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## Chapter 5: Networks of Association

### The Social and Intellectual Lives of Academics in Manx Internment Camps during World War II

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#### INTRODUCTION

As fascist governments tightened their grip on intellectuals and those in categories that they viewed as undesirable, such as Jews, many people in all walks of life found their employment, freedoms, and even their lives under threat. Academics at many British universities supported their colleagues suffering persecution in Europe, and significant numbers were assisted, often through the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning (SPSL, see Introduction, this volume), in reaching Britain and in some cases finding employment.<sup>1</sup> In this way, many academics reached Oxford, though only a minority were able to remain in the longer term. The security of the refugees was far from certain within Britain, however, as xenophobia rapidly became rife as the likelihood of war increased, and even Jewish refugees from the Nazi regime were viewed with suspicion.

Once hostilities were commenced, the fears of spies infiltrating the structures of British life, posing as refugees, took hold. For some politicians it was better to be safe rather than sorry, and so constraining the activities of recent migrants was taken as the default solution: strong arguments had to be presented to counter this cautious position. In only a short time, all aliens were identified and graded by local Enemy Alien Tribunals into three categories: A were a threat to security, B were of uncertain allegiance, and C were deemed to be of no risk.<sup>2</sup> At this stage only category A (a few hundred souls) were interned, and could be held in facilities across Britain, but this situation was not going to continue, so plans for larger scale internment were drawn up.

Internees were to be sent to many temporary camps across Britain, but most were eventually relocated to those established on the Isle of Man. Britain's indirect control over the Isle of Man was considerable, as it was a Crown dependency within the empire; furthermore, the local democratic body, Tynwald, was supportive of the war against the Nazi powers. During World War I, the Isle of Man had housed most of the alien civilian internees detained in Britain, some in a converted holiday camp at Douglas, but most in a large site housing up to 23,000 men at Knockaloe, near Peel, on the western side of the island, which was run more on the lines of army barracks.<sup>3</sup> The holiday business, which was at that time the mainstay of the island's economy, collapsed as the ferries were commandeered for the war and annual holidays in the industrial north-west, which provided most of the clientele, were abandoned. This created great hardship for the local population, and so a different strategy was developed for World War II, whereby the hotels and boarding houses were requisitioned and taken over for the male internees, but payments to the owners were made by the British government.<sup>4</sup> The arrangements to accommodate female internees were

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<sup>1</sup> Ash and Söllner (1996b).

<sup>2</sup> Chappell (1984: 21).

<sup>3</sup> Cresswell (1994); Mytum (2011, 2013).

<sup>4</sup> Chappell (1984: 70).

different—here the landladies remained in residence and were paid accordingly. Thus, the physical and social structures established in World War II were quite unlike those of the previous conflict, and also unlike the typical World War II military prisoner-of-war camps on all sides, where long timber barracks formed the major element of the design.<sup>5</sup>

In May 1940, the first plans for camps on the Isle of Man were made public, with the Mooragh Camp at Ramsey being the first to be established and accept inmates. However, in June 1940 Italy joined the war, and suddenly numerous Italians settled in Britain came under suspicion.<sup>6</sup> By the middle of the month, large numbers of Italians,<sup>7</sup> but also the B and C category Germans, were being, suddenly and without warning, taken from their homes and placed in confinement. This was a large and not well-planned operation, so there was much administrative confusion as the many men, and some women, were shipped to temporary camps and from thence to the Isle of Man to remain for as long as it took for them to prove their loyalty to the Allied cause, and for a role in the war effort to be identified. The women were placed in Rushen Camp in the south,<sup>8</sup> but most of the male new arrivals were housed in the island's main town of Douglas, with some going to Ramsey and a few to Peveril Camp in Peel. The first Douglas camp to open was Onchan, followed by Central, Palace, Metropole, and Sefton on the main Promenade facing the Douglas Bay. Hutchinson Camp was set up slightly inland, using boarding houses built around a square in which pleasant gardens were laid out.

