


<p>Project: Pennylands Camp 22: WW2 POW Camp Respondent: Ian Nimmo. Year of Birth: 1934. Age: 82. Connection to project: Lived in Pennylands Camp for 2 weeks. His father was in charge of the Camp handover from German POWs to Polish troops. Date of Interview: 18th May 2017. Interviewer: Bobby Grierson. Recording Agreement: Yes. Information & Content: Yes. Photographic Images: Yes (Number of: 2). Length of Interview: 22.52. Location of Interview: Cumnock, Ayrshire. Recording Equipment: Zoom H4n Pro.</p>			
Time (from: mins/secs)	Time Coded Full Transcript	Full transcription (from: to: mins/secs)	
00.00	Introduction, welcome and information about respondent.	0.00:0.33	
	Q1. What is your connection to Pennylands Camp?		
	A1. I came down and stayed in the Camp for a week or two weeks, I think in 1946, I would be about 12 years of age at the time.	0.36:0.50	
	Q2. When you visited the Camp, who were you with?		
	A2. My father had been invalided out of the Royal Scots Fusiliers after Dunkirk and towards the end of the war the military had requisitioned houses in various areas and towards the end many of these houses had to be handed back to their owners in good condition and there was a number of military camps which either the prisoners, army or air-force were leaving and he got the job of taking these over just after the war and putting three caretakers into each camp. He did this in Glasgow, south-west of Scotland around about Cairnryan, the Stranraer area where I think there were about seven camps there but also Pennylands which was one of the camps he had to put caretakers in. He did this and moved on to the next bit as it became redundant after the war.	0.56:2.11	
	Q3. What was your father's name?		
	A3. His name was Joe Nimmo.	2.14:2.17	


	Q4. And his rank and age?	
	A4. He was a Royal Scots Fusilier. He started off as a private and he had campaigns with the Fusiliers stretching from the end of the First World War, White Russian Revolution, problems in Ireland in 1921 and seven years' tour of duty in the north-west frontier of Ithaca. He left the army and became a journalist and with the outbreak of the Second World War away he went again being a regular soldier. He rose to the rank of Colour Sergeant.	2:19-2:55
	Q5. What was his specific role at Pennylands?	
	A5. It was basically to take over the camp when the German Prisoners of war were in it, and the Germans left, I think, about 1946 so that it could be handed back or whatever was going to be done with the camp, in an orderly way. He put three caretakers into the camp just to keep it right. At that time after the war there was very difficult problems with housing, especially in Glasgow. Squatters, which wasn't a very nice name, but people who didn't have houses went in illegally and for a short period the government or the military were trying to say, "Look let's keep these camps or these big houses safe until we hand them over and somebody makes the decision about what going to be made with them." So that was his role, he would come in, put in three caretakers then move on to the next one and that's what he did in Pennylands.	3:00-4:10
	Q6. Were the caretakers part of the army?	
	A6. No. They were mostly local people, some of them had been ex-soldiers, some of them had been wounded during the war but others were just civilians: one of them as I remember, I wish I could remember his second name but I was just a wee boy, he was called Jimmy and he had an accident in a swimming pool and walked very badly with the help of a stick. He sort of befriended me because I had the run of the camp and we used to walk around together. The people who came into the camp as caretakers were some ex-soldiers, some wounded soldiers, all elderly and some retired people.	4:13-4:55
	Q7. Did they live on the camp?	
	A7. No, my father would go down to the Labour Exchange at that time and say can you find me somebody that can come in here.	5:00:05:11
	Q8. How long was your father at Pennylands Camp and when did he leave?	

