

BELLIGERENT INTERNEES
Allied and German Golfers at the Curragh Camp 1940-1945
By Colonel William H. Gibson (retd.)

Part 1 Allied Internees

Background

With the outbreak of war in Europe in September 1939 the Irish Government, led by Éamon DeValera, adopted a policy of neutrality and thereby refrained from joining the Allies or Axis powers. This was followed by a declaration of Emergency, which suspended the normal political life of the country. In the event of any of the ‘Belligerents’ landing by sea or air on the territory of the State, it was decided that the air or naval personnel would be interned in specially prepared accommodation at the Curragh Camp, Co. Kildare. Part of the present practice area of the Royal Curragh Golf Club was selected as the site of what became known as the ‘B’ and ‘G’ Camps – the former for Allied internees and the latter for Germans. This area was called ‘K Lines’ at the time the Curragh Camp was built in 1855, when ten wooden barracks were constructed and named in alphabetical sequence from ‘A Lines’ to ‘K Lines’.



Curragh Local History Group

Curragh Golf Club c 1961: (1) Clubhouse, (2) B & G Camps, (3) Abattoir

The first mention of internees in the records of the Curragh Golf Club is set out in the Minutes of the Committee meeting for 4th February 1941, when it was agreed that the Honorary Secretary Comdt. P.J. Whelan would undertake... *“to consult (sic) the Command Officer comdg. on the question of the Officers of the Belligerent Nations being permitted to play golf, either as subscribers to the Club or Honorary Members.”* Three weeks later, on 27th February 1941, the Committee met and heard reports from Fr. E. Carey C.F. and Comdt. Whelan when it was decided *“...to permit German & British internees to play golf for 5 shillings per month.”*

It appears that there may have been second thoughts on the financial arrangements and the Minutes of the Committee meeting on 10th April 1941 show that "*The Hon. Sec. was directed to advise British & German internees that in future subs must be paid quarterly or half yearly in advance.*" An important change in the conditions for internees was decided at the Committee Meeting on 3rd July 1942 when....."*It was agreed to allow N.C.O. Internees to play on the course on the same terms and conditions as the Officer Internees.*" At that time non-commissioned members of the Irish Defence Forces were not permitted to become members of the Curragh Golf Club and it would be some years later before this situation was changed. Unfortunately, there are no surviving records to show the names of the British and German internees who availed of the facilities of the Curragh Golf Club; it must be unique in the history of World War 2 that 'Belligerent Internees' of both sides could play golf on the same course, within three hundred yards of their respective internment camps. It would appear that they may not have played at the same time as parole hours were 'staggered' for other sporting facilities on the Curragh Camp. It has been possible to identify most of the internee golfers from other sources.

The first internees and a golfer arrive to the Curragh

On 20th August 1940 a German Focke Wulf Condor aircraft became lost in cloud while on patrol off the Atlantic coast and crashed on Mount Brandon on the Dingle Peninsula, Co. Kerry. There was a crew of six under the command of Oberleutnant Kurt Mollenhauer and, luckily, only two of the crew were injured. They were all moved to the Curragh camp on 31st August 1940 and were the first group of Germans to be interned.



F.O. Paul Mayhew

The first Allied internee to arrive was Flying Officer Paul Mayhew R.A.F. who was engaged with his squadron of Hurricane fighters over the Irish Sea in the interception of eight German HE 111s on 29th September 1940. Low on fuel, he was forced to make a wheels-up landing in a stubble field in Co. Wexford. Shortly afterwards, on 17th October 1940, he became the first Allied internee in the newly created 'B Camp' on the edge of the Curragh Golf Club. Later, on 14th June 1941, Mayhew and five other Allied internees successfully escaped from the camp and made their way to Northern Ireland. He returned to flying duties and was killed on crash landing in England on 19th February 1942.ⁱ

Mayhew was a golfer and T. Ryle Dwyer wrote of his interest in the game in his book 'Guests of the State':-

*"Mayhew availed of parole most afternoons to play golf. He usually played with retired officers from the British army, or with serving Irish officers. 'I expect to be British Amateur golf champion in 1944' he remarked facetiously in a letter to his father."*ⁱⁱⁱ

Parole arrangements for internees

Both Allied and German internees were able to travel freely within the local area bounded by Newbridge, Naas and Kildare town, when they had availed of parole arrangements. In doing so they signed a document which recorded their agreement not to escape or make any such arrangements; over time, the duration and boundaries of the parole area were extended to include overnights in Dublin. The ostensible reason for this was the need to visit the German and Allied Embassies. In addition a number of internees were given permission to attend

Universities or other third level institutions. Both groups of internees made friends with locals and the records in Military Archives have numerous request from Germans to stay overnight in Dublin and to stay out late for dances in Naas, Newbridge and Kildare. Many internees, especially Germans, were able to purchase bicycles and they were a common sight in the parole area.



Justin Horgan

13 German internees out for a spin

The Camp authorities were conscious of the necessity to separate both groups of ‘Belligerent Internees’ during their periods of parole and the Weekly Report of 26th March 1941 gives details of the times for local parole:-

“German internees: Each day 14.00 to 17.00 hours for exercise; 19.30 to 23.45 hours on Wednesday and Sunday to attend Pictures in Newbridge; and from 19.30 to 22.45 hours on Monday and Thursday to attend Pictures in Curragh Camp and from 11.00 to 13.00 hours on Tuesday and Friday to go to Curragh Swimming Baths.”

“British internees: Each day during the period 14.00 to 17.00 hours for the purpose of taking exercise. Parole also granted to British Internees to attend Pictures at Newbridge from 19.30 hours to 23.45 hours on Tuesday and Saturday, and to attend the Curragh Picture House from 19.30 to 22.45 hours on Wednesday and Friday.”ⁱⁱⁱ

The term ‘British internees’ used in the weekly reports was not intended to describe all of them as being from the United Kingdom. In time, a total of 34 Allied internees included British, Canadian and Polish personnel together with a New Zealand pilot, an American pilot and a Free French airman. Eventually, a total of 266 German military personnel were interned on the Curragh and these included 18 Austrians. On 18th October 1943 the Allied airmen were allowed to leave the Curragh for the last time; nineteen Officers and N.C.O.s were released and sent to Northern Ireland, with twelve N.C.O.s being sent to Gormanston Camp, north of Dublin.

