

Italian Prisoner of War Camp

By Angela Wagstaff [[email](#)], April 2015

On the night of 30th September/1st October 1940, three parachute mines fell in South Chingford. The last of these fell between Marmion Avenue and Hall Lane causing six fatal casualties. The Anderson shelter in the garden at the rear of 87 Marmion Avenue received a direct hit and all the occupants were killed. Very serious damage was caused to property in the vicinity; twenty-two houses in Marmion Avenue and Hall Lane were demolished or had to be demolished. Included in these were four terraced cottages in Hall Lane known as Albion Villas, numbers 88, 90, 92 and 94. Some 500 other properties were also damaged.

Subsequently, a prisoner of war camp was built on this land between Hall lane and Marmion Avenue and it was occupied by Italians. As far as I know, two single storey timber huts were erected and they were like army huts. They had shiplap sides and windows about 8' x 10'. One was used as a recreation hall and the other was their dormitory. The buildings were enclosed by chain - link fence with wooden framed gates at the front. These gates were always opened during the day but closed at night. The "prisoners" wore dark green battledress and forage caps and were taken by lorry each day to the Sewardstone area where they worked in the glasshouses. Many of them did odd jobs for Chingford residents as they were not considered to be a threat in any way. Several children from Chase Lane School would go to the camp after lessons and make paper aeroplanes or play table tennis with the occupants.

After the war, some of them married into the community while others made their way to Cheshunt where there were many opportunities to work on the land and in the glasshouses. I understand that there is still quite a large Italian community in Cheshunt to this day.

The four terraced cottages were re-built in exactly the same style and the present owner of one of them told me that two of the houses stand on a concrete base which was once part of the camp water tower.

Does anyone have other memories of this camp or even a photo?

Sources used: 'Chingford at War'. Memories of former Chase Lane School pupils. One of the cottage occupants.

Angela Wagstaff [[email](#)], April 2015
Chingford Historical Society