steel
320	Supplies Office & Latrines (buckets)	Brick	360	Pump House & Bore Hole	1/2 Nissen
321	Boiler House	Brick	361	Cess Pit	?
322-323	Officers' Quarters for 4	Nissen	362	Picket Post	Brick
324	Latrines (buckets)	Brick	363	Officers' Latrines (buckets)	Brick
325-326	Sergeants' Quarters for 8	Nissen	364	Latrines & Sergeants' Drying Room	Brick
327	Latrines (buckets)	Nissen	365-366	Officers' Quarters for 4	Nissen
328-338	Barrack hut for 12	Nissen			

After the end of the war, the Americans left RAF Duxford around October/November 1945 and the station was formally handed back to the RAF in December 1945. It seems, however, that the Americans had vacated the camp at Chrishall Grange before then. A comment in the report of a 1946 government inspection of the camp (in National Archives Documents) reveals that it became a German POW Working Camp in August 1945, as HQ of Camp 270. Later lists of camps give Camp 270 at Luton airport but the numbers sometimes changed.

There are quite a number of inspection reports from 1946 onwards in the National Archive papers. These show that the management of the camp at Chrishall Grange was transferred between camps a number of times although life there continued in much the same way throughout. Its history seems to be:

From August 1945 – HQ of Camp 270

By November 1945 – hostel of Camp 128, Meesden

February 1946 – about to be transferred (with Meesden) as a hostel to Camp 29, Royston Heath

January 1947 – satellite of Camp 45, Trumpington

September 1947 – hostel of Camp 29, Royston Heath (Camp 45 closed and Trumpington merged with Camp 180, Radwinter, as a 'Youth' Camp ie a camp for POWs who had spent their formative years living under the Nazi regime.)

January 1948 – closing

Of this once extensive camp, only three brick buildings, the water tower and seven air-raid shelters remain.

Former USAAF Picket Post/Guard Room



Water Tank





Former USAAF Combined Mess. Only the kitchen and boiler room remain but there were originally 2 large Nissen huts as well which acted as mess halls and another building – all arranged in a star shape.



Air Raid Shelter



The numbers of POWs recorded at Chrishall are:

February 1946	302	April 1947	486	September 1947	362
July 1946	237	June 1947	443	October 1947	313
August 1946	177	August 1947	400	January 1948	297
November 1946	120				

### ***Camp Life and Work***

#### *Camp leaders*

Each camp, satellite and hostel had a POW appointed as leader. The Leaders are noted in the reports and seem to be either criticised or rather damned with faint praise by the inspectors:

July and August 1946 – S/Masch (Stabsmaschinist) Rudolf Kose, aged 45. He had been a regular soldier until 1938 and then a Post Office official. He was called up in 1941 and joined the Navy. He was said to be a bad influence, with a poor attitude to anything British. It was arranged for him to be moved to Royston Heath and replaced by ObFw (Oberfeldwebel) A Baumann from Royston Heath.

June and August 1947 – Owm (Oberwachtmeister) Otto Sterz, a farmer from Fulda, a city in central Germany. He had been called up in 1933 and again in 1939. He was described as having “no political affinities, good and pleasant, solid but slow”.

September and October 1947 – Uffz (Unteroffizier) Hans or Anton Hoidn, aged 28. He was a Sudeten German from Prague and described as having no initiative, rather cynical but pleasant and helpful.

#### *Work*

The POWs worked on local farms. Karl Schirok was one of the POWs who worked at Wire Farm, Chrishall. The POWs gave a neighbouring family a watering can which they had made at the camp and which their descendants still have. At first glance it is a fairly ordinary watering can but, as you can see, they added a swastika to the bottom, presumably without the knowledge of the camp guards!



Two German POWs, including Erwin Keller, worked for Will Griggs at Priory Farm, Ickleton. Betty Willmott recalls that her mother, Marjorie Griggs, gave them a cooked meal every day.

### *Re-education*

In November 1946 the Camp had 1 classroom, 1 blackboard and 20 dictionaries. By April 1947, there were 2 classrooms, 6 blackboards and 15 dictionaries.

English lessons and some of the education was given by POWs who were tutors (Studienleiter) and POWs could take examinations in English. However, there were frequent changes as POWs were repatriated so, for example:

In November 1945 there were 60 POWs attending English lessons and there were 3 tutors:

Gunter Stein, aged 23, a medical student at Berlin University.

Hans Walter Georgii, aged 21, from Frankfurt, studied chemistry at Munich University.

Wolfgang Roth, aged 40, had studied for 1 year at Leeds University, later employed in textile factories.

