

The Integration of The Enemy.

*How Prisoner of War Camps Impacted Communities in Wales
during the Second World War*



Image taken by Laura Driscoll

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Abstract

During the Second World War, a total of over 550,000 German and Italian Prisoners of War (POWs) were brought over to the United Kingdom between the periods of 1939-1948. Their stories have featured prominently in Welsh culture and collective memory. Yet, it seems as though they have been neglected in academic enquiry due to the fact that historical contribution to British history is conventionally addressed in an Anglo-centric perspective. This thesis aims to fill the gap in the migration studies surrounding the Prisoner of War in Wales and their impact on and integration into Welsh communities. This study shows how the POWs have been able to culturally influence the communities within Wales to which they were sent. It dissects the sense of national belonging within the areas they were situated and explored differences between the experiences of Italian and German POWs in Wales.

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Introduction

*The degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering
its prisons.*

- Fyodor Dostoyevsky¹

When posed with the questions of who the Prisoners of War were during the Second World War, many would instantly think of the Japanese in America and the British in Germany. This thesis will be looking at both the German and Italians who were prisoners in Britain, specifically Wales.

During the Second World War, British and Allied forces were fighting on two fronts, Western Europe and North Africa. The Italian and German defeats on the North Africa front, inevitably lead to the capture and imprisonment of soldiers enrolled into the Italian and German armies, navy and air-forces. This led to them becoming Prisoners of War, which is where captured soldiers are removed from the battlefields and are detained for the duration of the hostilities in which they will be confined to set limits within a prisoner of war camp.²

¹ Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The House of the Dead* (Mineola, N.Y: Dover Publications Inc., 2004), p.210

² Oliver Wilkinson, 'Diluting Displacement Letters from Captivity', in *War and Displacement in the Twentieth Century: Global Conflicts*, Routledge Studies in Modern History ; 13 (New York ; London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2014), pp. 70–88.

During the period 1939-1948, the United Kingdom hosted more than 150,000 Italian and over 400,000 German Prisoners of War. The exact number of those which were sent to Wales is unknown, often records were not kept of the number, names or ranks of the prisoners. This was due to the fact that as quickly as they had been built, the Prisoner of War camps faded away; buildings were demolished, fences taken down and new developments quickly covered many of the camp sites soon after the prisoners had been repatriated. The camps were often built in rural agricultural areas for the purpose of maintaining control of prisoners and to reduce the likelihood of aggravation or trouble that may have developed in higher populated areas.

The Geneva Convention was used to set the benchmark in which communities had to comply when building the camps and dealing with the prisoners. Article 2; General provisions stated that the Prisoners of War

Are in the power of the hostile power, but not of the individual corps who have captured them. They must at all times be humanely treated and protected, particularly against acts of violence, insults and public curiosity. Measures of reprisal against them are prohibited.³

³ Red Cross, *Geneva Convention*, 1929 <<https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Article.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=F3C789772F4A2CA0C12563CD00518D5D>> [accessed 20 May 2018].

This provision will be a key focus point whilst debating the integration of both Italian and German Prisoners of War within the communities in which they were based.

There will also be close attention paid to how the prisoners were able to integrate. Wolff and Draine's article *Prisoners and Community and Re-entry*, focuses on the ways in which it is crucial to find methods which would help prisoners connect with the society they are in, in order to gain tangible and intangible benefits. Wolff and Draine provide a framework for understanding how prisoners integrate into their communities including during their interment and after their release. While Draine and Wolff focuses on prisoners in general, rather than prisoners of war, their framework is useful for analysis of the case studies presented here. This article in particular will be used to analyse the social relationships which bridge people together within Wales. Wolff and Draine identify four key attributes which include; the strength of connections, ability to mobilise them, the endowment of resources within relationships, and their social context.⁴ All four of these aspects are considered in relation to the German and Italian Prisoners of War in Wales.

The story of Prisoners of War held by the British has been virtually disregarded within the records of the Second World War history, yet it is a key part of the war and had affected many lives. Although this situation caused logistical and emotional problems, and even though there had been clashes and minor conflicts, compared to the conduct

⁴ Nancy Wolff and Jeffrey Draine, 'Dynamics of Social Capital of Prisoners and Community Reentry: Ties That Bind?', 2004
<<http://journals.sagepub.com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/doi/abs/10.1177/107834580301000310>> [accessed 12 May 2018].

towards the Prisoners of War in other countries, Britain had presented a much safer and accepting, open-minded approach towards the prisoners and aimed to follow the rules of the Geneva convention.

Although there has been little research done on the prisoners in Britain as a whole within the history of the Second World War, there have been fewer individuals that have given their attention to the Prisoners of War who had been transferred to Wales during their imprisonment. There have been even fewer studies on the way the communities had been impacted by them. However, the issue of Prisoners of War has grown in importance within community heritage and memorialisation of the Second World War. Far too little attention has been paid to this important topic that altered the demographic makeup of Wales after the war. In the past, oral history had not been considered valid, but this history is crucial to the researching of this thesis. Oral history brings up the facts of missing bits of history as this is the essence of community history. Traditionally, these missing parts of history often come from the local communities themselves when finding out about their own histories.

This paper will focus on three main issues; the economic benefits that Prisoners of War brought to the communities of Wales, the social interactions between the Prisoners of War and the local population and the differences between the German and Italian integration into their retrospective communities.

Two case studies have been chosen for this thesis; the Italian Prisoners of War at Henllan, Landysul and the German Prisoners of War at Bridgend. These particular

camps have been chosen largely because they are the only two camps which are still standing today, and this has led to a series of research projects being set up in their local communities to better understand the camps and their history.

The main research method which has been used to analyse the impact of the prisoners' integration in the communities is the collection and study of primary accounts. The primary accounts of interest here are specifically oral history which will be used to highlight the Italian's perspective of their treatment during the war and will show the similarities and differences of the Welsh and Italian perspectives. The use of interviews was also used to get primary evidence for this research. Facebook was used to find relatives of ex-prisoners of war to find out information and personal accounts. Family members of former prisoners of war and members of the communities who remember the camps were the main contacts used for this research, they were all eager to contribute and much of the information is publicly available on community social history sites. It was a chance for them to help tell their families' story. This links strongly with the idea of the prisoners building positive relationships within the communities which led to positive memories and integration.

The collection of primary sources greatly helped the study as they provided first-hand knowledge of the events whilst giving a snapshot into the opinions of the time. The private memoirs were able to provide me with an intimate glimpse into the lives of those who had experienced them first hand whilst providing a candid view from those whose memoirs were not intended to be read. Artefacts such as a poem by a German Prisoner of War provides an emotional connection to the past whilst providing a

viewpoint into the spirit and cultural identity whilst providing the reader the chance to associate with the individuals of the time, and this case provided a viewpoint of a 'good German.' The newspapers used provided a societal view on aspects of history. The interviews are key aspects of this study due to the fact that they are able to provide a way to preserve details of historical legacies which have not yet been included in written accounts of the time. They also provide important evidence on the prisoners of war and their life following the war, which were often excluded from mainstream publications.

Personal documents are fundamentally limited in scope due to the fact they only present one interpretation. The poem may not be solely concerned with providing a factual story. Poetry often contains imaginative aspects. Newspapers are inherently limited as they are a product of the society that they were produced in whilst running the risk of being an instrument of propaganda. Finally, although the interviews are a key aspect of this study, they still have limitations. This includes the fact that as the stories were often being recounted seventy years after the prisoners were repatriated, there may well have been mental deterioration of the stories, which would have often have been changed by the prisoner and their family members who later told the stories. Also, personal opinions often eclipse what may be seen as the truth when interpreting the events. Despite this, oral accounts are a unique insight into the past and are a valuable source in developing community histories.

