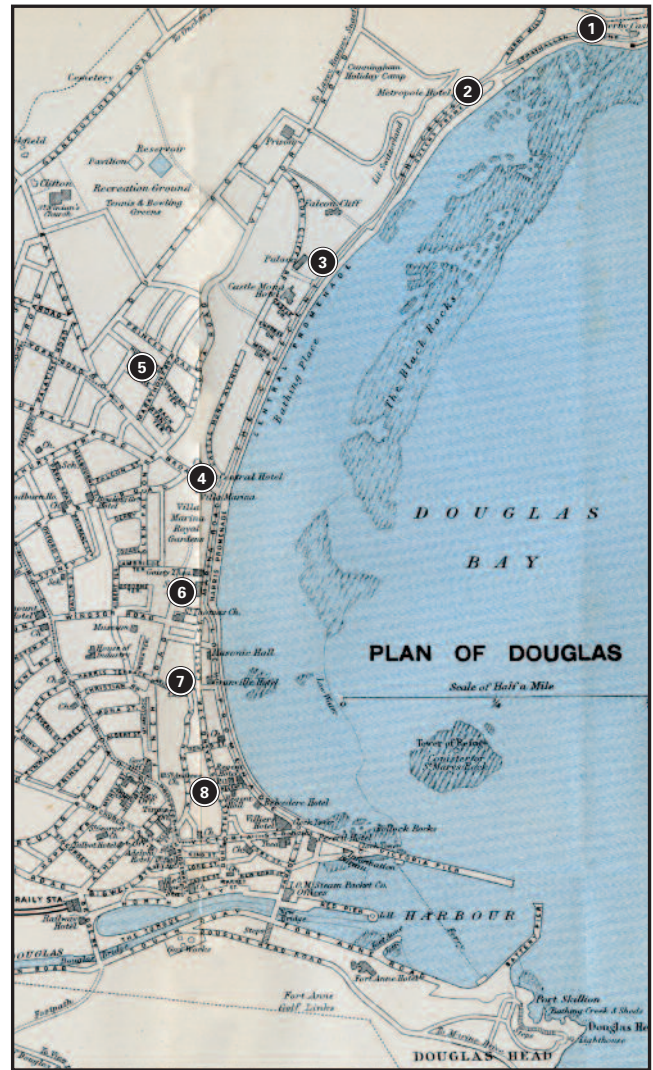




The Isle of Man in the Irish Sea — a popular holiday destination in times of peace — became an ideal location for the internment of German and Italian-born residents in the United Kingdom whose loyalty was questionable. Now Britain was at war, the empty hotels and boarding houses provided ready-made accommodation. Camps were located in Ramsey, Peel and Port Erin, but the majority were in Douglas: [1] Onchan. [2] Metro-pole. [3] Palace. [4] Central. [5] Hutchinson. [6] Sefton. [7] Granville. [8] Regent.



P.D. LLOYD-DAVIES

THE ISLE OF MAN INTERNMENT CAMPS

Known around the world as the home of the TT motorcycle races, in 1939 the Isle of Man was looking forward to a record entry for the races that year. The Grand Prix practice sessions were planned to commence on Monday, September 4, but the previous day war had been declared by Britain against Germany and the races would not be held again until hostilities were over.

On the outbreak of war there were an estimated 75,000 people of Germanic origin living in Britain, of whom some 60,000 were refugees, mostly Jews from Germany and Austria. With tensions increasing, the War Office had already prepared plans to intern aliens in the event of war under the provisions of the Emergency Powers (Defence) Act passed by the House of Commons on August 24. Regulation 18B of the Defence (General) Regulations 1939 allowed the internment of people suspected of being Nazi sympathisers and within ten days 14 people had been rounded up under 18B, several being German or Austrian by birth but since naturalised as British subjects. One of those who narrowly avoided arrest was William Joyce who had joined the British Union of Fascists in 1932. He was tipped off that he was due to be arrested under the provisions of 18B and he fled from Britain five days before the outbreak of war. He was put on trial and executed in 1946 (see *After the Battle* No. 136.)

A person subjected to 18B would be arrested without warning, the first detainees being held in Wandsworth prison if male, or Holloway if female. The men were later moved to Brixton prison but with the increase in numbers in 1940, derelict wings of other prisons were brought back into use.

It had been decided that all suspects should appear before local Enemy Alien Tribunals and classified into three categories. The first, Category 'A', was given to those deemed a security threat and were required to be interned at once. Category 'B' covered those where the loyalty of the person was suspect but who could be permitted to remain at liberty subject to various restrictions. Category 'C' was the classification for those who posed no risk.

By the end of February 1940 roughly 73,000 cases had been examined, resulting in 569 'A's, 6,782 'B's and about 66,000 'C's. Of the latter, 55,000 were registered as refugees from Nazi oppression.

Then, on June 11, 1940, with Mussolini's declaration of war, large numbers of Italians in Britain changed overnight from being aliens to enemy aliens. Many had been living and working normal lives in Britain for many years, speaking English and thinking British but, nevertheless, Prime Minister Winston Churchill instructed the Home Secretary to immediately intern all adult male Italians.