	A8. He wouldn't be there long. I think it would be a matter of a couple of months perhaps and he stayed inside the Camp. He set himself up and as an ex-soldier he could sleep anywhere and he took over one of the huts with a bed and the makings. Then he got things ship-shape and dealt with the Germans as they were moving out.	5:14-5:41
	Q9. Did you see the hut where your father stayed?	
	A9. Yes, I stayed in it. My mother and I came down and stayed in the camp for a week or a fortnight and we had the run of the camp. I remember the Nissen huts there and I remember the gates. I can remember vividly, which appealed to me as a small boy, that outside the huts the German prisoners had built little model villages of their homes. So, there were little churches, castles, rivers. These were like little toy villages. They had got broken mirrors down which they turned into lakes with little swans floating on the lakes, it was all very nice. In their dining quarters, they had artists who had made these wonderful drawings of their homeland, huge murals right across the walls.	5:47-7:09
	Q10. Whereabouts were the dining quarters?	
	A10. I can't be sure but they were near the camp centre and the parade ground.	7:15-7:24
	Q11. When you visited the camp how did you get there?	
	A11. By train and bus, I think, in 1946.	7:30-7:36
	Q12. Was it Auchinleck Railway Station?	
	A12. Yes, it was Auchinleck we went to. Cumnock was unknown to me at that time. It was Auchinleck that I knew.	7:42-7:49
	Q13. Can you remember what the entrance to the camp looked like?	
	A13. It was two gates. Both gates opened and there was barbed wire. Two very tall gates and there was barbed wire all around the perimeter. The gates opened outwards and there was a sentry box and a guard room at the entrance so that anyone coming into the camp or leaving had to pass through the guard room and be checked in and out. As I recollect the path went straight down more or less onto the main square where the prisoners had to parade every morning for a count to make sure no one had absconded during the night. These are just the memories I have.	7:55-8:42

	Q14. Were the gates and guardhouse manned when you were there?	
	A14. No, there was nobody there except the three caretakers who worked in shifts so there was always someone there. The Camp was never empty. There was always someone there 24 hours.	8:50-9:03
	Q15. What was your first impression when you went into the camp?	
	A15. I thought it was like a fairyland, as a small boy, with all these little miniature villages and towns in front of the huts and gardens. They had built lots of gardens with flowers. Don't know where they got the flowers but it was very colourful. Seeing these great murals with mountains and lakes which tended to be the feature on the walls, I felt at that time it was wonderful and had the run of the camp.	9:08-9:44
	Q16. Were there murals anywhere else in the camp for by the dining quarters?	
	A16. I think in some of the huts. There may have been orders of discipline but there were paintings in some of the huts themselves. They had got things on the walls. There were artists among them no doubt. In an army barracks, there would be nothing on the walls. Just your bed and cupboard. But I think with these prisoners of war they had relaxed a little bit and they had personal effects in the huts.	9:53-10:31
	Q17. Do you know how long the German POWs were there before your father arrived?	
	A17. No, I don't.	10:35-10:37
	Q18. Were the little model gardens in front of all the huts?	
	Not in front of them all but in front of quite a lot of them. You could walk down through the Camp and there was a lot of little gardens or little model villages or towns or churches.	10:47-11:01
	Q. Can you describe where you stayed in the camp?	
	A18. It was in one of the huts near the gate and I think it was probably one of the better ones because he had the choice of them wherever he went and the caretakers manned the guardroom and anyone staying there would have one of these huts.	11:07-11:24
	Q19. You stayed there with your mother?	
	A19. Yes.	11:26-11:27

	Q20. Can you describe the buildings in the Camp? Were they all Nissen Huts?	
	A20. No, they were what you would say proper huts, rectangular huts, with a door at one of the rectangles all facing the same way, like an avenue. Someone said at the time that the Nissen huts were warmest, they were warm huts but most of the huts had a stove in the middle. In their NAAFI or the cookhouse where they all ate and the recreation area they had meetings and put on plays and they sang. One of my memories is that just outside the main gates there was a little cottage there and a family called Mr and Mrs Aitchison (Christison?) and my mother and I and father became quite friendly with them in the short time we were there and they told me how it was quite pleasant to hear the German singing coming over the barbed wire of an evening. I remember now that there was no water in the camp but the Germans somehow had tapped water from somewhere and they watered the gardens and they had a little river coming through and they built up little German villages going along the riverside.	11:33-13:24
	Q21. Was there specific ancillary huts such as shower blocks etc?	
	A21. I don't recall that.	13:39-13:41
	Q22. Were there any particular places that leapt out at you?	
	A22. Without doubt in the recreation area where these wonderful paintings. I've always been interested in paintings. They were really big professional and dramatic murals on the walls and the little gardens and churches. It was a small boy's dream seeing the model huts and villages.	13:47-14:11
	Q23. Was there anyone else living at the camp at the time you were there?	
	A23. No.	14:16-14:18
	Q24. Have you got a favourite memory of the camp?	
	A24. The memory is just these little model villages. No one we spoke to had a bad thing to say about the POWs. On both sides as I understand it they had a lot of respect for each other. They felt that Pennylands and the local people that they came in contact with and this would be presumably when they went out to do various jobs as prisoners of war. They got on with people very well and they spoke of all the many kindnesses they got from local people about and one of the caretakers I talked to said they were a great bunch and they	14:22-16:12

