

Scriven Camp: Prisoners of War

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 commonly 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 hatted camp at Scriven show a semi-circular profile suggestive of Nissen huts with just the occasional example of a MoWP hut amongst them.

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. POWs were also held elsewhere 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. German prisoners were also housed in a hostel at Great Ouseburn. This building was the former village workhouse, still standing today, and was a satellite site to Scriven.

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).

Italian POWs 1942-43

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 local newspaper reported in August 1941 that the first 2000 Italian POWs had arrived in Britain and would shortly be placed in various working camps around the country. It was the intention to use them for ditching and drainage work as well as general agricultural labour (ref.60).

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. Eden Camp then provided accommodation for Polish forces preparing for the invasion of Europe and when they departed, the first German POWs arrived in mid 1944. Germans remained at Eden Camp until the end of 1948 when the site was used for Displaced Persons. This is a similar sequence of events to Scriven, although the chronology differs slightly.

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).

The only mention of Italian POWs being held in the area appeared in the local press in August 1943. Then, the West Riding Branch of the National Farmers' Union reported a serious shortfall of harvest labour in the Knaresborough district and recommended that Italian POWs be taken off the drainage work on which they were engaged and put to help with the harvest (ref.61). Whether or not this related to prisoners at Scriven is unknown since the Royal Scots Fusiliers arrived at the camp just one month later.

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).

Italians were still being accommodated in a camp near Knaresborough after they had left Scriven however because in November 1944, and without any appeal, collected the sum of £2 12s 6d amongst themselves as a donation to British Red Cross funds. The money was handed in to a well known local farmer, presumably by one of his workers, and paid into the bank (ref.67). It is thought that the camp in question was a Skipton, with whom Knaresborough Council had various dealings later in the war regarding the conduct of Italian POWs.

There must have been a time when both Italian and German prisoners were at Scriven, although not housed together in the camp. 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 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).

The government's response did not appease the Council, stating that certain privileges were allowed to Italians who had volunteered to help the war effort. The government considered that the work then being undertaken by Italians was a valuable contribution to the war effort and their withdrawal from such employment would have a serious effect on man-power. The Italians were still subject to rules, not being able for example to enter licensed premises or dance halls or to use local buses and any complaints about their behaviour should be reported to the camp commandant at Skipton. Disciplinary action would be taken against any prisoner who abused his privileges. The Council then wrote to the Commandant who had responded in a similar vein to the government, and requesting particulars of any infringement in writing so that an investigation could then be initiated. The Council believed it was difficult to follow this course when no-one knew whether individual Italians came from a camp or were billeted at a local farm and were angry that the government seemed to expect local authorities to act as policemen in such matters (ref.68).

The issue did not resolve itself. By February 1945, complaints were still being received about the conduct of Italian POWs and Knaresborough Council eventually wrote to the camp commandant to state that, if their behaviour did not improve, Knaresborough would be placed out of bounds to the men. The Council's letter which was written by the Clerk and addressed to the CO at Skipton, reads:

'I hesitate to write to you again upon the question of the conduct of Italian prisoners in this town. It has been noticed that recently there has been an increased number of these men about here. I appreciate that the area in which they must exercise includes Knaresborough but a number of these men are cyclists who at night do not trouble to have lights on their machines. There are also cases of their fraternising with young girls in various parts of the town which is causing a certain amount of disquiet and anxiety. It would appear that those billeted on neighbouring farms are the offenders and the ones in need of stricter control. The farmers have no control over them, nor does anyone else appear to have. If they conduct themselves properly, no objection is made to their presence in the town. If there is not a considerable improvement in their behaviour, my Council feels that there are ample grounds for the placing of Knaresborough out of bounds, which I have been informed by the War Office is the proper step to take. My council has no wish to supply evidence against individual persons but is concerned with the matter as a whole. I shall be glad to hear that you will take appropriate and adequate steps to see that these men are kept under stricter surveillance than appears to be the case at the moment.'

(ref.69).

The commandant at Skipton duly replied:

'It is regretted that Italian co-operators from the farms are causing annoyance in Knaresborough. The farmers upon whom prisoners of war are billeted are responsible for their behaviour and each farmer employing prisoners of war from this unit receives a leaflet of instructions, a copy of which is enclosed. Another letter is being sent to the farmers in the vicinity of Knaresborough warning them that if these instructions are not carried out, Knaresborough will be placed out of bounds. Hoping this threat will have the desired effect.'

The Council remained unimpressed, believing the authorities at Skipton were merely trying to pass the buck to the local farmers who were virtually powerless to rectify the situation (ref.69). There remained considerable resentment in Knaresborough regarding the amount of liberty afforded to the Italian prisoners.

By the end of the war, when 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).

Russian POWs 1944-45

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 1946-48

German POWS arrived at Scriven in mid 1946 although there were evidently German POWs in the area beforehand because teams from various local camps would play each other at football (ref.71). The last prisoners were not repatriated from Scriven until February 1948. 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).

Each prisoner would have had an index card in the camp records, containing his photograph and essential details. None have survived from Scriven but some remain on display at Eden Camp because a British guard rescued them from destruction in 1948. The information on the cards is printed in German and includes full name, date of birth, the date the man arrived in England, and the nature of his work whilst at the camp; most were described as 'Farm-Worker' (ref.110).

Officially, the only way into, and out of, the camp was the road up from Scriven green and the old coach road which ran from the hall to the lodge house on Ripley Road, does not seem to have been used, other than perhaps unofficially. When Scriven was an army camp, there was a small gatehouse or sentry position outside Ivy Cottage but after the war when the Germans were here, the entrance was a gate with stone pillars to either side (ref.62). This may have been at the end of the

outbuildings associated with the original Hall, at the top of the road from the village green where there is still an old, high wall at one side of the road.

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). When they arrived at Scriven, 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).

There was no bad feeling in the village toward the prisoners who would work side by side with residents in the fields, particularly at harvest time. As a girl, Enid Atkinson (now Hornsby) recalls that they could generally make themselves understood and they did not fear the former enemy. One POW showed her how to avoid vermin running up inside her trouser leg during threshing by tucking her trousers inside her wellingtons (ref.63).

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.

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). It is thought that this account relates to Otto Pletz who was a prisoner of war at Scriven and who still resides at Brearton, just a few miles from Scriven.

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).

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 was born in 1919 and lived in the Knaresborough area until his death in 1982 (ref.37).

Other former prisoners from Scriven Camp who settled in Knaresborough after their release were Kurt Brigatski, Frank Rosenberg, Josef Chubcek (who worked as a tailor) (ref.118).

Erich Hainy was a Czechoslovakian POW who was taken prisoner in Holland and spent time at Scriven Camp. He was threshing at a local farm in 1946 when he met Teresa Crabtree of Morley, near Leeds who was also working there as a Land Girl; she was billeted in the Knaresborough WLA hostel. The two were married in November 1947 at St. Mary's RC Church in Knaresborough (ref.98).

Bob Zirmer has described how his father, Josef, who was a POW at Scriven, also chose to stay in the UK when hostilities had ceased. The Zirmer family settled in Scotland and it was only many years later, when Bob and his own family moved by chance to Knaresborough, that he discovered the family link with Scriven (ref.51). Bob has also donated a copy of some rare photographs of the huts at Scriven, including one of his father with fellow prisoners inside a Nissen hut.

Josef Zirmer was born on 14 August 1922 and lived initially in the village of Siria, some 25km from Arrad in north-west Romania. Just before he died in 2002, he prepared an audio tape for his sons, giving information on his life. His parents ('poor but proud') worked a self-sufficient small holding with an acre of land. Josef was educated at school until he was 13 and then served a 5 year apprenticeship as a cooper. At the age of 21 (c.1943), he was due to enter the Romanian army but, together with two friends, decided to join the German army instead, for reasons he did not explain. After 3 months training, Josef joined the Transport Corps, obtained a military driving licence and was sent to Minsk in Russia. The Germans subsequently retreated into Poland and then, in 1944, his unit was transferred to Luxembourg. It was here that he was stationed when the war ended upon which he became a prisoner of war. Josef was placed in several camps on continental Europe, the largest of which was one at Ostend which was huge and held a great number of nationalities. In June 1946, he was one of a contingent brought across the Channel to England. 800 of these prisoners were taken to a camp in Sheffield and then 200 of these men, including Josef, were moved further north to Scriven where he lived in one of the Nissen huts.