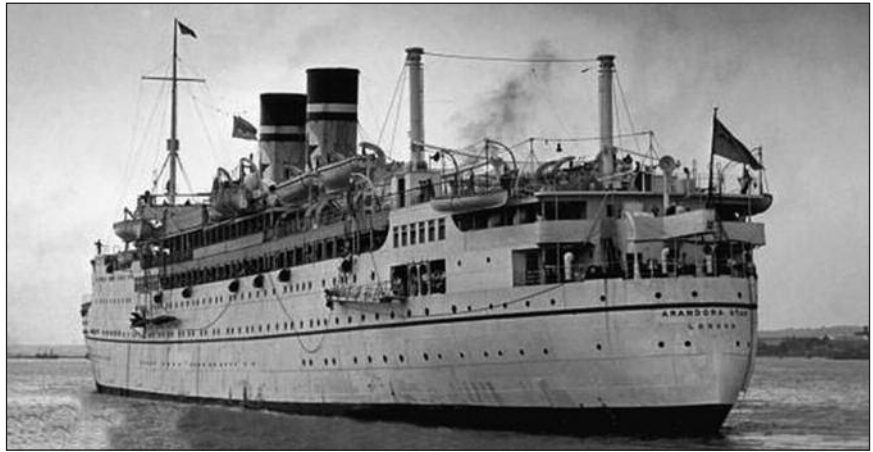
By Connery Chappell

Two days later 10,869 had been arrested, and after another week 4,500 Italians out of 15,000, plus another 12,000 Germans of the 'B' and 'C' categories, had been interned.

Now the Home Policy Committee of the Cabinet decided to widen the operation by the wholesale rounding up of all enemy aliens aged between 16 and 60. This began on June 25 and, to ease the burden, 11,400 Germans and Italians were shipped out to Canada and Australia. On June 21, the *Duchess of York* left with 2,100 Category 'A' Germans that included approximately 1,700 merchant seamen and 500 prisoners of war. Two more sailings to Canada comprised a total of 4,500, while the *Dunera* transported 2,550 Germans and 200 Italians on an eight-week voyage to Australia.

However it was the sinking of the cruise liner *Arandora Star*, en route for Canada, which caused a huge backlash against the further transportation of aliens to the Dominions. She was torpedoed about 75 miles to the west of the Hebrides by the *U-47*, commanded by Günther Prien, on July 2. On board were 479 German and 734 Italian internees; 86 German POWs; 200 military guards plus the ship's crew of 174, of whom only 868 were rescued.

Right: When the German High Command joyfully announced the sinking of the British liner *Arandora Star* off the western coast of Ireland, little did they know that she was carrying over 1,000 internees (734 Italians and 479 Germans) plus 86 German prisoners of war. The ship was bound for St John's, Newfoundland, and was torpedoed early on the morning of July 2, 1940 by the U-47 commanded by the U-Boat ace Günther Prien. There were also 200 military guards on board as well as a crew of 174. A Sunderland dropped supplies and stayed on station until the Canadian destroyer *St Laurent* reached the site of the sinking. She rescued 868 survivors of whom 586 were detainees, but 805 people lost their lives including the captain, 12 of his officers, 42 of his crew and 37 of the military personnel.



Although the sinking did not deter from sending POWs to North America, as far as aliens were concerned, the Isle of Man was more

convenient. Transit camps were set up using race courses and also an unfinished housing estate at Huyton near Liverpool.

With the increased number of refugees arriving in Britain from the Continent, by the middle of July a further 23,000 had been interned. (Of those, around 8,500 were by then in camps on the Isle of Man.) To cope with the influx, several transit camps had to be set up in Britain including Ascot, Kemp-ton Park, Lingfield and York Racecourses; an unfinished housing estate at Huyton near Liverpool; a tented camp at Prees Heath in Shropshire, and a derelict cotton mill near Bury, Lancashire.

Conditions in these transit camps were very poor and a Parliamentary debate in July focussed attention on the large number of serious complaints that had been received by the government. It was therefore agreed that all those men that had now been registered as Category 'C' should be released.

So a solution had to be found closer to home which is where the Isle of Man came into the picture. Being a popular holiday venue, the island — midway between Britain and Northern Ireland in the Irish Sea — was well provided with hotels and boarding houses, all of which were now empty. Although hutted camps had been erected on the island in the First World War, now it was intended to use these empty properties to accommodate the internees. New legislation — the Isle of Man (Detention) Act — had to be passed to authorise the transfer of detainees to the island.

The first official news that an internment camp was to be established on the island was announced in May 1940, stating that it was to be located in a parade of small hotels and boarding houses on the Mooragh Promenade

in Ramsey. At the same time, tenders were invited for a daily delivery of 500 pounds of bread, 240 pounds of meat on each of five days a week, 40 gallons of milk per day, plus supplies of potatoes, sugar and jam.

The Government Secretariat advertised for storekeepers, clerks and typists for the administration of the camp and on May 21 it was reported that all the 30 properties that had been commandeered had been vacated, the occupants boarding with relatives or friends. All the contents had to be left behind but was valued by an assessor appointed by the Manx Government, a percentage of the value then being paid as a yearly rent. Meanwhile, two rings of barbed-wire fencing were being erected surrounding the houses on the promenade including the golf links to be used for recreation.

