

Feltham History Group

web submission December 2021

The Chairman opened the meeting with his customary welcome and introduction,

Under items of Interest the Secretary, in response to an enquiry by a number of member's who after the last meeting were discussing a prisoner of war camp which was set up at ex Mx Industrial School. Briefly the school in 1909 had become a Borstal Institution, but by '1914' was converted by the government of the day into premises to house WW1 opposition forces 'German's and Danes'.

This is the 'camp'
Feltham Lejren 'Camp'



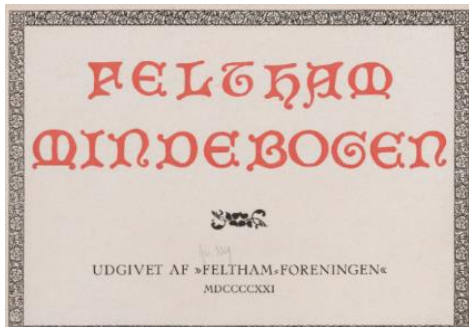
Amongst those confined in the camp were a number of South Jutlanders or Slesvigere, to acquaint everyone with the situation generally in that region the following is given – in the 1860's the districts of Schleswig and Holstein were surrendered to Prussia by Denmark, but the people of Schleswig kept 'resolutely to their Danish language and customs, but when WW1 war came some were conscripted into the German Army - - in the many battles of WW1 some were captured and transported to England.

After cessation of hostilities a plebiscite was held in their homeland which resulted in the reunification South Jutlanders of Schleswig [and Holstein] with Denmark. The prisoners in 1919 were returned to a liberated homeland.

In the main the following is contained in a publication called The Anglo-German Family History Society Magazine and is a very interesting read!



The publication was in Danish and entitled 'Feltham Mindebogen' which I understand means 'Feltham memories' and was published in 1921, the content being supplied by the ex-internees and therefore varied in nature – here is but a few of their experiences. The camp was set up to be self sufficient and required the men to carry out many tasks—one example being



Backerei des Gefangenlagers

It would appear that the camp did not hold German POW's for long as there was some friction between the Slesvigians and the German's resulting with the Germans being placed elsewhere in the UK which meant that it, 'the camp' consisted of Danes alone.

When they arrived in Great Britain in the Autumn of 1914 a Reverend Troensegaard Hansen set about uniting all the Jutlanders in the country here at Feltham – there were '75' at first - but by 1916 they numbered some 2000



Reverend Hansen organised religious services and the services were taken by their own Pastor. In the publication is the following - *“it was a great day when the whole congregation filled our little camp church in order to listen to the words of our Lord in our Danish language”*

A choir was formed and a Theatrical group – other entertainment ranged

from Gymnastics and ball games with of course a Football team



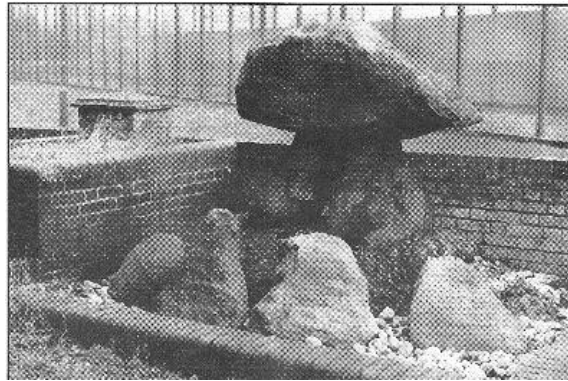
Because they were designated ‘friendly aliens’ they were allowed to go unescorted to Hounslow, Staines and other nearby places – some worked on local farms and market gardens

Christmas was eagerly looked forward to and preparations began early ‘bit like today’ the big hall was decorated with green branches and flags and a large Christmas tree with hundreds of red and white candles – the Christmas Geese arrived ‘in a gaggle I presume’ and were subsequently prepared! – all this made for a proper Christmas spirit - - ‘songs were heard’ and ‘happy faces’ seen everywhere.

The choir practiced Christmas hymns and on the eve they all met in the chapel and sang heartily so reawakening memories of home and childhood.