In response to this massive removal of alien refugees, the University of Oxford established a committee to recommend the release of academics with whom they had links, and graded them into three classes according to their potential contribution to the war effort, giving their classes Roman numerals rather than letters. Class I were those whose work was directly of value; Class II were 'scholars of great distinction whose contributions to the progress of knowledge are a class apart'; other researchers and academics were in Class III, though the university registrar emphasized that the differences between Classes II and III were slight.<sup>9</sup>

Many institutions, including other universities and organizations such as the Society of Friends and SPSL, were also active in collecting information about internees and, where appropriate, petitioning for their release and for them to be allowed to undertake an active role in the war effort. However, most internees were confined for a period of at least months before their release, in part because, even when deemed not a threat, arrangements had to be made to house them and provide useful employment—all of which required suitable contacts and available resources. Therefore, even those who returned to Oxford to continue researching and teaching for much of the war endured a period of time in the Manx camps, which often had a profound effect on their characters and attitudes.<sup>10</sup> In such confined circumstances they would have experienced a complete culture shock—from refined and narrow class-based lives to a place where people of all types of background, ability, and

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<sup>5</sup> Mytum (2011).

<sup>6</sup> Chappell (1984: 22).

<sup>7</sup> Sponza (2005).

<sup>8</sup> Stent (1980: 186–98); Kochan (1993); Brinson (2005).

<sup>9</sup> Weindling (1996: 105).

<sup>10</sup> Ulmschneider and Crawford (2013).

attitude had to survive together, and where avant garde artists mixed with political activists across the whole spectrum from communism to fascism. In these environments the internees learnt about others—and themselves—in ways that could break or strengthen them in the times ahead. The experience led to outcomes as diverse as suicide or depression, or changes in career and lifestyle. Some artists and academics developed interests in different specialisms, which they followed once released, and others used the opportunity to carry out their work even within the constraints of internment. Some of these positive attitudes and outcomes are illustrated here with short biographies, set within the physical and social frameworks within which all had to operate.

Details of the physical arrangements in each male camp varied, depending on the nature of the hotels and boarding houses requisitioned, but each was cleared of the owners' valuable items of furniture and fittings, which were locked away in the attics or put into long-term storage elsewhere. Only the simplest and most essential furniture remained, with no curtains and the windows painted dark blue for the blackout. Each camp was surrounded by barbed wire fences, designed to enclose exterior exercise areas. For Hutchinson, this was provided by the central open area of the square, for the others, in all towns the pavements and roads in front of the accommodation was included, with the seaward barbed wire running parallel and a little inland from the sea defences. The one exception was Rushen Camp for women and children in the south (later adapted to also house married couples), which consisted of a tract of land marked by long barbed wire fences across the island, clifftop to clifftop, creating a zone within which Manx and internees lived, only able to leave by land through a small number of control points.<sup>11</sup>

Whilst the arrangement of men's accommodation created the appearance of an airy environment with good views, not at all like the serried rows of wooden barracks seen at military prisoner-of-war or concentration camps elsewhere, there was still considerable overcrowding, and inappropriate mixing of Nazi sympathizers and refugees. There is no doubt that the internees were physically well cared for in the circumstances, with rations that were adequate if unexciting and repetitive (on a three-week rotation at Hutchinson Camp).<sup>12</sup> Appropriate medical support was readily available, including dedicated facilities with an internee as doctor at Falcon Cliff Hospital Camp in Douglas for minor cases, with those suffering serious physical or mental problems being sent to the normal civilian facilities across the island.<sup>13</sup> Most criticism at the time and subsequently was of the poorly managed initial phases of taking interns into custody and the temporary holding camps, as well as the subsequent bureaucratic impediments put in the way of communicating with family (often also interned), and in establishing innocence and indeed support of the Allies. The potential boredom, depression, and interpersonal tensions caused by confining people for indeterminate lengths of time and with limited, intermittent, and uncertain communication with those outside were present in all the Manx camps, but how individuals reacted to these challenges varied greatly.

To illustrate the Manx experience one camp has been selected—Hutchinson in Douglas—and three of its inmates are then used to illustrate the varied experiences of those held there. For many confined for only a few months, and with few unusual talents or

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<sup>11</sup> Annotated Ordnance Survey map, showing extent of the camp and control points, August 1940.

Copy in Manx National Heritage archives.

<sup>12</sup> Stent (1980: 160).