Whilst at Scriven, Josef worked on a farm at Staveley; he remembers a gentleman farmer who smoked St. Bruno tobacco. It was hard physical work but the young Josef rather enjoyed the experience. He also recalls clearing snow from the roads in Leeds during the bitterly cold winter of 1947. Initially reluctant to the idea of speaking English, he eventually realised he had to learn the language. Before he achieved this however, he would walk into Knaresborough to shop at Woolworths where he could purchase an item without the need to speak. This memory is evidence that prisoners did in fact have access to Sterling currency despite this being prohibited by the camp rules.

Josef Zirmer remained at Scriven until 1948 when he was moved to a camp at Comrie in Scotland and then finally, to a camp at Bridge of Allan where he became a civilian again. He spent the rest of his life in Scotland. On his release, he continued to work as an agricultural labourer and worked on Douglas Farm in Croy, near Kirkintilloch and then to Dalnear Farm near Balfron. At one of these farms he met his future wife, Rebecca McGuinness, who was then in the Womens' Land Army. They were married in 1952 and Josef gained employment as a cooper in a brewery. The couple had three sons, John, Bob (who moved to Knaresborough in 1995) and Josef junior.

Josef Zirmer, who died in Scotland in 2002 at the age of 79, had lost contact with his Romanian family until he received a letter via the Red Cross in the 1970s from his brother Hans, leading to family reunions in Scotland and Romania. His son Bob took him to both Scriven and Staveley although Josef recognised little of the area. Bob also introduced him to Adolf Zelch who lived in Park Lane in Knaresborough and who had also been a prisoner at Scriven. Adolf Zelch married Jean Calvert of Haya Park, Knaresborough in the parish church in September 1948. His best man was Michael Zeck, probably another POW (ref.113).

Mrs Mary Taylorson remembers a POW called Helmut Massmann at Scriven and how he married a girl called Honor Musson. The couple were married in Winchester in 1948 and Helmut became a naturalised Briton, remaining in this country to his death. On the occasion of his wedding, Helmut had to borrow a jacket because the only one he owned had a large circle of material sewn on the back which denoted his status as a prisoner of war (ref.52). The couple lived in Knaresborough at 19 Kirkgate and then 3 Park Square.

One of Helmut Massmann's friends was another German POW called Wolfgang Hubbe who now lives in the small town of Horsingen in Saxony-Anhalt in what was formerly East Germany. In 1997, Herr Hubbe tried to find Herr Massmann, with whom he had lost touch, through the Knaresborough Post and was saddened to find that he had died two years previously (Ref.54 &55). Wolfgang Hubbe had initially been a POW at Ripon, from December 1944 to April 1946 when he was moved to Great Ouseburn where prisoners were accommodated in the former workhouse. He was there until March 1947 when he was moved again, this time to Scriven Camp and was one of the last prisoners to be released when the camp closed in February 1948. He would then have been about 24 years old and returned to spend the next 40 years in communist East Germany. He has fond memories of Knaresborough and Scriven and recalls that the prisoners would spend their spare time around the town, visiting the castle ruins, the Dropping Well, Mother Shipton's Cave and the riverside (ref.56).

Whilst at Ripon, Wolfgang Hubbe received copies of a publication entitled 'English for All'. The British government at the time was keen to sponsor foreign students to learn English and this magazine was produced every 'Fortnightly for German POW'. In 1946, more than 814,000 copies of

this magazine were distributed but in December 1947 however, the publication dropped the term 'POW' and became 'Fortnightly for Germans', presumably to reflect the fact that many prisoners were being released. It contained articles of general interest (such as the story of the 'Queen Elizabeth' liner, South Africa and the English Public School) and various features to help explain the intricacies of the language, including English jokes, a crossword and proverbs. At the end of 1946, there were more than 46,000 German POWs learning English in camps. Like many fellow prisoners, Herr Hubbe sat exams at Ripon and was awarded an 'English Diploma', one of 839 Germans in Britain who passed the higher proficiency level. At Great Ouseburn, he assisted the local GP, Dr. Benson, who looked after the prisoners when they had no other medical assistance, visiting them twice a week. Dr. Benson had lost two sons in the RAF over Germany whilst Herr Hubbe's brother had also been a doctor and had been killed in Russia. We have a photograph of the canteen at Great Ouseburn in which Fritz Wirtz from Rheydt stands behind the counter and Gunter Laack stands on the other side (ref.89). Both men had been friends of Wolfgang Hubbe who worked there as an interpreter. Fritz Wirtz, a sergeant, had been at Ripon camp with Herr Hubbe and it was to him that Herr Hubbe gave four weekly wage payments for safekeeping to enable him (Hubbe) to buy a copy of Cassell's English-German dictionary to improve his fluency in English. The book is still on his desk in Germany and Herr Hubbe well recalls that he had to manage without cigarettes and NAAFI cake for a month in order to buy it (ref.89). His command of English became such that one of the English guards at Great Ouseburn, who was illiterate, secretly asked Herr Hubbe to read his letters from home and help him to reply.

Herr Hubbe had an unhappy introduction to Scriven. Whilst at Great Ouseburn, he suffered from a bout of depression and left the hostel one Sunday to get 'clear again in my mind'. He roamed about the area for a while and then reported in to the police station at Boroughbridge, from where he was taken to Scriven Hall. The next morning, he was seen by the British commandant (probably Lt-Col. Wilkinson) who, having satisfied himself that the new arrival had no suicidal tendencies, sentenced Hubbe to three days in the camp prison for going AWOL. This 'prison within a prison' was the former hall coach-house in which the partitions for the horses had been removed; there were two or three other men doing time there as well (ref.62). The coach house is now a dwelling called 'Scriven Hall'.

In October 1946, when Herr Hubbe wrote to his parents in Germany (at Horsingen, Germany, Russische Zone) his address, whilst he was at Great Ouseburn, was POW Camp 121, Scriven Hall, indicating that Great Ouseburn was a satellite camp to Scriven. He believes this was also the case for other POW locations such as Kirk Deighton and we know German prisoners were also at Staveley Court in what was probably a similar arrangement. Herr Hubbe also recalls that Scriven itself was a satellite of Ripon camp 247 which further confuses the position since Scriven was allocated the two numbers 121 and 211 by the British authorities. The envelope sent by Herr Hubbe was unstamped and franked 'POW Camp No.121, Great Britain' and was also unsealed for censorship purposes, the rear flap being secured into a slit cut into the envelope.

For six of the eleven months he was at Scriven, Wolfgang Hubbe was paymaster for the other prisoners. He produced a large table showing the working hours of each POW, who had to register with him on their return from work and record their hours. In this way, he came to know most men in the camp although sixty years on, this has now been forgotten. A British soldier brought in cash from Ripon and Herr Hubbe would pay each prisoner their due; pay day was once a week. Originally, their wages amounted to 4s in plastic money which was only to be used within the camp but by

1947, the rate had risen slightly. For 44 hours of work, a prisoner would be paid 5s 6d with an additional 3s paid into a 'repatriation account' given to the prisoner on his release. From July 1947, the wages were split with 4s being paid in plastic tokens and 4s in British currency. At the same time, ordinary rates for British agricultural labourers amounted to 1s 8d per hour with overtime for week end working (ref.66). Examples of paper POW currency may be seen at Eden Camp; this was known as 'Lagergeld (camp money).

