

## THE HUNDRED PARISHES SOCIETY

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Hundreds of prisoner of war camps were set up in the UK during the two World Wars, with several in The Hundred Parishes. Camps varied in design and size. Some started as rows of tents with the prisoners engaged in constructing huts. Most have disappeared but I would like to tell you about a few.

In 1917, during the First World War, a camp was established at Great Dunmow's workhouse, initially taking about 100 German POWs. Capacity was later doubled by moving women elsewhere and closing the infirmary. The German prisoners worked on local farms but gained a reputation for obstruction and destruction. Dunmow workhouse never reopened and was converted to the housing that today is called The Close.

Bower Hall in Steeple Bumpstead was used as a POW camp in The First World War but it fell into ruin and was demolished in 1926.

Wynches POW camp in Much Hadham was situated in forty acres of parkland and in the Second World War housed both Italian and German prisoners.

Ickleton Grange housed a camp for both Italian and German men. Nothing now remains.

In Mill Lane, Hatfield Heath, the remains of POW camp 116 are still clearly visible, the most complete survivor in Essex, Herts or Cambridgeshire. The camp was set up in 1941 to house Austrian and Italian prisoners; later, German men followed. They worked on local farms and even played football against a Hatfield Heath team who were beaten 11-0!

Radwinter North POW rehabilitation camp was situated in the grounds of Radwinter Rectory, now known as Radwinter Manor. German soldiers were allowed to visit local families. Karl Weschke was one; he became an artist and his clay sculpture of a weeping mother and child titled "Deutschland 1946" is held in Saffron Walden Museum.

Ken McDonald, Secretary