<sup>13</sup> Chappell (1984: 74–80).

aspects of character, there is little to report, so the examples here are not, in that sense, typical. Many were quickly released, contributed to the war effort, and then settled to unremarkable though valuable lives in Britain—their combined contributions in Britain's post-war economy and society were, however, significant. Much of the published literature concentrates on the majority of academics who emigrated abroad, particularly those who were scattered across the North American Continent at the many different universities and colleges who could afford and absorb additional faculty members.<sup>14</sup> Most British discussion has concentrated on the intellectual and artistic stars and their achievements;<sup>15</sup> these case studies are again of major figures in their fields, but they reveal the multiplicity of response to the situation and the ways in which intellectuals and artists could survive the experience and form part of the research that is gradually coming to understand the wider material and social implications of internment.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, the physical and social aspects of Manx internment are now being considered more fully, and the experience of camp life is being better understood. This can be illustrated through consideration of Hutchinson Camp.

### **HUTCHINSON CAMP—AND THE 'CAMP UNIVERSITY'**

The design of Hutchinson Square was of respectable bow-fronted terraced houses that faced each other around three sides of a rectangular grassy open space; today it is largely as it appeared in 1940. The camp housed over 1,200 inmates at its peak, and was relatively easily contained by the strategic placing of barbed wire that prevented movement from the rear of the properties, and with fenced and gated control points that blocked off the roads and pavements. The camp literally looked in on itself, though distant views of the mountains inland and the sea to the east were gained from windows at higher levels in many of the properties. Set in the middle of Douglas, Hutchinson was surrounded by Manx families going about their business as best they could in wartime, so was part of the town yet frustratingly separated.

The authorities delegated many aspects of the running of the camps to the internees, both to avoid an undue level of management but also to give the inmates responsibilities and activities to fill at least some of their time. Each house at Hutchinson cooked its own meals using the rations provided, with inmates taking turns. The camp as a whole had its own internee staff to manage the place, though it was hard for this to be effective once releases began in earnest, as there was little continuity in office, and as the tensions mounted between those of different backgrounds and ages who were left. The opportunities for work were limited because of governmental fears of sabotage in any important production, and the trade unions' worries regarding the loss of employment for British workers. Moreover, industry was very limited on the island, and the logistical difficulties of using internees in agriculture were considerable. Some external enterprise was possible in certain circumstances, however, as is indicated with the case of Gerhard Bersu, discussed in the section 'Case Studies: Wellesz, Schwitters, and the Bersus'.

Such was the number of intellectuals and artists within Hutchinson Camp that a vibrant community developed a programme of activities that, to some extent, alleviated boredom and promoted a sense of doing something within a regime of enforced confinement. The

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<sup>14</sup> E.g. Ash and Söllner (1996a); Rider (1984); Greenberg (1992).

<sup>15</sup> E.g. Behr and Malet (2004); Smalley (2009); Ulmschneider and Crawford (2013).

<sup>16</sup> Myers and Moshenska (2011); Carr and Mytum (2012); Mytum and Carr (2013).

camp commander, Captain O. H. Daniel, encouraged these activities and, given the constraints of wartime resourcing, provided materials whenever possible.<sup>17</sup> Even so, the artists in particular created resources beyond those officially supplied by recycling items within the camp, leading to innovative use of materials and the production of art in unusual settings and materials. These included works incised into the blackout paint and into the glass on the windows of some of the rooms, the reclaiming of linoleum to cut in the production of prints, and the scavenging of wood for sculpture. Captain Daniel was clearly proud of his camp and wished it to excel in any way possible, and indeed he obtained for his own collection various items produced in the camp.

The academics provided lectures, in good weather in the open air on the grass in the square, sometimes as one-off events, and in some cases as a related series, though apparently some did not contribute as they did not have their notes or reference works with them.<sup>18</sup> The organization of the programme was undertaken by architect Bruno Ahrends and art historian Klaus Hinrichsen (who later wrote an insightful piece about the artistic culture there).<sup>19</sup> The extent of the programme (including musical performances) can be seen in the range of topics in one week's activity (Table 5.1). The diversity of disciplines in even this one week of offerings reveals the range of academics within this single camp.

