




<p>Project: Pennylands Camp 22 - WW2 POW Camp.  Respondent: James Blyth.  Year of Birth: 1923.  Age: 93.  Connection to project: Captain Black Watch and was working on the Repatriation of Polish Troops.  Date of Interview: 12<sup>th</sup> May 2017.  Interviewer: Susan Christie.  Recording Agreement: Yes.  Information &amp; Content: Yes.  Photographic Images: Yes (Number of: 2).  Length of Interview: 16:18.  Location of Interview: Ayr, Ayrshire.  Recording Equipment: Zoom H4n Pro.</p>	
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Time (from: mins/secs)	Time Coded Full Transcript	Transcribed Extract (from- to: mins/secs)
0.00	<b>Introduction, welcome and information about respondent.</b>	0:00-0:27
	<b>Q1. What was your personal connection to Pennylands Camp?</b>	
	A1. I was born on the All Saints day, 1 <sup>st</sup> November 1923 in the City of Edinburgh. I have written a book, One Man's Pilgrimage because from the 41 <sup>st</sup> year until I retired I was a Church of Scotland parish minister but getting back to Pennylands, 271258 Captain James Blyth the Black Watch. In 1946 sailed up the Clyde on the Nea Hellis a troop ship from Mombassa after 3½ years' service with the Kings African Rifles in Africa, Ceylon, India and Burma. I was due to serve in the army until demob number came up. I am saying about April 1947.	0:28-1:35
	<b>Q2. Which era are we talking about? Are we talking about the end of the war and the repatriation of troops from Pennylands?</b>	
	A2. Yes, I would have arrived at Pennylands, actually there was a smaller camp in Stewarton and it was there that I first made contact with the Poles having come from Edinburgh by train. That would have been November 1946 and I would leave the associations with Pennylands in about May 1947.	1:45-2:18
	<b>Q3. Can you describe for us the layout of the Pennylands Camp?</b>	
	A3. This is difficult, because although I was not only associated, deeply involved with the process of repatriating	2:24-4:09

	<p>the Poles to their native land, I was actually in London for a good part of this, so many months, 8 months, yes 8 months and the reason for this is that the situation in Poland at the end of the second world war was that no words to describe the shambles there was and the Polish Embassy in London which was in a right big mansion house quite near the headquarters of the BBC and I was the guy placed in charge of this and must have had files and all. We travelled down from Pennylands to London overnight in service buses from Kilmarnock. It seems totally ridiculous when we were standing in Pennylands an area on millions of tons of coal but there was some upset, not a strike, but upset and trains were not available for this particular job so we travelled down one or two buses a night for a period of some weeks, 2 or 3 months even so I was actually in London I wasn't in Pennylands Camp.</p>	
	<p><b>Q4. Do you know how many Poles you helped to repatriate in this way?</b></p>	
	<p>A4. Yes, I have one very clear memory of marching from Pennylands Camp up to Auchinleck station with a lot of good local good wishes and we saw them off and I am saying there were about 400 and they were destined by train to Leith then by ship to Gdansk I would say, to Poland and so on.</p>	4:18-4:45
	<p><b>Q5. Can you describe the locals' feelings towards the soldiers as they saw them leave?</b></p>	
	<p>A5. I would say they were very nice people the Poles and they were very polite from all ranks and no I would say they were dispatched with greetings and well-wishers. Not surprisingly quite a few of the Polish lads married local girls and there are quite a lot of Polish families round this part of Scotland with Polish names and without blowing my own tooter, in the little cemetery in Auchinleck down the hill there are several Polish names there and I have more than once laid daffodils on the Polish graves not knowing the individuals but this is in honour of a very super people the Poles and the longest start of any bunches of humans, there you go.</p>	4.58-6:07
	<p><b>Q6. How did you contact the relatives of the soldiers that were stationed there, was there any relatives you had to contact to give them bad news for example the soldier had died?</b></p>	
	<p>A6. No I was not involved in that at all, there would have been no doubt.</p>	6:21-6:26
	<p><b>Q7. You have described for us the troops were moved by service bus, can I just ask was there a lot of trucks in Pennylands or tanks?</b></p>	

