

Scriven Camp: POWs

During the second world war, enemy prisoners were graded by the British authorities as being 'black', 'grey' or 'white' dependent upon the level of risk associated with their imprisonment. A committed Nazi for example would have been graded 'black'. Camps for prisoners were one of four categories, these being Command Cages (for high risk prisoners), Interrogation Camps, Transit Camps and internment Camps(ref 1). The POW camp at Scriven Hall was an internment camp for low risk prisoners and so possessed none of the features usually associated with the popular concept of such places; there were no watchtowers, high barbed wire fences or machine gun posts. Indeed, the camp seems to have required little security. Audrey Hines tells how there were some railings around the camp but there was never even a sentry on duty here, leaving the prisoners to come and go virtually as they pleased (ref. 2).

The camp was, at different times, an army camp and a POW camp and, finally, a camp for displaced persons. An aerial photograph of 1941 shows the hall without any huts in the grounds but we know huts had been installed by September 1943 when the Royal Scots Fusiliers arrived. The huts therefore appeared at some point between these dates which would accord with the general position nationwide in which it was Italian prisoners of war, captured in North Africa, who built the majority of the 'standard' camps in Britain during late 1942 and early 1943. Often, they lived on site under canvas until the accommodation huts were built. Although it has become normal practice to describe such buildings as being 'Nissen huts', this is not necessarily correct. The most common type of building used in British POW camps was the 18' 6" span Ministry of War Production (MoWP) standard hut although some timber sectional 16' and 24' span Nissen huts were used at a number of sites (Ref. 1). Having said this, the aerial photographs we possess of the hutted camp at Scriven show a semi-circular profile suggestive of Nissen huts with just the occasional example of a MoWP hut amongst them. The aerial photographs of Scriven show not only the huts around the Hall but some minor adjustment to their positioning over time which may or may not be significant.

During the war, POW camps were allocated an official number, although there appears to be little logic in the numbering system which resulted in some sites being ignored and some duplication of numbers between different sites, all of which possibly arose from the ever-changing demands of the situation. Scriven Camp was actually given two numbers, these being 121 (the same number as given to the racecourse camp at Ripon) and 211 (ref.1). The reasons for this are unclear but may reflect of the initial use at Scriven for Italian POWs prior to reverting to a British army camp and then being used again to house German prisoners. Camp 211 is referred to by the authorities as a 'base camp'.

Like the army camp, the POW camp at Scriven was not an isolated example. POW camps were also established in the area at Leeds, York, Wetherby, Kirk Deighton, Bramham, Skipton, Otley, Husthwaite, Thirkleby, Dishforth, Great Ouseburn, Harrogate and Starbeck. Not all of these sites were given an official number. It was common practice for prisoners to be moved frequently from camp to camp, even after the war had ended.

In addition to the base camps, a large number of semi-autonomous hostels were established out in the country and a significant number of individual prisoners were billeted on farms, where they worked as agricultural labourers. Older residents recall, for example, that German prisoners were

billeted at Staveley Court, just a few miles from Scriven, where they carved their names and initials on the old stone gate pillars at the entranceway. No formal record has been unearthed regarding these prisoners but this could have been a satellite location for Scriven Park.

We have no knowledge of the internal camp organisation at Scriven. A POW camp would, as a matter of course, have accommodation for sleeping, a cookhouse and a messroom, showers and latrines and a medical block. Some also possessed their own chapel. At Scriven, we cannot allocate function to any of the known huts in the grounds of the hall, including that single hut positioned immediately to the rear of what was then the coach house. Having said this, one hut along Gaker Walk does appear to have had some kind of cooking apparatus installed, the concrete and iron remains of which are still visible, and other hut bases are connected to a drainage system which indicates their use as ablution blocks. At nearby Thirkleby camp, local plumbers were brought in to supply water to each hut, assisted by helpful Italian soldiers (ref.49).

All that remains now at Scriven, following the demolition of the hall in 1954, are some of the outhouses to the main building which were used by both the British army and the prisoners, together with some surviving concrete hut bases, mostly overgrown by encroaching vegetation. The old coach house has been refurbished as a residence and is now known as Scriven Hall. In the attic room of an outbuilding however, someone has chalked notices on a wooden door which have still survived. These state 'Leave Kit', 'Das Betreben' and 'Verboten'. Whilst the first phrase may relate to Scriven's role as an army camp, the two German phrases presumably date back to the period when German POWs were in residence here.