Both artists and academics contributed to *The Camp*, Hutchinson's newspaper, which was first produced in September 1940 and continued until at least November 1941.<sup>20</sup> This publication both advertised and reported on events within the camp, including many lectures, musical and dramatic performances, and art exhibitions. The issues were illustrated with lively line drawings, and contained a considerable amount of humour, and as much criticism of the injustices of internment as was allowed by the censors. Other camps also produced newspapers, and each developed its own style, reflecting the mix of personalities and skills within the camp, and what was allowed by the various British commanders in charge of each.<sup>21</sup>

The camp library made many academic and popular texts available. The books for this resource were provided by a range of charities and publishers, together with purchases obtained through the income gained by the small charges made for borrowing books. By May 1941, *The Camp* notes that the library contained 4,000 volumes, with 85 per cent of the internees paying for library access (and others borrowing books off those to avoid paying fees). The books had been contributed by Oxford University Press (OUP), Victor Gollancz, with others from the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and the National Central Library. Books were purchased from Everyman and Pelican. About 1,000 duplicates were to be sent down to what was, by this stage, the married camp at Rushen, in part because other camps' libraries were merged as some closed. Whilst some books were novels, many were reference or educational volumes, supporting the activities of all those involved with the 'Camp University'.

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<sup>17</sup> Stent (1980: 156–79).

<sup>18</sup> Stent (1980: 174).

<sup>19</sup> Hinrichsen (1993).

<sup>20</sup> Copies of the originals held by the Imperial War Museum were consulted at the Manx National Heritage Archive.

<sup>21</sup> Chappell (1984: 109–17); Taylor (2005).

Occasional trips out were given particular prominence in *The Camp*, but largely the items reflect an anxious inward-facing world. Whilst celebrating the frequent release of batches of internees, the newspaper inevitably carries the sense of frustration felt by those left behind who continued its production. Physical exercise was limited, though the younger internees occasionally played football matches with teams drawn from the various camps, and occasionally inmates were taken down in groups to swim in the sea at the later stages of the war.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, the frustrations of limited activity must have been a significant cause of internal tension, but seems to have led to various types of response, no doubt largely linked to personal character.

## CASE STUDIES: WELLESZ, SCHWITTERS, AND THE BERSUS

The case studies here are of three individuals who remained interned for several years. They were all already well known for their intellectual or artistic abilities in their respective fields, and all continued to have significant impact after the war. Here, however, attention is paid to their internment experiences. The amount of surviving information varies, but inevitably those who were most active within the camp and so recorded in the newspaper and in others' memoirs, or who enjoyed an active correspondence with networks of associates whose archives have been preserved, can be more fully understood. The three examples reveal a range of responses: Egon Wellesz (Bujic, Chapter 19, this volume) appears to have been relatively inactive in the camp, Kurt Schwitters was quite the reverse. Gerhard Bersu networked both in Britain and on the Isle of Man to create a unique niche, gaining permission to regularly leave the camp, and in time was reunited with his wife and settled in the camp for married internees, from which his external forays continued. Probably many more were like Wellesz, and largely sat out their time of confinement, managing as best they could, but for a minority this was a productive time where the challenges of the situation created a dynamism that had significant effect.

### Egon Wellesz

Wellesz was the child of Hungarians who, whilst Christians, were of Jewish heritage. Due to his musical abilities he was able to go to Vienna to study under Arnold Schoenberg and had already established a reputation as a composer and academic, being Professor of Music at Vienna University from 1928.<sup>23</sup> He was in Amsterdam to hear his *Prosperos Beschwörungen* when the Anschluss made it unsafe for him to return to Austria or remain in continental Europe, so he fled across the North Sea to England. The chief music critic for *The Times*, H. C. Colles, was aware of Wellesz's abilities, and he managed to secure him a fellowship at Lincoln College Oxford in 1939. He was already well known in Oxford, and had received an honorary doctorate from the university in 1932.<sup>24</sup>

In July 1940 Wellesz was interned at the age of fifty-four, and was in time sent to Hutchinson Camp. He was subsequently classified as Class III by the University of Oxford,<sup>25</sup> presumably because musical composition and the study of Byzantine music was hardly a

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<sup>22</sup> Stent (1980: 178).

<sup>23</sup> Cooper (2004).