The arrival of 164 German naval personnel, having been rescued in the Bay of Biscay by the M.V. Kerlogue on 27th December 1943, resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of German internees. As a result, a new camp had to be opened at the western end of the

Curragh Camp in the area of ‘Tintown’; thus the comfortable arrangements at K Lines were at an end.

P.O. Ralph Keefer (Royal Canadian Air Force) internee 25 Oct 1941- 17 Aug 1942

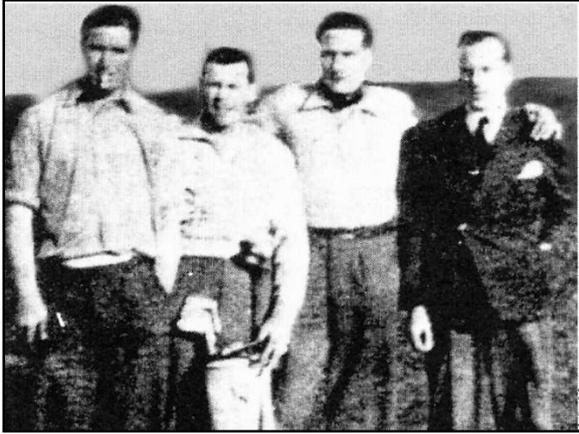
On 25th October 1983 I was serving in the Military College, when I received a call from the Curragh Golf Club to say that there was a visitor who wished to speak to me; at the time I was Treasurer of the Club and I was also researching its history. The visitor provided a fascinating insight into a forgotten era of times gone by on the Curragh Camp. Ralph (Bob) Keefer was the pilot of a Wellington Bomber which was returning from a mission over Frankfurt, Germany, on 25th October 1941. They had lost their way and after flying for eight hours, running out of fuel, they saw lights and guessed they were over Ireland. They jumped in one ‘stick’ – Bob was last out and they landed near Kilmihill and Quilty, Co. Clare. All of the crew survived and shortly afterwards they were transported to the ‘B’ Camp at K Lines, Curragh Camp. Bob Keefer had returned to the Curragh Camp forty one years after he had first entered it as an internee; he was researching a book of his experiences in World War 2.^{iv}



W,H, Gibson

Bob Keefer points towards the ‘B’ Camp on the Curragh G.C. practice ground 25th October 1983

Bob Keefer was a keen golfer and the first parole slip in his name was dated 30th October 1941.^v In the course of his interview he gave me the names of Allied golfers that he had played with during his time on the Curragh – Jack Calder (Canada), Chuck Brady (Canada), Grant Fleming (Canada), Aubrey Covington (English), John Shaw (English), David Midgley (English), Denys Welply (English), Bruce Girdlestone (New Zealand) and Bud Wolfe (U.S.A.).

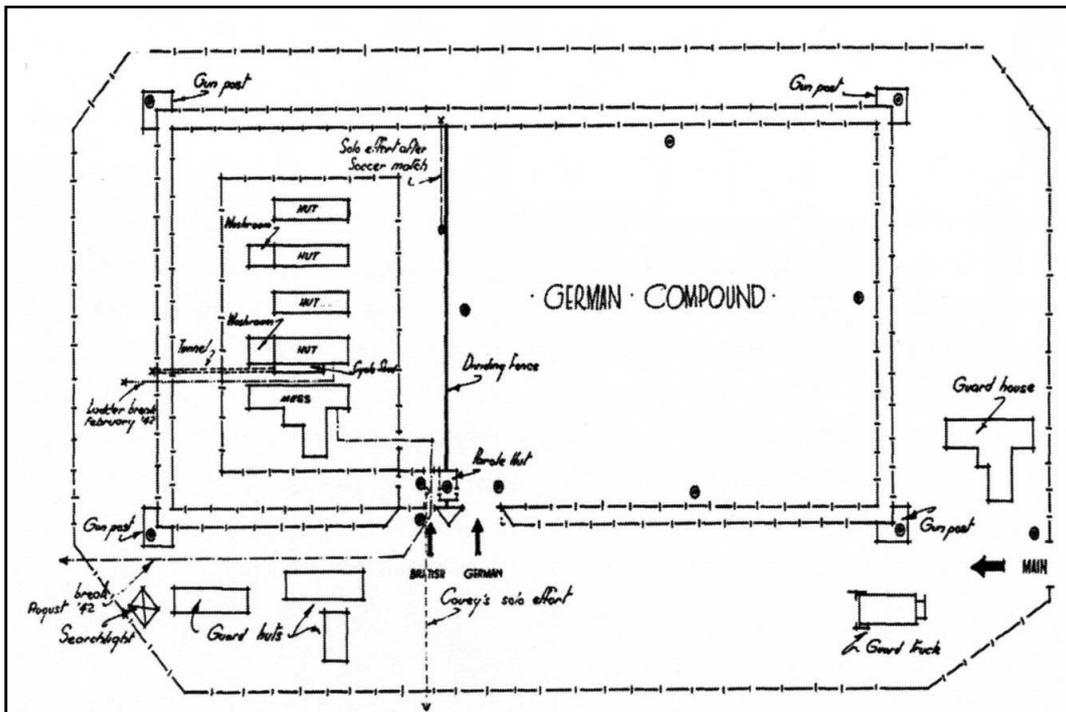


Bruce Girdlestone
L - R: Jim Lawlor, Bob Keefer, Tom Lawlor and Jack Calder)

Jack Calder was co-pilot, with Keefer, of the Wellington Bomber that had crashed in Co. Clare and they all spent a lot of their free time on the Curragh golf course. I was most interested to learn that Tom and Jim Lawlor from Naas were regular golfing companions; these two brothers played at Naas Golf Club with my father for many years until the late 1960s. Jim Lawlor had a hotel at Osberstown, near Naas, which was a regular 'haunt' for the Allied and German internees. Tom Lawlor and his mother had the long established Hotel in Naas, which was very popular with the Allied

and German internees. The dances at the Hotel were regularly mentioned in the German requests for late parole extensions.