Long before prisoners were actually sent to Scriven Park, the possibility of accommodating German prisoners in the area had been considered in the local press. In September 1939, just after hostilities had begun, a reporter, who had obviously suffered at the hands of some amateur dramatic society, wrote:

'War unleashes strange passions, but I hope our traditional English kindness will not be perverted and that we shall never meet frightfulness with frightfulness. I am moved to write this because I have just heard of a scheme to punish the Germans. When German prisoners arrive here and are placed in camps, a number of small town dramatic societies are planning to give them shows - preferably musical ones. The Germans will be compelled to sit them out as armed guards will be placed at strategic points to prevent any desertions during the performances. This adventure in sadism will, it is hoped, be nipped in the bud by the proper authorities. I am not being mealy-mouthed and I do not think this war should be fought with kid gloves, but even Germany can be made to suffer too much' (ref.41).

We do not possess many firm dates for POW activity at Scriven. It seems that the first to arrive were Italians, possibly in 1942 or 1943 following the success of the Eighth Army in the North Africa campaign. The chronology at Eden camp, on the outskirts of Malton may be indicative of the picture at Scriven and elsewhere. The Eden Camp site was requisitioned by the Ministry of War in early 1942 and tents were set up. By mid 1943, the permanent camp had been completed and was receiving Italian POWs who moved out again at the end of the year following Italy's surrender.

When Italy surrendered unconditionally on 8th September 1943, there were 74,900 Italian POWs in Britain with a further 11,000 due to arrive from Algiers. Their position was complex since the British

government seemed to want it both ways. On the one hand, they were reluctant to relinquish the Italians' POW status but on the other they ignored the restraints which the Geneva Convention imposed on the type of work which POWs could undertake. A typically British compromise was reached whereby Italians could serve in units under Italian officers provided these were supervised by the British. Eventually, these POWs could expect greater privileges in respect of pay, letters home, leisure and general restrictions. This effectively enabled them to work as free men although many continued to stay in their old camps and hostels until they were repatriated; by the end of 1944 there were 155,000 Italian POWs in Britain and, as would be the case with other nationalities, many were able to settle here at the end of the war (ref .3).

Nationally, Italian POWs first appear to have arrived in Britain in 1941. In January 1942, Italian prisoners of 'good conduct' were about to be used as farm labourers and the press announced that farmers in the Midlands would be able to apply for prisoner labour to the appropriate County War Agricultural Executive Committee. Presumably, the scheme was then extended throughout the country. If a prisoner 'lived in' at the farm, the farmer would pay the Committee 40s (£2) per week for his services, rising to 48s after three months, but were entitled to deduct 21s per week for board and lodgings. If the prisoner was accommodated at a hostel however, the farmer was charged 1s per hour for the man's labour (ref.45). Accounts from Italian prisoners held elsewhere describe how prisoners would be given a ration of one packet of cigarettes per week and paid 5d per day if they remained inside the camp. Those who elected to work outside the camp would be paid more. In camps, tokens were used instead of sterling currency (ref.48).

At Woods Nurseries in Scotton, they remember that 'The Italians used to come up our lane after being out in the fields, wearing hair nets and singing at the tops of their voices!' (ref. 4).

Not everyone was impressed by the quality of the work carried out by the Italian prisoners. In a hearing of 59 summonses by the River Ouse Drainage Board at Harrogate Borough Court in early 1946 against local farmers for substandard drainage works, a drainage expert was quoted as saying that 'My land girl could do as much as six Italians'. The magistrates made orders for payments in all cases against the farmers, totalling around £2000(ref.5).

As a boy, Jim Wetherall would play in the fields around Scriven where he frequently met Italian farm labourers, often in the area off Dumb Pots Lane. He remembers that they were always ready to stand and talk and improve their command of the English language (ref.30).

Cynthia Stevenson recalls buying shoes in the west end of London in a tiny shop established there in the late 1940s. This particular shop was owned by an Italian called T Savva. On learning she lived in Knaresborough, Mr Savva told her that he too had lived in Knaresborough, having been a POW at Scriven. The shop is still run by the Savva family in Marylebone. (ref 6).