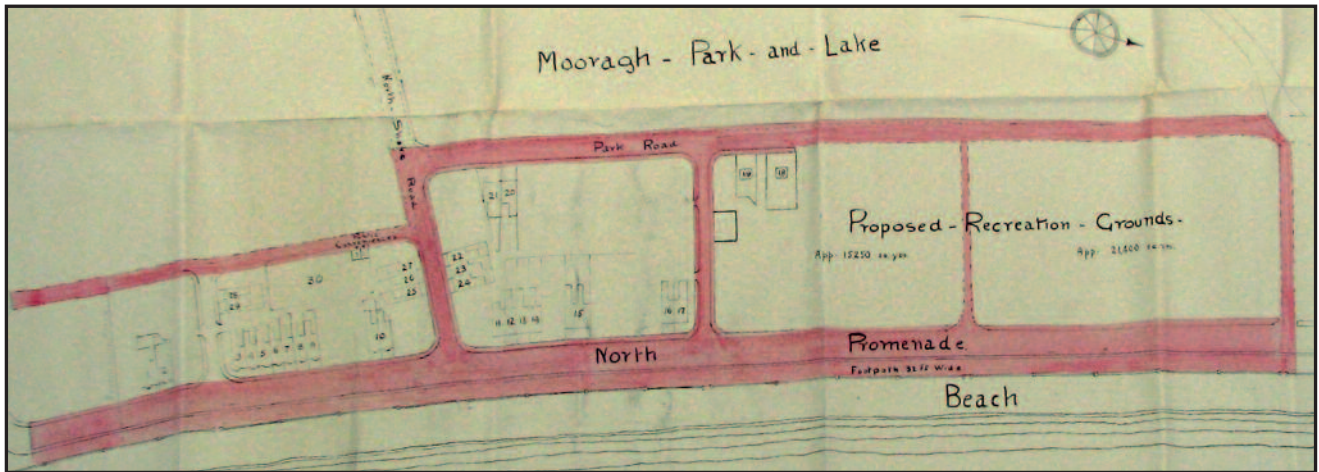


The Huyton Alien Internment Camp was formed around several streets of empty council houses on the Woolfall estate, made secure by high barbed-wire fencing. By the end of the war, much of the housing was very run down and subsequently redeveloped.

THE SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF THE ETO

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Isle of Man Examiner, May 17, 1940: 'Detention Camp for Aliens. Barbed Wire Enclosure at Ramsey. Mooragh Houses Requisitioned. Enemy aliens are to be placed in an internment camp on the Mooragh Promenade, Ramsey, and the Government has commandeered all the buildings in that neighbourhood for the purpose. The first intimation of some wartime scheme for the Mooragh boarding houses was a few weeks ago when the

occupiers were asked for details of all available accommodation. The next information came in the nature of a shock to the householders for a policeman called at their premises on Monday morning with an official Government notice requiring them to vacate the houses by tomorrow (Saturday)'. This is the original plan showing the properties being requisitioned for the first internment camp on the island.

On May 26 a party of 150 troops from the Royal Welch Fusiliers arrived to prepare for guarding the camp as the first consignment of internees was due to arrive the following day. The *Princess Josephine Charlotte*, a Belgian cross-Channel ferry that had recently evacuated refugees from Ostend, docked in Ramsey with the first batch of 823 males, all mainly Category 'B'.

The residents had to be out of their houses by May 18 and to leave behind all their furniture, bedding, linen, cutlery, crockery and utensils. Pieces of sentimental or rare value could be retained with official permission. Those deposed of their properties had to go to live with relatives or friends. The first shipment of internees to reach the Isle of Man on May 27 came ashore watched by a number of islanders. According to the *Ramsey Courier*, 'after a lengthy period of waiting an officer appeared and called out: "Can anyone speak English?" Then followed what was surely one of the strangest orders ever issued by a British infantry officer. The large assortment of civilians needed to be sorted into some semblance of order, as required by the military mind. He did not order "Quick march!" nor did he yell out "Get a move on!" According to the report, his command was perhaps unique in the modern history of the British Army: "Now, please get going".'



Mooragh Internment Camp lay at the southern end of the promenade at Ramsey, the houses being sub-divided into separate enclosures for Germans, Italians and Finns.