Plan of the British and German Camps, side by side, on the Curragh G.C. practice area



Reproduced by Bruce Girdlestone from a 1943 report on the camp prepared for the Department of External Affairs in Ottawa. The interior of the German compound was similar to the RAF compound with eight rather than five separate accommodation huts needed for their greater numbers, fifty-six compared to thirty-three Allied flyers as of late December 1941.

Ralph Keefer Jnr

The 'B' and 'G' camps were separated by a corrugated iron fence which precluded any contact between the two sides; however, Bob Keefer mentioned that the 'wall' did not hinder the Germans from heckling the Allied side when an escape attempt dismally failed.

Did the Allied golfers break parole in planning their various escape attempts?

Bob Keefer's son Ralph gives an interesting account of his father's golfing experiences during his time at the Curragh, in his book *Grounded in Eire*:-

"That Keefer's first day of parole would begin on the camp links was no surprise – golf being a lifelong passion of his. He had made the decision the night before... The arrangement was that they would meet the Club Secretary, Major Whatcomb*, who thanks to Welply, would recommend Keefer and Calder for membership at one pound a month. When the Major showed up at 11.00 hours, they proceeded to the first tee.

The camp links immediately next to the internment camp was remarkable, not only for its location but for its beauty. From the panoramic view from the first tee, where one could see large country estates, buffered by gorse, heather and bracken to the cylindrical hollows in the fairway that marked where English army tents had been pitched during the Crimean War (making for ideal grass bunkers), the setting was addictive. When the frustration or boredom became too much to bear, the internees would often retire there, surrounded by only green and the sound of the wind whistling across the plain."^{vi}

[* The Honorary Secretary at the time was Major P. Tuite].

In our discussion in 1983, Bob spoke of the various escape plans that were constantly being revised by the Allied internees. By signing the parole documents before they proceeded on local leave, they were precluded from escaping on such occasions; however, he did admit that by smuggling various components in his golf bag he was 'bending the rules'. In confirmation of this practice, Bruce Girdlestone stated that he too brought in escape material in his golf bag.

"We thought that we could get through the first wire by using wire clippers. We managed to acquire these and then it was a question of how we were going to get over this double 8 foot separation between the two inner wires. So we thought the only thing to do, we'd have to build a ladder of metal sections, and how were we going to get these metal sections? Well, we had a few friends on the outside who rustled up some metal sections for us and we managed to smuggle them back in our golf bags....."^{vii}

The first major escape effort was made on the night of 9th February 1942, when the elaborate plan was put in motion using wire cutters and pre-fabricated metal ladders; as described by Bob, the affair descended into a 'Keystone Cops' event. There were three elements involved, a wire cutting party, a ladder bearing party and the main body to follow the first two groups. The wire cutting did not proceed smoothly and the noise was greater than anticipated. The ladder party went into action too quickly and ended in a pile up at the outer wire – leading to more noise and the alarm was raised. The Irish sentries and reinforcements quickly went into action and at the same time the next door neighbours (German internees) got up on the roofs of their huts and joined in the noise with loud heckling and jeering. Eventually, peace was restored, with lots of bruised egos and aching bodies on both sides. Parole was suspended for some time.

Further escape planning on the Curragh golf course

Individual efforts at escape had been tried by several of the Allied internees, most notably by Aubrey Covington who, at his first attempt on 20th March 1941, was apprehended by Military Police at a bus stop in Newbridge, just over an hour after he had 'effected his escape'.^{viii} He would make several further efforts. Bud Wolfe, the lone American internee and



P.O. Bud Wolfe

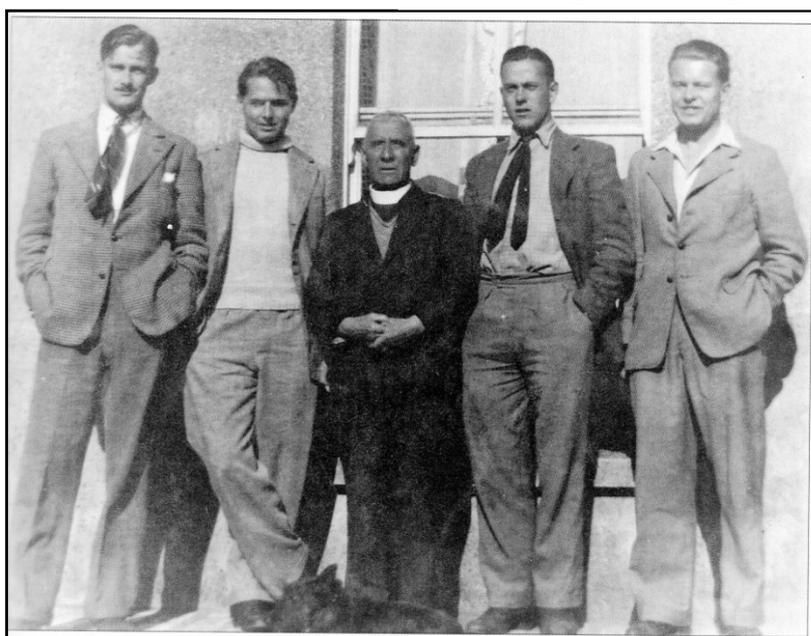
a pilot with the 'Eagle Squadron of the R.A.F., could not understand the idea that Allied pilots could be interned in neutral Ireland and he decided that he could ignore the system. He had arrived to the Camp on 1st December 1941 after bailing out of his Spitfire in Donegal the day before. Bob Keefer took him out for a game of golf on 9th December with Calder, Covington and Welply. They went to Osberstown Hotel afterwards.^{ix} Just four days later Wolfe left that camp on 13th December, having signed his parole, and headed straight for Northern Ireland. The fact that Pearl Harbour had been bombed by the Japanese a few days beforehand must have been a factor in his decision to try to return to active service however, he was very surprised to find himself being himself returned to the Curragh from his former base in Co. Derry, on account of breaking his parole.