<sup>24</sup> Cooper (2004).

<sup>25</sup> Weindling (1996: table 4.2).

wartime priority. Unlike the composers Gál and Reizenstein in the far less convivial Central Camp,<sup>26</sup> it would seem that Wellesz did not continue composing during his internment, and though he was part of a vibrant musical environment at Hutchinson, he does not seem to have been a leading performer in the camp.<sup>27</sup> There would have been no physical reason why Wellesz could not have composed, and indeed he would have had the time to do so and, at least for non-orchestral works, the opportunity for them to be performed, but it seems that he did not take up this opportunity.

Some of the houses around the Square contained upright pianos, often in poor but workable condition, and other instruments were obtained by the commander to allow the establishment of a chamber orchestra. Stent recalls that he was sufficiently supportive to arrange for a pianist named Landauer to be transferred to Hutchinson so that he could join Marian Rawicz, already interned in the camp, to reunite their well-established partnership, with two baby grand pianos being borrowed to allow them to perform.<sup>28</sup> Musicians within the camp, both professional and amateur, were able to provide more than one concert a week, as demonstrated in the weekly programme (Table 5.1). Indeed, the vibrancy of the musical culture resulted, most famously, in members of what became the Amadeus Quartet becoming acquainted and laying the foundations for that most influential ensemble.

Despite his age, but perhaps because of his late escape from the Continent, Wellesz only gained his freedom in 1943, again through the good offices of H. C. Colles,<sup>29</sup> when he returned to Lincoln College. A year later, he was made a University Lecturer in Music, a further recognition of his status. It would seem that the period of internment, whilst itself unproductive in terms of composition, created an urge that, on release, led to a period of considerable creativity, starting with a chamber work in 1944. Meanwhile he also returned to college teaching and his musicological researches of Byzantine music.<sup>30</sup>

### **Kurt Schwitters**

Already with established reputation as an artist, Schwitters moved to Norway in early 1937 in an effort to avoid the persecution that was imposed on those who created his form of art in the intolerant environment of Nazi Germany. Four of his works had been displayed in the Degenerate Art Exhibition of 1933 and his works were removed from all public display by 1935.<sup>31</sup> Schwitters continued his artistic endeavours in Norway, in exile with his son and daughter-in-law, but all fled by ship to Scotland when Norway was invaded by the Nazis in 1940. He and his son were placed together in Hutchinson Camp, and shared a bedroom, though his daughter-in-law was sent to Rushen Camp for women.

Despite attempts from August 1940 to obtain release, Schwitters remained in the camp until November 1941; he was neither a Jew nor with influential friends, and so whilst many

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<sup>26</sup> Dove (2005); Snizek (2012).

<sup>27</sup> Snizek (2012: 35).

<sup>28</sup> Stent (1980: 164).

<sup>29</sup> Holden (n.d.)

<sup>30</sup> Cooper (2004).

<sup>31</sup> Milner (2004).

other artists left after a few months he resided at Hutchinson for over a year. Schwitters became a major figure within the camp, even in the face of fighting depression. The extent of his hidden stress is revealed by his son, who recounted that his father slept under his bed and shouted in his sleep, signs of the mental problems from which he was suffering. Schwitters' response was intense activity. He painted many portraits for money (more than at any other stage in his career), with a fixed set of charges depending on their scale; these works were in oils for which he reserved his limited supplies. These commercial efforts (together with Norwegian landscape scenes based on memory) enabled him to pay others to carry out his share of domestic chores in his house as well as obtain more artists' materials. In this way he was able to produce an astonishing number of works during his time on the island. Other forms of his output were not appreciated within the camp, however, and none were made widely known outside the camp. He used all sorts of available materials in a series of collages, continuing a mode of production that he had begun in Germany but which were even more innovative in the constrained conditions of the camp. Quayle argues that the 'forming' and 'unforming' seen in the collages was hardly appreciated at the time, though is now seen as a major strength in Schwitters' work.<sup>32</sup> Schwitters also produced sculptures in porridge, though the latter did not last long and could not be exhibited because of fears over health and safety as they grew mould. His abstract work was not appreciated like other internees' expressionist styles, which were seen as more politically effective at the time.