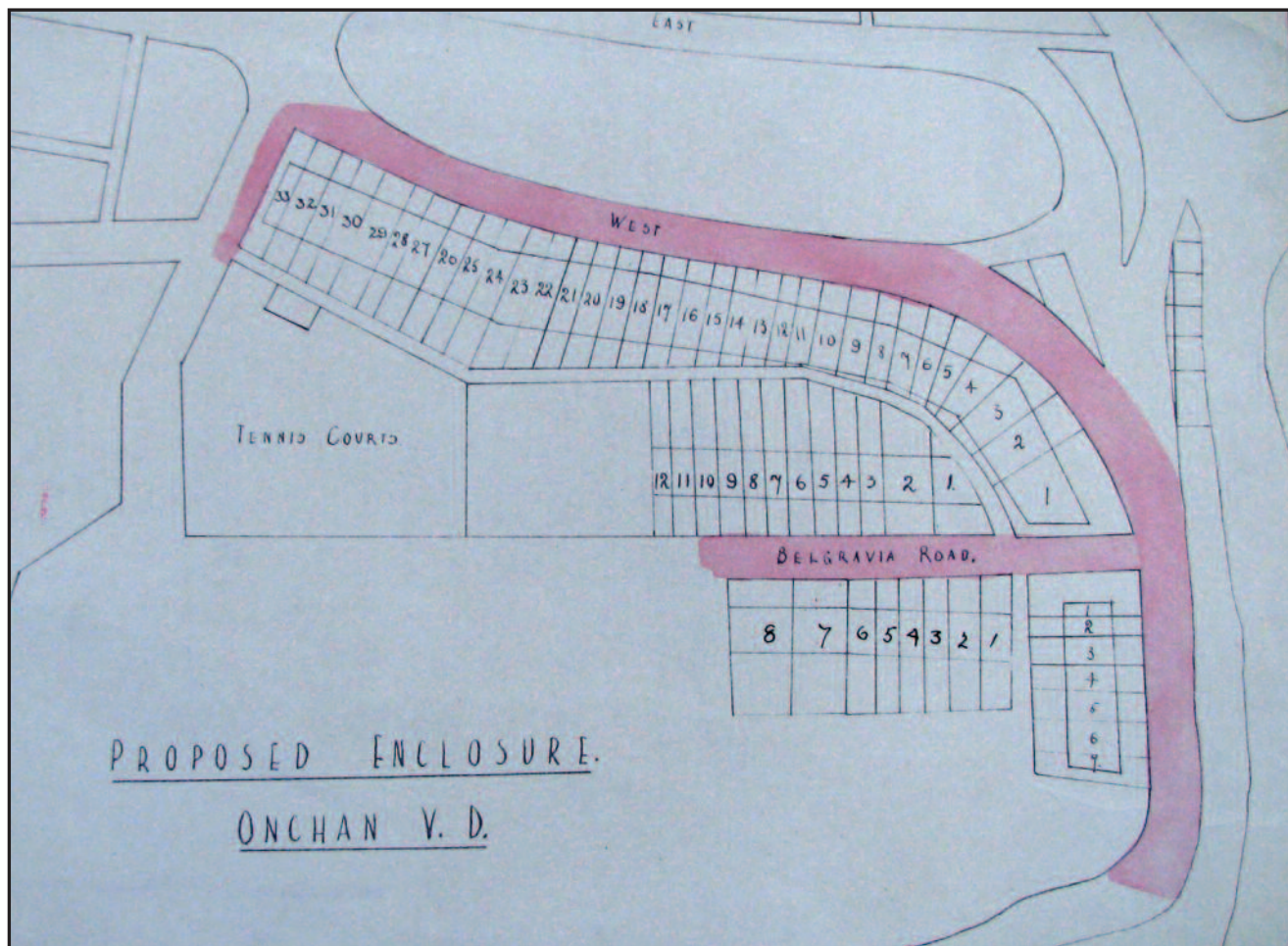


Right: The main internment camps on the island were all sited in the capital Douglas (see plan page 46). The first to be established there was Onchan Camp which consisted of 60 houses located on the headland at the northern end of the promenade.

Preparations were on-going to create a second camp on and behind the Central Promenade in the capital Douglas. This was to comprise around 40 houses that had to be vacated by June 4. Also located on the headland immediately beyond the northern end of the promenade was Onchan Camp consisting of 60 boarding houses, and Palace Camp on the terrace overlooking the main seafront in the area known as 'Little Switzerland'. The Granville and the Regent were at the southern end near the harbour but were later taken over by the Royal Navy to become HMS *Valkyrie*.



THE SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF THE ETO



ISLE OF MAN MUSEUM

The camp had magnificent views of Douglas Bay and included a football pitch and tennis courts — certainly the best male camp on the island.

One of the first published reports on life inside the camps was given by Dr George Bell, Bishop of Chichester, who had just returned from spending four days on the Isle of Man. In a speech in the House of Lords early in August 1940 he alleged that there were 10,000 men, women and children in the Manx camps, a figure that was somewhat on the low side. He added that there were 2,800 German and Austrian internees at Huyton, near Liverpool.

The Bishop then stated that there were 1,900 internees in Central Camp in Douglas, and that of them 150 had been in Nazi concentration camps. Some of Hitler's leading political antagonists were interned,