Bob Keefer used the Curragh Golf Club links as a safe haven for discussing escape plans with his colleagues and occasionally he used one of the several shelters on the course.^x He and fellow Canadian Grant Fleming were sitting in a shelter one day when the thought struck him that the Camp gates were like those on a neighbour's farm in southern Ontario. They were mounted on gudgeon pins and would either slide open or lift off their mounts. Thus the next daring escape plan was formed.



W H Gibson

**Old shelter on Royal Curragh GC course
5th green in background**



Bruce Girdlestone

**Group of Allied internee golfers with Church of Ireland Chaplain Rev. Flint at Curragh Camp
L/R Fl.Lt. Aubrey Covington, Bruce Girdlestone, Fl.Lt. Denys Welply and Fl.Lt. Grant Fleming**

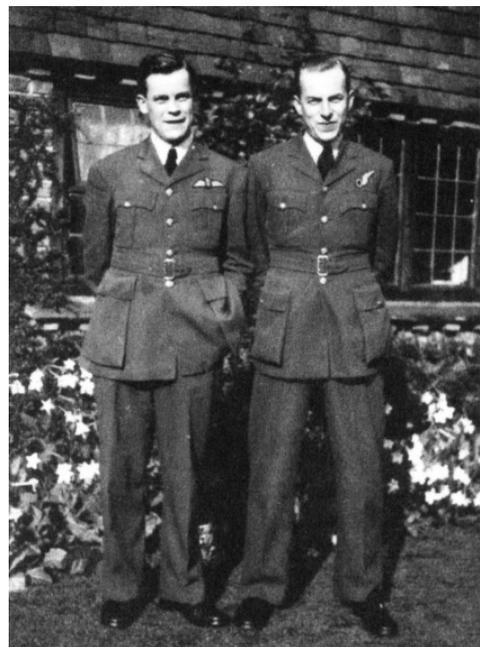
The Great Escape of Allied Internees 17th August 1942



Justin Horgan
Col T.J. McNally

Bob Keefer had a high regard for Colonel T.J. McNally who was Officer Commanding the Curragh Camp and also President of the Curragh Golf Club. There is a very amusing description of their first meeting, when McNally tried to speak in a paternal manner and Keefer replied as if he was a prisoner – number, rank and name only! “*What in God’s name are you talking about... and you don’t need to shout! Come over here please.*”^{xi} This gentlemanly impression of McNally is mentioned in several other accounts, including those of T. Ryle Dwyer and Bruce Girdlestone. He was President of the Curragh Golf Club from 1940 until 1944, during which period he held the senior military appointment in the Curragh Camp.

After detailed planning, the next major escape plan was put into effect at 10 p.m. on 17th August 1942, when a total of nine Allied internees successfully exited ‘B’ Camp via the main gate. By a ruse, Bud Wolfe and Jack Calder got inside the ‘cage’ together and held the Military Policeman in the parole hut, then the next group of internees poured into the ‘air lock’ between the inner and outer gates. After that, Bob Keefer and Chuck Brady with others lifted the outer gate off its hinges and nine internees made their escape. The alarm had been raised by another sentry and the exit was blocked by the now fully alerted security detachment. Keefer and Fleming hid locally initially and then headed North, moving only at night – they had a limited amount of food with them – fortuitously, the cordon was lifted after only 5 days and it was then that they headed for Northern Ireland. In his interview in 1983, Bob did not go into detail about outside help; however, in the account of his escape with Fleming in his book *Grounded in Eire*, it is clear that there were many locals involved. Both of them managed to get back to Roslea, Co. Fermanagh in Northern Ireland on 27th August.



Ralph Keefer Jnr
Bob Keefer and Jack
Calder in 1941

Jack Calder, who was an experienced journalist before joining the Royal Canadian Air Force, had feigned mental illness for some time before he was released from internment on 28th June 1943.^{xii} He was admitted to St. Patrick Dunn’s hospital, Dublin, on the same day and returned to England on 1st July. Calder wrote several accounts of his time on the Curragh and these were published in various Canadian newspapers, including *The Ottawa Citizen* 9th June 1943. In this article he mentions the change in attitudes of the German ‘neighbours’

“There has been one recent consolation for our plight. Often we used to have to listen to ‘Deutschland Uber Alles’ and shouts of ‘Heil Hitler’ from the German camp on the nights of Axis victories. When the start of Montgomery’s march in North Africa was announced, we smuggled fireworks into our quarters. The young Nazis have never had a chance to reply to the hullabaloo we raised that night.”

End of Allied internment 18th October 1943

With the reduced threat of a German invasion of Ireland in the late autumn of 1943, together with pressure from the U.K. representative in Dublin, the Government decided to release the remaining Allied internees. On 18th October 1943 a total of 10 Officers and 21 N.C.O.s departed the Curragh Camp for the last time en route for Dublin in two buses. On arrival to the Phoenix Park the convoy split. Twelve N.C.O.s were sent to Gormanston Camp and the remainder were sent directly to Northern Ireland. Bruce Girdlestone is quoted as saying...

”Individually we liked the Irish, with their sentimentality, brogue and blarney, but the wartime intrigue of an internment camp is hardly an environment in which to paint the Emerald Isle red!”^{xiii}

Among the released internees the following golfers can be identified:- P.O. Charles Brady, F.O. Aubrey Covington, Sub Lt. Bruce Girdlestone, F.O. David Midgley, P.O. John Shaw, F.O. Denys Welply, P.O. Bud Wolfe.

Mixed fortunes for Allied internee golfers

After a peaceful interlude at the Curragh Camp, the golfing internees resumed their war time careers with the Royal Air Force. Bob Keefer and Grant Fleming had returned to flying duties shortly after their escape in August 1942. Fleming was on a Mosquito reconnaissance mission over Munich on 15th September 1944 and his aircraft went missing. A month later the Swiss Red Cross reported that a Canadian made Mosquito had crashed high in the Swiss Alps; Grant Fleming’s body was never recovered.^{xiv}

Flying Officer John Holgate an earlier internee, who had landed in a Beaufighter at Leopardstown race course on 22nd May 1941, was a keen golfer. He successfully escaped from the Curragh on 14th June 1941, together with Paul Mayhew. The Imperial War Museum in London has an audio record of his war time experiences with 252 Squadron of the R.A.F. and he also spoke of his time on the Curragh and playing golf while on parole:-

“REEL1 Recollections of period of internment in Eire 1941: forced landing: ... capture by Irish troops; hospitality of captor; move to the Curragh; arrival in internment camp; availability of parole to internees; obtaining his golf clubs from squadron member at A.R.F. Aldergrove in Northern Ireland.... Planning of escape from camp...degree of contact with German internees; executions of escape plan; escaping across the border to Northern Ireland.”^{xv}



Ralph Keefer Jr.

