Chapter 18
Prisoner of War Archaeology in an Interdisciplinary Context

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Abstract The archaeology of PoWs offers valuable insights that can be valued not only within archaeology and anthropology but also more widely across cultural and military history, many of the creative arts, and memory and heritage studies. The archaeologists' experience of studying and interpreting material culture gives a unique perspective on the built environments and products of internment. This is illustrated here under three broad thematic headings of confinement and embodiment, ethnicity and identity, and heritage and the commodification of the past, as examples of the ways in which PoW archaeology can contribute to broader themes.

Introduction

The chapters in this volume have provided a wide range of case studies that demonstrate the many and varied ways in which archaeologists can approach the evidence from PoWs, and the diverse research directions that lie open in the future. This concluding chapter offers some comments not just on the archaeological potential of continued research, but its relevance to a wide range of disciplines including anthropology and other social sciences, history and art history, folk life and memory studies, heritage management and "dark" tourism.

Archaeologists of the recent past may undertake excavations, but those researching PoWs often use other evidence in addition or instead, applying our expertise in analyzing material culture of all kinds from the intensive study of one artifact

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through to whole assemblages, from a single structure to sites or landscapes. We as archaeologists perceive, interrogate, and interpret material evidence in ways that other disciplines do not, and indeed treat texts not only as documentary sources but physical items with a materiality that also gives them value and significance. We thus have a vital part to play in the interdisciplinary approach to PoW studies, particularly as the materiality of confinement is such a prominent part of the physical and mental experience of imprisonment, and where restrictions in access to material goods and physical places dominates the internees' thoughts and lives, even in the most benign of camps.

Material remains of many kinds form vital parts of the evidence base for understanding PoW camps and their inmates, not only because often the documentary sources have been destroyed and archaeology can "fill some of the gaps" but more importantly because it offers a distinctive and highly valuable lens on the times, places, and experiences under consideration (Carr and Mytum 2012a). People could act and make when they could not talk or write; camps were managed and used beyond the plans and rules set out by authorities; people remember through and with things as well as though stories and written words. Three examples of arenas of multidisciplinary concern are used here to illustrate the potential for PoW archaeology to contribute within the wider intellectual landscape.

Prisoner of War Camps as Confinement, and Embodying the Prisoner of War

Many disciplines study confinement within its historical and social contexts (Evans 1982; Foucault 1977; Harding 1985; Johnston 2000; Rhodes 2001; Taylor 1991). Moreover, the concept of embodiment has become a central postmodern theme, often inspired by the writings of Merleau-Ponty (1962). These themes are central to the understanding of the PoW experience, and artifacts and settlements provide the evidence for the methods of confinement and the physical, bodily experiences of both those so held and their captors. Archaeologists have become increasingly interested in the ways in which various groups have been confined (Casella 2007), and research in examining the nature of the institutions in which such confinement takes place is now an important theme in historical archaeology (Beisaw and Gibb 2009; Spencer-Wood and Baugher 2001). There is no doubt that PoW archaeology can provide an important perspective on this subject, frequently sitting between the punitive conditions of prisons and outside the apparently benevolent but highly ordered structuring principles of work houses, asylums, boarding schools, and orphanages. Thus far the only comparative study has been between a Scottish PoW camp and a logging work camp, both in Scotland (Banks 2011), the latter being voluntarily attended by those working in an isolated location. Some PoW treatment was more like those of prison work camps, as in World War II Norway (Chap. 9), whilst for others it was more relaxed. Nevertheless, all saw confinement and control of bodily movement, both within and beyond the camp.