Schwitters was a major contributor to the Hutchinson art exhibitions, and clearly was a well-known character around the camp,<sup>33</sup> further enhanced by his contributions to *The Camp*. He also delivered startling public performances, often poems containing no words. One lengthy poem was an incantation called the *Ursonata*, part of which became popularly repeated within the camp. He was part of a substantial group of artists, of whom Ernst Blensdorf, Siegfried Charoux, Georg Ehrlich, Erich Kahn, Ludwig Meidner, and Frederick Uhlmann are the best known.<sup>34</sup> The first exhibition was reviewed in *The Camp*, and the second exhibition was supported by a catalogue, and these sources reveal vibrant production from not only the well-established artists, but many others encouraged to also be creative during their captivity. Just as the intellectuals developed an environment of education and learning through attendance at lectures and the reading of books, so the artists encouraged visiting the exhibitions and taking part in the creative activities on offer. Schwitters had been part of an international network of artists throughout the 1920s, but in the 1930s this became more difficult, and was hard to maintain from his Norwegian exile. Once on the Isle of Man he attempted to keep in touch with a few colleagues elsewhere, but also was able to be encouraged and challenged by the artistic community at Hutchinson, creating an artists' café in one of the houses where they met each afternoon.<sup>35</sup>

The art-historical importance of Schwitters' output whilst interned has been recognized in a number of art exhibitions and publications,<sup>36</sup> but the reality of the camp life still deserves further attention. The tension between the wish for release on the one hand, and sense of security within the camp on the other, can best be seen in Schwitters' own correspondence,

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<sup>32</sup> Quayle (2004).

<sup>33</sup> Stent (1980: 170).

<sup>34</sup> Dickson, MacDougall, and Smalley (2012); Smalley (2009).

<sup>35</sup> Stent (1980: 171).

<sup>36</sup> E.g. Anon (2010); Behr and Malet (2004); Dickson, MacDougall, and Smalley (2012).



and in the memoirs of his friend and art historian Klaus Hinrichsen.<sup>37</sup> Behind commentary on the pleasant living conditions and opportunities for walks and trips to the beach for swimming, which were suitably positive to both pass the censor and put the readers at ease in their worries over his situation, there are hints of the difficulties that internment created. In early correspondence Schwitters implies the level of overcrowding by noting that he shared his house with twenty-three others, though later he may have felt lonelier as his artistic colleagues returned to Britain and his son joined his wife in the married camp at Rushen. By May 1941 he writes that he now has the bedroom to himself and could adapt the space as a studio,<sup>38</sup> but even as other camps closed and their residue of inmates moved to Hutchinson, there would have been a sense of being left behind, irrelevant to the world in conflict, his family split, with wife and mother still in Germany.

Once released, Schwitters moved to London and was welcomed by art critics and leading figures in the art world including Barbara Hepworth and Ben Nicholson. After the war he moved to the Lake District where he continued to work, though his ill health, from which he had suffered for decades, brought about his untimely death in 1948.<sup>39</sup> The internment phase of Schwitters' artistic production therefore takes on added significance given that it was his last major phase of using fragments of refuse and second-hand items, which has been one of his lasting legacies within art. He had already been developing this approach to materials before the war, but this aspect of his work was encouraged by the difficulties of supply of materials, creating a level of innovation and imagination enhanced by confinement.

### Gerhard and Maria Bersu

Gerhard Bersu was an eminent archaeologist with a European reputation, particularly for his style of excavation and methods of graphical recording. Born in 1889 the son of a Jewish manufacturer, he began excavating whilst still at school and was given his first professional post before graduating. He excavated not only in Germany, but also in Greece, Italy, and Rumania. He became the first Director of the Römisch-Germanische Kommission (RGK) in 1931, and made a strong personal friendship with UK aerial photographer O. G. S. Crawford at this time, as they used aerial images to plot the line of the Roman *limes*. He was also well known to prehistorians based in the UK, including Grahame Clarke at Cambridge, Gordon Childe at Edinburgh, and Christopher Hawkes and T. E. Kendrick at the British Museum in London. He was eminent and well-connected enough to be elected Honorary Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London in 1933. However, in 1935 he was demoted from Director of the RGK to become Officer for Excavations, Berlin, and forced to retire in 1935.<sup>40</sup> He was, however, still active in German archaeology in March 1938, when he assisted Crawford at a conference in Berlin.<sup>41</sup>

By the late 1930s, Bersu was concerned with building bridges with his British colleagues, and Crawford, recently elected President of the Prehistoric Society, persuaded that body to fund excavations, to be directed by Bersu, in England. They selected the site,

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<sup>37</sup> Hinrichsen (1993).