There must have been a time when Scriven housed both Italian and German prisoners. Margaret Stacey recalls that 'during the second world war there were huts in the field along Beech Avenue for German prisoners of war. They made toys out of the beech wood. There were also Italian prisoners and they had to be kept apart' (ref.40). Presumably the friction between the two groups of prisoners was exacerbated by the surrender of the Italy in September 1943.

A year later, Knaresborough Urban District Council raised concerns about the 'unrestrained liberty' of the Italian prisoners still in the area, complaining amongst other things, that 'they used the buses freely'. The Council passed a resolution asking the Government to arrange for these men to be deported to enable them to fight for their own country which arose from the apparent resentment felt at the heavy British casualties in Italy. The Council felt, like others at the time, that Italians in this country should take a greater responsibility for liberating Italy from German occupation (ref.42).

By the end of the war, the former Italian POWs had assumed the role of 'co-operators', most of whom were working on local farms. They were described then as being 'rigged out in a motley collection of uniforms, and lent an exotic touch to a typically English country scene. Some sported forage caps of the rounded American pattern and American khaki jackets, while others were attired in odd bits of British uniforms. One furnished striking contrast by wearing a pair of shabby blue trousers with a khaki battledress blouse' (ref.44).

Similarly, we know little about the Russian men at Scriven, believed to be White Russians. Janet Murphy remembers these men: 'They often passed our house (Boroughbridge Road), I shall never forget their haunting, melancholy songs. Later, I remember seeing them near Knaresborough station when they were about to be sent home and they were smiling' (ref. 28). Under escort, they were allowed to visit the nearest 'local' which was the Royal Oak on Bond End (now a private residence) where they sold beautiful hand-made wooden toys to supplement their income (ref. 4). The National Archives show that Soviet and Polish nationals were at Scriven, including some named officers, and were sent to another camp in Worthing in January 1945 (ref. 7). However, the local Harrogate press has made it clear that these men were actually ex-German POWs who were stationed at Scriven, rather than being imprisoned there: 'A good deal of interest was shown in Harrogate last Saturday morning when six hundred Russians stationed in Knaresborough paid their first visit to the town to see the film 'Song of Russia' showing at St. James's Cinema. The men marched smartly and frequently broke into song, much to the interest of spectators who lined the roadside. The Russians, accompanied by their own officers and camp commandant, were liberated when the allies invaded France and are now engaged in agricultural work in the neighbourhood'. (ref.8). Notwithstanding their status, they faced a very uncertain future on their repatriation to a Russia controlled by Stalin.

The Russians were well thought of by local farmers and endeared themselves further at Christmas 1944. The local paper recorded: 'For some time a number of Russians have been working on the land in the Knaresborough district, and have won golden opinions from the farmers who have employed them. Although the men receive only a few shillings a week, they have expressed a desire to make some contribution to the Christmas festivities of evacuated children in the town and have subscribed in small amounts a total of £16, which was presented by their representatives at a special meeting of Knaresborough Urban District Council on Tuesday afternoon. The men have also sent about 100 toys for the children. This is a thoughtful gesture that is very much appreciated' (ref.16).

One Russian prisoner died in Harrogate Hospital following an operation on his kidney on December 30th 1944. At the subsequent inquest, Lt. G.D. Seymour of the RASC, who acted as an interpreter, told the coroner that the patient had been Sapar Kalishew who was about 27 years of age and who had lived in the Ural mountains. He had been stationed with a working party at Ripon (ref.43).

German POWs seem to have arrived after this and were not repatriated until two or three years after the end of hostilities. Reports in the local press would indicate that the Germans were not at

Scriven until 1946. We acquired some photographs of Knaresborough in 1947 which include portraits of what we assume to be German POWS although we have yet to identify the precise location of the pictures. From a wooden sign by the rear door which survived into the early 1950s, we know that, at this stage of its history, that Scriven was the '24th German P.W. Satellite Camp'(ref.39).

Labour to gather in the harvest was very important, even after the war had ended in Europe and schoolchildren from Leeds would come to Knaresborough to help. Prior to the 1945 harvest, these boys and girls were accommodated in tents but in that year, a large wooden hut was erected for their use by German prisoners of war (ref.44).