Community memories of Henllan and Bridgend are shaping our idea of the past, and because of this, attention will be paid to Jan Assmann's theories on collective memory and cultural identity. Assman highlights how the definition and concept of cultural memory is often seen through a double delimitation that distinguishes it from what is seen as communicative or everyday memory. This will be used to understand the concept of communicative memory within the history of Wales and its POW camps.

Communicative memory is often connected to those who relate to a memory or an experience, which leads to a socially mediated memory as well as one which relates to a group, in this case, the communities of Henllan and Bridgend. To a great extent my research has relied on the personal accounts of the local Welsh and Italian community and it took flight because of the enthusiastic responses of local people whose lives had been personally affected by the prisoner of war camps and who wanted to shape and contribute to a positive image of the past.

Firstly, an examination of the perceptions of Germans and Italians during the war years is presented. This provides a social and cultural context for the discussion of the two case studies that follow. The first case study presented is the Italian Prisoner of War camp at Henllan. This is followed by an examination of the German Prisoner of War camp at Bridgend. Finally the conclusion sums up the finding that many Italians and Germans Prisoners of War integrated well with the local communities, and the legacy of this positive integration can still be seen in the makeup and memories of the communities today.

Chapter One – Good German vs Bad Nazi; Good Italian vs Enemy Alien

What is a prisoner of war? He is a man who has tried to kill you and, having failed to kill you, asks you not to kill him. —Winston Churchill⁵

First and foremost, a look at Britain's approach to the diplomacy surrounding the Prisoners needs to be looked at. Neville Wylie, a professor of political history, highlights the need to remember the realist theory around international relations when discussing this topic. The theory follows a quote from former Prime Minister of Britain, Lord Palmerston, in the house of commons who stated;

We have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow. When we find other countries marching in the same course, and pursuing the same objects as ourselves, we consider them as our friends, and we think for the moment that we are on the most cordial footing; when we find other countries that take a different view, and thwart us in the object we pursue, it is our duty to make allowance for the different manner in which they may follow out the same objects. It is our duty not

⁵ House of Commons Parliament, 'KOREAN CAMPAIGN (Hansard, 1 July 1952)' (Parliament, 1952) <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1952/jul/01/korean-campaign#S5CV0503P0_19520701_HOC_393> [accessed 20 May 2018].

*to pass too harsh a judgment upon others, because they do not exactly see things in the same light as we see...*⁶

Paraphrased this shows that within Parliament it is believed that Britain ‘have neither permanent friends, nor permanent enemies; just permanent interests.’⁷ This highlights that when discussing the Prisoners of War within Wales during the Second World War, it is necessary to follow the belief that the authorities should still treat the prisoners cordially regardless of the fact that they are prisoners within the country.

The treatment of Prisoners of War within Wales was influenced heavily and upheld by the 1929 Geneva convention act concerning prisoners of war. This is especially important considering Britain, and by default, Wales, had been significant in writing the convention.⁸ This shows that the country had a commitment to following the acts, and were later praised by many historians for reaching ‘the pinnacle of historic development for prisoner protection.’⁹ This is shown heavily through Chapter Two and Three when looking at the reactions to the Italian and German Prisoners of War in Wales. For the most part they were treated civilly and often relations ended in friendship.

⁶ House of Commons Parliament, ‘TREATY OF ADRIANOPLE—CHARGES AGAINST VISCOUNT PALMERSTON. (Hansard, 1 March 1848)’ (Parliament, 1848) <<https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1848/mar/01/treaty-of-adrianople-charges-against>> [accessed 20 May 2018].

⁷ Matthew Stibbe, ‘Barbed Wire Diplomacy: Britain, Germany and the Politics of Prisoners of War, 1939–1945’, *German History*, 29.2 (2011), 341–43 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/gerhis/ghq124>>.p.341

⁸ Stibbe.p.342

⁹ Geoffrey P. R. Wallace, *Life and Death in Captivity: The Abuse of Prisoners During War* (Cornell University Press, 2015).p.99

Although Churchill had previously said that ‘a prisoner of war is a man who has tried to kill you and, having failed to kill you, asks you not to kill him’¹⁰ it was believed that the captor should always accept the surrender if the opponent has been sincere.¹¹ Ferguson highlights how there were often four main arguments to accept the surrender, which all include the prisoners value as; a source of intelligence, a source of labour, a hostage, and the use of an example to his comrades.¹² He states the reasoning of why Wales ended up treating their prisoners the way they did. This was due to the fact that if a prisoner was treated well, it would be possible to induce their comrades to either imitate him by also surrendering, or to reciprocate by acting mercifully if the tables ended up being turned.¹³ This is shown considerably within Chapter Two, when it is shown that Italians often left the Fascist ways of Italy to move to Wales of their own accord. The attitudes of the British can be highlighted by their ideas of ‘good Germans’ and ‘good Italians’ in comparison to ‘bad Nazis’ and ‘enemy aliens.’ This chapter looks at these concepts and how they relate to the integration of the prisoners of war.

¹⁰ Parliament, ‘KOREAN CAMPAIGN (Hansard, 1 July 1952)’.

¹¹ Niall Ferguson, ‘Prisoner Taking and Prisoner Killing. The Dynamics of Defeat, Surrender and Barabrity in the Age of Total War’, in *The Barbarization of Warfare* (NYU Press, 2006).p.131

¹² Ferguson.p.131

¹³ Ferguson.p.131

An article written by a professor at Harvard during 1945, helps to highlight the three different groups that Germans were said to have fallen into; black, grey and white.

The 'black' sector were seen as fanatical Nazis, the 'grey' sector were prisoners who were neither strongly Nazi or anti-Nazi. These were the people who may have been able to be converted into anti-Nazis if they were given acceptable treatment and propaganda.

The 'white' sector were the anti-Nazis by conviction.¹⁴

In Britain, there had been aims to segregate the good Germans from the Nazis. Special provisions had been provided for those who needed protection and those who caused trouble had been places in separate quarters. This sometimes was not enough however, to stop the abuse towards fellow prisoners who may have been seen as turncoats, such as was the case in an event at Bridgend.¹⁵

Curiosity towards the prisoners within Britain outweighed the need for hostilities.

Instead, the news was often used to reassure the public that the German prisoners were not dangerous, whilst familiarising them with their presence.¹⁶

As well as the Germans being seen as an enemy, following Germany's invasion of Norway and Denmark in April 1940, the Italians were also seen as the enemy as a consequence of this.

¹⁴ Sidney B. Fay, 'German Prisoners of War', *Current History; Philadelphia, Etc.*, 8.43 (1945), 193–200. Pp.197-198

¹⁵ Fay.

Note: The event of Bridgend is expanded more within Chapter 3.

¹⁶ Pathe News, 'German Prisoners of War in Camp', *Pathe News*, 1939.

This led to the rising fear about the role of potentially untrustworthy people in the event of an attack on Britain. The subsequent ‘fifth column panic’¹⁷ was fed by exaggerated and xenophobic articles in the current press.¹⁸ Due to this panic, much of Britain became wary of Italians, including in the areas in which Italian communities had previously thrived. John Boswell helped further ignite this panic in the Daily mirror when he stated that;

*Every Italian colony in Great Britain... is a seething cauldron of smoking Italian politics. Black fascism. Hot as hell. Even the peaceful law-abiding proprietor of the back-street coffee shop bounces into a fine patriotic frenzy at the sound of Mussolini's name*¹⁹

This led to the ‘rounding up’ of the Italian enemy aliens from Britain.²⁰ However, following the internment of the Prisoners of War into Britain, a mixed perception of Italians was seen throughout Britain due to the fact that around 40,000 Italians had been brought over by 1943, where Prisoners of War were able to work in Britain, often within agriculture. Both German and Italian Prisoners had been appreciated by society for how

¹⁷ F. H. Hinsley and C. A. G. Simkins, *British Intelligence in the Second World War: Volume 4, Security and Counter-Intelligence: Security and Counter-Intelligence v. 4* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1990).pp.47-64

¹⁸ Kathy Burrell and Panikos Panayi, *Histories and Memories: Migrants and Their History in Britain / Edited by Kathy Burrell & Panikos Panayi.*, International Library of Historical Studies ; 37 (London, New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2006).p.68

¹⁹ John Boswell, ‘Memo to the Home Office’, *Daily Mail*, 27 April 1940.

