

All over Britain, prisoner of war camps had been set up towards the last years of the war. Adolf Hitler already knew the war was lost by 1943 but he was unwilling to give up the fight and face the wrath of his people, so the fighting had continued. He buoyed them up with speeches, condemning the Allies and suggesting that victory was just around the corner. However, after the momentous events of June 1944 when the British, Canadian and American troops landed in Normandy, there was no getting away from the fact that Germany and her allies had been defeated. Still, the fighting soldiers kept going until their capture by the British and Canadian forces as they drove inland. These men were then shipped to Britain as prisoners of war.

In its early life as a prisoner of war camp, Camp 165's commandant was Lt.-Col. P. H. Drake-Brockham. However, Drake-Brockham's time there was short-lived, for by November 1945, Lt.-Col. R. L. T. Murray from the Black Watch had taken over and he was there until the camp closed in 1948. Murray wrote about the camp for the *John O'Groat Journal*. He wrote that in the early days of the camp it consisted of one compound surrounded by wire and was under guard day and night by the sentries. Four observation towers had been built, one in each corner of the compound, so the guards could keep watch over the prisoners. Towards the end of 1945 escorts for prisoners of war working outside the camp were removed as the prisoners were specially chosen because they were considered to be reliable in character.

In June 1945 each prisoner had received on arrival a sleeping bag and, due to the climatic conditions, which were apparently very windy, two blankets. The number of blankets however later increased to three, no doubt because the men were more used to the warmer climes in their homeland, even in winter. Heating for the accommodation huts came from stoves and the lighting was electric, being carried over to the main camp from the Crossley engine in the engine shed on Banks Road. Five hundred and one men of the Heer, Marine and Luftwaffe, amongst others, were incarcerated. Of these, there was only one officer, but seventy-one non-

commissioned officers and 429 men. Their nationalities were German (by far the majority of the population), Austrian, Belgian and Polish, although the Poles numbered only two. Most of the prisoners had been captured since D-Day, 6 June 1944, and had been transferred from Camp 22, Pennylands at Auchinleck near Cumnock in Ayrshire. Like Watten, this camp had originally been taken over by the War Office to form a military training camp. The men billeted there were of many different nationalities, including the secretive members of the Free French who were being trained using SAS tactics. However, by the end of the war, it had been turned into a prisoner of war camp, housing at first Polish prisoners then German. Also, like Watten, the prisoners here, if deemed to be of suitable character (which in the main they were for the camp was not a special camp holding 'blacks'), were allowed to go out of the camp compound and work on the local farms. Over half of the men transported to Watten in May 1945 were aged between 30 and 40 and forty-one per cent were in the 40–50 age group. Surprisingly, seven were aged over 50.

The camp leader at this time was Wilhelm Macht, whose assistant was Oberführer Wilhelm Brinkenmeyer. On his acceptance as camp leader, Oberführer Macht had received papers on the conventions of the camp, to which prisoners were to adhere. These included discipline within the camp compound, the organisation of the camp, and behaviour outwith the camp if men were allowed out. Sanctions would be applied if prisoners did something that the camp commandant believed to be unfair, undisciplined or harmful. Other information included in the booklet was about food and clothing, the issuing of blankets, and hygiene within the camp, detailing bathing, hand washing and so on. Recreational activities, both mental and physical, religious practice and information regarding prisoners' mail, including parcels, was also incorporated into the booklet. Everything was clearly defined for the new internees.

Although the camp had already been established, more accommodation was being built at the time of the June ICRC inspection. The inmates were involved in the building of new huts. There were already Nissen huts and wooden huts, but the wooden ones were uninhabitable unless a lining was installed for the winter months. This was brought to the attention of the second-in-command at the camp, as Drake-Brockham was away on leave, so that something could be done about it. A large camp infirmary was also under construction at this time and the sanitary installations for the camp were in the process of being completed. For the time being, though, pails had to be used. There were already hot and cold shower baths, however, so at least the men could wash.

The infirmary was already in use even though it was incomplete. Central heating was up and running and all amenities had been installed. There were two wards, consisting of eleven beds. In the infirmary there was what were termed 'protected personnel'. These were members of the SS who posed the greatest threat to security and stability within the camp. In total there were nine men under this umbrella. Two were officers who were in the infirmary and the others were categorised as other ranks, five of whom joined the officers in the infirmary and two others who were held in the compound.