F.O. Jack Calder July 1944 and his aircraft was hit by anti-aircraft fire over Hamburg on 21st July.^{xvi} He bailed out and landed in the Elbe estuary, where his body was washed ashore six weeks later; he was interred in the British Military Cemetery at Kiel, Germany.^{xvii}

Bud Wolfe survived the war having returned to active flying duties, after his release in October 1943 he flew with the US Air Force in Europe. Subsequently he flew jets in the Korean War and Vietnam War; he retired as a Lieutenant Colonel and died in 1994.^{xviii}

David Midgley was one of the privileged internees whose wife was able to join him not long after he became an internee in March 1941. He was one of the golfers who played with Bob Keefer on his first outing to the Curragh G.C. on 31st October 1941^{xix} The Weekly Reports in the Military Archives file PM 738 ACE Collection from 27th September 1941 to 16th November 1942 show Midgley receiving sleeping out paroles on three nights weekly to “his wife’s address”. After his release he returned to active service with No. 201 Squadron, flying Sunderland flying boats out of Lough Erne in Northern Ireland.



F.O. David Midgley

Denys Welply returned to active operations following his release from the Curragh on 18th October 1943. Just over one year later on 20th November 1944 he was flying a Vickers Warwick Mk 1 from 279 Squadron R.A.F. out of Thornaby, Yorkshire on a navigation exercise. The plane disappeared off radar screens at 18.57 hrs and no trace of the aircraft or six member crew was ever discovered.^{xx}



Ralph Keefer Jnr.
F.O. Denys Welply

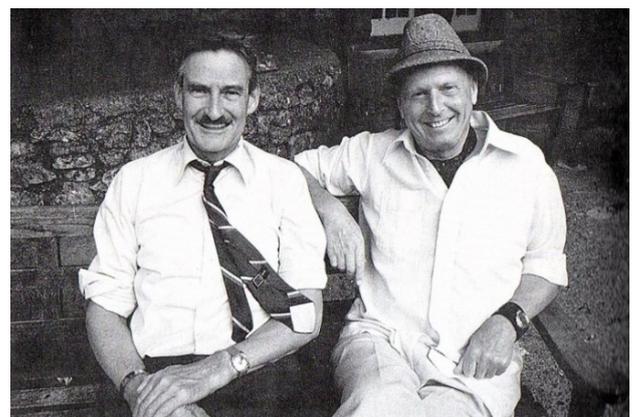


John William Shaw had landed at Skreen, Co. Sligo with Denys Welply on 24th January 1941, when their Hudson bomber ran out of fuel. They left the Curragh together on 18th October 1943 and Shaw went back to active service with 53 Squadron afterwards. He disappeared on 17th June 1944 and is commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial.^{xxi}

Courtesy Ralph Keefer Jnr.
F.O. John Shaw

Bruce Girdlestone was released from the Curragh internment camp on 18th October 1943 and returned to New Zealand after the war ended in May 1945. He became a successful architect and was one of the founders of the New Zealand Architects Co-operative Society (NZACS) in 1972. In a letter to me in 1984 Bruce wrote:-

“Yes, I played golf on the Curragh from time to time and on one occasion we smuggled metal sections of a prefabricated ladder, which we used in an abortive escape attempt, in our golf bags.



Bruce Girdlestone
Aubrey Covington & Bruce Girdlestone c 1988

I have continued with the wonderful game, being a member of Wellington Golf Club near my home and have carried out extensive architectural work to the buildings over the past thirty years.”^{xxii}

Part 2 German Internees

As mentioned earlier, the first German fliers to arrive to the Curragh Camp on 31st August 1940 were the crew of a Focke Wulf Condor that had crashed on Mount Brandon in Co. Kerry 11 days beforehand. Pilot Robert Mollenhauer was the senior of the six Luftwaffe crew members and he became the first commander of the German internees in the Curragh Camp. He held this appointment until the arrival of Lt. Commander Joachim Quedenfeldt together with 163 other German Navy (Kriegsmarine) survivors of a battle in the Bay of Biscay, when the small Irish ship *MV Kerlogue* rescued them and brought them to Cobh, Co. Cork on 1st January 1944. This major influx of internees resulted in the construction of a larger internment facility at the other end of the Curragh Camp.

Golfers among the German internees



Justin Horgan

Georg Fleischmann

The earliest mention of 'Golf' for German internees appears in the Weekly Report of 27th June 1942 when it was recorded they were granted parole from 14.00hrs to 17.00hrs "for walking exercise or golf practice." Because there was no record of individual German or Allied golfers in the Minute Books of the Curragh Golf Club, it is not possible to clearly identify those who availed of this facility. One German internee who can be clearly identified as a possible golfer was Feldwebel Georg Fleischmann whose Heinkel HE111H-5 crash landed at Dunbratten Head Co. Waterford on 1st April 1941. The fact that he may have played golf during his time on the Curragh Camp is mentioned in Gisela Holfter's book "Heinrich Boll and Ireland" :-

"He spent several years interned in the Curragh where the situation was quite different from that in most other camps in Europe; the internees were allowed out during the day, bound only by their word of honour to return and attended dances, **played golf**, even took university courses."^{xxiii}

A most interesting description of life on the Curragh for German internees is given by Paul Störmer in Justin Horgan's book "Luftwaffe Eagles over Ireland". Störmer was the pilot of a Junkers Ju-88 D-1 that was shot down by R.A.F. Spitfires and crash-landed at Tourgare, Tramore, Co. Waterford on 23rd August 1942; it is clear that he enjoyed his time on the Curragh:-

"Parties together with Irish friends and receptions at the German Embassy in Dublin were a welcome change to the life in the camp. **One could play tennis or golf and some were members of local clubs.** Highlight of the social life in Curragh were the horse races. There was a well built race course, always very busy and a perfect opportunity to meet their girlfriends, and later wives, at that race course."^{xxiv}

'Belligerent internees' on the Curragh golf course at the same time?

