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# Lofthouse Park Camp: Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Sailor...and possibly a few gentlemen spies?

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Lofthouse Park Camp: Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Sailor...and possibly a few gentlemen spies?

by David Stowe

## Introduction

*Pleasure, Privilege, Privations. Lofthouse Park Near Wakefield, 1908-1922* was published in April 2018. It comprises 25 chapters, written by 15 authors drawn from British and German academics, independent scholars, and social and family historians. Some of the themes dealt with include the origins of Lofthouse Park as a theme or amusement park, an overview of its role as a civilian internment camp from 1914 to 1918, and the transition from civilian to military prisoner of war camp which took place in October

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1918. The book also includes a number of appendices, with several lists amounting to around five hundred civilian and military prisoners who had been interned at Lofthouse Park between October 1914 and 1920.<sup>1</sup>

This article is based on new research which could not be included in the book at the time of publication. In addition to this, the article draws on a number of sources which includes the identification of more than two hundred civilian and military personnel who had been interned at the camp between October 1914 and 1920 – bringing the total number of civilian and military prisoners now known by name to have been interned at Lofthouse Park to around 750. Among these numbers were some who were suspected of posing a threat to the nation if released. Some of the sources used in researching this article may be found in the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) database, the Manx National Heritage iMuseum website, and official correspondence relating to German civilian prisoners and their fitness for release.

The three main themes dealt with in this article are thus: civilian internees, military prisoners of war, and suspected enemy agents. A list of the names from which much of the following analysis is taken will be published at a later date.

## Civilian Internees

There are more than one hundred names listed on the Manx iMuseum website of men interned at Knockaloe Camp on 11 October 1918. Among the civilians transferred to the Isle of Man when Lofthouse Park closed in October 1918 were Simon Broders (Brod), Hans Georg von Chorus, Karl Johann Dyckerhoff, Johann Georg Giese, Adolf Karl Alexander Korner, and Franciscus Antonius Swinkels.<sup>2</sup> According to additional material found in the ICRC database, Johann Giese was interned at Lofthouse Park in May 1915, and Adolf Korner had spent some time at Queensferry, Scotland, before being transferred to Lofthouse Park the same year. The registration details for Hans von Chorus show that he moved between Germany and the United States before the war, with his address given as Berlin and 634 Fifth Avenue, New York.<sup>3</sup>

## Military Prisoners

The ICRC database has proved especially useful where a further two hundred names of the German armed forces have been found which might be linked to Lofthouse Park. The information contained in the documents includes name, rank, unit, place of capture, pre-war occupation and profession in many cases, and in the case of captured naval forces, the name and class of vessel or ship. Among those who had surrendered or found themselves captured on battlefields such as Cambrai, Le Cateau and Montbrehain were Hauptmann Hans Schmidt of 401 Infantry Regiment, who was a Professor of Theology in civilian life, Hans Peter von Briessen whose profession was *Magistrats-Sekretär*, and Rafael Urban, a student of philosophy, born in 1893.<sup>4</sup> Many of the men listed in the documents were officers who were captured in the last stages of

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the war and would have been among the first of the military prisoners to arrive at Lofthouse Park after the camp had been cleared of civilian internees in October 1918.<sup>5</sup>

A summary of the places of capture, occupations and professions, and pennant numbers or ships based on the additional list of military prisoners held at Lofthouse Park in 1918 may be found below.

### German Military: Place of Capture

Beaurevoir	Bertry	Brancourt	Busigny
Cambrai	Clery	Fresnes	Honnechy
La Cateau	Lesdain	Montbrehain	Neuvilly
Ponchaux	Ramicourt	Rumilly	Walincourt

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Source: ICRC Database. ANGL 27121-27125, 27220-27223, 28370-28372, 29431-29432, 29616.

### German Military: Occupations and Professions

Graduate	Archaeology Student	Architect	Actuary
Bank Clerk	Bookseller	Chemistry Student	Engineering
Merchant	Lecturer	Medical Student	Trainee Lawyer
Student	Theology Student	University Assistant	Customs Officer

Source: ICRC Database. ANGL 27121-27125, 27220-27223, 28370-28372, 29431-29432, 29616.

