

Camp 668 Aliwal (aka Aliwell) Barracks, North Tidworth, Hampshire.

1947 Camp List							
668(G.W.Coy)	S	Aliwell Barracks, North Tidworth, Hants			Bulford 3171 Ext.354	80(W.O.)	V/1270/4

Prisoner of War Camps (1939 – 1948) - Project report by Roger J.C. Thomas - English Heritage 2003							
OS NGR	Sheet	No.	Name & Location	County	Cond'n	Type 1945	Comments
SU 2309 4938	184	668	Aliwell Barracks, North Tidworth	Wiltshire	5	German Working Camp	Precise location not identified. NGR for centre of North Tidworth.

Location: The barracks are shown on the 1961 OS map at NGR SU 220 480.

Before the camp: Army barracks from the late 19th C.

[Note: 668 Pow Working Company was set-up in June 1945 at 'Tidworth, Wiltshire', probably near to Aliwal Barracks. Most of the 425 pows had transferred from Glen Mill in Oldham, while the Provost Staff were mainly German pows from Devizes. Shortly after, on 15 July 1945, 668 PWC moved to another tented site at Chiseldon, Wiltshire – separate records for this.]

Pow Camp:

2 March 1946 – 'Report of Move'. The camp was moved from Chiseldon to Aliwal Barracks.

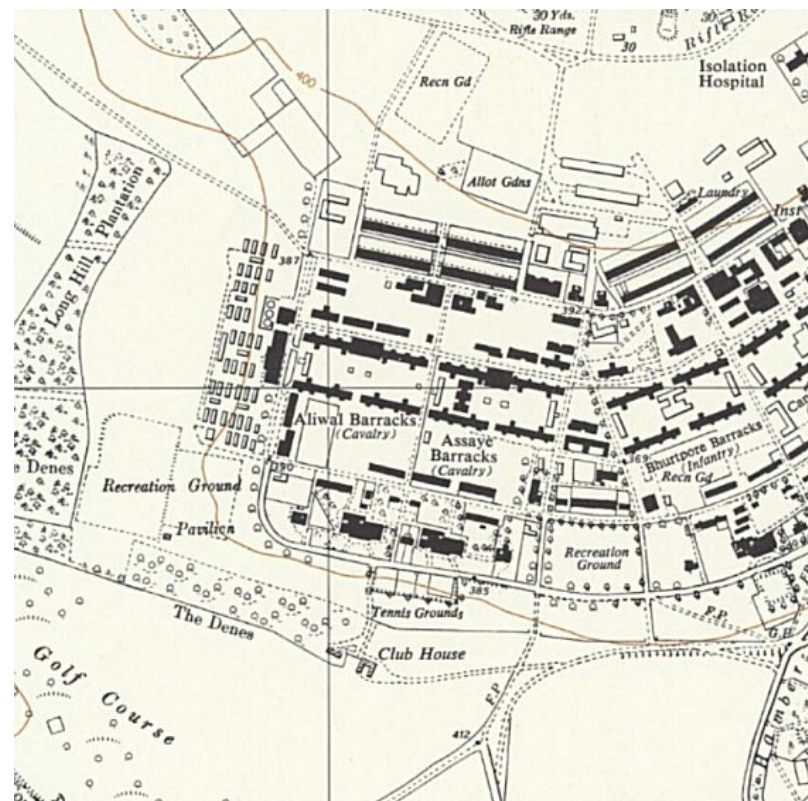
Commandant: Major W S Reed Camp leader: S/Fw Georg Mueller (Müller)

I am not sure if there was a short time when the pows were still in tented accommodation when they arrived at this site, but by May 1946 they were all accommodated inside the barrack buildings. Comments were made by visitors about the excellent accommodation and how this raised the morale of the pows.

2 April 1946 – A visiting lecturer, A F K Schlepegrell, reported that some pows had informed him of dissatisfaction with the Lagersprecher (Camp Leader), and in particular his deputy, Fw Köppe, who they stated was a former SA-Sturmbannführer. There were allegations of subversive Nazi propaganda and running the camp on Nazi lines. Some of the pows wished to speak to the British authorities. No further actions were recorded in the file and the Camp Leader and Deputy were still in post in July 1946.

14 April 1946 – Another visiting lecturer, Dr W Milch, described the camp as being; *"obviously politically backwards, run by unreliable P/Ws and needs new men strong enough to alter conditions."* He also noted that the Commandant was due to leave in a few weeks time, (he was still there in June).

7 June 1946 – A visiting lecturer, P F Doring, gave a very different report from those above. He reveals that the Commandant, *"speaks German perfectly"* and attended one of the lectures.



Ordnance Survey 1961

The visitor commented that; “*This Camp is one of the Happy Camps. The Commandant does everything in his power to make his men happy. Educational activities on a very high level.... There are workshops where men make their own musical instruments (as in some other ‘happy’ camps).... In the same way toys & small pieces of furniture are made, mostly of excellent workmanship.*” (* see link at end for pictures of some of the toys).