	<p>were all looking forward to getting home. The other memory I have, which saddened me at the time but totally understandable, as the Germans left the camp was empty – that’s when we were there but there was a Polish regiment about to be repatriated to Poland and when they came in and of course what the Poles had suffered at the hands of the Germans all these little model villages and things were immediately destroyed and I wouldn’t blame anyone for that. I remember feeling sad as a small boy of these little communities suddenly gone. I would have probably have done the same thing.</p>	
	<p>Q25. Did you ever return to the camp?</p>	
	<p>A25. No. Except when I had the plaque, which I should mention. My father being a very old soldier and had fought in campaigns right across the world. He had a great respect for the ordinary German soldier and these were ordinary soldiers to ordinary soldier. In the withdrawal at Dunkirk he was in the Royal Scots Fusiliers he had been in charge of a group taking German prisoners which was a bit of a joke because many of them became prisoners themselves. The German prisoners, what would you do with them? You either said, run for it or you shot them and there wasn’t much point in that really. My father had a number of prisoners and looked after them well, they were prisoners of war and the property of the Royal Scots Fusiliers and that’s what you did during the war you looked after each other’s prisoners. We did it better than some. In fact, we did. So, when my father met these German prisoners of war in Pennylands they swapped army stories together and I don’t think he met anyone he’d been directly up against but they swapped their soldier’s stories and there was quite a friendship built up between the two. My father of course, we were on the winning side so that made it much easier but one of the Germans felt that my father had been kind to them and considerate and looked after their interests the best he could and he carved out of, we think the top of an ammunition box, the gates of Pennylands Camp. Significantly one of the gates is open so the prisoners of war saw mostly the gates closed – no escape. So, they felt one of the gates should be shown as open. They said, “You have this,” to my father, “as a keepsake of your kindness to us and from us to you and look the gates are open.” So that was a fond memory.</p>	<p>16:16-19:45</p>
	<p>Q26. What other memories has this plaque for you as you’ve had it since your father passed away?</p>	
	<p>A26. I’ve always seen it as a part of his very long military service. He had memories going right back to the Second World War and this had always been one of the memories my father had and I have many memories of him as a soldier especially of him coming back from Dunkirk. I’ve always seen</p>	<p>19:53-20:33</p>

	this as one of the memories I shared with him. I saw the camp and so it's been special to me, yes.	
	Q27. What was the worst thing about the camp?	
	A27. At the end of the day they were prisoners. I was reading afterwards and picking up now the history of when I was a small boy aged 12 and knowing nothing about it and it seemed to me while it was in the possession of the military it was done on a military basis, that it was kept clean and tidy and smart and at the end of the day it was a prison but it was a smart prison and properly run and then no doubt after the Polish soldiers came in. The Polish soldiers would have cleaned the place up and left it in a good condition, that was part of the deal. When it was run by the military it was obviously done as a proper military establishment as you would expect. But from my reading of what happened afterwards it began to get run down and it seemed to me without knowing much about it that the very thing the authorities were trying to avoid is hand over these establishments in a proper way and in good condition it seems from my reading of it from some of your material that it had begun to get a bit dilapidated and no doubt maybe that was the best thing to do. It had been a military camp and maybe the best thing to do was to wipe it.	20:45-22:15
	Q28. Thanks very much. Have I missed anything out?	
	Q28. I don't know! You jogged my memory on a few things.	22:24-22:26
	Q29. Would you like to add anything further?	
	A29. No, I think you got just about everything there.	22:28-22:34
	Closing statement and end of interview.	22:52
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