From the symbolic and esthetically pleasing Japanese American ponds (Chap. 15) to the temporary subdivisions of space by Channel Islander internees within barracks in Germany (Chap. 11), archaeologists can recognize the ways in which the physical world was utilized by and for PoWs, to create embodied spaces full of meaning. The mixture of material culture and people within the photographs commissioned by internees at Cunningham Camp, Douglas, reveal the interlinked roles of objects and bodies in creating and recreating active social agents in circumscribed conditions (Chap. 6). The ways in which people sat and ate, socialized and interacted created tensions and new understandings of self and community in Japanese American camps (Chap. 17), and all camps created unfamiliar and usually unwelcome proximity to others' bodies in the cramped sleeping and living arrangements. The frequent representation of barbed wire in the twentieth-century PoW art reflects the obsession with control of bodily access to the wider world (Carr and Mytum 2012b), and many written and graphic sources record the tensions, embarrassment and loss of dignity imposed by communal washing and the high-density sleeping and eating, with little prospect of privacy. While the activities of those who gambled even their clothes away in Napoleonic camps might create a lifestyle almost free of material culture (Chap. 5), these unfortunate souls unable to cope with the effects of confinement were still subject to their bodily movements within the palisaded compounds and barracks.

Bodily comfort was managed by the authorities with greater or lesser concern and efficiency, but internees could be highly ingenious in their use of limited resources to improve their physical circumstances. While this might be focused on escape (Chap. 8), it was more frequently concerned with comforts created by the actions of internees using what materials they could find. Dwellings were constructed or improved (Chaps. 2, 4, and 6), furniture created (Chap. 11), and many decorative items produced to domesticate the institutionally designed living spaces and to make the living conditions more physically as well as psychologically bearable. In contrast, bodily discomfort, torture, and even execution could be the fate of the interned (Chaps. 2 and 9), and many camps have associated burial areas where those who died from mistreatment or disease were interred, and it has been possible in some cases to locate and commemorate executed PoWs (Fig. 18.1).

Connerton (1989, 2008) has argued strongly that social memory is highly dependent on physical actions and that, while first-hand memories of the actual events end as those involved die, the continued enactment and re-enactment of commemorative events, both public and private, perpetuate and create the social memory. The commemorative events associated with wars, including religious services where many gather together, the marching to military bands, and the laying of wreaths at communal memorials, all employ clear bodily presence and movement. The physical appearance of even very aged survivors helps to legitimate and reinforce these commemorative acts, and indeed as all surviving combatants of World War I have now all died this has been seen as a significant break with the past, though in practice all the events continue as before. Interestingly, not all cultures require this form of bodily involvement, as Muzzaini (2006) has noted in the case of Singapore. In many societies, however, continued activities by descendants, as well as any survivors,

Fig. 18.1 Burials of executed PoWs are marked with small pyramids on a woodland walk, Falstad, Norway

remains a vital part of the PoW heritage (Chap. 12). Indeed the increasing academic and wider heritage interest in this subject might be seen in part as a reaction to the "loss" of the memory of past events and experiences as survivors become unable to directly participate in commemorative acts. The perceived value of the physical resource may increase as the living resource is extinguished (see below for a discussion of the heritage implications). Moreover, as the structures of PoW camps often outlast the evidence of the confining boundaries, so it is archaeology that can confirm and reveal the nature of those technologies of imprisonment—palisades, walls, barbed wire—that contained and controlled bodily movement within proscribed spaces.

Ethnicity and Identity

Issues of ethnicity and identity have now become established issues with which archaeologists engage (Jones 1997), and in the process are participating in debates with other social scientists and historians. Both ethnicity and identity are highly significant in the case of PoW camps, whether military or civilian. Internees were held because of their identity with another regime, those at the time considered enemies of the state. In the case of military PoWs they had been captured and were held to prevent their continued participation in conflict and could be treated with respect, as a source of labor, or as an inconvenience. The identification of PoWs as "other" has often led to degrading and horrific treatment. While how deliberate this was in the American Civil War is debated (Hesseltine 1962), there is no doubt of the intention

under the Nazi regime (Soleim 2010), and the cruel effects of the policies are archaeologically attested at Andersonville and Fort Pulaski (Chap. 2) and in the Norwegian Romsdal peninsula (Chap. 9), respectively. This volume does not consider concentration camps where the extermination of the inmates was a primary goal, though these have received some archaeological research (Myers 2008, 2011).

Historians have become interested in the process of increasing internment during the twentieth century (Bird 1986; Cesarani and Kushner 1993; Panayi 1991; Soleim 2010), but have not closely considered the material aspects of this experience except the obvious one that the PoWs were incarcerated in cramped and sometimes inhuman conditions. They have, however, drawn attention to the ways in which xenophobia evolved in wartime situations, both creating popular demand for internment and easing political desire to control aliens.