At the end of the war the POW’s looked forward to the day when they would return to their homeland but that was tinged with sadness as 4 of them died of the Spanish Flu - that was pandemic in nature – the 4 men are buried in the small graveyard in what today is the Young Offenders Institution

The below commemorative piece of 1961 bears their names 'on the 4 smaller rocks'

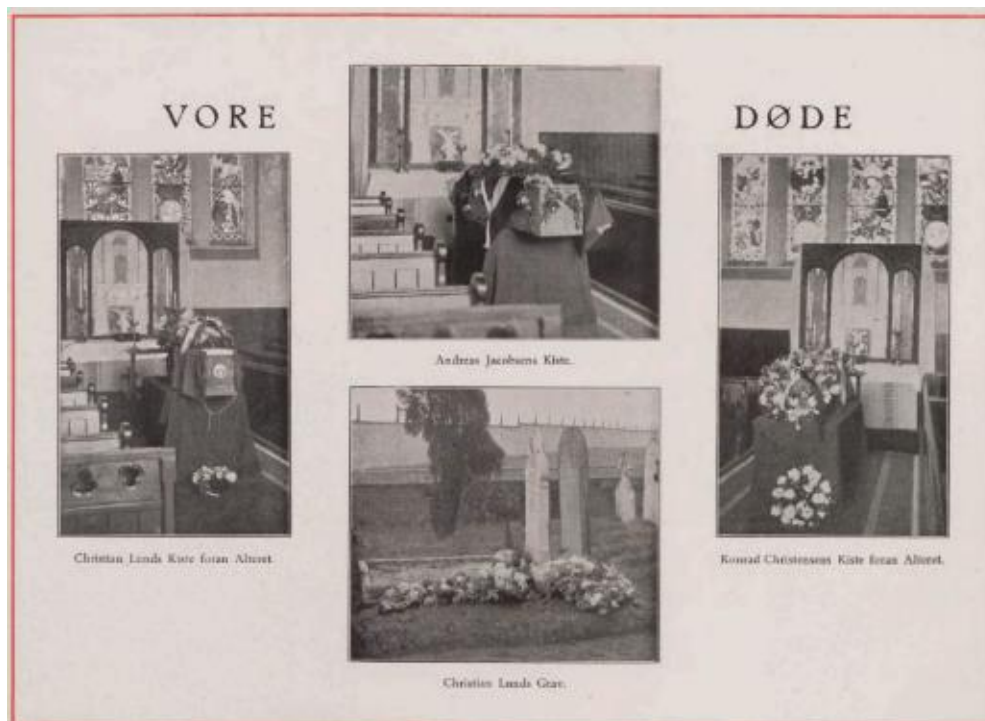


the Chapel



This image (below) shows inside the Chapel at the time and shows the caskets of the men who had died.

They are Christian Andrejan Lund 'kiste' and grave - - Andreas Jackobsens 'Kiste' and Konrad Kristensen , the other was Peter Andrese Petersen



The release date came and the men 'marched' off to Feltham Railway station but not before the camp commandant, Colonel Johnson said these words *"now you are no longer prisoners of war; now you are Danish Slesvigians and free men"* at these words the writer of this particular piece records *"we felt as if our hearts would burst with happiness"*



The Chronicle report at the time '1919' concludes with *"I understand that many people will remember the friendly Huns"*

That is not the end, however, as the prisoners of war made a visit in 1923 and it was said *'through having such pleasant memories of Feltham'* and to also unveil a memorial to their comrades who had died in 1918 epidemic.

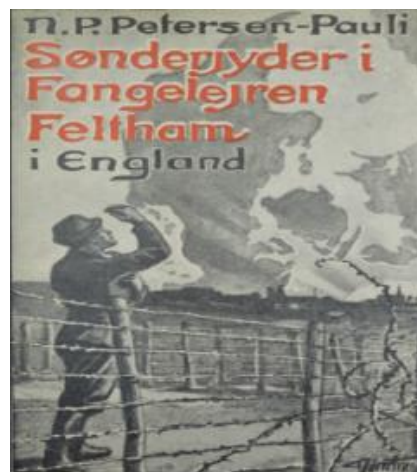
Then in 1961, '20' ageing Danes returned to Feltham and were met at the gates by 75 year old William Fisher 'one of their guards – he was instantly recognised and they hugged him with enthusiasm.

According to a local newspaper the veterans whose ages were between 80 and 90 also made a beeline down the corridors in search of the cells that they once occupied.