In previous reports, when 668 PWC was under canvas at Chiseldon, it had been noted, with some agreement, that there was very little scope for organised activities / re-education. Now that they were inside buildings, various activities flourished.

11-12 July 1946 – A General Survey was carried out by H R Downer. Strength 1 officer; 636 ORs.

Political screening:	A	B+	B	B-	C	Unscreened
	94	1	419	20	25	77

Commandant: Capt F W Leeke
 Interpreter: None

Camp Leader: Sfw Müller (B)
 Deputy C/L: Fw Köppe (B)
 German M.O. Oberarzt v Delft. (A)

The commandant was new – all German staff were the same as at the start of 668 Company in 1945. Captain Leeke was from the Pioneer Corps. His rank here is very unusual – all other commandants in a camp of this size were either Major or Lieutenant Colonel.

The strength had grown since arriving at the barracks by about 100 pows from America and 200 from Camp 663 (Parkhouse Camp, Hampshire).

Positive factors for morale was the start of repatriation and the treatment by the British staff which was “*exemplary*”. Negative factors included – Bad news from the Russian zone; news of the use of Poles as police in the American zone; a general feeling that democracy ‘had let them down’. The pows from the US were additionally demoralized as they had been told in the US that they would be returning to Germany, (the US authorities knew that this would not be the case).

218 pows were ‘youth (under-25) – they were not seen as a problem.

Re-education activities were well advanced, but it was difficult to sustain enthusiasm as detention continued. Standard list of activities:

Wochenpost and Ausblick – 85 and 40 respectively received. Twice the amount was requested.

Newspapers – British daily papers, the Weekly Times and Manchester Guardian were received. The PID (Political Intelligence Department) sent about 20 German and Swiss papers each month. More wanted.

Library – ‘flourishing’ with 600 books mainly provided by PID and the YMCA. More novels and political works requested.

Lectures – regular and well attended

Discussion Groups – once a fortnight with up to 350 attending.

Films – alternate fortnights supplied by PID and YMCA.

Wireless – 3 sets and 3 loudspeakers. BBC news and BERLIN were the favourite programmes.

Camp magazine – weekly - ‘Freier Wille’ [Free Will].

Press review – extracts translated and exhibited in the reading room.

English instruction – separate report.

Other activities:

Religion – 60/40 Protestant/RC.

The Protestant padre – Schmidt, held weekly services and a study group. A German-American RC priest from a nearby American unit held a weekly service. Interest in religion was 'not very great'.

Education - Classes in French, Russian, book-keeping, accountancy, radio engineering, and bee-keeping.

Theatre – the pows had built a stage and the theatre group had given its first variety concert.

Orchestra – 2 orchestras; a mandolin orchestra of 10 playing light music weekly; a string orchestra of 8 giving a varied fortnightly performance.

Choir – 32 pows giving concerts once per month and during church services.

[From a comment made by a lecturer in late July, it seems that an Interpreter was placed in the camp soon after this report].

13 – 14 July 1946 – the positive atmosphere within the camp was reaffirmed in a report by visiting lecturer, Dr H Gottschalk. One of his lectures was given when there was a POW football match taking place and he was satisfied to find 60% (about 300) of the pows had still turned up to listen to him give a talk about 'Bismarck'. Regarding the attitudes of the pows he talked of a, "*raising political conscience*" – "*discussion on a remarkably high level*" – and that "*political re-education is advanced in this camp*".

After the football match, when the other pows returned at 9.00p.m., many gathered round to listen to the BBC News in German.

"*There is a very active Demokratische Arbeitsgemeinschaft [Democratic Working Group – a committee to develop activities] in this camp under Schweden who is largely responsible for the fine work done.*" This group asked for books on English constitution and '*deutsche Verfassungsgeschichte*' [German constitutional history] – A biography of Gladstone was a particular request.

28 August 1946 – Notes from a visit by lecturer, Dr Kissin. Strength of camp – 648 (57 'stationed outside'). Mainly 'depot work'. Accommodation excellent – brick barracks – very comfortable. Food adequate. Repatriation had started.

"*Frequent lectures and discussions, a fortnightly 'Brains Trust', classes in English, French, Russian, arithmetic, book-keeping. Ps/W get English, German, and Swiss papers, have theatre performances, concerts, variety shows. Twice a week they are allowed out in sections, i.e. 25 men, without British escort. There is plenty of sport (Football, Jiu Jitsu, Boxing, Wrestling).*"

October 1946 – comment by a lecturer that the camp had continued to grow to nearly 800 prisoners.

25 April 1947 – visiting lecturer, B Reichenbach, reported that the camp was closing in about a fortnight. There were only about 200 pows left, the rest had been repatriated or sent to other camps.

May 1947 – the camp closed for pows.

After the camp: Returned to military use.

Further Information:

National Archives – FO 939/321 – 668 Camp, Aliwal Barracks, Tidworth, Hampshire. Dated 1945 - 1947

* The site today – [PoW Camp 668 Aliwal Barracks Tidworth – Repatriated Landscape](#) – includes pictures of some of the toys made for local children by PoWs.