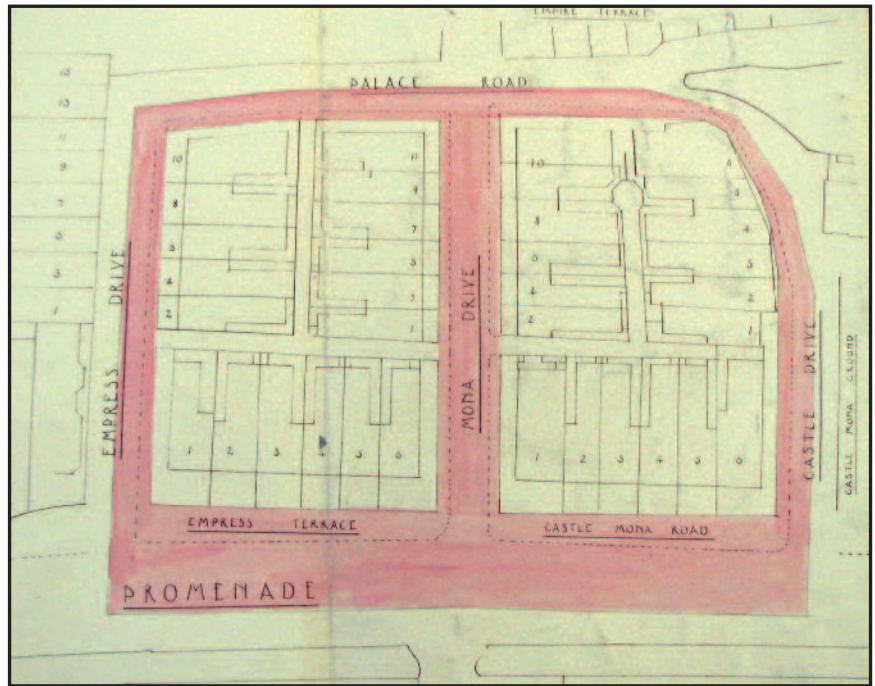
JULIAN NUTTER

he alleged, and ‘multitudes’ of men on Hitler’s black-list were to be found in Huyton or on the Isle of Man. He urged that men with such backgrounds should be released speedily.

‘In the Isle of Man and at Huyton,’ he said, ‘I was astounded at the quantity as well as the quality of the material available — doctors, professors, scientists, inventors, chemists, industrialists, manufacturers, humanists — they all want to work for Britain, freedom and justice.’

The speech was widely reported and it increased the growing feeling that the camps contained a gross wastage of valuable human material. At the same time, serious newspapers were reporting a man released from the Isle of Man as saying that he had been a prisoner in Dachau and then, for four months, in Buchenwald. The Manx camps, he said, were ‘Paradise’ compared with the German versions. ‘In Germany they would give 20 lashes for almost any minor offence.’ By contrast, he claimed that at Douglas internees were shown every consideration. He also maintained that, while

Right: Central Camp comprised a block of 34 houses further down the promenade bounded by Castle Drive and Empress Drive (below). It held 2,000 men but was later taken over by the RAF.



ISLE OF MAN MUSEUM



THE SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF THE ETO

The overall commandant of all the camps on the island was Lieutenant-Colonel Sydney Slatter, a veteran of the First World War who had been given an Emergency Commission. He was later superseded, first by Lieutenant-Colonel Richard Baggaley and then by Lieutenant-Colonel A. M. Scott.

Notices informed internees that ‘the measure of your co-operation and behaviour will decide the measure of your privileges and the consideration shown for your welfare. In all events, you are assured of justice.’

Discipline was simple. The immediate camp commander could award up to 28 days’ punishment for what was essentially a camp offence and all camps had a small detention unit, the Metropole for example having six cells near its guardroom. ‘Crimes’ included fighting, which would attract 14 days; wilful damage; breaking the black-out, and insubordination. An escape attempt usually attracted 14 days behind bars providing it was not compounded by the theft of a rowing-boat for example.

The Manx police had no jurisdiction within the camps but they could be called in over more serious matters such as an incident involving grievous bodily harm, or a felony deserving a sentence of more than 28 days’ confinement.

there had been no real medical facilities at Dachau, no one could have had better medical attention than was to be had on the island. All the aliens, he maintained, had been impressed by the good treatment they had received, and many of them were only too anxious to get out and serve in the British Army.

The truth about conditions, once the first stampede was over, was that on the island they were as good as war allowed. Yet the allegations that Jews and anti-Nazis who had suffered in German concentration camps were later interned in Britain through inefficient screening is accurate enough, vouched for time and time again.

On September 16, 1940, Detective Inspector Cyril Cuthbert of the Metropolitan Police arrived in Douglas to head a tribunal sitting in the Douglas Court House to consider for release internees held as Category ‘B’. The hearings, held in secret, began on October 7 and continued until September 1941, some three out of every ten behind barbed wire in August 1940 having since been released.





Above: The promenade at Douglas had tramlines where horse-drawn trams plied their trade on the seafront, still a feature today. Right: Metropole Camp was located at the northern end which becomes Queen's Promenade just below the rockface of 'Little Switzerland' where Onchan Camp was situated.

The Metropole Camp, comprising the Alexander, Waverley, Dodsworth and Metropole Hotels, was mainly for Italians, and opened in the first week of July. This was followed by Hutchinson Camp which was grouped around 33 houses on Hutchinson Square behind the front promenade. Sefton and Falcon hotels also became short-lived camps in the town.

One of the more-serious incidents took place in Palace Camp on the night of June 11/12, 1941, the first anniversary of Italy's entry into the war, when three Blackshirts violently attacked one of the pro-British Italians. The three men each received six months' hard labour, served in Douglas Prison.