Ethnicity and national identity is central to the construction and ordering of most PoW camps. These are places where those that are being demonized as the enemy alien can be contained. The camps both help to divide nationalities, and also represent and reinforce those differences in their physical presence in the landscape. Where there had previously been toleration if not outright friendship, these institutions formed part of the governmental framework that encouraged national unity in the face of a common foe. The archaeology of PoWs investigates the ways in which the camps themselves, and what the authorities and the inmates did within them, reinforced and physically represented these divisions. Likewise, within the camps there could be increased awareness of national identities that had been downplayed or even ignored in less confrontational times. In some situations, these divisions and identities were also based upon or also reflected religion, and the single-sex camps also led to questions of gender identity being raised that had often been previously suppressed. Archaeologists are only just beginning to address some of these issues in relation to PoWs, but other disciplines are also only just becoming aware of some of the implications (Kewley Draskau 2012; Rachamimiov 2012).

Those wars that were between those of the same nation created different challenges to identity, as seen in the American Civil War. Here, ideological values were given such a high priority that large-scale inhumanity could be shown on both sides (Chaps. 2, 3, 4). The ways in which "otherness" could be created to justify this in the minds of those involved still continues to shape the cognitive, cultural, political, and economic geography of North America. Archaeology can highlight the similarities in mistreatment and the high degree of shared culture, yet divisions were still recognizable, important, and maintained. Archaeological sites are important even now in the process of mutual understanding and reconciliation (Chap. 2).

Prisoner of War Heritage and the Commodification of the Past

The heritage from even recent conflicts is now being recognized as requiring management by heritage professionals, and it is noteworthy that organizations from as far afield as North America (Burton et al. 2002), Australia (Cowra Shire Council n.d.),

and England (Thomas 2003) now include PoW sites within their remit. While still at an early stage across the world, there are increasing moves to survey, assess, and then selectively manage this fragile resource. Parallel with this management concern has grown the academic appreciation of the potential offered by PoW sites, as this volume and others (Carr and Mytum 2012b, Myers and Moshenska 2011) demonstrate. While government agencies may now be considering the role of PoW camps within a wider heritage landscape, there is also a move for a more public use of such sites to exploit their associations culturally and commercially. Whether this is to replace living survivors of this phase of family and national history as they inevitably succumb to old age, or whether it is a result of globalization, new senses of identity and history, and the limited and indirect experience of war that most of the population now have experienced, is uncertain. What is clear is that PoW experience now forms part of the wider heritage.

The place of PoW camps within the tourist industry is an ambivalent one. They certainly sit within the recently coined term dark tourism (Ashworth and Hartmann 2005; Lennon and Foley 2000; Sharpley and Stone 2009; Wilson 2008), but their place there, as in military and cultural history, is hard to classify. They are neither places of conflict, like battlefields, nor are most locations of genocide (Beech 2000), though in many camps some PoWs died. Stone (2006) has attempted to categorize the types of dark tourism sites, and PoW camps are probably most closely aligned to his Dark Dungeons category (Stone 2006, 154) as the emphasis is on incarceration. PoW camps were sites of varying degrees of brutality, and so they sit at various points on the spectrum of darkness as discussed by Miles (2002), with those Nazi camps in Norway being significantly darker, for example, than those for Japanese Americans in North America. Researchers of dark tourism also consider the role of demand in the development of such sites (Cole 1999, Sharpley 2005, Seaton 1996), and this may come not only from survivors and their families but also now a much broader spectrum of society. Underlying political and cultural factors operate on both supply and demand, as discussed by Lennon and Smith (2004) where the Jewish concentration camp at Terezin is remembered and interpreted for the public, but in contrast the Roma camp of Lety is forgotten. Both sites lie in the present state of the Czech Republic, but their current place in social memory is clearly different, and this is reflected in their heritage roles. Likewise, the considerable tourist interest in the Normandy battlefield sites is not matched by any remembrance of the PoW camps or what those inmates achieved after the war (Chaps. 6 and 7). Moreover, the role of PoW labor in the construction of military infrastructure is often ignored in any interpretation (Carr 2010; Chap. 9).