²⁰ Burrell and Panayi.p.69

hard working they had been, although the Italians had been seen as spineless for wanting to be taken from the front lines.²¹

Britain, as a whole, would like to remember their history as being tolerant towards those who were their enemies during a difficult time, upholding the articles of the Geneva convention, particularly with the protecting of the prisoners from the public. Britain's tolerance is also highlighted in the way the prisoners were allowed to work within society, a luxury from the mundane life of a prison. Prisoners often became more skilled through their use within agriculture and often language barriers fell between the prisoners and the communities. This often led to a more positive experience.²²

There were many opportunities for prisoners to integrate within society, as a result of the tolerance shown. Chapter Two and Three will explore this fact within the Italian rural camp at Henllan and the more urban setting of the German prisoner of war camp in Bridgend.

²¹ Burrell and Panayi.p.70

²² Johann Custodis, 'Employing the Enemy: The Contribution of German and Italian Prisoners of War to British Agriculture during and after the Second World War', *Agricultural History Review*, 60.2 (2012), 243–65.p.265

Chapter Two – Italian Prisoners of War within Wales.

Initially when one would think of Prisoners of War, it is unlikely that Italian prisoners in Britain would instantly come to mind. But what of these Italians? Why were they seen as the enemy to Britain?

On the 10th June 1940, Mussolini officially declared war on Britain. In Britain during that time, over 3000 Italians who resided there, suddenly became ‘undesirable aliens’. The largest communities of Italians were located in the valleys of Wales. By the start of the war, many Italians had intermarried with the local people and considered themselves part of the community. By the 1930s, Italians had become integrated within Wales, and many had served in the British Army during the First World War.²³ The positivity surrounding the Italian-Welsh relations can be heavily linked to the fact that Italy had been an Ally to Britain during the First World War, and as such, would have contributed to the hospitable attitude to the Italians within Wales.²⁴

However, due to the declaration of war on Britain by Mussolini, Anderson, the Minister of National Security, immediately ordered that all ‘B’ class Italian ‘aliens’ be interred.²⁵

This led to an increase of animosity towards the Italians who lived in Wales before the

²³ Bruna Chezzi, *Italians in Wales and Their Cultural Representations, 1920s-2010s* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015).p.5

²⁴ Chezzi.p.6

²⁵ François Lafitte, *The Internment of Aliens* (Libris, 1940).p.72

war started; their shop windows were smashed and their shops were looted.²⁶ This created an opposition to the stability which had been attained by the Italians in the previous decades, which was further increased by Churchills statement of how it was necessary to ‘collar the lot.’²⁷ It would appear that the initial decline of relations between the Welsh community’s and the Italians in those communities and Italians as a whole was exacerbated by the actions of the British populous and the British government. The declaration of war had a larger impact than physical damage to Italians business’ and endeavors. It also effected Italians on a social and emotional level, 4,000 Italian men, including those who were British born were detained and interned as ‘enemy aliens.’²⁸ The social impact onto the Italians inside the British communities encompassed numerous unpleasant repercussions following the internment of the British-Italians, including in particular the hardship of the separation of families.²⁹ Alongside the social aspects, the economy of the Italians was impacted, many Italians lost their properties and businesses, where the local community turned onto them as already discussed destroying and damaging their assets.

²⁶ Chezzi.p.6

²⁷ ‘Detention of Aliens. Code 49 File 8253 (to Paper 9085)’, 1940, The National Archives, Kew, FO 371/25197.

²⁸ Terri Colpi, *The Italian Factor: The Italian Community in Great Britain* (Mainstream Publishing, 1991).p.113

²⁹ Anne-Marie Fortier, *Migrant Belongings: Memory, Space, Identity* (Oxford: Berg 3PL, 2000).p.55

Following the defeat of the Italian forces on the North Africa front, Italian Prisoners of War began to be deported to Britain during the summer of 1941. Wales itself, hosted 7,262 Italian Prisoners of War which distributed them into various camps in Wales, one of which was Henllan, which will be taking the majority of the discussion on the Italian perspective.³⁰

Henllan Prisoner of War Camp, Llandysul.

During the years 1941-1942, a prisoner of war camp was built in the small village of Henllan in Wales. However, it was not used until May 1943, when more than 1,200 Prisoners of War were transported to Henllan after being captured in Libya and Tunisia.

Before the Italians Prisoners of War were interned within Wales, there had been a fraternisation policy put into place. The authorities wished to minimise contact between public and Prisoners of War for several reasons, including; regulation and safeguarding of prisoners from aggression.³¹ However, although there was a fraternisation ban put into place, the greater part of the public thought that with the use of detainment of the prisoners, would only assist to turn them away from the British as it only pushes them

³⁰ *War and Displacement in the Twentieth Century: Global Conflicts*, ed. by Sandra Barkhof and Angela K Smith, Routledge Studies in Modern History ; 13 (New York ; London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2014).p.90

³¹ Alan Patrick Malpass, 'British Attitudes towards German Prisoners of War and Their Treatment: 1939-48' (unpublished doctoral, Sheffield Hallam University, 2016) <<https://doi.org/10.7190/shu-thesis-00056>>. P.201

further away from civilisation, even those who may not have even believed in the fascist beliefs that they were forced to fight on the front lines for.³²

There had been an emerging picture from press reports of cases of fraternisation, that lean towards biasedness, with prisoners being represented as wicked seducers, and the women as either naïve dreamers or unpatriotic rascals.³³ Sponza draws attention to a report of negative fraternisation at the Henllan Prisoner of War Camp.

Henllan Trouble [c.70] 1943.

‘Recently when two girl cyclists passing a lorry loaded with Italian prisoners inadvisably gave the ‘V’ sign. One prisoner was so enraged by this, he leapt from the lorry and chased the girls who ran away. The prisoner then attempted to damage their cycles, and was only, with difficulty, restrained by the lorry driver.’³⁴

Although this report highlights the negative feelings towards the Italian Prisoners of War by the Welsh women, it does not necessarily show the full picture. However, it is useful as it effectively highlights that there was resentment towards the prisoners due to their association to the ‘enemy’ and their role in facing and potentially killing allied and

³² Malpass, p.200

³³ Lucio. Sponza, *Divided Loyalties: Italians in Britain during the Second World War* / Lucio Sponza. (Bern ; New York: Peter Lang, 2000), p.215

³⁴ Lucio. Sponza. P.215 (originally from MAF 47/117,15, Cases of fraternisations reported during the past six months by camp labour officers. Attached to a note by E.W.Keep 19th August 1943.)

British troops on the military frontiers. At the same time, there was an increase of emotional and social reactions towards the prisoners due to the fact that many regarded them with a great amount of sympathy and felt empathy towards the Italians, due to their fate in Libya.

Despite the report, interviews with family members of ex-Prisoners of War who were brought over to Llandysul, shows the positive experiences the Italians faced within the area. I managed to get in contact with the grandson of a Prisoner of War from the Henllan camp, who remembers the stories his grandfather told of life on the camp.