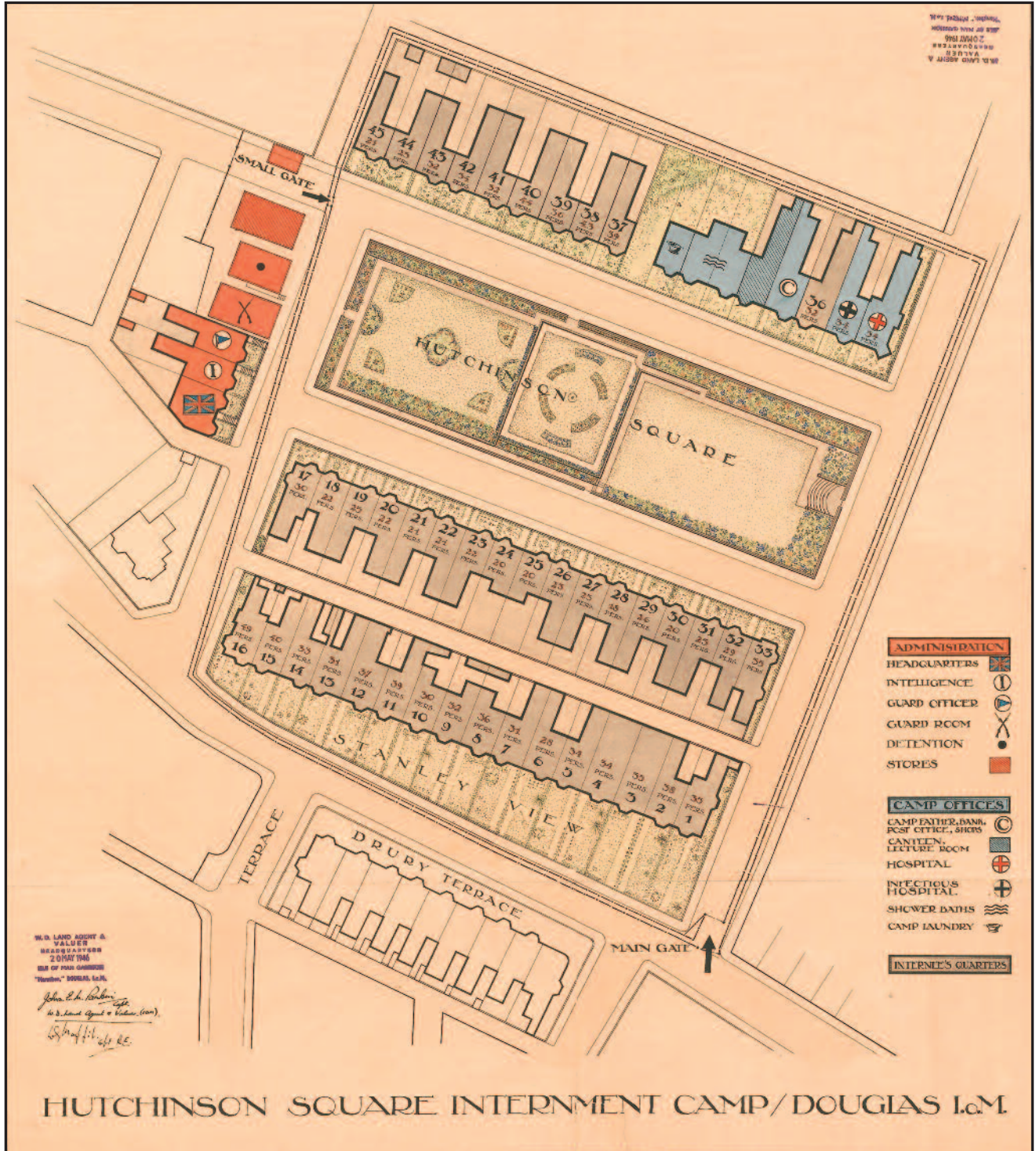
THE SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF THE ETO