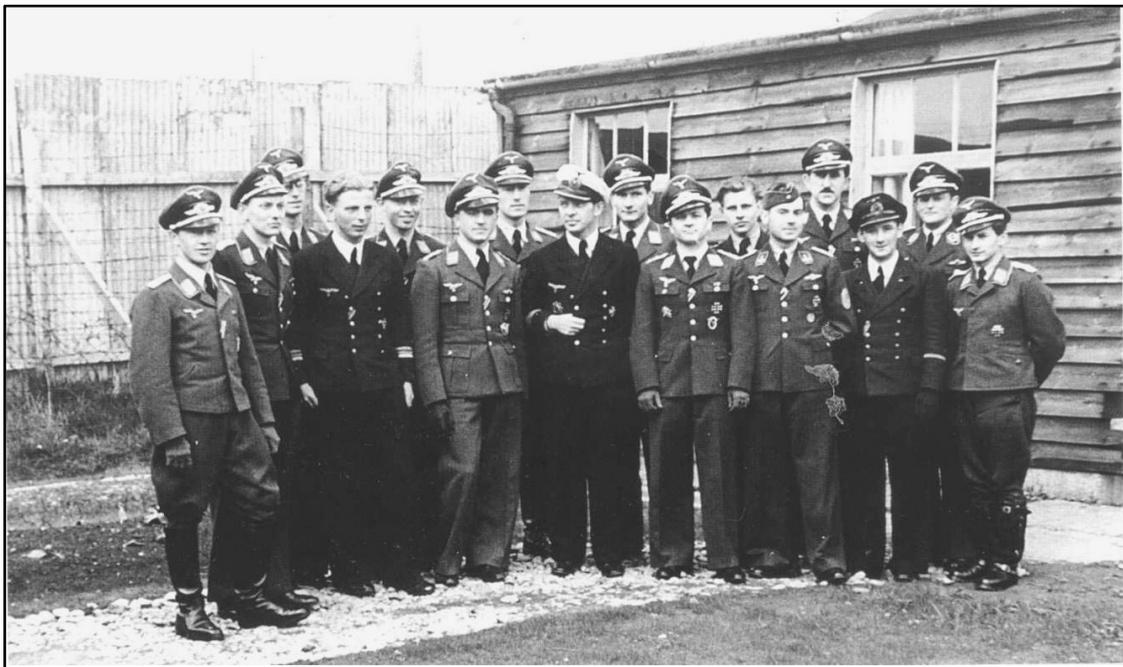
Military Archives Dublin have specific references to German internees being given parole for 'golf practice' from 14.00 hrs to 17.00 hrs daily in the Weekly Reports ended 27th June 1942, 1st August 1942, 29th August 1942, 2nd January 1943, 9th January 1943, 16th January 1943 and 23rd January 1943. British internees were shown as being allowed parole for golf on the same days; which indicates that the 'Belligerent Internees' might have been playing on the same days at the same time in the afternoon. The question of 'friendly fourballs' between

the respective inmates of the 'B' and 'G' Camps comes to mind as a consequence. There is evidence that there was some friendly interaction between the two sides and Bruce Girdlestone alludes to this in his account of life on the Curragh:-

“...We'd hear the Germans. They were very well organised, they settled down with Teutonic thoroughness to their internment – naturally, because for them getting away was very difficult. They made immaculate flower beds and they sang beautifully. We were an absolute shambles, we cultivated a flower bed for ulterior purposes and we sang the usual air force and Fleet Air Arm songs which were hardly comparable with what the Germans turned out in perfect harmony. **I think the only communications we ever had with them was at Christmas when there was an exchange of gifts, We'd send over probably a bottle of whisky and we'd get back a rather dubious – looking cake and that would be all. ...**”^{xxv}

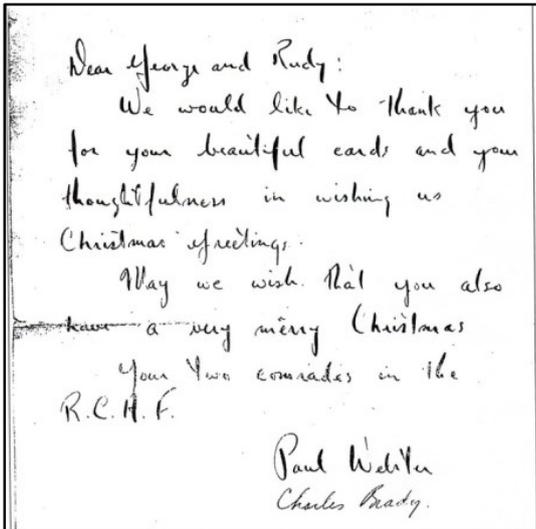
This small incident at Christmas 1942 is mentioned in more detail in T. Ryle Dwyer's book, where he states that the German initiative came via Kurt Mollenhauer, the senior German officer at that time, who went to Lieutenant James Kelly, a fluent German speaking officer of the Internment Camp staff. The senior Allied officer Flying Officer Leslie Ward was less than enamoured by this seasonal offering:-

“On Christmas Day Mollenhauer arrived in the parole hut carrying six bottles of wine and a cake that he asked Kelly to deliver to Ward as a gift from the *Lutwaffe* to the RAF. When Kelly presented the gift, Ward reacted indignantly. He refused to accept it and made some very derogatory references to the Germans, but Kelly placated him and persuaded him, in the spirit of the season, to reciprocate by sending back a couple of bottles of brandy that well wishers had sent to the Allied internees. Even if it was a grudging gift, it was one of the few friendly gestures that Allied airmen ever made towards the Germans. On the other hand, Kelly felt that the German gesture was indicative of the respect the Luftwaffe officers had for their RAF counterparts....”^{xxvi}



Justin Horgan

Luftwaffe and Kriegsmarine officers at Curragh Camp December 1943 –
Photo by Georg Fleischmann: L - R.: 1. Ludwig Stockbauer; 2. Alfred Heinzl; 5. Paul Störmer; 7. Kurt Mollenhauer 8. Joachim Quedenfeldt (senior German Officer). Fleischmann, Heinzl and Stockbauer may have been active golfers. Störmer wrote a very detailed account of life in the 'G' Camp on the Curragh.