One thing mitigating the prisoners' restricted life was being able to look forward to the ever-increasing number of letters and parcels sent to the camp for them. May 1945 was the

C.P. S. 10970—1945-G—5,000,000. S.
 UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA.—UNIE VAN SUID-AFRIKA.
FOREIGN PARCEL POST.
BUITELANDSE PAKKETPOS.

For use to all Commonwealth destinations, Mozambique, and United States of America.
 Moet gebruik word vir versending na alle bestemmings in Britse Gemenebes, Mosambiek en Verenigde State van Amerika.

TO AAN Herrn Uffz. Heinrich Lampe / W. B. 151533
P.O.W. Compound 165
Watten, Caithness, Northschottland
ENGLAND.

DELIVERY INSTRUCTIONS.—AFLEWERINGSINSTRUKSIES.
 If parcel is undeliverable at address shown, it should be (a) packet not by recorded address delivery can word nie, moet dit (a) considered as abandoned; (a) as prysgees beskou word.
 (b) involved for delivery; (a/b) vir aflewering aangety word aan.

(Alternative address.) (Alternatiewe adres.)
 N.B.—If abandonment is not requested, undeliverable parcels are returned to senders at their expense.
 L.W.—As daar nie versoek word dat 'n onbestelbare pakket prysgees moet word nie, word dit aan die afwender teruggelewer op sy koste.

CUSTOMS DECLARATION.—DOEANEVERKLARING.
 CONTENTS.—INHOUD.

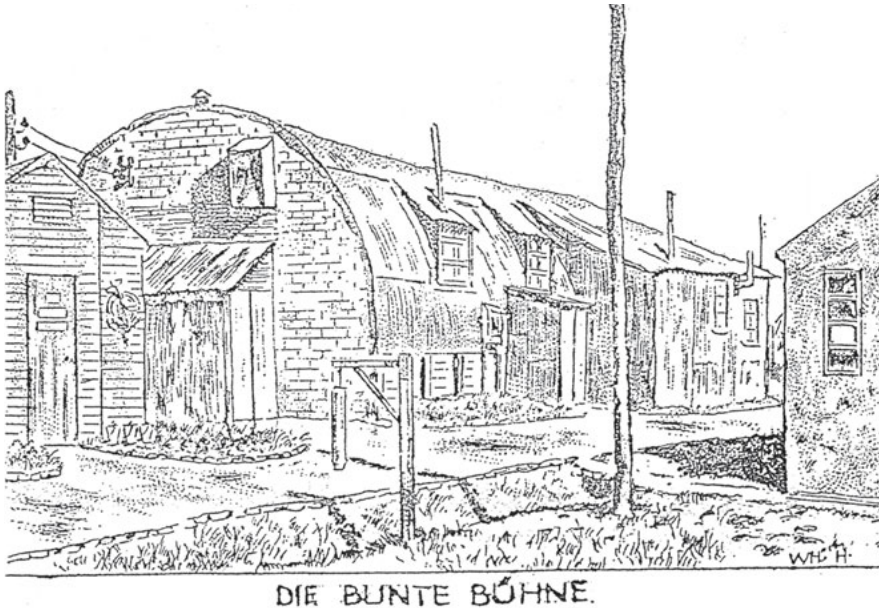
Contents	Nett Weight.		Value as Merchandise.		
	lb.	oz.	£	s.	d.
6 pkt. cigarett's 4lb tea 4slates chocolats					
1 jar honey 1lb's sugar 3pkt rice dinner					
1 pkt dried fruits 1candied fruits					
1pkt raisins.					
	10.	8.	1.	12.	-.