The recognition of PoW sites and material culture as heritage to be managed and, on occasion, exploited can be associated in part with the growth of interest in memory and the relationship between past and present. Memory studies have become increasingly significant in many disciplines (Radstone 2008), and the role of ruins is widely recognized as a powerful physical trigger (Trigg 2009); archaeologists have also recognized the way in which various forms of painful heritage may be termed haunted archaeology (Jonker and Till 2009). Archaeologists of the PoW experience both remember this part of the heritage themselves and for a scholarly purpose, but also in the process bring it back into a wider social existence from which it may have

Fig. 18.2 Eden Camp Modern History Museum, North Yorkshire, UK, using a World War II PoW camp

disappeared. Archaeology can often be a major stimulus to the process of recovering and remembering that can then be associated with other sources buried previously unnoticed in public and private archives and in the heads of survivors.

Many camps have been largely erased from the landscape, either deliberately to remove an uncomfortable reminder, or as part of ongoing postwar regeneration and return to normal life. The massive World War I Isle of Man camp of Knockaloe, with over 20,000 inmates, was rapidly dismantled and the landscape retuned to farmland, while the other camp at Douglas rapidly reverted to a holiday camp (Mytum 2011). A similar process of demolition or reuse can be seen in across Europe in France (Chaps. 6 and 7), Poland (Chap. 8), Norway (Chap. 9), and Germany (Chap. 12). In North America, where sites were generally placed in isolated locations and where space is less of a premium, they have been abandoned though often after deliberate demolition (Chaps. 14, 15, 16, and 17). While these actions reflect practical functional decisions, they also signaled part of a widespread process of forgetting, in contrast to the institutionalized remembering of the war dead in the same conflict (Mytum 2013). However, traces can often survive apparent erasure, and archaeological investigations allow location and identification of such heritage sites. Many locations had buildings which have been reused for agricultural and light industrial uses, and in this way still survive in the landscape to this day (Thomas 2003). It is even possible for these to be turned directly into a heritage resource (Fig. 18.2). The Eden Camp Modern History Museum is formed from the surviving structures of a World War II PoW camp in North Yorkshire, England. It displays many aspects of World War II, with only one building focusing on the role of PoWs and only part of that on the aliens for whom the camp was originally constructed, with the rest devoted to British PoWs held elsewhere. Nevertheless, this is

an example from the gray end of the dark tourism spectrum, as many positive as well as negative aspects of the war and internment are revealed, as well as the tragedy and suffering. This commercially successful model is reflected in the large numbers who visit, of all ages, indicating that dark tourism satisfies a demand, even if the very publicity of the museum may in part create it.

War was traumatic for those directly involved, and for those on the margins waiting for news of loved ones and managing within the constraints of rationing and shortages. Research through archaeology, documentary research, or oral history can find out much about such challenging times. The question for archaeologists, heritage agencies, and the communities is how to react to this actual or potential knowledge. Should it be brought out from its hidden location, reviving memories and potentially opening wounds, or should it be revealed, confronted, understood, and used to assist in dealing with old divisions but also acting as lessons for the future? Moshenska has noted how evocative excavated material remains can be in memory works (2008, 2010), but others have noted the power of the photograph (Kunimoto 2004), artwork, or the written or printed text in creating a link with the past. The question often for those involved in the study of the past is whether this prompting should be undertaken, and for what end. Memory is fluid and not a simple matter of accurate recall; it is culturally and contextually constructed (Connerton 2008) and memories now may or may not easily relate to past events and places as revealed and understood by archaeologists. Conflict and enmity from the past can be revived, but also new conflicts in understanding of the past can arise between those who experienced it and those studying it now. This in itself can be the subject of research, but there is a danger of self-indulgence or opportunism at the expense of some of the participants. The power relations here between young and intelligent researchers and aging and potentially vulnerable witnesses need to be fully considered within any research or interpretation framework.