As a girl, Margaret Wood lived in Follifoot and, together with her family and neighbours, struck up a friendship with some of the young German prisoners, sparking correspondence which continued long after the war had ended. Margaret has two letters written by Werner Rastemborski whilst at Scriven Camp. Werner left for the camp at Ripon in early January 1948, from where he moved again to a camp at the Bridge of Allen in Scotland. On 3 May 1948, he was again a civilian but it was not until December of that year that he was able to travel back to Germany. Margaret has provisionally identified Werner as one of the prisoners in our 1947 photographs (Ref. 9).

Another of Margaret's correspondents was Walter Liederhold who left Scriven for Ripon in 1947, moving again March 1948 to Moorby Camp in Lincolnshire. Walter was repatriated to Germany in June 1948. Both Walter and Werner continued to exchange letters with Margaret for years until their English began to fail. (ref.9). A third correspondent was William (surname unknown) who was at Scriven until early 1948 and whom Margaret has tentatively identified on another of our photographs.

Most prisoners seem to have worked on local farms as labourers. Ken Thompson recalls working alongside German prisoners of war during potato harvesting at Butterhill Farm which is now the site of Knaresborough Golf Club (ref.15).

Otto Feltz was in the Luftwaffe, captured in France a short time after the outbreak of war. He spent the rest of the war in sixteen internment camps in Europe and the UK, including Scriven. During the winter of 1947 he was sent into York to clear the streets of heavy snow and where he encountered some hostility from the Jewish community who '...poured hot drinks into the freezing snow so that we could not drink...'. Nevertheless, Otto chose to remain in the UK after the war and farmed at Brereton (ref. 10).

Amy Murphy's father was a German POW who spent time at Scriven Camp. He too chose to stay here when the war was over. He was apparently distressed that one of his brothers had been sent to a concentration camp and may also have been involved with a local lady (ref.10). He died in April 2008 and had also spent time at POW camps at Horncastle and, finally, Ripon, from which he was released in 1948 (ref.50). He probably arrived in Britain from a camp in North America since his imprisonment here only began in 1946.

Heinz Emmerich had commanded a German minesweeper before it was sunk in the English Channel in 1944 and he was captured. Speaking good English, he became an interpreter in British POW camps, moving from camp to camp throughout Yorkshire and he spent some time at Scriven.

Disregarding the rules, and trusted by the authorities, Emmerich used to drink in pubs and had English girlfriends. His First Officer had been the son of a brewer and whilst they were held in a Rotherham POW camp, they began to distil illicit spirits which were sold at £1 per bottle to both prisoners and the public outside the camp on the black market, the alcohol being marketed by British army drivers. By the time of his release in 1948, Emmerich had accumulated an impressive total of £800 in savings from this illegal activity (ref. 47). He was repatriated to Germany but found that it was not the country he had known and so he returned to marry an English girl. He lived in Chorlton, Manchester where he ran an hotel and, in 1974, returned to view the remains of the Scriven camp which, thirty years on, was already very overgrown (ref.46).

Theobald Doemling was a German POW at Scriven who also stayed in Knaresborough, marrying a local girl, Rosalie Juhasz, in September 1947, which would be before many POWs were repatriated. He lived at Scotton, where his son and daughter-in-law still reside. (ref.11). He had been born in 1919 and lived in the Knaresborough area until his death in 1982 (ref.37).

One resident recalled: 'My mother was rather shocked when our neighbours employed a German to 'do' their garden. I think she felt it was unpatriotic. Later though, Mum had to agree that he was a pleasant, hard working lad, not much more than a boy. He kept in touch with next door after he went home' (ref.4).

Audrey Hines recalls that in June 1945, one of the prisoners at Scriven was a German physicist who would walk out of the camp and stand around on the village green for 'half an hour or so' which unnerved her.. He wore a new bib and braces, a Glengarry in two shades of grey and a British battle blouse, together with German steel spectacles. Shortly afterwards, he was taken to the USA (ref.2).

By the end of the war, more than 400,000 Germans were being held in POW camps on the outskirts of most towns and by 1946, these prisoners were responsible for 20% of all farm labouring in Britain. They also made significant contributions to the major rebuilding programmes of roads and housing (ref. 3).

After the war was over, German POWs being held in the USA and Canada were brought over to Britain for processing prior to being repatriated. Hans-Dieter Hundsdoerfer was one such prisoner. He travelled across the Atlantic on the Liberty class ship 'Brett Hard' in 1947 and was surprised to find himself in Liverpool, rather than Germany. He then spent time in British camps before deciding to remain in Britain, working initially on farms. Eventually, he settled in Scotton. He was never at Scriven Camp but his recollections show how that POWs were still arriving in this country well after the war had ended (ref. 12).