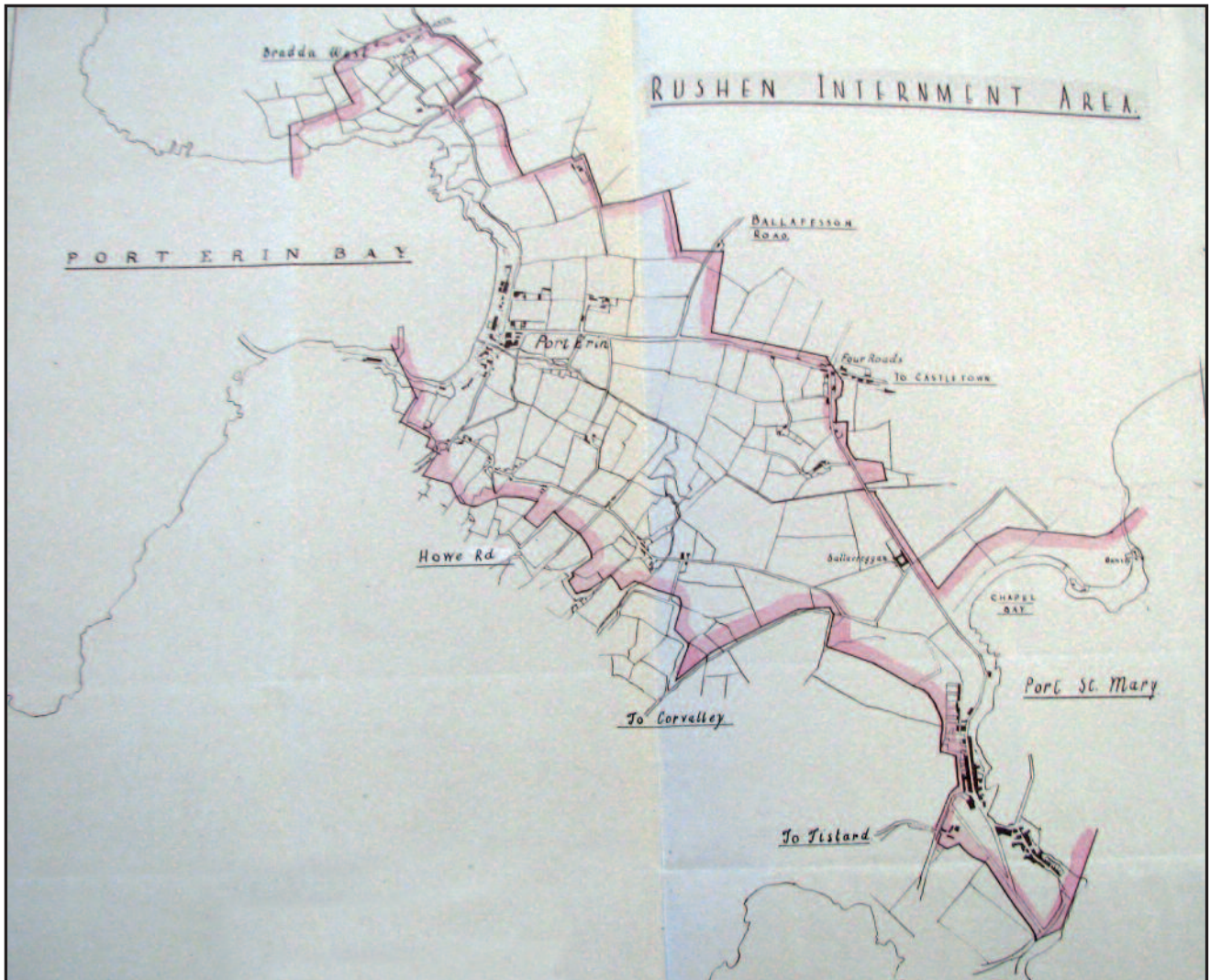


JULIAN NUTTER



Hutchinson Camp, the largest of all, was centred on the square of that name lying inland beyond Central Camp.





ISLE OF MAN MUSEUM

Rushen Internment Camp in the southern tip of the island comprised Port Erin Camp and Port St Mary Camp.

Meanwhile, over on the west coast, the residential and holiday village at Port Erin was taken over in its entirety, together with its smaller neighbour at Port St Mary, to provide accommodation for 3,500 women, the complex being officially known as Rushen Camp.

The first shipment of women disembarked at Douglas on the same Belgian ferry on May 29, followed by two more round trips to pick up more from Liverpool.

The women there were billeted on residents like ordinary holidaymakers, and were able to keep their children with them, landladies being given an allowance of £1. 1s. for each internee. A cordon was to be maintained to ensure the internees did not leave the confined area that could only be entered by those on business or with authorisation. Residents were issued with passes to move in and out.

On the night of September 17/18, a party of about 200 detainees were being marched back to Palace Camp after attending a concert when three men slipped away. As soon as the loss was discovered, the master plan for handling escapes swung into action with warnings being issued to all police stations, Army camps and RAF stations. It was found that a small fishing boat was missing from the harbour at Castletown so an air/sea search was begun and two days later the boat was intercepted off the Irish coast.

When the men returned they claimed that they had been denied hot food and blankets. A substantial number of the detainees then began to protest on their behalf, the fracas



GOOGLE

Altogether there were nine camps for men on the Isle of Man. Mooragh was at Ramsey while Onchan, Central, Palace, Metro-pole, Hutchinson (which was the largest), Granville and Sefton were at Douglas. Peveril was on the western coast at Peel. It was there on the night of September 17/18, 1941 that three men managed to slip away as a couple of hundred detainees, who had just attended a concert, were being marched back to the camp. They stole a boat, it being their intention to row to Ireland but they were picked up two days later seven miles off the coast. When the three men were returned to Peveril, their capture caused a number of the inmates to start a riot. This led to the tearing down of a dry stone wall to provide ammunition which was then thrown at soldiers summoned to quell the disturbance. The road outside the Creg Malin Hotel (right) became littered with debris and any other objects the inmates could lay their hands on and several windows in the hotel were broken.



soon developing into a full-scale riot. Every available soldier was called in to reinforce the guard. Stones, bottles, plates, lavatory seats, timber and dustbin lids flew over the wire across Walpole Road and into the side of the Creg Malin pub-cum-hotel. Thirty windows were smashed and the roadway littered with missiles.

On September 22 two Manx policemen arrived at the camp cells to arrest the three escapees who had been recaptured. Two were members of the IRA, which had mounted a bombing campaign in London just before the war, and the third was a member of the British Fascist party. They were remanded in custody in the Isle of Man Prison in Victoria Road.

A week later an Army officer was walking up a narrow footpath off Ballarat Road in Peel when he felt his foot sink slightly as if the ground was hollow. Investigation revealed a hole about four feet deep with a short ladder running up from its base, the grass being held in place by a trapdoor. It was soon established that a tunnel had been dug about 25 yards long from the front room of No. 13 inside the compound on the other side of the road. It then ran under the perimeter wire and across the road before rising to the surface in the path between the barbed wire around the guardroom and the hedge of a bungalow. It was grudgingly admitted that it was a very clever piece of work, carried out with great accuracy.



CONNERY CHAPPELL



CONNERY CHAPPELL



CONNERY CHAPPELL

On September 29 another escape attempt was made from Peveril Camp, this time via a tunnel dug under the road from the front room of No. 13 Ballarat Road (today No. 17 Peveril Road). Centre:

The house lay inside the wire, the tunnel emerging in the narrow path in the foreground. Above left and right: The tunnel, ten feet underground, was shored up with timber and lit with electric light.