The government set the rates of pay for POWs working as agricultural labourers. These rates were increased wef 14 July 1946 so that 1s 8d per hour was paid for all hours up to 8.5 hours worked Monday to Friday and 5.5 hours on Saturdays. Overtime in excess of these hours was paid at 2s 1d per hour Monday to Friday and 2s 6d per hour on Saturdays. Any work on Sundays or public holidays was charged at 2s 6d per hour. This is borne out by invoices for labour in the Eden Camp archive. A typical example shows an invoice dated 15 March 1947 from the North Riding War Agricultural Executive Committee (WEAC) to a farm in Malton, charging £9 10s for 114 hours of work, costed at 1s 8d per hour (ref.110). This did not mean however that the POW in question received pay of this amount, or indeed, anything like.

There seem to have been considerable deductions, presumably for food, accommodation etc which reduced the amounts of pay to individual POWs to the level of 8s per week as remembered by Herr Hubbe. In practice the British government appear to have used German prisoners as forced labour, albeit paid, to undertake what was seen as post-war reparation. The Ministry of Agriculture were also reluctant to speed up repatriation because by 1947 German POWs had become a welcome addition to Britain's manpower; about a quarter of all agricultural labour at this time was being provided by POWs. The Eden Camp archives also show that many German prisoners were employed in brickworks, manufacturing the raw materials to help rebuild Britain; some four million homes in this country had been destroyed. The records show that German POWs engaged in such work were paid approximately 3s 6d for a 48 hour week and that this was paid in camp money (ref.110).

If prisoners were billeted on farms rather than in the camp, they would be paid 80s for a 48 hour week with a similar supplement for overtime working. Farmers were entitled to deduct 23s 6d per week for board and lodgings (ref.72). Again though, individual prisoners seem to have endured substantial deductions from these levels of payment, certainly in the period immediately after the end of the war.

There was little resentment amongst the Germans regarding the low rates of pay. Most were simply content to have survived a terrible war without serious injury and considered themselves fortunate to be prisoners in Britain (rather than Russia) where they were given sufficient to eat, particularly when so many of their relatives in Germany were struggling to find food. By 1947, some of the men were billeted at specific farms and were being paid in sterling by their employers and a considerable number of prisoners (24,000) elected to stay in Britain when finally released from their camps. Very few seem to have voiced complaints about their pay and conditions although most were very anxious just to go home (ref.89).

Receiving money in the local currency made an enormous change to the prisoners' lives. Now, they could purchase goods from the local shops and use the buses to go to Harrogate and the cinemas. Wolfgang remembers buying saccharin so that he and his friends could sweeten their cocoa. Nearly all POWs had their photograph taken to send home to family. It is possible that the many

photographs we have of POWs in Knaresborough at this time are the photographer's copy of such portraits. The photographer was local man Sid Horner, still well remembered in Knaresborough.

Wolfgang Hubbe had his photograph taken in Harrogate in 1947, at the studio of Mr Anderson. He recalls that the cost was tremendous, some 40s which was a huge amount for a POW. (ref.89).

Herr Hubbe knew of the camp rule restricting POWs to a five mile radius of the camp but recalls that no-one really cared about enforcing this. Similarly, the non-fraternisation rule was quietly dropped and Germans were allowed to marry English girls although they had to remain within the camp until formally released.

Not every romance had a happy ending. Wolfgang Hubbe was in his office (one of the camp Nissen huts) when a local farmer came to enquire about a fellow prisoner who had worked on his farm and who had apparently been going to marry his daughter. The daughter had flown to Belgium for the wedding but the German prisoner had not appeared. Wolfgang had the unpleasant task of telling the family, who lived just outside the village, that the man was already married.

Dorothy Power from Knaresborough married a German prisoner of war whilst still legally married to her first husband, John Power, who also came from Knaresborough. She was committed for trial at Lincoln Assizes in November 1948 on a charge of bigamy (ref.111). As Dorothy Hymas, she had married John Power in Knaresborough in 1939.

Wolfgang Hubbe's office was the nearest Nissen hut to the north of the old Hall. It was intended for the senior German officer at the camp but whilst the officer in question was there during the day, he preferred to share evenings elsewhere with his friends and so then Wolfgang enjoyed sole occupancy. He regarded it as a luxury- a hut to himself with a bunk bed and a radio on which he would listen to Bing Crosby, Vera Lynn, Gracie Fields, Paul Robeson and many others. This particular Nissen hut was internally subdivided with the door leading directly to the office section. Beyond this, Wolfgang's small cabin was in the middle of the hut and the remainder of the interior was usually closed up and only opened for special occasions such as assemblies (ref.89).

From his 'office', Wolfgang Hubbe had a view of the north elevation of the old Hall which he regarded as the front of the building. Many years later, when shown a picture of the grander southern frontage, he was surprised, never having seen this side of the building before despite spending eleven months at Scriven Camp. This indicates that the prisoners rarely had cause to venture round to the southern side of the hall; their huts were sited to the north and west and they had no reason to be on the other side of the old Hall which was where the British commandant and his men were based..

The prisoners at Scriven produced their own newspaper which appeared every second or third week. Entitled 'Die Pforte' (The Gate), it contained news and articles written by the prisoners themselves. Wolfgang Hubbe wrote an article about cricket which appeared in the edition of April 1947, just after he arrived at the camp and was assisted in this by a British army officer, a Major Holding. In June 1947, another of his articles concerned Knaresborough castle and the pedometer in the museum which had belonged to Blind Jack. This paper was in addition to another POW publication, 'Drahtpost' (Barbed Wire Post) which was published in London for the World Alliance of the YMCA and War Prisoners' Aid in Geneva and circulated amongst the POWs.

Another POW, who came from Bremen, worked at Park house Farm in Little Ribston and returned many times after the war to see the farmers, Mr and Mrs Bean (ref. 56).

Other local residents recall that Jack Obradovic, who came from Serbia, was also a prisoner at Scriven who settled in Knaresborough after the war although he apparently spent little time at Scriven, possibly only two weeks or so, before he was moved onto the POW hostel at Great Ouseburn.

Similarly, Otto Pletz from Germany, has lived for many years in nearby Brearton, having married a lady in Knaresborough in 1951; his spouse was Hilda A.E. Ringk.

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).

Manfred Eckert was a former German POW who married Alice Wilson at Knaresborough in mid 1948 and settled in the town upon his release. In 1949, he was working at South Docken Bush Farm in Brearton by Mr. H. Ingram. Like the other former POWs, he was permitted to stay in Britain by a licence which could be revoked by the authorities (ref.119). Fred Eckhart later worked as a boilerman at Scotton Gates Hospital (ref.118).

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 (refs.18 and 75).

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 (refs.17 and 76).

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 took place in January 1947, when 36 German prisoners attended evening service which was followed by a recital of gramophone records and then by a performance of carols by the prisoners, accompanied on the piano (ref. 77). The standard of music was so high that these musical 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). The newspaper report describes how the prisoners mixed with local residents, dressed in 'drab uniforms of dark red, brown or green, each with a tell-tale diamond on his back' and that they clearly relished the music of the Messiah sung in a language of which few of them could understand more than the odd word (ref.78).

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).

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.'

These camp rules were also reproduced in the Knaresborough Post (ref.80), the local paper for Scriven but the editor does not seem to have included the Rutherford correspondence which he published in the Harrogate editions.

Notwithstanding this information however, it would seem that these 'rules' were really to reassure the public, since the evidence suggests that few of them were ever enforced. Certainly, official permission had to be granted for prisoners to visit private homes at Christmas and other occasions and there are no reports of prisoners from Scriven being found drunk (unlike, for example, British soldiers) but the authorities generally turned a blind eye to the restrictions. We are certainly aware that amorous liaisons were taking place between German prisoners and local girls and that German prisoners used local buses and shops and we know that prisoners did have access to sterling currency.

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 joined the Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry at the age of 18. He was subsequently commissioned as a 2nd

Lieutenant in the KOYLI in December 1918, promoted to the rank of Captain and then Major. He was 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).