The prisoners at Scriven made articles in the camp which they sold to local residents. Apart from the hand carved wooden toys mentioned above, we have a photograph of a ship in a bottle made by a POW and given to Mr and Mrs Herrington in New Scriven. One resident recalls the POWs selling slippers door to door around Knaresborough and remembers how 'they were mostly nice people who fitted well into the community' (ref. 10).

On 19 November 1946, one of the German prisoners was killed in a motor accident at Scriven. Corporal Johann Schueller, who was 38, had been riding a bicycle at the top of Greengate Lane when

he was involved in a collision with a lorry being driven out of the camp by Johannes Kirsten, another POW. Corporal Schueller died of his injuries in Harrogate Hospital that same day (ref.18).

At Christmas 1946, about one hundred POWs were invited to spend Christmas Day in the homes of local residents, a number of whom travelled by car to the camp to pick up their guests. The remainder of the prisoners were allowed liberty from the camp during the day and groups of them, in their uniforms of blue or brown with the distinctive POW patches, were to be seen about Knaresborough. In the evening, the men put on an impromptu concert which included pieces played by their own band and they also enjoyed a cinema show (ref.17).

The Primitive Methodist Church in Knaresborough High Street closed for worship at the start of the war and is now a carpet shop. In 1947 it was used as a concert venue for recitals given by some of the German POWs. One such event was reported in the Harrogate Advertiser of 4th January 1947, when 36 German prisoners attended. The standard of music was so high that these events were very well attended and the collections taken were donated to a variety of good causes, including St. Dunstons, Methodist homes for the Aged and the Earl Haig Fund (ref. 4).

In 1947, Wilhelm Iris, a German POW, gave evidence at Harrogate Crown Court regarding the accidental death of Tom Appleyard, an English farm labourer, at Kirk Hammerton. The two men had been loading potatoes from a dray onto a lorry when Mr Appleyard fell to the ground (ref. 23). In August that same year, the police enlisted the assistance of Germans from Scriven Camp to search for a missing seven year old boy whose body was later recovered from a disused and flooded gravel pit in Lingerfield (ref.24).

After the war, some POWs returned to Knaresborough to thank Mrs Edith Cleasby who had been responsible for organising their red cross parcels. A photograph of this event is contained in Arnold Kellett's book, 'Knaresborough' in the 'Images of England' series.

It is evident from the local press however, that there were very different opinions within the local community about the German POWs. These differences came into the public domain in early 1947 (ref.20). A Dr Kathleen Rutherford unwittingly started the ball rolling in a letter which The Harrogate Advertiser published on 4 January 1947 and this began an exchange of correspondence which continued for several weeks. Dr Rutherford, who lived in Harrogate, was a principal organiser for collecting clothing and food for distribution in war-torn Europe and her initial letter spoke of her pleasure in having been able to share her Christmas with two German POWs. She went on to exhort other residents to open their doors to these prisoners. This prompted a rebuke the following week from correspondents who did not agree with this approach, their views being summarised by one Harrogate lady who wrote 'I personally disagree with the whole idea of peace and goodwill to our most bitter enemies of so short a time ago'. This in turn brought a response in justification from Dr. Rutherford and many others then also wrote in to the paper. Opinion was polarised; on the one hand were those supporting Dr Rutherford who believed that now was the time to be conciliatory, particularly to young German prisoners who were not fascists, and on the other was a faction who could not forgive the enemy for what had happened during the war. This latter group cited the heavy bombing raids and concentration camps in support of their views and many believed that greater efforts should be made to look after of our own service men and women first.

This debate probably prompted the commandant at Scriven, Lieut-Col. B. C. Wilkinson, to clarify the position regarding the restrictions associated with the prisoners at the camp. The Harrogate Advertiser published this information on 1st February 1947, which sets out the rules for those prisoners not considered to be 'politically biased'. POWs of 'Category C+' were excluded from these privileges:

- '(a) They may take unescorted walks within a radius of five miles of their respective camps/hostels.
- (b) They may converse with members of the public, but anything of an amorous nature is strictly forbidden.
- (c) They may accept invitations to private houses, subject to the permission of the Camp Commandant, but they are not permitted to enter licensed premises, dance halls, restaurants, shops or cinemas, or attend public meetings, but may enter buildings of public interest if accompanied by a member of the public.
- (d) Public transport may not be used, but they are allowed to be transported by private cars to and from private houses.
- (e) All POWs will be in their respective camps/hostels, unless at work, by lighting up time.
- (f) They are not allowed to be in possession of sterling currency under any circumstances.'