Courtesy Donal McCarron
**Paul Webster's response to German
 internees Christmas Card**

In his excellent publication "Landfall Ireland" Donal Mc Carron gives some examples of friendly contacts between the inmates of the 'B' and 'G' camps.^{xxvii} This Christmas card acknowledgement from Chuck Brady, an R.C.A.F. officer and Curragh golfer, to two German internees is indicative of a friendly relationship between some of the internees. Because the Allied internees were moved from the Curragh Camp on 18th October 1943, it would seem that this exchange of Christmas greetings took place in December 1942. It is possible that 'Georg' was Georg Fleischmann; however, there was one other German named Georg Sigi in the Camp at that time. There is evidence regarding Fleischmann's interest in the social side of golf in a letter dated 29th August 1944 from the Senior German officer, a request "*for a long leave on Sunday 3 September until Monday 4 September 0500hrs for going to the Dance of the Golf*

Club in Kildare for Oblt. Heinzl, Lt. Stockbauer and Sdf. Fleischman."^{xxviii} The application was approved and the fact that Fleischmann and two fellow internees had social contacts with Cill Dara Golf Club (near Kildare town) indicates that they may have been playing there, just four miles from their base in the Curragh Camp. Further evidence of Heinzl's interest in visiting Kildare will be seen later.

Three German internees with an interest in golf



Justin Horgan
Georg Fleischmann

Georg Fleischmann was born in Graz, Austria in 1912 and he joined the Nazi Party in June 1932. He became a member of the 'Austrian Legion' which was responsible for explosive attacks in Austria; he was convicted in Graz but fled to Germany in July 1934.^{xxix} There he assisted the acclaimed film producer Leni Riefenstahl in making her film of the 1936 Olympic Games and he won a gold medal at the Venice Film Festival in 1939 for his film *Styria*. Fleischmann had a movie camera with him when his plane crashed on Dunbratten Head in

April 1941; the movie camera was his own property and became a very important factor in his subsequent life in Ireland. Fleischmann became friendly with Dan Breen, the well known veteran of the War of Independence and Fianna Fáil T.D. for South Tipperary.

Fleischmann was allowed to remain in Ireland in 1945 due to Breen's influence on Éamonn DeValera, head of Government at the time. In due course he set up a business 'Hibernia Pictures Ltd' with Stanley Moore and began making films for various commercial projects. In 1948 he filmed the All Ireland Hurling final and he filmed the All Ireland Football final in 1952.^{xxx} Georg Fleischmann is acknowledged as one of the major influential figures in the establishment of the Irish film industry.

Alfred Heinzl arrived to the Curragh Camp in early March 1941 following the crash of his disabled Heinkel He111H-r at Tacumshane Co. Wexford on 3rd April. He was one of the three internees who received permission to attend a dance at Cill Dara Golf Club, Kildare on 3rd September 1944, together with Georg Fleischmann and Ludwig Stockbauer. Heinzl was born in Vienna, Austria in August 1919 had joined the Hitler Youth in 1934, it appears that



Justin Horgan
Alfred Heinzl

he joined the Nazi Party in March 1938^{xxxii}. Similar to Fleischmann, he would use his previous affiliation to Nazi politics as an excuse for seeking permission to stay in Ireland. There was another substantial reason - the fact that he was engaged to a local girl May Rowan, the daughter of Dr. Laurence Rowan (deceased) of Kildare town. The parole records in Military Archives show that Heinzl was invited to a party in Mrs. Rowan's house on 21st July 1945 and he requested an extension of parole to 05.00 hrs on Sunday morning 22nd July. The request was granted because "*Lieut Heinzl has honoured his parole obligations.*"^{xxxiii} Somehow Heinzl was granted permission to remain in Ireland, probably because he was under threat of incarceration in Austria should he return there; in due course he married May Rowan in August 1946.

Subsequently Heinzl went into business as a commercial artist and he became a founder member of the Dublin Gliding Club; he set a national gliding record in March 1956.^{xxxiii} Alfred Heinzl died in Dublin on 22nd April 1979.



Justin Horgan
Ludwig Stockbauer

Ludwig Stockbauer, a native of Spiegelau Bayerwald, was pilot of a Junkers Ju-88 D-2 on a reconnaissance mission to Wales on 26th August 1941. He had a crew of three on board with him when he was spotted by Free French Pilot Officer René Mouchotte in an RAF Hurricane, who badly damaged the German aircraft before it disappeared into cloud. Shortly afterward Stockbauer was forced to crash land his badly damaged aircraft at Belgooly, near Kinsale Co. Cork. The four Germans survived and destroyed their aircraft before surrendering to a group of Local Defence Forces personnel. They were transferred to the Curragh on 27th August. Stockbauer was one of the three internees who were given permission to attend the dance at Cill Dara Golf Club Kildare, on 3rd

September 1944. He was one of the large group of internees that departed the Curragh Camp on 31st August 1945 for Dublin, on their way to Britain for repatriation to Germany.

Belligerent internees relationships?