Most of the Prisoners who were at the camp used to work on farms, growing crops for the allied war effort. My grandfather was one of them, and that is where he became friends with a Welsh farmer, who helped him come back to Wales after the war ended... They had a curfew of around 7pm, so no prisoners were allowed outside of the camp after this time. They were not allowed to chat to the Welsh ladies, but being Italians, they found ways of doing so, with one hiding a girl under his long black coat.³⁵

Tony Vasami, spoke of how friendly and accepting the Welsh had been towards his grandfather during his time at Henllan. This interview contrasts the report presented by

³⁵ Tony Vasami, Interview with Tony Vasami, the grandson of an Italian Prisoner of War, 2018.

Sponza, as it shows the positive social aspect of the prisoners, who managed to have positive relations with the people at Henllan. This, in turn, highlights that the social aspect of housing the enemy soldiers faced constant variation³⁶. In this circumstance, Vasami, as a Prisoner of War, was treated as a long-lost friend which led to his socialization with the locals of the area.

Alongside the social change within the dynamics of the relationship of the POWs with local people in Wales, they heavily impacted the economy of the country. The prisoners at Henllan were put to work, mainly on the land. They were often sent to places such as Llanrhystud, Manorbier, Llandeilo and Carmarthen.³⁷ They would have often been recognised as the prisoners due to their set uniform which was often chocolate or wine coloured with yellow circles on their backs and knees.³⁸

Johann Custodis, a researcher of economics, claims that by 1946, prisoners proved to be extremely significant to the economy through their productivity on the land.³⁹ At their peak, they contributed to a fifth of the local agricultural workforce.⁴⁰ Agriculture was a vital portion of the Welsh economy, especially during the war, so the Prisoners of War efficiently contributed to fulfil the gaps of manpower which affected the agricultural

³⁶ Sophie Jackson, *Churchill's Unexpected Guests: Prisoners of War in Britain in World War II* (Stroud: The History Press, 2010).p.172

³⁷ 'Henllan POW Camp – Church of the Sacred Heart | LLANSAWEL' <<http://www.llansawel.org.uk/llansawel-history/local-history-in-english/places-of-worship-history/henllan-pow-camp-church-of-the-sacred-heart/>> [accessed 22 February 2018].

³⁸ 'Henllan POW Camp – Church of the Sacred Heart | LLANSAWEL'.

³⁹ Custodis.p.243

⁴⁰ Custodis.p.243

division as a result of the war.⁴¹

Draines and Wolff's paper highlights the need for professional connections as well as economic resources, for the vital growth for prisoners within their camps⁴² giving the impression that prisoners should be able to participate in the economic growth of the areas in which they are residing, for example, working within agriculture to help the communities. One would assume, due to the contribution to the local community's and the vital aid to the depleting work force left in Wales, that the Local communities would have become more incline to incorporate the Italian Prisoners into their community. Nevertheless, it shows how productivity helped expand their connections outside of the prisoner lifestyle as well as opening up a gateway bridge to social relationships.⁴³

James Spaight, a 20th Century scholar, declared that;

Today the POW is a spoilt darling; he is better treated than a modern criminal, who is infinitely better off under the modern prison system, than a soldier on a campaign under present day conditions, captivity... is no sad sojourn by the water of Babylon; it is usually a halcyon time, a pleasant experiences to be nursed fondly in the memory, a kind of inexpensive rest-cure after the

⁴¹ Barkhof and Smith.p.90

⁴² Wolff and Draine.p.474

⁴³ Wolff and Draine.p.474

wearisome turmoil of fighting. The wonder is that any soldiers
fight at all.⁴⁴

In a documentary ‘La Casa di Dio (the house of God)’⁴⁵ the son of a Prisoner of War recollected how ‘Welsh people were very welcoming when the POWs arrived from Italy.’⁴⁶ Owain Llyr, the director of this documentary, declared that the Welsh ‘treated the Italian POWs well’ and ‘looked after them’. He states that the story of the Italians at Henllan is a ‘war story that is actually quite a nice story of people who were at war, who treated the POWs well’ this heavily contrasts to the war which is frequently depicted as being filled with fear and antipathy.⁴⁷ This represents the social impact of the Italians integration with the Welsh at Henllan. It also highlights how there is a romantic and nostalgic view of the past at Henllan.⁴⁸

Church of the Sacred Heart

*‘Prisoners of war shall enjoy complete liberty in the
exercise of*

⁴⁴ James Molony Spaight, *War Rights on Land* (London : Macmillan, 1911)
<<http://archive.org/details/warrightsonland00spaiuoft>> [accessed 15 May 2018].

⁴⁵ ‘British Council Film: La Casa Di Dio’ <<http://film.britishcouncil.org/la-casa-di-dio>>
[accessed 8 May 2018].

⁴⁶ ‘British Council Film: La Casa Di Dio’.

⁴⁷ ‘British Council Film: La Casa Di Dio’.

⁴⁸ ‘British Council Film: La Casa Di Dio’.

their religion, including attendance at the services of their faith, on the sole condition that they comply with the measures of order and police issued by the military authorities.

Ministers of a religion, prisoners of war, whatever their religious denomination, shall be allowed to minister fully to members of the same religion.'

An important aspect of Italian's life as Prisoners of war, from the moment they set foot in Britain, until the distant day of their repatriation, was religion. When the Prisoners were brought to Henllan, they experienced a spiritual gap in their lives⁴⁹. They felt that they needed a place to find comfort in God. The camp itself had no church and there was not a single building which was unused for them to convert and although the commandant in charge of them had been sympathetic, he himself had no answers.⁵⁰ In the end they requested that one of the Nissan huts, which used to be used for sleeping, be set aside for them to create a Roman Catholic chapel. Pre-1945 it was suggested that there had been an anti-Catholic attitude across Wales, resulting in the

⁴⁹ 'Prisoners of War's Labour of Love', 20 October 2009

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/local/midwales/hi/people_and_places/religion_and_ethics/newsid_8306000/8306541.stm> [accessed 15 May 2018].

⁵⁰ Ruth Winnie Roberts, 'The Altar', *The Catholic Liturgical Library*, 1999

<<http://www.ourladyofthetaper.org.uk/Henllan%20-%20Catholic%20Liturgical%20Library.pdf>>.

idea that Italians and Welsh could not possibly socialise with the other.⁵¹ Paul O’leary, a Welsh history lecturer, highlights how ‘anit-Catholicism played a central role in Welsh public life.’⁵² Anti-Catholicism is emphasised as an issue due to the fact that it is a key symbol of otherness, it was not seen as the community heritage of Wales. This would therefore, place the Italians as distant from the roots of the local communities, holding opposing ideas and faiths which one would assume could cause tension and possibly social disorder in the community between the two sets of people.