When asked if they would return again one shrugged his shoulders and said *"we are too old – and we only wanted to see the old place for the last time.*

Returning to the Mx Chron report of 1923 - included was the following 'Invocatory exhortation'

"teach us oh God to count our days that we may receive wisdom from thee in our hearts"

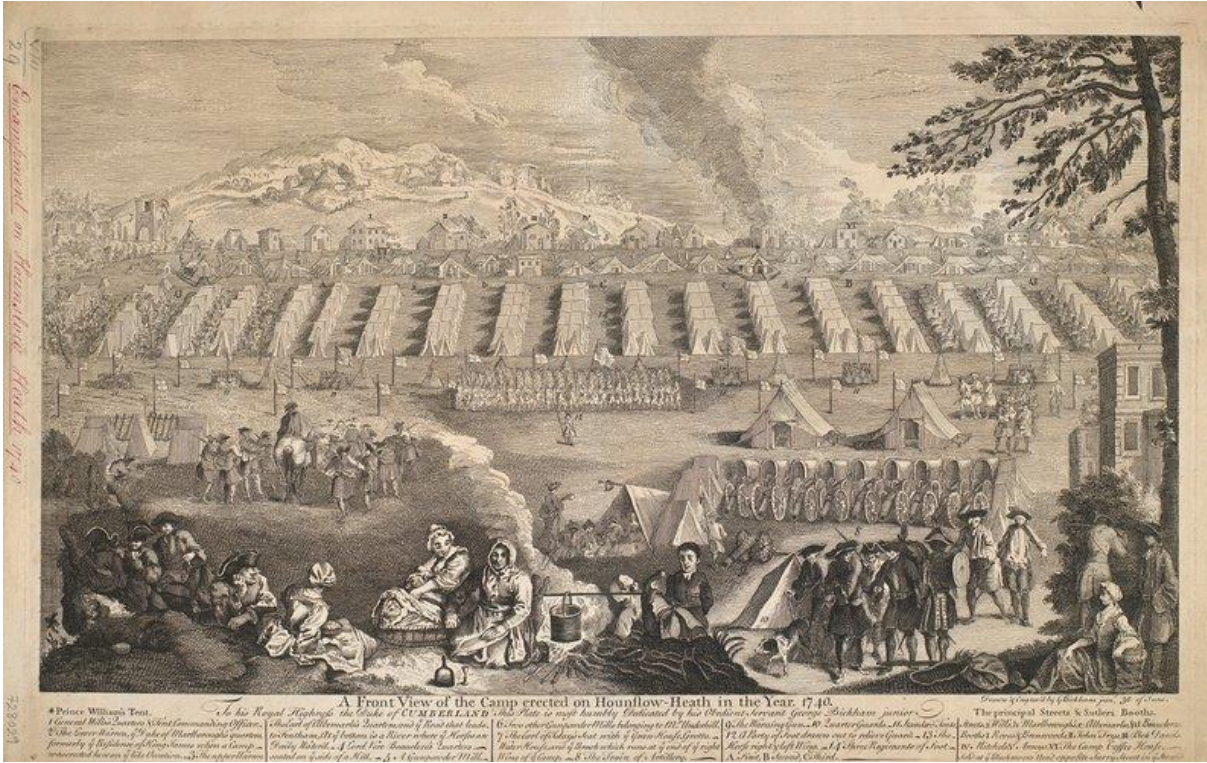


From prison camp Feltham'

The next item concerned the Four Point Garage and Ford Z's Club (detail available)

Finally a short film was played entitled "Know Your Place" this was produced by Ed Harris. Chair, Borough of Twickenham Local History Society. It centres around

Hounslow Heath and its Military association over the years. Of particular interest was depictions of the heath in regards Military reviews held under a number of Kings and information of the landscape of the time, e.g. roads, paths, bridges and waterways.



Under ‘forthcoming events’ was a notification of an enterprise called Feltham Fete which being organised by many local groups and Hounslow. Provisional date being June 2022

There followed a Short Talk by the Chair of Friends of Bridge House Pond and Garden titled 'What went before the Longford River?' (full transcript available from Author)

The next meeting will be Tuesday 1st February 2022 when the Treasurer will talk more on Feltham’s Military Associations.