Right: Born in 1896, Oswald Mosley was educated at Winchester and entered Sandhurst as a cadet. With the outbreak of the First World War, he was granted a commission in the 16th Lancers, later transferring to the Royal Flying Corps. It was not long before he had gained his pilot's certificate but he injured a leg in a flying accident which left him with a permanent limp. In 1918, Mosley was elected to Parliament as a member for Harrow under the Conservative banner but it was not long before he found himself at odds with his constituency officials. A serious row led to Mosley's departure from the party and he contested the seat at the 1922 election as an Independent when he defeated the official Conservative candidate by a substantial margin. His marriage to heiress Lady Cynthia Curzon in 1920 had a profound effect on Mosley's political outlook and, possibly due to her influence, Mosley became converted to Socialism. He secured nomination as prospective candidate for Smethwick and duly won the seat for Labour in the 1926 election. Two years later he succeeded to the family baronetcy.



THE SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF THE ETO

Altogether there were 57 escape attempts, the first being that of a young Italian who cut the wire at Palace Camp on the night of August 17/18, 1941. Many made the effort, not with any real hope of gaining permanent freedom, but from a variety of simple impulses like having the opportunity of airing their grievances to the authorities when caught. The last escape of note took place on March 11, 1945 from Mooragh. The two internees were at large for a week before they surrendered, cold, wet and hungry, to the postmistress at Bride.

The only murder took place in April 1943 at Mooragh Camp where a quarter of the occupants were now Finnish seamen. They were made up of pro-Nazi and pro-British factions although the two were not separated within the camp. On April 20, Hitler's 54th birthday, feelings were running high, fermented by liquor looted from the canteen. Fascist songs added to the bullying by the Nazi element and one of the Finns received a fatal stab wound. Although one of the internees was arrested and put on trial, he was found not guilty, and there the matter rested.

At the beginning of August 1940, Pevelin Camp was opened at Peel on the western coast of the island with the intention of using it to hold those men who were most likely to cause trouble. They were sent straight to the camp from prisons in Britain.

From a total of roughly 7,000 male

internees at the end of 1940, the figure had dropped to 5,000 by April 1941 and to 4,700 at the start of May. All the original Category 'C' internees had gone and also a high percentage of the 'B's'.

On April 22, 1941 the internees at Peel were transferred to Ramsey to make room for 800 British Fascists, the first 550 arriving on May 12 escorted by three officers and 143 other ranks. When the *Lady of Mann* tied up to King Edward Pier at Douglas, a large banner on the upper-works proclaimed: 'MOSLEY FOR PEACE'. Those on board began singing and to chant out the name of the leader of the British Union of Fascists, but catcalls from the shore soon drowned them out.

The BUF members were not classed as internees but detainees, a subtle difference. One conspicuously absent was the leader Oswald Mosley who spent the first part of the war in Brixton prison. Later he was transferred to Holloway prison where he was held incommunicado with his wife Diana Mitford. They were released in November 1943 but spent the remainder of the war under house arrest.

By now the internee count in the Manx camps had grown to 9,700 rising to 10,024 on August 8, the highest it ever reached. From then on it slowly declined as individual cases were re-examined.

The first repatriation of internees, in this case of 43 German women from Port Erin, took place in October 1941. Organised by

Sweden, they travelled to Gothenburg with a contingent of badly wounded German prisoners of war in an exchange scheme for British POWs. Then, in July 1942, 27 Japanese were repatriated in exchange for civilians. The largest single transfer of 600 aliens — women, married couples and children — took place in September 1944 which had the effect of reducing the number of detainees and internees remaining on the island to less than 2,000. This group was shipped from Liverpool straight to Gothenburg.

Following the success of the landings in Normandy in 1944, it was anticipated that the facilities on the Isle of Man would be required for housing prisoners of war captured in France. By then the number of internees was slowly being reduced, so it permitted the military to convert the Douglas camps into POW cages.

The last internment camp closed in September 1945 when the 580 remaining aliens were shipped to Fleetwood from where they were moved by train to London. There they were processed through a dispersal camp set up at Stanmore.

Inspector W. H. Howard of the Metropolitan Police was in charge of the operation to return to Germany the troublemakers remaining in the camp at Peel. Escorted all the way by armed guards, from London they were taken via Ostend to Germany where, we are told, the escort simply turned about and left them to their own devices.



Left: In the General Election in 1931, Mosley stood as a candidate for the New Party but, on his defeat, he quickly called a spade a spade and renamed the party the British Union of Fascists modelled on Italian lines. The Rome-London-Berlin axis was cemented on several occasions, one being the first Nuremberg Party Day in September 1934. Although Regulation 18B of the Defence (General) Regulations Act passed in 1939 permitted the detention of aliens, in May 1940 the government also decided to round up members of the BUF. This required an amendment to the act which was rushed through on May 22 giving the Home Secretary the power to detain any members of an organisation which in his view was 'subject to foreign influence or control'. The following day Mosley, who had met Hitler twice and Mussolini five or six times, was arrested. Now married to Diana (née Mitford) who was a staunch supporter of Hitler she was arrested on June 29. While members of the organisation were interned as 'detainees' on the Isle of Man, Mosley and his wife spent the next 3½ years imprisoned in London.

THE SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF THE ETO