However, Henllan is an example of the community looking past their differences in religion and ethnicity. The workers of the nearby woollen mill contributed yarn dye to the prisoners to help them in their creation of the chapel on their site, proving that there was already positive connections made between the prisoners and the Welsh within the communities. The chapel itself is a key part in the remembrance of Henllan’s camp. It is a physical symbol of Italianess within Wales. Within the group of prisoners, they had proved to be resourceful and talented. They salvaged cocoa, jam and corned beef tins, cartons as well as wooden packing, which provided them with materials to create the chapel. Often enough, the workers traded craftwork for cement within the local community. With the materials they salvaged, and the ones donated by the village, they

⁵¹ Marco Giudici, ‘Migration, Memory and Identity: Italians and Nation-Building in Wales, 1940-2010’ (unpublished phd, Prifysgol Bangor University, 2012)
<<http://e.bangor.ac.uk/5864/>> [accessed 7 May 2018].p.153

⁵² Paul O’Leary, ‘When Was Anti-Catholicism? The Case of Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Wales’, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 56.2 (2005), 308–25
<<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046904002131>>.p.325

created a chancel, high alter and dome, side alters and holy water font.⁵³ The glory of the church, however, is the painted dome above the alter alongside the murals on the beams.⁵⁴ The paints for which were made from berries as well as the yarn die from the local mill. Highlighting how important the social connections within the community was for the prisoners of the camp, to make the best out of the situation they were given so that they were able to heal the spiritual gap they had previously felt. This is determined by Wolff and Draine, they state that it;

‘is important to both grown and diversify the prisoner’s investment in social connections. It would be useful to consider a mix of family, peer, religious/spiritual, and professional connections, each offering an array of emotional and economic resources.’⁵⁵

This verifies the extent in which the prisoners would have needed to create this chapel on a religious and spiritual level to be able to cope within an uncertain and monotonous environment on their camp. Henllan chapel is also known for the painting, by prisoner Mario Ferlito, of the Last Supper. The painting has become the main symbol of Italianess within Wales and has had much attention paid to it within Welsh culture and identity. Within both Italian and Welsh narratives, the painting itself has been used to

⁵³ ‘Prisoners of War’s Labour of Love’.

⁵⁴ ‘Prisoners of War’s Labour of Love’.

⁵⁵ Wolff and Draine, pp.473-474

reinforce the Welsh tolerance-myth as it emphasises the positive contribution of Italian Prisoners of War to the Welsh cultural landscape, whilst also being a tangible sign of the Welsh-Italian relationship which was seen as dominant over the resentment that was motivated by the war.⁵⁶ A reason as to why Ferlito chose the Last Supper as the painting may have been down to the treatment he and the other prisoners personally faced by the Welsh.

“At ten, he saw her coming with a tea pot, sliced of bread and blackberry jam. She was very kind! Mario was amazed by the treatment, considering that he was still an enemy... strange people those Welsh!”⁵⁷

This quote from an interview with Mario himself highlights the positive experience he faced at Henllan, how he was welcomed into the community despite being seen as the enemy. The positivity they faced even led to Italians, who were not prisoners, travelling over to live in the Area.

Luciano Del Rosa, the grandson of an Italian confided his grandfather’s story to me. He stated that;

⁵⁶ Giudici, pp.115-116

⁵⁷ Barkhof and Smith. P.91, Originally from M.Ferlito, “Breve Storia di un Mancato Guerriero,” 2002-2004, AND, MG/05

*One of the main reasons my grandfather came to this country was because of the Prisoner of War camp in Henllan. Although he was not a prisoner of war himself, his sister's husband was. This is how he heard of the way of life, and the advantages over Southern Italy at the time.*⁵⁸

This helps to show the set of recollections of the war years, within Wales itself that represents the national allegiances as well as the relations between the warring factions in a very different light to that which is normally perceived. It highlights the alliances which often appear sporadically within local publications, such as the Llandysul history groups, which most often refer to the Prisoner of War camps. This particular interview shows that important bridges were built between the Welsh and Italians at Henllan, leading to Italians moving to Wales, simply because the way of life was better for a prisoner of war in Wales than it had been for the Italians in their own country.

However, the most striking aspect of these accounts, is the portrayals of the soldiers and their legacy within the Welsh cultural heritage. The memoirs portray images of friendly and caring British prison guards⁵⁹, as well as the Italian soldier-artists, craftsmen and carpenters who built beautiful chapels⁶⁰ such as the one at Henllan. This in itself is an intriguing turn of what is the usual depiction of soldiers, one that is often an extremely masculinised nationalism.⁶¹ These Italian soldiers however, are recollected for their

⁵⁸ Luciano Del Rosa, Interview with Luciano Del Rosa, grandson of a POW's brother, 2018.

⁵⁹ Fortier.pp.91-92

⁶⁰ Fortier.pp91-92

⁶¹ Fortier.pp91-92

creative achievements, not, alternatively, for endangering their lives. They have been remembered for the cultural heritage which they have bestowed to Wales, and other parts of Britain during the war years. The Chapel at Henllan is a prime example of an Italian legacy to the Welsh country.

Another example of the close integration of the Italians within Henllan is the anniversary celebrations which take place there. These cancel out the assumed previous hostilities by underlining the past and present alliances and hospitality between Welsh and Italians by dedicatory a Welsh veteran or honouring the legacy of Italian Prisoners of War whom have been characterised as artists rather than as enemy soldiers.⁶²

However, these celebrations must also be taken with caution, it seemingly took around 30 years after the abonnement of the camp for the celebrations to occur. Perhaps this shows that initially after the camp there was not the same sentimental value and attachment from the Welsh to Italians that occurred during these celebrations. And that it grew as time passed, there still could have been resentment and opposition to the prisoners of Henllan at the time of the camps operations. I would alternatively argue that the delay in creating the celebrations was not due to resentment from the Welsh to the Italians, but rather with the deportation of the Italian prisoners it was difficult to bring the two communities together in Henllan. Which inevitably stalled the creation of the annual celebrations.

⁶² Fortier.pp91-92

However, after more research, it was found that it was the school children at Ferwig County Primary School who wrote to the painter after he made himself known in a letter to Bob Thompson in the 1970s.⁶³ Although their teacher was wary that Ferlito may be bitter towards the community that may have once hosted his fellow soldiers, the letter was sent. It is believed that in that moment, a thread connecting the past, present and future was firmly woven into the story of Henllan Chapel.

Despite the reservations, Ferlito answered. In his letter he wrote that;

*I did not realise the mystery I had left behind, and I could not believe that children of this modern, materialistic age would bother to study my work... in all those years it was the first direct contact I had had from Wales.*⁶⁴

In 1977, eight ex-prisoners of war, with their families, were invited to visit Henllan again and the parents of the schoolchildren offered to host the guest in their homes.

Mario Ferlito was one of those who came back along with Don Italo Padoan, the former priest of the camp.⁶⁵ They were greeted with parties, concerts and teas, highlighting the connection that had been forged between them and the community, regardless of them

⁶³ Roberts.

⁶⁴ Roberts.

⁶⁵ Roberts.

moving back to Italy. There was a pilgrimage to the chapel and Padoan offered mass.

The Catholic Liturgy Library tells us of how Welsh and Italian, Protestant and Catholic, young and old joined hands. It is said that someone remarked that this was a symbol ‘not of enemies coming to terms, but as friends sharing memories of old times.’⁶⁶ This itself shows the way in which the Italian prisoners of war integrated themselves into the communities and developed positive relationships of love and friendship.

During 1986, the ex-prisoners of war visited the church at Henllan again, and symbolically donated a special trophy of peace to the Welsh people at the National Eisteddfod.⁶⁷ The trophy appeared to perfectly symbolise the Welsh-Italian relationship with its depiction of a Celtic cross set in a round of barbed wire.⁶⁸ The trophy was fashioned in silver slate and wood⁶⁹, these materials would have been chosen through semiotic choices which would influence the public who would view the artwork.⁷⁰ The use of slate symbolises Welsh heritage whilst also representing heaviness and permanence, although slate is not an expensive material, there is a higher aspect of sentiment towards the society in which it is gifted to.

⁶⁶ Roberts.

⁶⁷ Barkhof and Smith.p.92

⁶⁸ Giudici.p.118

⁶⁹ Anonymous, ‘Henllan PoWs Say “thank-You” to Wales’, *Cardigan Tivyside*.

⁷⁰ Gill Abousnnouga and David Machin, ‘Analysing the Language of War Monuments’, *Visual Communication*, 9.2 (2010), 131–49 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/1470357210369884>>.