The Camp had an English Club where the penalty for lapsing into German was one cigarette! The POWs asked for copies of English plays and songs as they wanted to put on performances.

In February and July 1946 there seems to have been only one tutor, Fw (Feldwebel) Heinrich Klein, aged 31, a reform school teacher. He was said to be capable, qualified and doing his best giving political talks and news reviews weekly as well as lectures once a month but he needed help. In September 1946 Stein and Georgii, who were based at the Meesden hostel, were teaching at Chrishall again but by November, the only tutor was the Padre, Dr Hardrop, aged 46 from Cuxhaven and only 8 POWs were learning English.

In April 1947 there were 4 tutors:

Gefr (Gefreiter) Richard Weisskirchner, aged 26, a mining student

Capt O Wagner from Zwittau in Czechoslovakia, aged 22, a student at Business School

Capt H Tiensch from Ottendorf, aged 25, a commercial clerk

Capt S Mueller from Zittau, aged 30, a motor fitter

They gave 4 English lessons a week to 35 POWs. In June there were 2 tutors – Richard Weisskirchner, and Gefr Heinz Krueger aged 23. The latter was said to be rather pleased with himself having been to the Training Centre at Wilton Park but his rather brusque approach upset things and he was not very effective. In any event, this was not for long as Richard Weisskirchner was soon repatriated and Heinz Krueger took on paid work in the canteen instead. In addition, harvest work meant that the POWs had little time for study. By December 1947 the only tutor was Mueller.

There were talks on political issues by outside lecturers, most of whom were German speaking, as well as occasional lectures provided by the University. Unfortunately, it seems that Chrishall Grange was too far from Cambridge and there were difficulties with transport and petrol rationing with the result that POWs were unable to take part in many of the other activities which were available in Cambridge, Royston and elsewhere such as tours of the Fitzwilliam Museum, some Colleges, visits to the Courts, Council meetings and the Police. However, in 1947 POWs had the freedom to go to the International Club and Churches in Cambridge, and Church Ministers ran a rest room providing light refreshments and literature on Sunday afternoons.

### *Social Activities, Entertainment and Relaxation*

In November 1945 the Camp had no wireless and there were no film shows. Later, there were films shown by the YMCA and TF once a fortnight. There was only one wireless and one additional speaker for the whole camp. English newspapers were provided, individuals could receive German newspapers though in August 1946 it was noted that none had arrived for 5 weeks and post hadn't

come through from the British Zone for 7 weeks. POWs contributed to the magazines of the main camps. The main camps had libraries of German and English books which were lent to the satellites and hostels.

POWs formed a band and a theatre group which put on variety shows. In August 1946 the band consisted of 2 violins, an accordion and several zithers. In September and October 1947 it was noted that the theatre group gave performances at the main camp at Royston Heath and the hostel and Meesden, and the Royston Heath orchestra visited Chrishall. The Camp had a football pitch but unfortunately it was ploughed up in 1947 so they had to travel 3 miles to use a pitch made available to them on weekends.

Padres visited every week when there wasn't an 'in house' padre.

### *Morale*

Morale varied at times. The majority of the POWs were categorised as B or C meaning that they would have to wait some time before they were repatriated and this impacted morale. For example:

February 1946	A+1; A 12; B+ 18; B137; B- 9; C+ 1; C 124
August 1946	A+ 1; A 9; B+ 9; B 89; B- 3; C66

In August 1946 morale was also adversely affected by the lack of post and newspapers coming from Germany and the attitude of the Hostel Leader. The POWs were described as weary, apathetic and complaining that work was too hard and food poor.

Morale was also said to be low in June 1947 as a new commandant had removed surplus barrack furniture and accommodation stores but the problem had been overcome by August. The remoteness of the Camp still meant that there was little in the way of contact with local communities and, at his visit in August 1947, the Government Inspector commented that there was some aloofness on the part of locals because of the nearness of Polish servicemen and displaced persons housed at RAF Fowlmere. He also said that "the presence of a number of Balkan Volksdeutsche [ethnic Germans from the Balkan countries who had served in the Wehrmacht], whose fate is uncertain is a disturbing factor".

However, in September 1947 morale was said to be good as the POWs were pleased that Chrishall had been transferred from Camp 45 to Camp 29. By October it was helped by the knowledge that the number of repatriations was to rise and, although the Camp was described as "very lonely, but the POWs there lead a free and easy life". The Christmas concessions in December had a good effect.

Outside lecturers commented that their audiences were friendly and lectures were well received.