The correspondence ends in early February 1947 although another disgruntled resident risked refuelling the debate with a further letter of complaint, published by the paper on 15th February. He had observed, whilst in Knaresborough that week, workmen labouring to clear a heavy snowfall from the streets as scores of 'hefty German prisoners could be seen idly promenading the town, chatting with girls and women'. The writer considered that 'if they cannot be fully and usefully employed here, wouldn't it be better for all concerned for them to be returned to their own country and save us the cost of maintaining them here'. That seems to have concluded the correspondence on the issue but one imagines that some residents continued to resent the presence of the prisoners in their midst.

The camp commandant, in 1947, Bernard Cautley Wilkinson, was born in March 1900 and had been commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry in December 1918. He was subsequently promoted to the rank of Captain and then Major, and attached to the 2nd Battalion KOYLI in India and then the 1st Battalion in Strensall in January 1939. He became Acting Lt-Colonel in May 1943 when he commanded the 2nd Battalion, the Worcestershire Regiment in Madras until November 1943. He became a Temporary Lt.-Colonel in June 1946 and retired in March 1949 with the rank of Honorary Lt.-Colonel. By early 1948 he had been replaced by Captain G. O. Plackett as Commanding Officer at Scriven (ref. 27). Lt-Col Wilkinson died in Leeds in September 1985.

Later in 1947, the authorities confirmed it likely that POWs would be able to work on a new housing scheme on the Knaresborough Road Estate in Harrogate (ref. 21).

In December 1947, three German prisoners were sentenced to two months imprisonment each for theft, having been arrested in a lane near to the camp. Heinz Viebranz and Herbert Triemer pleaded guilty to stealing 24 chickens which they had been about to hand over to a buyer from Harrogate.

The third man, Heinz Baur, had pleaded not guilty. The case was heard at a special court in Knaresborough (ref.26). Generally speaking though, the POWs seem to feature in very few criminal cases as reported in the local press. Certainly, there were more reported cases of offences committed by (British) soldiers still stationed in the area, who enjoyed greater freedoms at this time as well as access to alcohol.

In January 1948, The Germans hosted a party at the Methodist hall in Knaresborough High Street for 100 local children as a return for the hospitality they had received in the area. The children were given gifts of hand-made toys, described as 'miracles of ingenuity and improvisation', from old pieces of wood, tin and wire, painted in bright colours. Particularly desirable were the 'Hihnerspeils' or 'hen's games' in which a number of carved wooden chickens sit on a base not unlike a table-tennis bat and are made to peck rapidly at a central dish in turn by means of a swinging weight underneath. Other toys made by the prisoners included jockeys on horses which galloped as they were pulled along, small roundabouts, model Father Christmases, an alligator whose snapping jaws pursued a hen, barrows, railway engines, lorries, horses and carts, ducks, parrots and similar delights. The role of Father Christmas was taken by 23 year old Richard Pfluegner from Berlin. Peter Niessen from Hamburg, together with twelve musicians, provided the music for community singing and dancing. The cost of refreshments was defrayed by contributions of 10d each from the POWs, donated to the camp leader, Ernst Schuetze and the event was attended by the CO at Scriven, Captain Plackett and his second-in-command, Lieutenant T. H. Davis (ref 27).

Even after their countrymen had been repatriated, those prisoners who had elected to stay here were subject to specific regulations. In February 1949, Walter Juerges and Kurt Brogatski, both then resident in Harrogate, were each fined 10s for failing to notify the police of a change of address. The police were quoted as saying that a degree of laxity had crept into the system and that these cases should remind other aliens of the regulations they still needed to observe. (ref.33).