When he retired from the army, Bernard Wilkinson moved to 43 Boroughbridge Road in New Scriven, another military figure from Scriven who settled in Knaresborough. He stood for election to Knaresborough Urban Council in 1950, one of seven candidates for five seats, having been proposed by Councillor Ernest Alton and Lady Evelyn Collins and seconded by Mr R. Holmes and Dora Jacob Smith (ref.121). In the event, Lt-Col. Wilkinson polled 1312 votes, the highest number of votes of any candidate, and was duly elected to the Council (ref.123). In 1956, he became Chairman of Knaresborough UDC (ref.150).

Once he had settled in Knaresborough, Lt-Col. Wilkinson set about exploring the surrounding countryside with a view to survey every footpath and right of way in the district, mapping the route on a large-scale plan and recording details of useage and condition of gates and stiles. When he finished listing all known paths, he intended to search other paths which had been ploughed over or which had disappeared for lack of use. In this context, he had already discovered one local path which had not been used since before WW2; this ran from Sweet Bits Lane to Hazleheads Lane in Scriven (ref.124). He completed this task in February 1951, having walked and mapped every footpath within the district and made recommendations as to its future use (ref.126). He also served on the Services Committee of the Knaresborough British Legion from 1950 (ref.125) and was a member of the KOYLI Association (ref.131).

Lt-Col Wilkinson died in Leeds in September 1985.

The general picture seems to be that whilst these rules were initially enforced in camps in 1946, by the middle of 1947, they were being relaxed. Certainly, one prisoner at Ripon was brought before a Court Martial in August 1946, charged with fraternising with a local girl, without any suggestion of impropriety. Contrast this to late 1947 when prisoners were being partially paid in sterling and were using public transport to visit cinemas and were openly fraternising with local girls; some at Scriven were even married in 1947 and 1948, probably whilst still POWs.

Certainly, in March 1947, the Secretary for War announced a further relaxation of the restrictions applying to German POWs. The distinctive patches on their clothing would be phased out as chocolate-dyed battledress became available; this would be issued without such markings. General Officers commanding POW camps were given authority to extend the five mile radius limit previously imposed upon prisoners leaving their camps to enable them to reach special amenities such as a town otherwise out of bounds. It should be noted that this five mile radius was itself a relaxation of the rules which had applied whilst the war was still being fought. (At Ripon Camp which held German POWs during the war, unescorted POWs were only permitted to go a few hundred yards from their camp.) Prisoners would also be allowed to enter private residences upon invitation without the need to obtain the prior approval of their commandant although he would retain the power to place a specific house or district out of bounds (ref.81).

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 May 1947, one of the first concerts performed by the prisoners was given in The Methodist Hall on Knaresborough High Street. The orchestra was conducted by Peter Niessen (who also played the violin) and the programme included music by Handel, Schubert, Beethoven, Wagner, Brahms, Chopin and Tchaikowsky (ref.82). The hall was crowded for the concert and a number of the audience were unable to find seats. Conny Schmitz played the piano and Paul Crutzner the organ whilst Egon Kliewert sang. Joachim Specht acted as compere at the event (ref.83). The performance was so well received that the prisoners put on another concert almost immediately (ref.84). on this second occasion, the orchestra performed pieces by Mascagni, Verdi, Handel, Strauss, Tchaikowsky, Liszt, Dvorak and Wagner. The performers were as before although this time the evening was compered by Rudolf Schumann (ref.85).

For those working on the farms, POWs were entitled to supplementary rations during periods of special seasonal activity such as harvest time, haymaking, threshing and sheep shearing. This gave them the same nourishment as British farm labourers of the time. Farmers who employed prisoners were required to apply to the camp in question in sufficient time to enable rations to be adjusted accordingly (ref.86).

In August 1947, more antagonism surfaced in regard to the locally-held POWs. When Knaresborough Urban Council considered a proposal to permit a limited number of prisoners to attend future meetings of the Council. The debate did not clarify the source of this suggestion, nor explain why German POWs would wish to attend, but like the Rutherford debate in Harrogate earlier in 1947, the issue polarised opinion. Speaking against the proposal, Councillor J.A. Henry believed that the presence of prisoners would be an embarrassment to both councillors and the general public and added 'I hate Germans and have no wish to associate with them and have them sitting behind me at council meetings'. Some other councillors supported this view whilst others felt that the Germans could learn much about the workings of British democracy. Councillor Aykroyd best summed up the case in favour by declaring that the prisoners who walked around Knaresborough were not war criminals and now that the war had been over for two years, it was time to treat them like human beings. After what was evidently a lively debate, Councillor Henry's amendment to exclude the Germans was defeated by 7 votes to 6 (ref.87).

The debate, reported in the paper, soon spread beyond the Council chamber. A Miss Edith Simpson of Copgrove wrote in to say it was distressing both to hear Councillor Henry declare that he hated Germans indiscriminately and to find that others supported his views. She pointed out that many POWs would read the paper and she felt there ought to be more tolerance and progressiveness in discussing these Germans than for them to be subjected to public outbursts of hatred (ref.88). The following week, the Knaresborough Post printed two more letters on the subject, one from each side of the debate. The Cox family from Grove House on Boroughbridge Road in Knaresborough considered that 'Many of the German boys at Scriven Hall are quite young, in some cases having been called up at the age of sixteen and have a passionate longing to see their mothers. Others have lost both parents, and many have no homes. Externally they look the same, just P.O.W. in patched clothes, but beneath the patched suits beat the hearts of human beings just as real and keen as our own'. The opposing view was anonymous, being signed 'Yorkshire woman' who took the view that

Councillor Henry had a very fine war record and hence his views reflected his knowledge of the Germans and their ways. The writer went on, 'I do not believe in fostering hatred but nevertheless, all the misery at present in the world is directly due to the Germans. The way in which I have seen Knaresborough people behaving with Germans fills me with disgust and not only young people, I might add.' (ref.90).

In the event, three German prisoners from Scriven Camp did attend a council meeting at Knaresborough in October 1947. The men were Peter Niessen, leader of the camp orchestra, Richard Haage and Hans Bohner and they were welcomed by the Council chairman, Councillor G.A. Hodge. The Germans expressed the hope that they would learn something from the proceedings of the democratic way of life. All three were fluent in English (ref.95).

At much same time as this debate, in August 1947, a letter was published in the Knaresborough Post by an ex-British serviceman, complaining about German POWs on the local buses. The writer, who signed himself 'Disgusted' described being on the Harrogate to Knaresborough bus one evening and finding no less than twelve German POWs already seated and who declined to offer their seats to women who were standing (ref.87). This indignation was wholly supported by 'Yorkshire woman' who considered that if she could not get on a bus for Germans then 'I should be furious, to put it mildly' (ref.90).

The POW orchestra gave another concert in September 1947 in the Methodist Hall on Knaresborough High Street. This time, the programme included Beethoven's Fifth Symphony (ref.92). The concert was again attended by a very large and appreciative audience and prompted one local resident (Mrs Ethel Abbott of West Park View in Knaresborough) to write and congratulate the orchestra on their performance. She called for more concerts whilst the men remained in the town (ref.93).

In October 1947, the War Office announced that the shortage of shipping made the on-going repatriation of German POWs impossible to maintain at the increased rate which had occurred during the summer of that year. They advised that only a small number of prisoners would therefore be shipped back to Germany in the remainder of 1947 but that it remained their intention to repatriate all POWs by the end of 1948 (ref. 94).

Mr A.P.Mann of Hambleton Grove in Knaresborough, who was organist at Aldborough Parish Church, composed a violin solo in 1947. This was played at a recital at the Methodist Hall on the High Street by Peter Niessen of Scriven Camp during a further concert in October 1947 by the camp orchestra (ref.95). Later that month, at the end of October, a musical trio of German POWs entertained members of the Gracious Street Wesley Guild at their weekly meeting. The performers on this occasion were Conny Schmitt on piano, Peter Niessen on violin and Egon Kliewert as vocalist (ref.97).