<sup>38</sup> Anon (2010).

<sup>39</sup> Milner (2004).

<sup>40</sup> Crawford (1955); Maischberger (2002); Raleigh Radford (1965).

<sup>41</sup> Crawford (1955).

Little Woodbury, in 1938 from potential crop mark sites photographed by Crawford, and he dug the site in the summers of 1938 and 1939.<sup>42</sup> Even in early September 1939, the Bersus made the pretence of trying to get to the King's Lynn ferry back to Germany, but missed it.<sup>43</sup> Bersu was a refugee, but an unwilling one—in the sense he had not fled Germany—and so was viewed with suspicion by the British authorities. He stayed with Childe, visited sites in Scotland, and carried out small-scale excavations until his internment in 1940.

Gerhard and Maria Bersu were interned on the Isle of Man in 1940, at first separately; Maria was in Rushen Camp, and Bersu in Hutchinson. For some time they did not know that they were both interned on the Isle of Man, and even then communication was uncertain, but from late that October, the Theatre Hall and rooms in Derby Castle in Douglas were made available for husbands and wives to meet. Bersu was an acquaintance of classical archaeologist and art historian Paul Jacobsthal (Ulmschneider and Crawford, Chapter 9, this volume), also interned at Hutchinson having been taken from his post of Reader in Celtic Archaeology at Christ Church Oxford; Bersu visited his house within the camp for tea and even gave a talk on an introduction to prehistory to the inmates.<sup>44</sup> The overlapping and interconnected networks that were formed or reformulated through internment can be illustrated by the numerous individuals mentioned in Jacobsthal's Internment Report (Table 5.2). This list, which Jacobsthal circulated among a select group of friends, and which is based on an earlier diary written during confinement, reveals the variety of backgrounds and professions of the people that he mentioned by name.<sup>45</sup>

Bersu managed to persuade the local authorities to allow him and a small band of internees to prospect for minerals such as manganese in the nearby countryside, and an organized walk for camp internee officials, reported in the December 1940 issue of *The Camp*, included a visit to what was described as a Viking site, which must have been the Braaid. Photographs survive in private ownership that record this outing. The prospection project failed to identify mineral sources suitable for exploitation, but set a precedent for out-of-camp activities that Bersu set about arranging.

Maria Bersu was, meanwhile, interned in the women's camp—Camp W—in the south of the island. Here a large area was fenced off with barbed wire and contained the small towns of Port St Mary and Port Erin where the female internees stayed in the boarding houses and hotels, still run by Manx landladies, allowing the local population to continue to make a living as the tourist industry ceased for the duration of the war. Although some strong Nazi-supporting women caused conflict,<sup>46</sup> especially in the early days, they were gradually isolated and put together in a few hotels so that they could be closely watched and could not victimize the majority Jewish prisoners, many with their children.

In April 1941, the married camp—Camp Y—was established in Port St Mary, first only at the Ballaqueen Hotel, but then more accommodation was transferred from being for women only to being for couples. The Bersus stayed in Southlands from at least July 1941, a boarding house with ten guest rooms in Port St Mary, run by the widow Mary Eslick. By

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<sup>42</sup> Bersu (1938, 1940); Evans (1989).

<sup>43</sup> Crawford (1955).

<sup>44</sup> Ulmschneider and Crawford (2013).

<sup>45</sup> Jacobsthal (1940); Ulmschneider and Crawford (2013).

<sup>46</sup> Brinson (2005).

1943, however, the Bersu correspondence is headed Port Erin, so they had clearly moved to new accommodation by this time, to the seaside town that had previously been reserved only for women. This presumably reflects adjustments made as many internees were released when their security clearance came through. Indeed, by 1944, only a small part of Port Erin remained fenced off as a camp, as so few internees remained by this stage.