A comparison of the accounts of both sets of internees shows that the German/Austrian side were more open in describing their contacts with the Allied side, while the latter group were reticent in this regard. The effort of Kurt Mollenhauer on Christmas Day 1942, as described earlier, was initially met with animosity by the Senior Allied Officer Leslie Ward. The exchange of Christmas greetings between Paul Webster, Chuck Brady and 'Georg and Rudy'



Justin Horgan
Paul Störmer

on the same occasion displays a warmer state of affairs. Paul Störmer gives a much more revealing version in his memories of life on the Curragh:-

"Germans and allies together, were in good mood on the way home from the ballrooms or pubs having some drinks. Brits and Jerries used to cycle together in a flock and had fun."^{xxxiv} "The Allies, until now our neighbours, had been transferred, at least it was told. The men had to join the war again and we soon learned from Irish friends that this man and that man was killed in action in Germany. Many of them, who had a polite and kind relationship with the German internees, were dead now and the Germans felt sad. Many friendships between former British and German internees lasted after the war for many years."^{xxxv}

A Thieving Crow has the last word

An article in the local Leinster Leader newspaper on 24th November 1945, carried an intriguing report of a bird taking golf balls from the course. An interesting theory was put forward regarding the origins of this thieving bird's activities:-

“A large black crow, whose happy hunting ground is the links of the Curragh Golf Club, threatens to rival the fame of the ‘Jackdaw of Rheim’s. whose audacious theft of a Cardina;s ring has been immortalised in verse. This Curragh crow , however, does not purloin jewellery. His penchant is for thieving golf balls..... It would be interesting to know what he does with his loot, were he secretes it and what instinct prompted him to develop this golf ball snatching technique. The writer heard one intriguing theory about the bird. It appears that the Germans interned at the Curragh had, until repatriated some months ago, among a varied collection of furred and feathered pets, a trained crow. As far as is known, the bird was freed when his temporary owners departed. The deduction is that the modern ‘Jackdaw of Rheims’ is the self-same trained crow – living a lone existence.”

Present day golfer on the Royal Curragh Golf Club's course have had similar experiences with a family of crows that are able to open zips on their golf bags and remove candy bars and biscuits!

SOME GERMAN INTERNEE PHOTOGRAPHS



Justin Horgan
Group of German internee cyclists Paul Störmer
2nd from right



Justin Horgan
‘G’ Camp located on present practice area of
Royal Curragh Golf Club



Justin Horgan
‘G’ Camp located on present practice area of
Royal Curragh Golf Club



Justin Horgan
German Internees Band
A very popular group on the Curragh Camp



Military Archives, Dublin
New German internment Camp on Curragh Camp opened in January 1944 due to large influx of Kriegsmarine saved by personnel of Irish ship ‘Kerlogue’



Justin Horgan
Adolf Oelkers taking tea to officers. Hans Beigel and Rudolf Hengst gardening in the background

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END NOTES

- ⁱ <http://www.bbm.org.uk/airmen/Mayhew.htm> [Accessed 5th September 2017]. The other escapees included
- ⁱⁱ **Dwyer, T. Ryle** : *Guests of the State* [Brandon Books, Dingle 1994] page 39.
- ⁱⁱⁱ **Military Archives** P M 738_Weekly Report 26th March 1941
- ^{iv} **Keefer, Ralph** *Grounded in Éire – the Story of Two RAF Fliers Interned in Ireland during World War II* [McGill-Queen’s University Press, Montreal 2001]
- ^v **Military Archives** P M 738_Weekly Report 1st November 1941
- ^{vi} **Keefer, Ralph** *Grounded in Éire* page 69.
- ^{vii} **Girdlestone, Bruce** *Prisoner of the Green* Article in *The War Years, New Zealanders Remember 1939-1945*, [Platform Publishing, Wellington, New Zealand 1989] page 81
- ^{viii} **Military Archives** P M 738_Weekly Report 22nd March 1941 page 2
- ^{ix} **Keefer, Ralph** *Grounded in Éire* pages 95-97
- ^x **Ibid** Page 189.
- ^{xi} **Ibid** Page 63.
- ^{xii} **Military Archives** P M 738_Weekly Report 3rd July 1943
- ^{xiii} **Dwyer, T. Ryle** : *Guests of the State* page 175
- ^{xiv} **Ibid** Page 254.
- ^{xv} **Imperial War Museum, London.**: Sound Archive Catalogue No. 4996. **T.Ryle Dwyer** documents the escape plan in his *Guests of the Nation* pages 78-80. It is clear that the British Directorate of Military Intelligence MI9 was deeply involved.
- ^{xvi} **Dwyer, T. Ryle** : *Guests of the State* pages 164-165.
- ^{xvii} **Keefer, Ralph** *Grounded in Éire* page 252
- ^{xviii} **Omaha World-Herald** 24th May 2014
- ^{xix} **Keefer, Ralph** *Grounded in Éire* page 67 .

- ^{xx} <https://aviation-safety.net/wikibase/wiki.php?id=202510> [Accessed 7th February 2017]
- ^{xxi} <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=GBM/CW/GC/ROLLOFHONOUR/001612138> [Accessed 7th February 2017]
- ^{xxii} **Girdlestone, Bruce** personal letter to Comdt. William H. Gibson dated 17th January 1984.
- ^{xxiii} **Holfter, Gisela** *Heinrich Boll and Ireland* [Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne 2011] page 28
- ^{xxiv} **Horgan, Justin and Cummins, Paddy** *Luftwaffe Eagles over Ireland* [Horgan Press, Ardfert, Co. Kerry 2016] page 300.
- ^{xxv} **Girdlestone, Bruce** *Prisoner of the Green* page 75
- ^{xxvi} **Dwyer, T. Ryle** : *Guests of the State* page 155.
- ^{xxvii} **McCarron, Donal** *Landfall Ireland, The Story of Allied and German aircraft which came down in Éire in World War Two* [Colourprint Books, Newtownards C. Down 2003]
- ^{xxviii} **Military Archives** 2/C/3/45 Parole applications etc German internees ACE16
- ^{xxix} **Altmanninger, Nicole**: *Die Gefangenen der Grünen Insel - angestrebter akademischer Grad Magistra der Philosophie (Mag. Phil)* Vienna University 2013. Page 111. [Abstract kindly translated by Andrew Gibson]
- ^{xxx} <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0281532/> This website gives a full listing of his many films in Ireland [Accessed 7th March 2018]
- ^{xxxi} **Altmanninger, Nicole**: **Op. Cit.** page 109
- ^{xxxii} **Military Archives** 2/C/3/45 Parole applications etc German internees ACE16
- ^{xxxiii} **Irish Press** 12th March 1956
- ^{xxxiv} **Horgan, Justin and Cummins, Paddy** *Luftwaffe Eagles over Ireland* Page 299.
- ^{xxxv} **Ibid** page 303.