This was proved in a newspaper article of the event where it was stated that;

‘some of the Italians who spent four years of their young lives at Henllan... Still remember with gratitude the way the local people treated them. The trophy is a special thank you from all those prisoners who returned to Italy when peace was declared.’⁷¹

A strong relationship between the Italian prisoners of war and the Welsh communities have been reported within literature and has been supported even further through the use of interviews with the relatives of ex-Prisoners of war. However, the information given has to be interpreted with caution due to the fact that there were not many different viewpoints within the interviews received. Another way in which Italians had successfully integrated within communities in Wales during and post Second World War is highlighted through the romanticised image of Italians within an exhibition created by St Fagans Museum in 2009 on ‘Italian Memories in Wales.’⁷²

These factors reinstate the fact that both the Italian prisoners of war and the Welsh society of Henllan tend to preserve optimistic memories of their war years, claiming to have been able to form friendly and loyal relationships against the odds of war. Lizzie

⁷¹ Anonymous.

⁷² ‘Italian Memories in Wales | Events’ <<http://www.whatsonwales.co.uk/all-events/i/13621/>> [accessed 21 May 2018].

Mary Jones, a lady who fed thirty-two soldiers during one of their days out in the village, believed that it did not matter that she was seen as feeding an enemy, because to her, ‘the soldiers were somebody’s son in an alien land.’⁷³ This is seen to be the overriding thought of many towards their acceptance of the prisoners. Ferlito stated that ‘we found in Wales, Christian tolerance unique to Welsh land’⁷⁴ The Catholic Liturgy Library highlights how much in common the Welsh and Italians had;

Through generations of oppression and hardship both had found comfort in music... Both lived close to the soil and held all of nature sacred. Both were deeply committed to family. And though they worshipped in different churches, it was with the same fervour and to the same God that they prayed.⁷⁵

It is clear that the Italians integrated themselves into the Welsh community through finding common ground.

⁷³ Roberts.

⁷⁴ Roberts.

⁷⁵ Roberts.

Chapter Three- German Prisoners of War within Wales

By March 1940, there were 257 German Prisoners of War within Britain. However, by the end of the war, this number had grown more than a thousand-fold. This was due to the fact that by 1941, Hitler had started to abandon hope of negotiating peace with Britain, or even invading it. German Prisoners of War started being increasingly perceived as bellicose fanatical Nazis.⁷⁶ The exact number of German prisoners Wales hosted is unknown. However, it is said that the treatment of German Prisoners of War by the allies was seen as generally, but not uniformly good. Prisoners themselves had been regarded somewhat like radioactive material; as a useful and valuable resource, but a potential hazard.⁷⁷

While fraternisation protocols sought to reduce interaction between the public and German Prisoners of War, the choice to employ German prisoners in 1944 brought them into closer contact. The need for labour, heavily outweighed the security concerns of the time.

When the Italians prisoners started to be deported, the work force began to diminish.

The home office decided that the solution was to enlist German prisoners to work in

⁷⁶ Malpass. P.15

⁷⁷ Gabriel. Moshenska, *The Archaeology of the Second World War: Uncovering Britain's Wartime Heritage* / Gabriel Moshenska. (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books Ltd, 2012).pp.73-74

their place.⁷⁸ Camp leaders were asked to provide suitable prisoners, those without Nazi learnings.⁷⁹

This led to the German Prisoners not being repatriated until 1948, apart from those who married, as they were able to be kept as cheap labour within the rural economies. The artefacts, artworks and secrets that they left behind, can help to reveal the human faces of the men who, for a while at least, were the only glimpse of the ‘enemy’ that most people in Britain ever saw.⁸⁰

Island Farm Prisoner of War Camp, Bridgend

The German prisoners arrived in November 1944, and by the end of the war 2,000 of them were hosted at Island farm. Within the camp itself it is said to have been loud and the prisoners often sang defiantly and hatefully. There was often inter-prisoner violence against the prisoners who disbelieved Hitler would be victorious.⁸¹ There had been social disruptions within the camp itself due to the violence, and one prisoner, Otto Iskat, died as a result of this.⁸² Otto Iskat was killed due to his lack of belief in Hitler and the Nazis winning the war.

⁷⁸ Jackson.

⁷⁹ Jackson.

⁸⁰ Gabriel. Moshenska.p.71

⁸¹ ‘Island Farm Camp 198’ <<http://www.islandfarm.wales/Camp198.htm>> [accessed 15 May 2018].

⁸² ‘Baurat Otto Iskat - Organisation Todt (OT)’ <<http://www.islandfarm.wales/Otto%20Iskat.htm>> [accessed 15 May 2018].

This highlights how the integration of the Germans was resisted by the prisoners themselves, which in turn is shown by the way in which the Germans turned on their own within the camp, especially if they are viewed as wavering from the strict Nazi regime ideology.

The camp at Bridgend memorialised Iskat's memory on their website by posting a selection of poems that he wrote to his wife. One of which had come from France just before he was captured and transported to Bridgend. The poem itself highlights the humanity of the Germans, showing their kind-heartedness, the way they felt love, what makes them human;

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Kleine Frau in weiter Ferne

komm, verliere nicht den Mut,

Denn Du weisst, ich hab Dich gerne,

Denn Du weisst, ich bin Dir gut.

Fühlst Dich einsam und verlassen

Und von Sehnsucht übermannt

Wanderst still durch unsere Gassen

Fühl ich Deine liebe Hand.

Und Dein Herz das hör ich schlagen

Immerzu, in Lust und Leid.

Ach, so viel möchte ich Dir sagen

Doch der Weg ist gar so weit!

Liebe Frau, in weiter Ferne,

Schau nur immer gradeaus,

Einmal leuchten uns die Sterne

*Einmal komm auch ich nach haus!*⁸³

In this poem he writes to his wife about how one day he will come home to her, and the stars will shine for them, he states that she should never lose her courage. The memorialisation of this prisoner highlights the way in which the Welsh had managed to overlook the enemy status⁸⁴ and have accepted this as part of their heritage, showing the

⁸³ 'Baurat Otto Iskat - Organisation Todt (OT)'

<<http://www.islandfarm.wales/Otto%20Iskat2.htm>> [accessed 15 May 2018]. This poem has been translated on the website to give an insight into what was said for the public to see. Often enough, people may not bother with translating German Prisoners of War personal poems into English as they do not wish to view them as humans. The translation is; Little lady so far away come, don't lose your courage, When you know, I love you dearly, When you know, I am good for you. When you feel lost and lonely and are overcome with yearning, Wander through our little alleys and Feel your lovely hand in mine I hear your heart beat Always, in delight and song. Oh, there is so much I want to say to you But the road is far too great! Lovely lady, so far away, Always look straight ahead, One day the stars will shine for us Once day I will come home to you!

⁸⁴ Jackson.p.45

social and emotional acceptance of the German prisoners following the war. It could be assumed that a reason why society is overlooking the enemy status is due to reparation. Filigo believes that reparation is often driven by guilt.⁸⁵ It often leads to falsifying a memory in order to avoid guilt, becoming ambiguous as they become motivations for different conflicting groups.⁸⁶ In this case, the German prisoners and the Welsh citizens. Although it was perceived as inherently good that the prisoners were in the camps, there could still be a sense of historian's struggle when remembering the past and assimilating it into collective memory⁸⁷; how national history, identity and pride should be portrayed. There would have been debates of whether society would be able to integrate the German's history and poetry into collective memory or whether it should be ignored. By the camp memorialising the poem in their museum, they are commemorating the prisoners' redemption, this inclusive commemoration highlights the implication of a moral equivalence between the Welsh in Bridgend and the German soldiers who resided there. However, McCartney points out that having 'an empathetic approach to history often encourages us to project our own feelings and attitudes...onto those who lives in the past'⁸⁸ using this quote alongside her belief that there is a 'rising

⁸⁵ Karl Figlio, 'Psychoanalysis, Reparation, and Historical Memory', *American Imago*, 71.4 (2014), 417–43 (p. 417) <<https://doi.org/10.1353/aim.2014.0021>>.