Name and Address of Sender.
 Naam en adres van afwender Mrs. Eva Laszig. Gobabis. South-West-Africa

The recipient's prisoner of war number was a requirement of the documentation for parcels being sent to Camp 165 in 'Northschottland, ENGLAND'.

peak month, when 118 letters arrived from Germany and as many as twenty-eight parcels. Between March and July 1945, 191 letters and thirty-seven parcels were received from Germany. The parcels the men received contained cigarettes, which they could trade, sugar and dried fruits. Occasionally a huge treat of chocolates, or sweets, arrived. On the label there was a customs section in which the sender had to declare what was in the parcel, and each parcel was weighed. Addressing the parcel, the sender also had to put the recipient's prisoner of war number, which was allocated to the men as they were processed.

By November 1945, the camp had changed dramatically. It had been divided up into Compound A and Compound B. Compound A held prisoners who were seen as no threat whatsoever. They were the ones who were trying to get on with their lives and were happy enough to pass their days without causing problems. Many of these men had been conscripts and had not wanted to fight on the front line, but having been captured they felt safe in British hands, for if they had deserted whilst on duty in the field, they would have undoubtedly been shot. Compound B, though containing some who were happy to bide their time in captivity, was far more complex. Many held in there were former members of the Hitler



One of a series of sketches assumed to be drawn by Unteroffizier H. H. Walter, a prisoner at Camp 165 Watten. The hut in this sketch is apparently where the theatre group rehearsed.

Youth and were seen as hard-line Nazis. There were more than 350 men in this compound alone.

The total number of prisoners stood at almost 1300. A breakdown of the nationalities included 929 Germans in Compound A, which was their grand total, and 344 in Compound B, with four Austrians, one Belgian and twenty-one Dutchmen. Of those in Compound A, 395 were from the regular army, 197 from the SS, 179 from the Luftwaffe and 150 from the German navy, the Kriegsmarine. There were also three customs men and two civilians. In Compound B, there were 166 from the regular army, forty SS men, eighty-eight from the Luftwaffe and seventy-one from the navy. There was only one civilian held here along with four commercial servicemen, but all were staunch Hitlerite supporters and made no secret of it.

The original prisoners had been transferred and replaced by the others at the end of July and end of August. Amongst this new group were Luftwaffe pilots captured in 1940 and six prisoners from Canada. There were now 145 buildings within the camp. In Compound A, fifty-two buildings were used for accommodation purposes, with four used as canteens, two for kitchens and seven for latrines and showers. There were also eight used as workshops for the skilled craftsmen and one as a Protestant chapel. The compound leader was now Stabsoberfeldwebel Walter Lindner and his adjutant was Stabsfeldwebel Bruno Rokall, both of whom had been sent up from Camp 21 at Comrie.

Compound B, under the leadership of Hauptfeldwebel Hugo Fischer von Weikerstahl, had forty-two accommodation blocks, four buildings for latrines and showers, and one for a

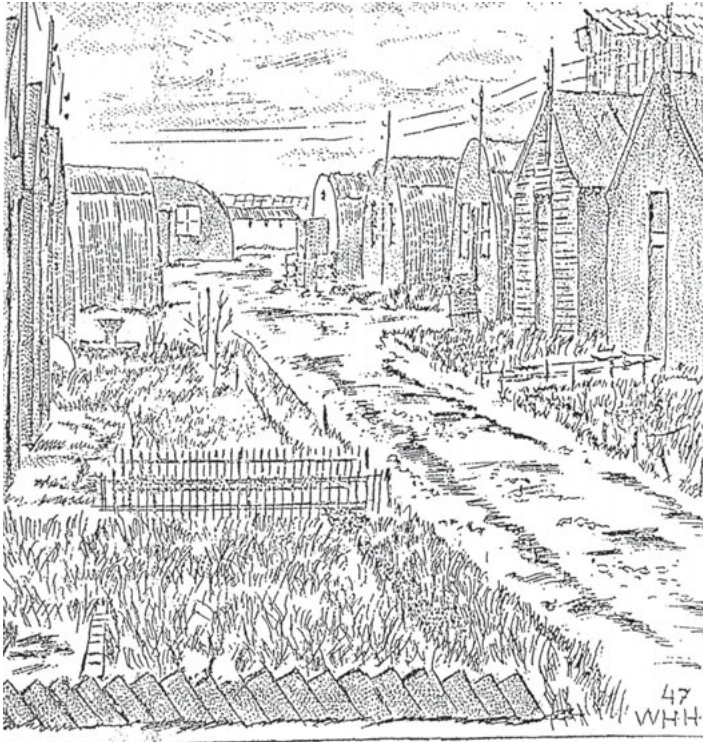
canteen; others included one each for a laundry, an office, a quartermaster's store, a theatre, a Catholic chapel (no Protestant chapel was available in this compound) and a classroom. Three buildings were used as bakeries. In both of these compounds, each man still received a sleeping bag with two blankets and it was promised that a third would be issued for the winter. They, like their earlier comrades, had been issued with clothing. Each man received three pairs of trousers and three shirts. Around a quarter of the men in Compound A and a tenth in Compound B still had their full German uniforms but they were well-worn. With winter fast approaching, the prisoners needed the new clothing, even if it was just to supplement the somewhat threadbare uniforms. Some put on the new clothes under their German uniform, as their symbolic gesture of defiance at being held in a military prisoner of war camp.