There was evidently a sick bay at Scriven Camp because an appeal was launched locally in October 1947 for gifts of periodicals and other reading material for sick German POWs. Messrs. Parrs Ltd in Knaresborough High Street, run by Wilfred Wilkinson, offered to receive any donations at their shop from where they would be forwarded to Scriven (ref .96).

More concerts took place in November 1947, as closure of the camp approached. The next performance took place in Holy Trinity Parochial Hall in Knaresborough as one means of thanking local residents for the kindness they had received in the town. The first part of the evening was taken up by orchestral items played by the camp orchestra under Peter Niessen and later they played for dancing. The evening ended with the singing of 'Bless you' by all parties in honour of the Royal Wedding. At the interval, Captain G. O. Plackett who was then the CO at Scriven Camp, thanked residents for all they had done for the prisoners (ref.99). This event was swiftly followed by a 'request' concert in the Methodist Hall in the High Street where the programme included two movements from Mendelssohn's violin concerto. Peter Niessen conducted the orchestra and performed violin solos and the other soloists were Conny Schmitz on the piano and organ, Alex Drewniok on the clarinet and Egon Kliewert as the vocalist (ref.99). The concert was compered by Richard Pfluegner and also included works by Verdi, Rachmaninoff, Tchaikowsky, Schubert, Schumann, Suppe, Paganini, Strauss and Romberg (ref.100).

A Christmas concert was then organised for 20 December 1947, again in the Methodist Hall on Knaresborough High Street. The programme included movements from Beethoven's Fifth Symphony and Peter Niessen again conducted the orchestra and performed violin solos, with Conny Schmitz on the piano, Emil Fehrecke on trumpet and Egon Kliewert as the vocalist (ref.102). The programme also included the 'Grand March' from Tannhauser, Schubert's 'Rosamunde' and a Christmas selection arranged by Neissen and Schmitz (ref.103).

Peter Niessen went to Ripon POW camp when Scriven closed and continued with his musical career, leading German musicians at a recital at Dragon road Methodist church in Harrogate at the end of February 1948 (ref.107).

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). Giving evidence, WO Duncan told the court that on 4th December he went with other officers to a lane leading from Ripley Road to Scriven Camp where he found the three accused men with two boxes of newly-dressed fowls in their possession. The men had been taken to Knaresborough Police station and had made statements through an interpreter (ref.101). At their trial, Lance Corporal Klapsing acted as interpreter together with Captain Snowball of the British army; both interpreters were awarded one guinea each for their services. Each of the accused had been given a good character reference by the camp CO, Captain Plackett.(ref.102).

Almost immediately, another three prisoners from Scriven were found guilty of a similar offence which had occurred just before Christmas and they were sent to prison at Wetherby. Heinz Rudnik, aged 20 admitted the theft of five fowls from a farm at North Deighton was sent to prison for 3 months. Charges of theft against Ludwig Fohman, aged 26 and Karl Heinz Schranz, 21, were dismissed but the two men were found guilty of receiving the stolen fowls and sentenced to 2 months imprisonment each. An unnamed officer from Scriven camp testified that the men were of a good character but were not employed at that time and so had no money (ref.105).

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 between the ages of 9 and 12 as a return for the hospitality they had received in the area. It was initially going to be held in the camp but the venue was changed to the church hall (ref.104). 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. A surviving example of a Hihnerspeil is on display at Eden Camp. 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 and 105). Photographs of the event appeared in the Knaresborough Post, showing the children, some of the POWs and the toys (ref.105).

Scriven closed as a POW Camp in February 1948 (ref.56) although there does not seem to have been any formal acknowledgement of this in the local press. Return to a Germany broken by war was not always ideal. Josef Hanton spent two years at Ripon POW camp and when he returned to Germany in mid 1947, he wrote a letter to a Mr H.E.Sadler at his former place of work stating '....the first impression of Germany was terrible. You surely have read in your newspapers about the actual conditions existing in Germany. I do not want to describe it; it is too bad' (ref.64).

A similar experience was described by Werner Tippmann from the town of Brunn who had been taken prisoner at El Alamein and had then spent time in North American camps before being repatriated from Scriven in late 1947. His home was then in the Russian zone of Germany and in a letter to Scriven, Herr Tippmann described his journey home:

'Having crossed the British-Russian zonal frontier we came to the last camp where we had to stay for a fortnight. There we had to hunger for the first time. I couldn't help thinking, 'I had better have remained in England for some time'. I can't describe the impressions we got there. You can't believe it. It would be necessary to see it. We gave our last piece of bread to the hungry children. There were some who seemed unable to live any longer. On September 6th I was allowed to leave the camp and return to my dear mother as a free man. Now I have been living here for some weeks and I soon got accustomed to the misery. I am hungry from morning till night. There is nothing to be bought. At best, you can exchange one article for another if you have any. You don't know how deep our misery is. I intended to have a cloak and a suit made but it is impossible as I have no thread. We can hardly bear the bad conditions' (ref .100).

This food shortage in Germany compares to a much better situation in Britain at that time, even with food here still being rationed. Wolfgang Hubbe, who spent time at POW camps in Ripon and Great

Ouseburn as well as at Scriven, recalls that the only time he saw a Red Cross parcel whilst a prisoner was when he was in a transit camp in Sheffield in 1944. On that occasion, he felt rather humiliated because the small portion of black bread he received, presumably sent from Germany, compared very unfavourably with the ample supply of white bread the prisoners were given as part of their ration (ref.149). The attached appendix sets out more detail regarding Herr Hubbe.

In January 1948, just before Scriven POW Camp closed, many German prisoners at Scriven, together with a large number of others in the West Riding, volunteered to stay in Britain rather than to return to Germany. This was a scheme which allowed prisoners to continue to work on the land as 'alien civilians' and benefitted Britain by retaining agricultural labourers for the 1948 harvest, when ordinary POWs would have been repatriated. This idea was part of the European Voluntary Workers scheme, see below, under which the men had the same pay as British farm workers and could reside either in an EVW hostel or on a specific farm. The men had to retain their German nationality and were given 43 clothing coupons, a ration book and an identity card (ref.106).

Displaced Persons 1948-51

In September 1948, faced with a serious shortage of agricultural labourers, the government decided to permit ex-POWs who were employed by individual farmers to remain in Britain after the end of 1948 provided that their current employers were willing to offer them continuing employment. Permission was subject to approval by the Ministry of Labour who would check that such employment was without detriment to British and Polish workers or EVWs. The scheme under which German POWs were engaged by Agricultural Executive Committees ended in December 1948 and those Germans covered by the scheme would then be repatriated. In 'exceptional cases', Germans employed under the AEC scheme could take up work with individual farmers and therefore remain within Britain. Former German POWs who had married British wives were entitled to apply to the Home Office for permission to remain in Britain, rather than being repatriated to Germany by the end of 1948. Additionally, those former prisoners who were accepted for further service in agriculture were given the opportunity to visit their home country by the end of 1948 (ref.112).

Whilst Scriven Camp had been requisitioned by the Ministry of War and used for the British army and prisoners of war, when it was to house foreign workers who were farm labourers it seems that responsibility for the site now passed to the Ministry of Agriculture (ref.138).

Those prisoners who had elected to stay here were still 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).

Many former prisoners who elected to stay in Britain remained working as farm labourers because there was still a great demand for their services and because Germany was still a shattered nation. Christopher York MP advised that, in March 1948, immediately after the last POWs had departed from Scriven, there were 502 German civilian farm workers still in the West Riding (ref.65).

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 their home land. 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, although EVWs appear to have remained at Scriven well into 1951 (ref.128).