	A7. No there wasn't. Little wee vans and the sort of transport that's necessary for an outfit like this. [Susan asks] but no troop trucks? Not that I recall.	6.39-6.37
	<b>Q8. Can you describe the process once they were in London as what the procedure was for these Polish soldiers to get back home?</b>	
	A8. Yes, they went down, as I already said, they went down overnight and they went to the Marylebone Station Hotel which was on Marylebone Road quite close to Madame Tussaud's. It was used as a transit sort of camp in fact it was in that camp in getting back to 1943 that a bunch of us young officers were stationed until we got the train and sailed for we didn't know where, it turned out to be East Africa but the good souls came down overnight on the bus and without being unkind to the dear Poles, they tended to have rather longer overcoats than the other forces and many of them had little wee leather handyman bags and having to come down overnight for the 400 miles they were a bit dishevelled, so I was presented with a file and what the procedure was, I was a Captain of the Black Watch and not all that pleased with myself but walking marching from the Marylebone Station Hotel to the Polish Embassy beside the BBC was not exactly a barrel of fun so I arranged for a Polish Corporal from the embassy to come down and pick the lads up and walk on there and I used to travel through to the embassy with the files by underground.	7:06-8:51
	<b>Q9. Do you remember any of the Poles names?</b>	
	A9. No	8:57-8:58
	<b>Q10. What other nationalities, other than Poles can you remember being repatriated?</b>	
	A10. There was one great character in the Mess, Colonel Paul Rodienko, a Polish Russian upper you know upmarket guy. A very kind gracious lad and he was a skilled horseman and at a club in London where he entertained me to dinner one evening where I think he was also a the whatever it's called the Irish Olympic jumping team. I think he was the master of that we will call it or something. A delightful man but not a youngster he was a man of 50 year or so he joined... I don't want to ramble off too far but he was a famous guy Colonel Paul Rodienko. He joined the British Army as a Private and had an honorary rank of Lieutenant Colonel, he was a very nice chap.	9:09-10:29

	<b>Q11. I know you said you didn't spend a lot of time at Pennylands but can you talk us through a brief layout of the camp?</b>	
	A11. Yes, I have given you a copy of the huts, yes right. On the front of this printed Pennylands newsheet there is obviously a foundation for one of these huts I have called it brick and rubble base. It wasn't a foundation in the real sense because I am pretty certain the floor in the huts were 3 or 4 feet, 3 feet of the ground and that's how the entrance was from each end. Up 4 or 5 steps and this was the gap underneath.	10:39-11:25
	<b>Q12. How many men slept in the Camp?</b>	
	A12. Well this was it. There was room for 40, 10 bunks down each side so there was 40 in each but there was more there weren't sufficient Poles to fill all the huts in the camp and quite apart from that there were factions, fraction is a mild term to apply to the disagreements between one group of Poles and another group and in fact there was more than rumours that some of the poor lads when they got back they stepped off the troop ship from Leith to Gdansk and were strung up on the quay side. I cannot verify that but I am not given to telling just imaginary you know giving my imagination away too far.	11.30-12:34
	<b>Q13. Do you have any photographs of this era?</b>	
	A13. No.	12:39-12.40
	<b>Q14. Talking about the camp again these were sleeping quarters for the men, was there a separate shower and latrine block for them?</b>	
	A14. I have no recollection about that.	12.53-12.55
	<b>Q15. Or a hospital or a church in the grounds?</b>	
	A15. No.	12:58-12:59
	<b>Q16. Is there anything else you would like to add for me of your memories of this time?</b>	
	A16. Both the, like for myself just counting the days until I was out of the Army. I wasn't exactly, well I was still enthusiastic for the gift of life but how the days were filled in as I say a major part of the whole period was spent in London but things, one thing I do remember is an odd trip from Pennylands Camp to Gales Camp which is an old army camp near Troon and there was a big NAAFI, Navy, Army, Air Force Institute famous thing for cups of tea and all the rest of it. We would	13:07-14:16

	go over there whether I drove or what I don't remember we would go over and collect supplies for what we had a kind of canteen shop in Pennylands, you know cigarettes just the usual kind of stuff, toothpaste, razorblades and so on.	
	<b>Q17. It was hard to get that kind of thing?</b>	
	A17. Oh, aye and sweets lot of that stuff was very, what's the word rationed so the trips to the NAAFI during the war and even to this day have been a superb support of loving kindness and all sorts for troops and folks away from home.	14:18-14:45
	<b>Q18. Do you ever remember Red Cross parcels arriving to the camp?</b>	
	A18. I know about this, very kind, a lot was from Canada and was never personally aware of you know, seeing this in front of my eyes.	14:52-15:06-
	<b>Q19. Do you know if the locals used to help the soldiers by passing on food to them or maybe giving them small gifts?</b>	
	A19. I am sure, I am totally certain there was no enmity on the part of 80-90% of the local people they would have been kind to the prisoners and I'll top that one up with one, recently outside of Comrie in Perthshire, there is a famous prisoner of war camp, Cultybraggan which is still run as some sort of outdoor thing, where recently a German prisoner of war who had been there, I am saying he was a bachelor, anyway he died and in his will, he left £150,000 to the community of Comrie.	15:16-16:06
	<b>Closing statement and end of interview.</b>	16:18
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