POWS apart, there were many people at the end of the war who were, for various reasons, unable to return home. Some of these displaced persons (DP) were also accommodated at Scriven. From 1947, under the European Volunteer Workers (EVW) scheme, citizens of any state, including 'defeated hostiles', could apply to come and settle within the UK. This was an effort to aid those who had been rendered homeless during the war and to help alleviate the chronic labour shortage in essential services within Britain immediately thereafter. Although most successful applicants were single, EVWs could subsequently invite close relatives to join them in the DP camps and a number of children were born in UK camps.(ref 13). Only the Poles were welcomed into the UK as a group of immigrants, being allies who often could not return to Poland. They were offered naturalisation, language training, help with housing and vocational courses to help them settle here. Some 300,000 Poles settled in the UK after the war (ref. 14). The EVW scheme closed in 1950(a date which corresponds with what we believe to be the end of Scriven Hall as a Displaced Persons (DP) /EVW camp) and Kelly's Directory for Harrogate in this year records 'F. Smallwood' as being the warden of the European Volunteer Worker's Camp at Old Scriven.

In response to a rather disgruntled letter from a local housewife, the editor of the Harrogate Advertiser felt obliged to clarify the rations being given to the European Volunteer Workers. He advised that:

'Displaced Persons, or as they are now known, European Volunteer Workers, receive ordinary rations unless they are working in certain types of heavy industrial trades when they receive additional rations. For instance, those in hostels for agricultural workers get more, but the rate of increase on a normal ration varies with each different type of foodstuff. E.V.W.s in agricultural hostels receive threepennyworth of meat for each main meal, and with two main meals a day, the weekly meat ration works out at 3s and 6d' (ref. 25).

The continued use of the Scriven camp from the end of the war into the 1950s may have saved the village from an influx of squatters. In the autumn of 1946, just along the road at Starbeck, two Knaresborough families comprising three adults and ten children moved into two of the Nissen huts on the high street which had been vacated the previous week by German POWs, highlighting the chronic housing shortage at the time. Although the huts were supplied with water, there was no heating or power supplies and the families were getting by on cold food. Both families had been given notice to quit their previous accommodation in Knaresborough and seem to have stayed in the huts for a few months (ref.19). It is noticeable that German POWs vacated the camp at Starbeck two years before they left Scriven.

Scriven also seems to have avoided another problem associated with having a large number of male prisoners in a local community. One Harrogate resident complained of 'the increasing number of girls who, every evening, parade outside the German POW camp at Harlow Grange, endeavouring with only mixed success to try and strike up more than just a nodding acquaintance with the Germans' (Ref.22). The complainant initially believed that the camp authorities should clear away the girls 'to stop them making an exhibition of themselves, but having had a closer look at the ladies in question I am inclined to think it is the Germans who need the guidance'. Whilst local residents in Scriven can recall groups of young women waiting at the gate when the Hall was an army camp, this does not seem to have been an issue when the POWs arrived even though there were a number of German prisoners at Scriven who were evidently involved in relationships with local women.

Vacated by the European Volunteer Workers, the camp was empty in August 1952 when the Prison Commissioners announced a proposal to place 200 'selected, short-term' prisoners here in what would now be described as an open prison but was then called a 'prison without bars' (ref.29). The Commissioners wrote to Nidderdale Rural Council, outlining their proposals and explaining that there was a need to urgently address the issue of overcrowding in the country's prisons and that, for reasons of economy, it was necessary to use existing camps held on requisition. It was their intention to accommodate prisoners at Scriven as a temporary measure only until such time as the prison population declined or alternative accommodation could be found. They assured the Council that only debtors, men serving short sentences, or prisoners nearing the end of longer sentences, would be brought to Scriven. Prisoners would normally work within the camp although 'a proportion' might work on local farms under supervision. It was not intended to erect any more huts in the grounds of the hall but some of the existing huts might require modification and others could be removed. The Council was not impressed. Within 2 hours of receiving the Commissioners' letter, the Council had formally objected to the proposal.

Objections were also raised by Harrogate Town Council, Knaresborough Urban Council and by Scotton Banks sanatorium who were particularly concerned about female staff walking back to Knaresborough late at night. The residents of Scriven were described as being 'unanimously against

the scheme and are prepared to back a petition against it'. Brigadier G S Brunskill, agent for the Scriven estate, appears to have taken a leading role in co-ordinating objections from the village residents (ref.37). The Harrogate Advertiser, in joining in the protest, made the point that 'the accident of war-time requirements should not prejudice Knaresborough and Nidderdale's case that Scriven is an unsuitable area for a prison from several points of view' (ref.34).