The first sixty DPs to arrive in the Knaresborough area came in June 1947, whilst German prisoners were still at Scriven. Mainly Lithuanians, these DPs came from the British-occupied zone of Europe and were accommodated at Pannal Hall, which had been converted into a residential hostel run by the Ministry of Agriculture and with a YMCA worker in charge. The intention was that these DPs would partly replace German prisoners as agricultural labourers who were gradually being released from their camps. Harlow Grange in Harrogate, which was previously a POW camp was then in the process of being prepared for further DPs who were expected to arrive in August 1947 and other hostels were being prepared at Wetherby and Ripon (ref.85). Harlow Grange actually opened as a DP hostel in September 1947, housing 87 European Voluntary Workers, who seem to have mainly from the Ukraine and to have arrived from camps near Hull and York (ref.91).

After initial doubts, farmers were soon won over by the DPs and became so eager to employ them that a waiting list had to be drawn up. Mr Briggs, the labour manager at Pannal, explained their popularity by describing how one DP could do as much as a normal farmworker, having had a rough life and not knowing how to take life easy. The only complaint he had heard was that the DPs were reluctant to break off in mid-morning for tea, preferring to work through, sometimes as many as thirteen hours a day. They were paid the normal agricultural rate of 1s 8d per hour with time and a quarter for overtime. Unused to a British economy, the DPs begrudged PAYE, not seeing what benefit they gained from the deductions (ref.88).

Most EVWs in the area seem to have worked as agricultural labourers, taking the place of the German POWs who were gradually being repatriated or otherwise released and they formed part of a 'pool' of labour resource which local farmers within a certain distance were able to draw upon as needed. At the time, there was some concern that as other industries developed a need for additional workers, farmers could be left without the resources to work their land effectively (ref.53).

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).

By June 1948, when the German prisoners had been replaced at Scriven by DPs, the Hall had a distinct air of neglect. A contemporary account describes the Hall 'as a melancholy sight. Shuttered windows, peeling paintwork and locked doors tell the tale of war, for ten years ago it was commandeered by the War Office. A succession of troops have left their mark on this ancient home and now Nissen huts stand out amongst the rhododendron bushes. Docks and dandelions grow in profusion in the paved courtyard and lawns have become hayfields' (ref.108). That Displaced Persons were occupying the camp at this time seems clear from a report in the *Knaresborough Post* the following week in which a Ukrainian DP was fined 10s with 10s 6d costs at Knaresborough court for being drunk in charge of a bicycle at Boroughbridge. Leonid Didenko pleaded guilty, having just attended a wedding. He was working then as a motor driver at Dishforth and although the report does not make it clear as to where he was based at the time, it does specify that the interpreter used in court was from Scriven Camp (ref.109).

One of the local issues which surfaced whilst the DPs were resident at Scriven was road safety. Most DPs used the roads in some capacity or other but it was evident that not all were familiar with British traffic regulations. In November 1948, after three DPs had been involved in traffic accidents around Knaresborough, the issue was raised in a meeting of the Knaresborough Road Safety Committee and the police were asked to consider whether it would be possible to give talks on road safety at Scriven and the other local DP camps (ref.114)

Kazys Kaslauciusas came from Panevezys in Lithuania and was resident at the Scriven EVW hostel in 1948. Whilst attending a dance at the Sun Pavilion, he met Elizabeth Kendall from Kepwick near Thirsk and the two were married in Harrogate in November 1948. The best man was Guiazas Livinskas and the groomsman was Antonas Vasilianskas, both friends of the groom and probably also European Voluntary Workers from the Scriven hostel. The ceremony was conducted by Father Kusmiskas, a Lithuanian priest from Bradford (ref.115).

In early 1949 the hostel at Harlow Grange in Harrogate was closed prior to being de-requisitioned. At the time, there were about 80 Ukrainian EVWs billeted there and these were then transferred to other camps in the area, notably to Scriven (ref.116).

Another voluntary worker at the Scriven hostel at this time was Potkonjas Dusan, then aged about 30. In February 1949, he was the victim of a traffic accident in Knaresborough when his bicycle was in collision with a car at the junction of Whiteley's Yard and Knaresborough High Street. Mr Dusan escaped without injury but his cycle was damaged (ref.117).

Yugoslav Illja Simic was aged 23 in 1950 and living at the Scriven EVW hostel. He had come to England as an EVW in February 1944 and came to Scriven as an agricultural worker in August 1948. Apart from periods of illness, he had worked on local farms in Nidderdale until November 1949 when he was suspected of suffering from tuberculosis. On 17 February 1950, he was however certified as being fit for any kind of work. The following day he was offered work as an agricultural labourer at Marston Moor but refused. Later, he was offered work in either a quarry or a brickworks but again refused, expressing a desire to go to the USA to escape the British climate. The authorities then tried to prosecute Mr. Simic for contravening regulations requiring EVWs in Britain to

undertake work. His work permit and identity card had however been printed in Germany and had not been endorsed by the Secretary of State. His defence maintained that the Aliens Order contained no such condition and that no offence had been committed; the Knaresborough magistrates considered that he had no case to answer because the prosecution had not established the existence of any regulation requiring EVWs in this country to undertake work(ref.122).

Paul Thatch was a Polish Ukranian whose parents lived in Poland. He spent time at Scriven Camp and was employed at Lingerfield quarry when he left. In October 1950, he married Joan Ibbotson from Park Parade in Knaresborough at the parish church. His best man was Walter Ornelanewies who had presumably also been an EVW at Scriven (ref.125).

Walter William Margis from Lithuania married Eileen Midgley of the High Street, Knaresborough at the parish church in March 1951. Her brother-in-law acted as best man (ref 127).

Ewhen Prokopiuk was a Ukranian EVW in the Scriven Park hostel who worked at Spring House Farm, Brackenthwaite, Pannal. In August 1951, at the age of 27, he committed suicide at the farm whilst the balance of his mind was disturbed. At that time, the hostel warden was Richard J. Roberts who gave evidence at the inquest (ref.128); Kelly's Directory for Harrogate in 1950 shows that 'F. Smallwood' was the previous warden.

Although the EVW scheme came to an end nationally in 1950, the case of Mr. Prokopiuk shows that the Scriven hostel still held voluntary workers at least until summer 1951.

There appears to have been some resentment about the EVWs at Scriven, a feeling that does not seem to have surfaced when the camp had been occupied by the army or by the POWs. This resentment was expressed by Brigadier Brunskill, the agent for the Scriven estate who lived in the village, and who objected strongly in 1952 to the conversion of the huts to an open prison which is discussed below. At that time ie in 1952, Brunskill said of the EVW camp, 'The camp was a terrible nuisance to all the people around and I myself nearly had a free fight with three drunken EVWs who were coming home late' (ref.135).

The regulations on aliens within Britain remained onerous in the early 1950s. In October 1951, 20 year old Helene Eastwood was summoned by Knaresborough court for failing to register her marriage and consequent change of address with the authorities (ref.129). As Helena Johanna M. Kollen, she had arrived in the area from Germany in 1949 and had worked at Scotton Banks sanatorium since September 1950. She had married John Eastwood in Knaresborough on 26 July 1951. PC Wright, the local aliens officer, told the court that her change in circumstances had not been reported until 16th August although the regulations required this to be done within 48 hours. He also added that her application for registration as a British subject had been granted on 17th October. Her defence pointed out that Helene had been married by a registrar, had obtained a new identity card from a registration officer and now had a certificate of nationality from the Home Office. He pointed out the regulations would confuse anyone who understood English perfectly, let alone a young girl who had only lived here for two years and she thought she had done all she should. The court found her guilty of these two technical infringements and she was fined 5s for each offence (ref.130).

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 (ref.74). 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 (ref.19); they were all still there after five months in January 1947, enduring conditions of damp and darkness and in a hut infested with rats (ref.79). The Cowley family remained in their Nissen hut at Starbeck for three years and finally left in early 1950 for a new life in Australia after the Australian High Commissioner had personally intervened during a visit to the Allied cemetery at nearby Stonefall (ref.120). It is noticeable that German POWs vacated the camp at Starbeck at roughly the time Scriven began to accommodate German POWs.