### German Navy

T-Boot 'G-38'	T-Boot 'S-32'	T-Boot 'V-43'
T-Boot 'G-39'	T-Boot 'S-36'	T-Boot 'V-46'
T-Boot 'G-91'	T-Boot 'S-49'	T-Boot 'V-70'
T-Boot 'G-92'	T-Boot 'S-53'	T-Boot 'V-82'
	T-Boot 'S-60'	T-Boot 'V-83'
	T-Boot 'S-131'	T-Boot 'V-126'
	T-Boot 'S-132'	T-Boot 'V-127'

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Source: ICRC Database. ANGL 40048-40049. See also Kreuzer 'Brummer' and T-Boot 'S-138'.

### German and Austrian Agents

Although stories of enemy agents and 'spy fever' were pretty much prevalent before the war, it was not uncommon to read reports in the local and national press of those who had been arrested and charged with espionage shortly after the war started. Karl Stubenvoll, who was in fact an Austrian, was a naval architect who had been recently employed by Messrs Swan Hunter and Wigham, Richardson and Company at Wallsend when he was charged at Newcastle in August 1914 with 'unlawfully, for purposes prejudicial to the safety and interests of the State, obtained certain plans, notes, and other documents which were calculated, and might be directly or indirectly useful to the enemy'.<sup>6</sup> Stubenvoll was charged under the Official Secrets Act. He was 27 years of age at the time of his arrest. After several court appearances and being further remanded in custody he was eventually sent to Lofthouse Park in May 1915.<sup>7</sup> In January 1916 representation had been made by the American Embassy on behalf of the Austrian Government for the release of Stubenvoll on the grounds that his relatives had claimed he had a defective heart and was not fit for military service.<sup>8</sup> The request was denied.

Stubenvoll's age is important as it meant that he was still considered eligible for military service. This applied to men up to the age of 45. It also allowed for the continued detention of some civilians over the age of 45 whose services might be of special value to the enemy if released. The desirability or otherwise of exchanging certain categories of civilian internees was outlined in a document which was sent from the Director of Special Intelligence to the Under-Secretary of State for War in December 1917.<sup>9</sup> The emphasis in this instance was the potential threat posed by a number of German-born internees if released or exchanged and returned to Germany. Thirty-two names are included in the document, covering five different groups or categories under the heading '1. Exchange with Germany of Civilian Prisoners over 45'.

Group I. Germans Specially Qualified For Consideration For The First Twenty

Group II. Germans Next Qualified For Consideration If The Number Is Increased To 24

Group III. Germans Also Qualified For Consideration<sup>10</sup>

Group IV. Germans In Dominions And Colonies

Group V. Germans Qualified But Not Retained

The conditions governing the detention of the civilian internees in Group I were laid down in Clause (iii) in which 'both parties shall be free on military grounds, up to the number of 20 persons who would otherwise be repatriated.'<sup>11</sup> Copies were forwarded to the Admiralty, Colonial Office, Foreign Office, Home Office, Ministry of Munitions, and War Office.

There are at least six men mentioned in the documents with links to Lofthouse Park, with four government agencies involved in the recommendation that each of the men be detained rather than released or exchanged. The detention in the cases of Charles Rudolf Altenheim (46), Baron Louis Anton von Horst (54), and Quirin Hubert August Maria Wirtz (54), of Great Ormond Street, London, was recommended by M.I.5 in so far that each man had expertise in areas of research which might be valuable to Germany. Charles Altenheim was a colliery engineer and Managing Director of Kopper's Coke Oven and By-Product Company in Sheffield. He was also said to be a chemist. Quirin Wirtz was a chemist and thought to have been an authority on explosives, dyes and paper. Edwin Cuno Kayser (53), Carl Koettgen (45), and Erich von Wedel (51), whose address is given as Bournemouth, are also mentioned in the document, with recommendations that each man be detained.<sup>12</sup>