In some cases, it is clear that nationalistic or racial motivations affect preservation, commemoration, and display. This can be seen most clearly in South Africa, where the Boer War camps have been used by both the white regime to define separation from Britain, and then postapartheid governments with a concern to highlight the multiracial nature of the internment and reduce the Boer emphasis (Hasian 2003; Nasson 2000; Stanley and Dampier 2005). The political significance of the Japanese American camps is recognized by the US National Parks Service, but the implications for preservation and interpretation in Britain and Europe is as yet undeveloped, though it is being recognized in some places such as Germany and the Channel Islands (Chap. 12) and Norway (Chap. 9).

The Future of Prisoner of War Archaeology in its Wider Intellectual Context

This book and other recent publications (Carr and Mytum 2012b; Myers and Moshenska 2011) demonstrate the vitality of PoW research where material culture plays a central role. Whilst some scholars approach from cultural anthropology

(Dusselier 2008), folk life (Cresswell 2005), art history (Behr and Malet 2004), or history (Dove 2005), there is little doubt that archaeology can take a central role in examining a wide range of evidence and addressing themes that are not set only within the one discipline.

Contested heritage is cross-disciplinary and reaches out to the community. Archaeologists are often both experienced at public interaction and interpretation, and are willing to communicate their findings. Increasingly, however, archaeologists do more than this and work with and for communities to serve their interests in understanding local, ethnic, or religious heritages. Archaeologists now frequently engage with other stakeholders in the past as experts but not controllers, as facilitators not judges. Many examples of PoW archaeology contain elements of tension, unresolved guilt and injustice, of different views on the same events. These opinions may be uncontested, but they often are hotly disputed, and archaeologists have become increasingly accustomed to parallel and conflicting world views and understandings of heritage. These skills and experiences can be brought to interdisciplinary research where many, though not all, of the other academic participants are less aware of public reaction, ownership, and strong identity with the past.

Archaeologists can bring a strong sense of place to interdisciplinary research. Although there has been a little interest from cultural and historical geographers (Clout 2006), places of confinement and confinement within landscapes have not been a popular field of study. The time depth awareness of place is important as so many camps were constructed from ephemeral remains, and even where the ubiquitous twentieth century concrete survives, this is often only a fraction of the total infrastructure and built prisonscape that was experienced by the PoWs. Archaeological survey and excavation can provide a far richer and contextualized understanding of spaces and places within the PoW landscape, both within the compounds and beyond if allowed out on work parties.

An unusual aspect of archaeological interpretation is the way in which it easily shifts in both spatial and temporal scale, a dimension seen in anthropology but less often in other social sciences and the humanities. Archaeologists work in highly detailed and contextualized case studies, as with the chapters in this book, but many also see their research as part of a larger, comparative process by which experiences can be understood over time and space. The PoW experience in general can be better understood by awareness of the diversity of the particular, yet throughout this book it is notable how many common strands emerge, even though they are not directly copied one to another. The similarities of mind sets in creating PoW camps by the military (Mytum 2011) and the strategies employed to provide effective logistics and security have a wider comparative interest. Problems of site organization, control of access, care of the sick, management of large numbers of fit and in some camps underemployed people, and provisioning and waste management of densely settled yet relatively isolated camps can be observed across time and space. From the Napoleonic camps of Britain (Chap. 5), through the camps of the American Civil war, both successful (Chap. 4) and failing (Chaps. 2 and 3), to both civilian and military for World War II (Chaps. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17), archaeological investigation reveals the ways in which authorities planned and managed camps.

A similar pattern emerges when we examine PoW reactions to time and limited resources, and their ingenuity in the use and creation of material culture. The internees adapted the imposed arrangements and worked within them to create opportunities for resistance, survival, and self-expression. The PoW's coping strategies frequently made heavy use of material items (Chap. 6), and worked to resist in both apparently decorative and more clearly functional items not only in European (Chaps. 7 and 8) but also in Japanese American contexts (Chaps. 14, 15, 16 and 17).

In both understanding the past, and the role of that past in the present and future, archaeology can make a major contribution. It is essential that archaeological researchers of the PoW experience disseminate their work not only within the archaeological community, but also that they reach out to other disciplines across the academy and beyond the heritage professions that manage and interpret this resource. Only then can the potential demonstrated in this volume be placed in its wider interdisciplinary context, and PoW studies generally be enriched by archaeological perspectives.

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