The proposal sparked great debate locally and in the pages of the local press; the vast majority of correspondents were vehemently against the idea of an open prison at Scriven. The local MP, Christopher York conducted his own survey and concluded that 99% of his constituents were against the proposal (ref.35). This did not stop the remaining 1% from airing their views. One gentleman, noting that concern had been expressed in view of Knaresborough being a popular visitor destination, pointed out that the prison on Dartmoor was itself a tourist attraction! (ref.36).

The opposition continued until October when the Home Secretary wrote to Mr York stating, 'It has now been decided not to proceed with this plan'. No reason was given for the withdrawal of the proposal (ref.37). The news came as a pleasant surprise to the various objectors who attributed the outcome to the local strength of feeling.

The prison scheme abandoned, the Hall was then to be handed back to the Slingsby family by the Ministry of Works. The family were reported as intending to refurbish the historic building 'which has suffered greatly in appearance from its war and post-war use. It is feared however that it will never again be suitable as a residence for a member of the Slingsby family whose connection with Scriven dates back more than 600 years, or for a tenant like the late Sir Algernon Firth' (who had leased the Hall from the Slingsbys until his death in 1936). Brigadier Brunskill advised that it was not the intention to either sell the Hall, nor to offer it on a long lease but to find another, quiet use for the property. Possible uses which would be considered were for the care of elderly or handicapped patients, offices or for training purposes (ref. 38). A few weeks later, the hall was badly damaged by fire.

Shortly after 6am on Friday, 19th December 1952, when the darkness was accentuated by a thick fog, Mrs Clapham of Home Farm noticed a red glow in the sky above the hall. Her husband, Harry Clapham, called the fire brigade (ref.39). Walter was a member of the local brigade:

'Three fire engines rushed to the scene, two from Knaresborough and one from Harrogate. We were hindered by fog and a very hard frost. We had to use felling axes to break the ice on the Basin'. (ref.4). The Basin is a small lake in nearby woodland which the firemen had to use on discovering that the water pressure in the village was insufficient to power their hoses. Eventually, hoses were run down to the Basin and a pump activated (ref.39) but Harrogate's new turntable couldn't be used because the ground was unsafe' (ref.4).

The firemen were to return on the following day, 20th December 1952, some from Leeds:

'We were there all day until late evening when we were satisfied the fire was out. However, the siren sounded at eleven the next morning so back we went. The Hall had sash windows and shutters and the fire had started up again in the wood shutters. Mounds of lead, glistening like silver, were running off the gutters. I went to damp down parts of the roof that were still up and found German

revolvers and long knives stuffed into the slates, presumably by the prisoners. We handed them to the police' (ref 4). No-one has offered any explanation as to how prisoners acquired such weapons.

The fire is thought to have started in the main hall which the workmen (who were restoring the building after its long military occupation) were using as a canteen. To keep warm in the bitterly cold conditions, they had been burning scrap wood in the inglenook fireplace. They had put out the fire before leaving at 4pm but it is thought that the intense heat caused beams above the false ceiling to smoulder and the fire then spread to the joists. By the time the fire service arrived, part of the roof had already caved in (ref.4). An immediate investigation by the fire brigade exonerated the workmen from blame and also ruled out arson as a cause of the blaze (ref. 31).

Although only the west wing of the Hall had been gutted, the cost of restoration was prohibitive. As Major G S Brunskill explained, when the insurance company had fulfilled its obligations and the Ministry of Works compensation, based upon the depreciation of the capital value of the Hall during its period of requisition, had also been taken into account, the total sum was but a fraction of the estimated cost of restoration or rebuilding. As a result, the Slingsby family took the decision to demolish the Hall, fill in the cellars and grass over the site. They did however preserve and renovate the old coachhouse (which is now known as 'Scriven Hall'). At the same time, they intended to remove the concrete bases of the various huts in the grounds where possible and to plant trees (ref.32).

The Hall was subsequently demolished in 1954 and the grassed site now forms part of the gardens of the 'new' Scriven Hall.

We do not have a firm date for the removal of the huts from the grounds of Scriven Hall. They were certainly still on site in the summer and autumn of 1952 when the debate raged about an open prison but had probably been dismantled by September 1953 when the talk was of removing their concrete bases.

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