Perhaps the man considered the most dangerous of the six was Baron Louis Anton von Horst, whom M.I.5 suspected of trying to stir up trouble in Ireland and strongly believed to be a German agent of high importance. Von Horst had been trading as Horst Company, at 26 Denman Street, London, before the war and was undergoing treatment in the German Hospital at Dalston at the time the report was compiled in 1917.<sup>13</sup> He seems to have been there some time, having been transferred to Dalston from Lofthouse Park in April 1915, where he had spent two days before being admitted to hospital after first exhibiting symptoms of a 'nervous breakdown' when he was interned on the *Royal Edward*.<sup>14</sup> Horst also had connections to Lillian Scott Troy, who was under surveillance by Special Branch for her involvement in Irish nationalism and women's suffrage. Both von Horst and Troy were deported after the war.<sup>15</sup>

## Conclusion

Lofthouse Park closed its gates in March 1920. Its fixtures and fittings were sold under public auction shortly after. The only building which remained was the Pavilion, which had been a familiar landmark since Lofthouse Park's former glory days as an amusement park before the war. Its grounds lay desolate for a couple of years until consumed by fire in April 1922. During its time as an internment camp more than 1,500 civilians had passed through its large wooden gate on the main Leeds to Wakefield road. Many of the civilians would spend their war in one of the three compounds on the 12.5 acre site. Some would die or end their lives there. The changes which took place in October 1918 – and what was essentially the change from one form of incarceration to another – is also a timely reminder that detainment is still an all too often grim reality for those who find themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time a century later.

## References

1. Claudia Sternberg and David Stowe (eds.), *Pleasure, Privilege, Privations: Lofthouse Park near Wakefield, 1908-1922*. Leeds: In the Wrong Place at The Wrong Time, 2018.
2. Manx National Heritage iMuseum. Knockaloe Camp. 11 October 1918.  
<https://www.imuseum.im/>. See Sternberg and Stowe (eds.), Appendix 1, pp. 278-280, for the order issued to evacuate Lofthouse Park Camp in October 1918. This is also covered in Oliver Wilkinson's chapter at Ref. 5 below.
3. ICRC Database. Hans Georg von Chorus. D-LXXVII-1. The date of internment on his index card is given as 4 March 1916.
4. See ICRC Database – with thanks also to Claudia Sternberg for translation of German professions and occupations.
5. Oliver Wilkinson, 'Lofthouse Park Prisoner of War Camp, 1918-1919', in Sternberg and Stowe (eds.), *Pleasure, Privilege, Privations*, pp. 182-188.
6. *Shields Daily News*, 21 August 1914, p. 3; *Yorkshire Post*, 29 August 1914, p. 9.
7. ICRC index card. Karl Stubenvoll.
8. The National Archives FO 383/114 (1916) 'Karl Stubenvoll, detained at Wakefield'.
9. 'Exchange with Germany of Civilian Prisoners over 45.' *Prisoners of War Dominions* (1917). Vol. 5. pp. 445-451. This document has been digitised and can be found on Find My Past. I would like to thank Dr Anne C. Brook for her generosity and drawing my attention to this document (Ref. CO 693/5). Thanks also for additional information recently received on Erich von Wedel. Please see below.
10. *Ibid.* Group III. Wedel, Erich von, aged 51. 'Possibly a Reserve Officer. If so, can be retained as a military prisoner. If he is not, there is no reason to detain him.'
11. See 'Exchange with Germany of Civilian Prisoners over 45'.
12. *Ibid.* Koettgen, of Bromley, was a Manager at the Siemens Works.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Ruth Allison, 'Gregory Sinclair Haines: Prison Reformer and Commandant of Lofthouse Park', in Claudia Sternberg and David Stowe (eds.), *Pleasure, Privilege, Privations*, p. 177.
15. *Ibid.* See Allison, pp. 176-77, on the relationship between von Horst, Troy and Commandant Gregory Sinclair Haines, and accusations of blackmail against Haines and his business partner by **Lillian Scott Troy**.

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