A similar situation occurred at Boroughbridge at the same time where a homeless family took over an ex-army Nissen hut in Spring Gardens, again without power or water supplies. In this case, the family consisted of an invalid former soldier and his wife, together with five young sons and a baby daughter (ref. 73).

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 either the POWs or the EVWs arrived even though there were a number of German prisoners and EVWs 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). Initially, no clear indication was given as to the proposed location, other than this was being proposed for the 'Knaresborough area' (ref.132) but within a week, Scriven Camp had been revealed to be the preferred site (ref.133).

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. Soon, that objection would be supported by many others, including a joint objection from Knaresborough and Harrogate Councils (ref.136).

The press pointed out that Old Scriven at the time had a population of only 110 adults and 30 children and the village had no wish to be continually outnumbered by outsiders in their midst. One village housewife was quoted as saying 'We had enough with the foreigners (EVWs); we don't want prisoners bringing here' (ref.133). A photograph published in the paper at this time shows the abandoned huts north of the Hall in a state of dilapidation, with the grounds looking neglected and overgrown. There was a feeling within both the village and the wider area that they had done their bit; the Hall had been requisitioned in a period of national emergency at the start of the war and whilst residents and locals had not objected to its use for the British army, POWs and most recently, EVWs, circumstances had changed and the prison proposal was an extension of use which was unacceptable (ref.133).

A reporter who visited the site during this debate was surprised to find a telephone being installed in one of the Nissen huts because the site of the old camp was otherwise deserted. The Post Office engineer was unable to tell him why this was being done (ref.134).

Objections were also raised by Scotton Banks sanatorium which was particularly concerned about female staff walking back to Knaresborough late at night. The councils were also concerned that the proposal would harm Knaresborough's image as a holiday destination. The residents of Scriven were described as being 'unanimously against the scheme and are prepared to back a petition against it' and there many other objections from Knaresborough and Harrogate. Brigadier G S Brunskill, agent for the Scriven estate, appears to have taken a leading role in co-ordinating objections from the village residents (re.37) and was anxious to point out that the estate had not been involved in developing the proposal. 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. According to the local newspaper, nine out of ten residents in Knaresborough objected to the proposal. The local MP, Christopher York conducted his own survey and concluded that 99% of his constituents were against the prison (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).

Another resident, Mr Abbott of Boroughbridge Road, was also more sympathetic to the idea of a prison. He pointed out that many of the people now objecting would have enjoyed the music provided by the German POWs and that these people would probably find the proposed prisoners equally 'companionable'. Mr Abbott also believed that whilst objections were being made on behalf of the nursing staff at Scotton Banks Sanatorium, no nurses had actually complained (ref. 136). Others were quick to respond, justifying their continued objections (ref.137).

The WI summed up the feelings of many residents in their letter of objection to Christopher York MP. Signed by Mrs Jacob Smith, the letter stated 'We understand that it is proposed to establish a 'prison without bars' at Scriven camp. If so, then we protest against the proposal most vehemently. To allow criminals to be at large in this district is intolerable. Our children and the women would never be free from molestation and no property would be safe. We believe that criminals should be kept under the closest supervision and should not be at liberty to commit further offences similar to this for which they have already been committed to prison' (ref. 134).

West Riding County Council also objected to the prison, condemning the proposal on 'sociological grounds' and adding that, to the best of their knowledge, 'there had been no complaints from neighbouring people about the previous uses to which the estate had been put' (ref.135). This was however contradicted by the wording of a petition which was sent to the Home Secretary in September 1952. Signed by '100 per cent of the electorate of the parish of Scriven', it naturally objected to the idea of a prison and pointed out that the village had no street lighting, no public telephone and no resident policeman. The petition also stated that the village had suffered annoyance and alarm from the previous occupants of the camp over the previous twelve years ie since it had been first requisitioned in 1940 (ref.137).

The proposal did however prompt some inspiration. At the Calcutt and Forest Moor fete at the end of August 1952, first prize in the fancy dress competition was awarded to Jennifer Laird who was attired as 'Convict 99, Scriven Park' (ref.134).

The opposition continued until October when the Home Secretary wrote to Mr York MP 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. Brigadier Brunskill described the news as conveying 'a very genuine and sincere relief from the state of anxiety and even fear which has been created among Scriven villagers and other residents'. The villagers now hoped that a use would be found for the camp which did not involve the introduction of a large number of men into their community (ref.138). Letters of thanks were sent from both Knaresborough and Nidderdale Councils to Christopher York MP for his support in opposing the proposals (ref.139).

The prison scheme abandoned, the Hall was then to be handed back to the Slingsby family by the Ministry of Works (ref.140). 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, but to offer it on a long lease and 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).

The editorial in the Knaresborough Post at this time seems to have summed up local feeling. The paper wrote 'In the post-war years not only Scriven but to a lesser extent Knaresborough and the whole Nidderdale rural area have viewed with distaste the continued government occupation of Scriven Hall. The long years of neglect, combined with the sometimes unfortunate type of 'tenant' have not improved the amenities of the district. When the hall is shortly freed (ie from government

control) the aim of the owners will be to preserve it. In these days that will not be easy but local people will wish the attempt every success' (ref.140). The size of this restoration task seems to have been considerable and the Ministry of Works sent in a team of workmen to restore the building. The 'unsightly' huts were also to be removed from the grounds in a bid to help restore the amenity of the park but there seems little doubt that the historic hall itself was in a poor condition from its requisitioned useage.

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 Low Wood 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, particularly since the Hall itself had been occupied by the British guards and administrators.

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). There was no night watchman at the hall (ref. 141). 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). Brigadier Brunskill described the fire as 'the last tragedy in a series of tragedies which the hall has suffered' (ref. 142).

It was in this fire-damaged condition that Scriven Hall was formerly de-requisitioned by the Ministry of War, this being notified in July 1953, thirteen and a half years after it had been requisitioned in the first place (ref.143). The Ministry had ceased to pay rent to the Slingsbys on 12 June 1953 (ref.58).

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, given that the surviving portion was in a bad state of repair, the Slingsby family took the decision to demolish the Hall, fill in the cellars and grass over the site (ref.144). Nidderdale Council were informed of this and raised no objections. The family did however preserve and renovate the old coachhouse for 'sentimental and historical reasons' and also repaired a range of garages and outhouses which were to be used for agricultural purposes (ref.57). The former coachhouse was bought privately in the 1960s and converted into a dwelling now known as 'Scriven Hall'. At the same time in 1953, the Slingsbys 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. When demolition began in December 1953, the first task of the workmen was reported to be the removal of the hut bases from the grounds so it is likely that these were removed in early 1953 although those along Gaker Walk and some north of the old hall were never removed and are still to be found in the undergrowth (ref.59). The press reported that a local firm was undertaking the demolition work although they did not name the company (ref.145).

It had been the intention during demolition to preserve the carved stone crest of the Slingsby family which was over the north door of the old hall. This dated to the early seventeenth century and was some four feet square, weighing nearly half a ton. Whilst the contractors were lowering the crest to the ground, it fell from its supporting boards and broke into several pieces (ref.146). It would be reassembled later by Arthur Atkinson, the estate mason, and placed on the wall of the former coach-house which is today called Scriven Hall (ref.147).

The Knaresborough Post published a photograph of the Hall when the demolition work was nearly complete (ref.148). It showed the site covered in rubble and timber with fragmentary remains of some walls still standing to the height of a single storey.

After the war, when the Hall and been demolished and the Nissen huts removed, a number of former German prisoners returned to see the site of their former home. Mr and Mrs Armitage who live in the old coach-house currently called Scriven Hall can recall many of them asking for permission for access from the 1960s and thereafter.