By November, the hospital was complete. In Barrack 1, there were two dormitories, consisting of fifty beds altogether, a bathroom, and toilets for the two members of the health care staff. Barrack 2 consisted of a kitchen, where the food was prepared solely for the invalids and the personnel looking after them. It also contained sanitary facilities. The doctors had separate barracks, which consisted of a surgical room, an office, two bedrooms for students learning under the doctor, a dental surgery and clinic. There was also a medical isolation hut and an accommodation hut for other students interested in medicine. Of these one was an officer and twelve students of other ranks. At that time, the infirmary was lucky that there were two German dentists ready to help anyone in pain.

Requests made by the internees included study manuals for their courses, equipment for the theatre group such as clothes and make-up, song books and sheet music for the orchestra and, at the request of the Catholic chaplain, Hermann Müller, the small prayer book *Gebetbücher für Kriegsgefangene* published by the Vatican. The Protestant chaplain, Oberleutnant Heinz Forster, asked for copies of the New Testament and hymn books. The medical officer, Stabsarzt Meinhard Keizl, put in a request for medical works and Swiss or German periodicals in order to stay updated with progress being made in the medical profession.

Each of the prisoners was consumed with the thought of the date of his repatriation. The war was over and they could not understand why they could not return home to their families and loved ones. It would be many months for some of these men. However, the one thing that kept them going was the writing and receipt of letters. Although there were problems with mail getting to and from the Russian zones in Germany, the prisoners wrote more than 900 cards and letters to their loved ones from Compound A, with Compound B sending considerably fewer. The camp received mail for the men on a daily basis, delivered by the ordinary Royal Mail postman. Compound A generally received more mail than Compound B.

Over the course of the next six months, the camp improved its accommodation. A number of the huts were tarred and other improvements made, such as the addition of new flowerbeds and vegetable gardens to try and give it a homely feel. The huts had been tarred to help combat the severe weather experienced in the far north. Between October and April, snow and wind can be a huge problem therefore any improvements made proved beneficial over the winter. By the early summer of 1946 the camp looked clean and tidy, and had been greatly improved. Some 380 of the men had been transferred to other camps and others had arrived from as far



A - LAGER - MITTELSTRASSE

Compound A's main thoroughfare.

afield as the United States of America, Canada once more and other camps within the United Kingdom. The type of prisoners had not changed, neither had their treatment, which was exactly the same as in other camps even if they were of a different character.

In May 1946, according to the article in the *John O'Groat Journal* written by Lt.-Col. Murray, a higher authority changed the status of the camp slightly. It was to be the chief CX camp, otherwise known as the chief Nazi camp. This was when it was split into two distinct compounds, different from the previous set up. Compound A was to house all non-CX types whereas B was to house the Nazi type. It was also at this time that the higher authority requested that the wire be removed from Compound A. Thus, the camp became partly a base camp (Compound B) and partly a working camp (Compound A). However, by November of that year, the camp had been further split and now had three compounds. Compound A still held non-CX prisoners, and Compound B held the CX ones, while the new compound C held intermediaries. These were young men who, although still considered Nazis, were seen as redeemable and it was thought it would be better to segregate them from those in Compound B who may have been a bad influence on them. As such, a more pronounced programme of de-Nazification was undertaken by the camp with these men.