### *A Death*

Very sadly Josef Giehl, a POW from Piriam in the Banat region of Romania, committed suicide in the Chrishall Grange woods. Before WW1, Piriam (Perjamosch in German, Perjámos in Hungarian) had been in Hungary. In 1936 there were over 5000 inhabitants, most of whom were German, followed by Romanians and a few Hungarians. Josef Giehl was an ethnic German (a Banat Swabian) who was married with 2 children. He was originally buried in Cambridge City Cemetery but his body was exhumed and moved to the German Military Cemetery at Cannock Chase on 29 January 1963 under arrangements made by the German War Graves Commission.

## GERMAN HANGED

A German P.O.W. Joseph Giehl was found hanging from a tree in a camp at Chrishall (Camps.).

Report in the Birmingham Gazette  
24 July 1947



Forscher scs, CC BY-SA 4.0  
via Wikimedia Commons

Registration District <i>Cambridgeshire</i>								
1947 DEATHS in the Sub-District of <i>Linton</i> in the County of <i>Cambridgeshire</i>								
Columns — 1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
No.	When and Where Died.	Name and Surname.	Sex.	Age.	Rank or Profession.	Cause of Death.	Signature, Description, and Residence of Informant.	Signature of Registrar.
132	Dead body found Twenty-third July 1947 Duxford RD	Josef Giehl	Male	39 Years	145. P.O.W. Camp Chrishall Grange Duxford German Prisoner of War	Broken neck due to hanging Suicide while the balance of his mind was disturbed	Certificate received from Vernon D.D. Esq., Deputy Coroner for County of Cambridgeshire Inquest held 24th July 1947	Twenty-third July 1947 Registrar

## Following Release – staying in touch and staying on

Paul Harding at Chrishall Grange wanted to continue to employ POWs after the war ended but apparently the Government did not allow him to do so. The Griggs family kept in contact for several years with one of the German POWs who had worked at Priory Farm, Ickleton, Erwin Keller, who Betty described as a lovely man. Unfortunately, when he returned to Germany he found his home was in the Soviet sector and, with the coming of the Cold War, letters stopped getting through.

Some POWs stayed on after the war. One Italian family lived for a while in one of the cottages on Deadman's Hill, Ickleton (when Larkhill House was 2 cottages attached to Rectory Farm). A family named de Martino lived in Duxford in the 1960s and he was thought to have been an Italian POW. There was also a well-known German ex-POW called Josef Bibracher who worked at Spicers at Sawston and lived on the Whittlesford side of the A505 near Volvo. He had married a local girl in 1948 and settled down and some of his recollections of the Trumpington Camp are on the Trumpington Local History Group's website.

Michael Zeck (1924 – 2007), a Romanian (ethnic German) POW, either stayed on, not wanting to return to Romania under Soviet occupation or went back and then came returned to the UK. He was from a farming background and from the 1950s he worked for Sir Claude Frankau at Ickleton Grange as head herdsman. His wife, Klaudia, was also Romanian. She had been one of many ethnic Germans in Eastern Europe rounded up by the Soviets in 1945 and transported in cattle trucks to labour camps in the Soviet Union. They remained there for a number of years before being allowed to return home or to West Germany.

Michael and Klaudia lived in the chauffeur's house and had 2 daughters, Marianne and Herta. Lady Frankau died in 1967 but, once she realised she had a terminal illness, she asked Michael to stay on to help Sir Claude while he was alive even though Michael had bought a house in Cottenham and found a job there. In return she left him a legacy in her will. Sadly, Sir Claude died a few weeks after

Lady Frankau but Michael continued to live and work at Ickleton Grange for about a year. From time to time Michael and Klaudia would return to Romania to visit family but always separately for fear of being detained by the Communist regime. Michael's father (or it may have been father-in-law) managed to join them here but his mother or mother-in-law could not get out of Romania so, eventually, his father went back. The family finally moved to Cottenham where Michael worked for another farmer who was Romanian.

Karl Schirok (as noted previously, one of the German POWs who worked at Wire Farm, Chrishall) became friendly with Rosemarie Gant's grandparents who lived in a cottage next to Wire Farm. Rosemarie's grandmother and Karl continued to write every Christmas and Karl came over for visits occasionally. When Rosemarie's grandparents died, and after Karl's death in 2019, the families continued to keep in touch. On one drive round the area, Karl clearly remembered accessing the camp at Chrishall Grange from the long, tree-lined concrete road.



Left to right: Fred Davies, Ruth Schirok, Karl Schirok and Susan Davies, Chrishall

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