

Castlerankie Prisoner of War Camp No 64

The camp was on the Castlerankie Road about a mile and a half from Denny in the field on the right as you travel west in front of the site of the Castle Rankine now only visible as a mound of raised ground.

During the Second World War there was a network of camps set up around the country and also in Canada to accommodate the large number of enemy prisoners.

Initially the camp in Denny housed Italian POWs hence the name (*the Tally Camp*) but they were moved to another as it became home to the large number of German men. Most were non-commissioned officers (*UNTEROFFIZIER*) and ordinary soldiers caught up in the fighting.

The camp consisted of over 40 prefabricated huts set in a field on the outskirts of the small town of Denny in Stirlingshire, Scotland for the 400 plus prisoners. It seems that the Denny camp was the main one as it served several smaller ones around the area such as Killearn and Westerton.

Doctors and dentists were among the POWs looked after their fellow prisoners in the medical block. There was a bakery run by the prisoners, shoemakers and 6 tailors all kept busy in the camp. Activities were encouraged by local groups as flower beds and vegetable plots made for self-sufficiency in the camp. Local groups set up craft competitions with drawing, painting, woodwork and carpentry, handcrafts and embroidery with many of the prisoners winning prizes for their work. There was a canteen, games room with table tennis equipment, a library, with billiards, cards and dominoes to play which kept the men entertained.

It was also a camp where an orchestra was formed travelling around the many camps in the district performing for prisoners and locals giving concerts for charity. It was said that they even made a record in Biggars Recording studio in Glasgow consisting of a waltz, a quick step a foxtrot.

Prisoners said they were well supported by the local Denny folk some even taking them into their own homes for meals. Many of the prisoners were put to work on the farms and local industries.

The local people were kind to the prisoners many of whom were only young boys of 16 and 17 years old forced to fight. They were forbidden to move out of the Falkirk area although it had been reported that locals smuggled some out dressed as farm workers to take them to the cinema in Stirling.

A few prisoners later married local girls setting up home in the area after the war, many of them unwilling to return to Germany after the end of hostilities. One such man was Gerry Lahmert sent to Denny at the age of 25 after he was captured in North Africa in 1943.

After the war he married a girl called Janet ,moved to Stirling had nine children only returning home to Hannover in 1971. 86% of the 425 prisoners worked either on the land or in local industry. Shows were put on and locals were invited to them.

After the war it was used as a pig breeding farm run by a German Gunter Ilgner and a local man, both of whom lived there until it closed when the two men died.

A prisoner called Otto Laud had painted scenes of the Germany and Polish countryside from memory onto the wooden boards around the canteen block, fortunately some remain courtesy of Mr Billy Buchanan a local councillor and local historian. (Now in the Smith Museum, Stirling)

Below are two examples, Stuttgart and Alpen