⁸⁶ Figlio.p.417

⁸⁷ Figlio.p.418

⁸⁸ Helen B. McCartney, 'The First World War Soldier and His Contemporary Image in Britain', *International Affairs*, 90.2 (2014), 299–315 <<https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2346.12110>>.

cult of the victim'⁸⁹ there may be an idea of blurred lines regarding the memorialisation of someone who may have been seen as an enemy during the time.

Draine and Wolff highlights the bridge between people which is social relationships.⁹⁰

Being connected to their joint history through the use of the poem being in their museum shows the tangible as well as intangible heritage surrounding the Welsh-German relationship and history, it gives society the opportunity to 'stake claims' to resources that help them with emotional support, as well as acting as gateway connections to others⁹¹. This shows the ways in which the memorialisation of the Iskat's poems enriches community heritage.

It is believed that German Prisoners of War in Wales were treated in accordance to the international law and fared a lot better than their counterparts which had been prisoners within the Soviets hands.⁹²

In the face of iron discipline and barked orders, the German Prisoners of War, on Island Farm, found an easy comradeship with their fellow prisoners, and even with their guards. It was believed that if you were able to read deep down into a prisoner's heart, maybe you would find him saying 'well it is not so bad to get away from it all, after

⁸⁹ McCartney.p.315

⁹⁰ Wolff and Draine.p.457

⁹¹ Wolff and Draine.p.458

⁹² Richard Garrett, *Pow: The Uncivil Face of War*, New edition edition (Newton Abbot, Devon : New York, NY: David & Charles Uk, 1988).p.166

all.’⁹³ Instead of being on the front lines, the prisoners were working within the camp. During the war, they were often given jobs such as maintenance, gardening, carpentry and even cooking.⁹⁴ However, after the war the prisoners were given the chance to work outside the camp doing manual labour, which, under the Geneva Convention, they would not be able to be compelled to do it, they should volunteer to do the jobs. Those who were often bored of the monotonous life of the camp, worked on local farms where there would always be work available for them.⁹⁵

The initial reaction to the Prisoners within Bridgend from the local people was highlighted by Ex Chief Superintendent W.C.May who recollects the events of the day he helped transfer the prisoners from the train station.

*“on the way down... two women stepped off the pavement, and this monocled officer, he was walking behind me you see, they spat square in his face.”*⁹⁶

While some of society managed to look beyond their neighbours’ enemy status, not everyone was sympathetic to them. Some saw no need to treat the men well or for their community to even worry itself with their wellbeing.⁹⁷

⁹³ Piers Jessop, ‘Come Out, Come Out Wherever You Are’, *Come Out, Come Our Wherever You Are* (BBC Two, 1976).

⁹⁴ ‘Life In Special Camp 11’

<<http://www.islandfarm.wales/Life%20In%20Special%20Camp%2011.htm>> [accessed 16 May 2018].

⁹⁵ ‘Life In Special Camp 11’.

⁹⁶ Jessop.

⁹⁷ Jackson.p.45

Victor Davies, a guard from island Camp, highlights how the negative reactions from the local people towards the prisoners continued even when the prisoners were trying to help the community.

"The station was such that the trains could not run because of the snow. We took the German prisoners up there regardless of who they were or their rank. The Germans were made to clear the snow away by hand using shovels. While they were clearing the snow, the people on the platform were throwing stones at them. We had our work cut out trying to stop them throwing the stones."⁹⁸

This in itself shows the way in which the guards had tried their best to follow Article 2 of the Geneva Convention, as they attempted to stop the acts of violence against the prisoners. Even though it may have been difficult seeming they were ultimately defending 'the enemy' from their own community.

Although the men were not treated with affection during the war, some were still grateful of being captured. Lieutenant Were Zielasko confides the positive aspect of being a prisoner.

⁹⁸ 'Life In Special Camp 11'.

*“In Bridgend, normal camp life began for us. You have to look at it from a positive side, we got a bed, regular meals and we got laundry. We had come from the battle line, our units were more or less extinguished. ... four hundred men were captured.”*⁹⁹

Unfortunately for the Germans, during the war years, the social relationships which usually bridge people together, were burnt. Simply because of the country they came from and the anti-fraternisation rules put in place. However, following the War, integration within Bridgend was common economically and socially. A number of prisoners worked for the RSPCA based in Bridgend, while a large number of them had been sent to work, clearing the beaches.¹⁰⁰

Following the war, a programme for re-education had been developed to prepare the prisoners for their new life, whether it be in Wales or Germany.¹⁰¹ The re-education

⁹⁹ Jessop. Interview with Lt. Were Zielasko.; Translated from the German below

“Bei Bridgend begann für uns das normale Lagerleben. Man muss es von einer positiven Seite betrachten, wir bekamen ein Bett, regelmäßige Mahlzeiten und wir bekamen Wäsche... Wir waren aus der Kampflinie gekommen, unsere Einheiten waren mehr oder weniger ausgelöscht. ... vierhundert Männer wurden gefangen genommen.”

¹⁰⁰ ‘Life In Special Camp 11’.

¹⁰¹ ‘German Prisoners of War in Britain’

<<http://www.radiomarconi.com/marconi/monumento/pow/pows.html>> [accessed 21 May 2018].

programme was used to discover if a prisoner should be allowed back home to Germany or not. However, although the last repatriations were in 1949, there were still a number of German prisoners who did not return to their home, leading to their decision to stay in Wales. They were then given the opportunity to interact more with local people after the war, when they were offered the chance to spend Christmas with a family local to the area and they would also be able to visit the children they made toys for. This led to even less resentment towards the prisoners.¹⁰²

In November 1946, the rules around fraternisation had been slightly relaxed which led to prisoners being allowed to attend cinemas as well as being able to accept invitations to peoples' homes. However, dating welsh women was still forbidden.¹⁰³ However, by July 1947 the fraternisation rules were abolished completely. This led to the marriage of a German Prisoner of War to a local lady at Bridgend. Helmuth Guettler, a German Navy Corporal, and Zena Pickering married on the 31st January 1948.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² 'German Prisoners of War in Britain'.

¹⁰³ Mark Muller, 'German Prisoners of War in Pembrokeshire', *Western Telegraph*, 19 November 2013

<http://www.westerntelegraph.co.uk/news/nostalgia/10820024.German_Prisoners_of_War_in_Pembrokeshire/> [accessed 14 May 2018].

¹⁰⁴ 'A German POW Marries A Local Girl'

<http://www.islandfarm.wales/Helmut_Guettler_Marries_A_Local_Girl.htm> [accessed 16 May 2018].