The final word on Scriven Camp may be left to Canon B. K. Kissack who was Vicar of Knaresborough. At the service of Thanksgiving held in May 1945 to celebrate the Victory in Europe, he considered the alternative to an Allied victory and concluded that this was too awful to contemplate. Had we lost the war, he said, there would have been nothing to prevent Scriven Park being 'turned into another Buchenwald or Dachau' (ref.70).

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128. Knaresborough Post 1 September 1951
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130. Knaresborough Post 3 November 1951
131. Knaresborough Post 19 January 1952
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135. Knaresborough Post 13 September 1952
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Appendix

Prisoner Profile: Wolfgang Hubbe

Wolfgang Hubbe was born in 1925 in Neunkirchen in Germany where his father was manager of the local brickyard. The family moved to Horsingen in 1927 which is where Herr Hubbe still lives. His elder brother qualified as a doctor but was called up into the German army in 1939 and was killed on the Russian front in 1941. The village of Horsingen had about 900 inhabitants at the start of the war; 76 of them died as soldiers.

As a boy, and like all his school friends, Wolfgang was a keen member of the Hitler Youth movement and in 1934 he attended a two-week school with examinations at Thale in the Harz mountains. He failed the examination, which appears to have related solely to physical exercise. His attendance on the course had required no personal application but he had been selected by his teachers after consultation with the local officials of the Nazi Party.

At the age of 16, he and a school friend had (cautiously) obtained access to anti-Nazi literature which was to change his views. This was in 1941, the year of his brother's death. After that, he was determined not to fight for the Nazis, although he could never express such views openly. In 1943, at the age of 18, Wolfgang was conscripted into the German army. After his initial training, he found himself on the front line in Belgium. This was in September 1944, when the Allies were advancing across the Low Countries. The Germans were dug in along the eastern bank of a canal near the town of Rotem, close to Maastricht on the border with Holland. At that time, the major fighting was taking place around Arnhem, and the area around Rotem saw little fighting. Here, he made the decision to desert.

With his Corporal, Wolfgang ventured across the canal and into a wood which was effectively 'no-man's land' and revealed his intentions to his colleague. The Corporal hurried back to the German lines, leaving Wolfgang alone in the wood; he has no idea how the Corporal explained his absence. Wolfgang took off his helmet, rifle, grenades and gas mask and walked on until he found a group of Desert Rats (British Eighth Army) to whom he surrendered. That occurred on Wednesday, 20th September 1944.

Wolfgang Hubbe already spoke good English and was readily understood by the British soldiers who had been very surprised by his sudden appearance. He was their only prisoner and the interrogating captain left him temporarily in the care of a Sherman tank crew who cooked pancakes for them all on an open fire, the eggs having been bartered locally for cigarettes and chocolate. Wolfgang remembers being astonished at the continual use of the word 'bloody' in their conversation and he was well treated as a prisoner.

He was taken to a transit camp near the town of Hasselt and then taken to England. He never told his fellow POWs about his desertion, fearing their reaction. Whilst in another transit camp near

Sheffield, he received his first, and only, Red Cross parcel from Germany. He said later that he felt humiliated because the small pieces of black bread it contained compared very unfavourably to the ration of more palatable white bread received by the POWs.

He arrived at Ripon Camp in December 1944, where he remained until April 1946. Then, he was transferred to the POW hostel at Great Ouseburn which was the former village workhouse and which still stands today on the road between Green Hammerton and Boroughbridge. The hostel had only recently been vacated by Italian POWs. Whilst at Great Ouseburn, Wolfgang worked on local farms as an agricultural labourer and also as an interpreter. In this latter capacity, he assisted the local doctor, Dr. Benson, whose surgery had been extended to cover the POWs in their hostel. He later learned that Dr. Benson had lost both of his sons during the war. Wolfgang acted as a translator at the Methodist chapel in Great Ouseburn and also at the chapel in nearby Whixley when the POWs were invited to attend. To further improve his command of English, he saved his wages, forgoing cake and cigarettes for a month, in order to buy an English dictionary.

In March 1947, suffering from depression, Wolfgang Hubbe walked out of the Great Ouseburn hostel and went AWOL. He tramped around the local fields for a while and eventually surrendered himself at Boroughbridge Police Station. The police incident report for the incident survives and shows that he gave himself up at 10pm on 23rd March 1947.

From Boroughbridge, Wolfgang was taken to Scriven Camp rather than being returned to the hostel at Great Ouseburn. At this stage, the hostel was a satellite site administered by the British authorities at Scriven. At Scriven he was interviewed by the camp commandant, Lt.-Col. Wilkinson, who satisfied himself that this new inmate was no suicide risk and sentenced him to 3 days in the camp cells as a punishment which is where Wolfgang spent his first days at Scriven. He remembers that the cells were located in the old coach house and that a hay rack was still positioned on the inner wall. Today, that building has been converted to a dwelling and is now known as 'Scriven Hall'.

Wolfgang Hubbe stayed at Scriven until the camp closed in February 1948, a period of some eleven months. For six months of his time there, he was paymaster to his fellow POWs. This involved his recording the working hours of each prisoner on the various local farms and ensuring that they received the correct payment. Pay day was once per week. Their original wages amounted to 4s in plastic money, for use in the camp only, but by 1947 working a 44 hour week would earn a prisoner 5s 6d plus 3s paid into a 'repatriation account'. From July 1947, wages were paid 4s in plastic tokens and the balance in sterling, the money being brought from Ripon by a British soldier and the payment process being supervised by Herr Hubbe during the course of an evening.

Wolfgang remembers the change to sterling currency making a big difference to the lives of the prisoners. Now, they were able to visit local shops and make their own purchases. He bought plenty of saccharine to sweeten his cocoa which was the preferred beverage in the camp. He also took the bus into Harrogate to visit the cinema there and, like many POWs, visited a photographer so he could send a photo of himself back home.

The prisoners at Scriven produced their own newspaper 'Die Pforte' (The Gate). Wolfgang contributed an article about cricket in the April 1947 edition, just after his arrival, and was assisted by a Major Holding. This was followed in June 1947 by a piece about Knaresborough Castle and the pedometer in Knaresborough museum which had been owned by Blind Jack. The area was popular

with prisoners who spent much of their leisure time roaming around Knaresborough, visiting the dropping well, Mother Shipton's cave and just walking along the river banks.

Prisoners do not seem to have frequented the local pubs. The rule forbidding alcohol was probably the only POW restriction which was not relaxed when the war ended. There are however accounts of prisoners entering local pubs to sell their hand-made goods in order to raise money.

The Nissen huts at Scriven were illuminated by electric light and had electrical power. Wolfgang's hut was the nearest one to the northern frontage of the old Hall; looking out from his doorway he would have seen the Hall with the old carriage turning circle in front. Decades later, when shown a photograph of the more impressive southern frontage of the Hall, he was surprised. He had never before seen that view despite spending nearly a year at Scriven since this had been out of bounds for POWs. The Hall itself had been the domain of the British staff.

Wolfgang's hut also served as the camp office, with the office section being immediately inside the doorway and with his bedroom in the middle. Beyond the sleeping accommodation, the remaining portion was only used for occasional assemblies. He had to share the office during the day with the senior German officer who was entitled to also have the bedroom, but he preferred to spend his evenings with friends in the other huts and so Wolfgang then had sole occupancy. This was luxury to him and he would spend much time listening to music on the radio.

In February 1948, as the camp at Scriven closed, he was repatriated to Germany. Horsingen was now in the Russian Zone of occupation and would soon be incorporated into the new East Germany. Despite his views on both Nazi-ism and Communism, and his acknowledged command of English, Wolfgang elected to return home rather than to stay in Britain. He did not relish the prospect of working indefinitely as a farm labourer which was his only employment option and he felt a loyalty to his aged parents who had already lost one son. In the event his father, who was crippled by arthritis, died in his 60s, just three years after Wolfgang returned home. An additional reason to return to Horsingen was to see his girlfriend who had patiently awaiting him and whom he would marry- the couple have been together now (2012) for more than fifty years and have brought up their own family in East Germany.