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GOFAL: Mae yna drosoddau yn ymwneud â new addau tystysgrif neu ddefnyddio tystysgrifau heb fod yn un yn ddiogel.
Hawddwr y gorn:

No. Rhif	Marriage solemnized at Priodas a weinyddwyd yn	in the yn nosbarth	in the yn nosbarth	in the yn nosbarth	in the yn nosbarth	in the yn nosbarth	in the yn nosbarth
1. When married Pryd y priodwyd	2. Name and surname Enw a chyfenw	3. Age Oed	4. Condition Cyllwr	5. Rank or profession Safle neu broffesiwn	6. Residence at the time of marriage Preswyllfa adeg priodi	7. Father's name and surname Enw a chyfenw'r tad	8. Rank or profession Safle neu broffesiwn
21 January 1948	Helmuth GUETTNER	26	Bachelor	Soldier	1011 POW Camp Enlledig 20 Alexander Road Bridgend, Bridgend British Zone	Georg GUETTNER (deceased)	Chenik
	Zena Beryl PICKERING	24	spinster	—	21 Brynorch Road Sarn	Albert Ernest PICKERING	Driver
Married in the presence of Priodwyd yn ymgyddwriaeth This marriage was solemnized between us, Gweinyddwyd y briodas hon rhyngom ni, in the presence of us, yn ein presenoldeb ni, by me, drwy hennid, gennyf fi, E. Chandler A. T. Voddens J. Kobay Registrar Cofrestrwr Registration District Dosbarth Cofrestru Bridgend 24.8.2001 Date Dyddiad							
Certified to be a true copy of an entry in a register in my custody Tystiolaethwyd ei fod yn gopi cywir o gofnod mewn cofrestr a gedwir gennyf i. Mary Thomas Signature Llofnod Registrar Cofrestrwr Registration District Dosbarth Cofrestru Bridgend 24.8.2001 Date Dyddiad							

WARNING: A CERTIFICATE IS NOT EVIDENCE OF IDENTITY.
RHYBUDD: NID YW TYSTYSGRIF YN PROFI PWY DYCH CHIL.

(Image one; Marriage Certificate of Helmuth Guettler, a German Prisoner of war, and Zena Beryl Pickering)¹⁰⁵

This marriage highlights the acceptance of society within Bridgend, due to the fact that the relationship was allowed, in an area where many would have been faced with losing family members because of the German enemies. However, this could be explained by the fact that many were keen to forget the horrors of war, and the impact it had on their family structures.

¹⁰⁵ 'England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1916-2005 - AncestryLibraryEdition.Co.Uk' <https://search.ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?_phsrc=xzR3&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&gss=angs-g&new=1&rank=1&msT=1&gsln=Guettler&gsln_x=0&msgdy=1948&msgdy_x=1&msgpn_ftp=Glamorgan,%20Wales&msgpn=5365&catbucket=rstp&MSAV=1&uidh=x2h&pcat=ROOT_CATEGORY&h=58283060&dbid=8753&indiv=1&ml_rpos=1> [accessed 16 May 2018].

This contrasts heavily to other parts of Britain where many women had been beaten and shunned

by their families for falling in love with a German prisoner of war. A woman in Southampton, June Tull, reported how the mere sight of her and her partner ignited insults and fury; questions were asked of ‘aren’t our boys good enough for you?’, she was spat at and even punched.¹⁰⁶ Many people were unable to come to terms with the fact that some women had chosen to associate themselves with the enemy, particularly when their own fathers, husbands and sons had been killed by the Germans, or at least were still fighting them.¹⁰⁷ This helps to show the contrasting views and reactions between England and Wales during and after the Second World War when discussing the integrating of the enemies whom were residing there until they were repatriated.

Sarah Morgan, confided a story of her father, who experienced first hand the Prisoners of War in Bridgend. He himself had positive memories of them.

My dad was a young boy at the time. He remembers that when the war ended, certain prisoners were allowed out and about. He remembers standing next to Von Rundstedt in W. H. Smiths one day. He was a true gent and was standing in his very pristine uniform, buying a newspaper.

¹⁰⁶ Helen Weathers, ‘Sleeping with the Enemy: The British Women Who Fell for German PoWs’, *Mail Online* <<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-476097/Sleeping-enemy-The-British-women-fell-German-PoWs.html>> [accessed 18 May 2018].

¹⁰⁷ Weathers.

*During the war and just after, prisoners would walk through the streets of Laleston with guards. One day a prisoner gave him a wooden kangaroo toy that he'd made. He still has it. As children they'd run and see them and give the prisoners chunks of wood to go off and make things for them.*¹⁰⁸

A striking aspect of this account is how these Nazi soldiers, especially Von Rundstedt, a Field Marshal during the war, have been depicted as kind humans, men who still have their humanity, still know how to be kind. This humanity is highlighted even more with the depiction of the soldiers as artists, men who make things with the tools they have been given by the public.

This lead to an important aspect of their legacy within the Welsh cultural heritage. The pictures of cordial and kind Germans who, as well as being soldiers, were craftsmen.

The change in reactions to the German prisoners of war over the years that they were in Bridgend gives an exemplary example of Wolff and Draines statement that 'building sturdy bridges between prisoners and the community takes more than a day to build, but if built may lead to a road worth travelling.'¹⁰⁹ The prisoners ended up providing an excellent replacement workforce whilst the British men were on the front lines, whilst

¹⁰⁸ Sarah Morgan, Story of a woman's fathers experience of German POWs at Bridgend, 2018.

¹⁰⁹ Wolff and Draine.p.480

creating toys for children to enjoy, showing that they are humans and not monsters
which Germans were often perceived as during the war.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to find how the German and Italian Prisoner of War camps impacted communities in Wales during the Second World War as the communities suddenly found themselves living with those who were seen as their enemies.

The study shows that there appears to be many similarities between the experiences of German and Italian Prisoners of War during their time in Wales. These similarities can be found in the positive social reactions which they encountered within the local communities as well as the significant impact they made in helping the economy during their time in the camps.

This study contributes to the existing knowledge of how Britain followed the Geneva Convention of 1929 to uphold the right practises towards their prisoners within the war years, whilst providing us with evidence of how this positively impacted the lives of the prisoners who lived there. This study does not suggest a complete agreement that all Prisoners of War had been treated fairly throughout Wales, as this study focuses particularly on two camps, but it does show that within Bridgend and Henllan the common theme was the fairness experienced by the Prisoners of War, as they maintained freedoms and employment.

The story of the Prisoners of War held by Wales has been almost ignored within Welsh history of the Second World War, let alone history in general. This study has readdressed its importance, showing that the impact of the prisoners was a key part of

the history of the communities. It was able to highlight how although there had been an initial fear on both sides, friendships were created, and love had been found. This encouraged many Italian and German prisoners to remain in Wales long after the war had ended. This study has gone some way towards enhancing our understanding of the role of prisoners within the society and how although their role was not officially recorded in history books, it is certainly one which wholeheartedly sums up the wartime spirit of Wales. It shows the need to look outside the battle, to the men behind their uniforms, which led to the Welsh often being willing to call them friends. It truly highlights the idea that building sturdy bridges between prisoners and the community takes more than a day to achieve, but if built may lead to a road worth travelling. Many prisoners stayed in Wales following the war because of the welcome they received from the communities, and often many found love.

In line with the framework presented by Draine and Wolff for prisoner integration, prisoners in both Bridgend and Henllan demonstrated the development of strong community connections which, through the willingness of the local communities they were able to mobilise through the labour they provided. Both the German and Italian prisoners were able to contribute to their communities in ways which went beyond what was required or expected. The Germans with their wooden toys for the children, and the Italians with their creation of the chapel. The social and cultural context of perceptions of Germans and Italians within Wales at that time allowed for a willingness on both sides for friendship to develop out of hostilities.

The willingness on both sides can be understood to continue to this day as communities are eager to build, shape and preserve a positive collective memory of the Prisoner of War camps in Wales. Assman's idea of communicative memory can be seen reflected in this enthusiasm with which the relatives and community members seek to present their past.

This research has provided answers as well as raised many more questions which would need to be investigated further. These include further research into archives of the time to find ancestry records of how many prisoners exactly settled down in the areas that they had resided during the war, as well as also researching more thoroughly into the camps themselves. It would be interesting to compare experiences of Prisoners of War who were based in different parts of Britain to examine whether they faced the same reactions and impacted the communities the same way the prisoners had in Henllan and Bridgend. The experiences of Henllan and Bridgend may be a uniquely Welsh experience and the local communities in other areas of Britain may have their unique responses to the challenges of hosting Prisoners of War.

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