Unlike Schwitters, Bersu was not part of a group of interned scholars with similar interests, but he was able to communicate by post, despite the censor, with his British archaeological colleagues, and some of this correspondence survives. He already had a wide network of acquaintances in Britain, including Christopher Hawkes (later Professor of European Archaeology at Oxford) and Gordon Childe. All were linked primarily through the Society of Antiquaries of London. Through lobbying by his friends, the Isle of Man excavations were started in 1941, and were part-funded by that body and partly by the Manx Museum. Bersu used his contact with Basil Megaw, who was Director of the Manx Museum and who had dug with Bersu's friend Gordon Childe, to arrange for permission to dig on the island. This process reveals Bersu's networks of contacts and also the ways in which his prisoner-of-war status affected his actions—negatively, but also positively in that several sites were extensively excavated on the Isle of Man that would otherwise have remained unexplored.

Bersu concentrated his efforts to sites close to the married camp and accessible by public transport, in particular, Iron Age sites at Ballanorris, Ballacagen A and B, and Balladoole (where he also found a Viking ship burial).<sup>47</sup> Bersu at first reached his sites by train, and his internee workforce presumably came by the same means from the married camp. He notes that, on 27 August 1941, he had to alight at Castletown because the train did not stop at Ballabeg. The first mention of arriving by bus is in October 1941. From the beginning there is mention of Maria and also women excavators, so they must have travelled north by the same means.<sup>48</sup> They were guarded at all times, which led to gaps in excavation when no one was available for this task. Maria certainly assisted with the excavation and recording, but it is unclear to what extent. In late August she helped Bersu mark out the first trenches, but then she twisted her foot and so went to the doctor in Castletown that afternoon. In September Maria helped draw the first profile of section 1, but otherwise is not mentioned in the day book though we know she made the contour survey of the Ballacagen sites. It is possible her presence is assumed and not recorded.

In the married camp, the Bersus also had networks for socializing and surviving within wartime conditions, despite the additional constraints of internment. The female and married camp management encouraged a simple exchange system that allowed skills and resources to be swapped between internees and also the Manx people living in Port St Mary and Port Erin.<sup>49</sup> This might include skills such as hairdressing or dressmaking, or actual products such as knitted clothing. Evidence of the Bersu involvement is indirect and unusual: a pink cardigan in the Manx Museum has wooden buttons, made from the bog oak-style wood excavated from the Iron Age settlement at Ballacagen.<sup>50</sup> Bersu presumably took back

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<sup>47</sup> Wilson and Bersu (1966).

<sup>48</sup> Site notebook with brief day entries, Manx National Heritage Archive.

<sup>49</sup> Brinson (1998: 211); Cresswell (1994).

<sup>50</sup> Manx National Heritage collections; the extent of the wood survival is visible in the photographs and line drawings in Bersu (1977).

suitable timber to be made into buttons, though by whom is unknown. This wood exploitation also took place at Hutchinson Camp; the Manx Museum houses some cufflinks made there from Ballacagen bog oak, and an item with the letters FRIEDA in metal type set on bog oak. There is no reason to assume that Bersu made any of the objects, but he may have taken the raw materials to Hutchinson, though the wood may have been acquired by one of the other internees who worked on the excavations. He was clearly operating within the craft production networks in the camps; a letter from Thomas Kendrick at the British Museum in July 1941 includes ordering a seven-inch locomotive and a motor car, costing together 9/6, to which Kendrick added 1/6 to cover postage; it seems that the order was to be fulfilled by a Mr Eisele.<sup>51</sup> In the same letter, Kendrick states that he cannot get any photographic film for Bersu and has shortages himself; clearly Bersu is combining academic discussion, desires for excavation supplies, and small-scale commercial transactions within the correspondence.

Bersu wrote a lecture for the Society of Antiquaries which was translated from the German and then delivered in London by Gordon Childe in 1942, illustrated with lantern slides of plans and sections sent ahead by Bersu. This was received with considerable enthusiasm, and Childe sent Bersu a telegram in May 1942 letting him know of its success; its impact is also mentioned independently in correspondence from several other archaeologists, so there is no reason to doubt its impact.<sup>52</sup> However, the final report on the Iron Age settlements was only published posthumously in 1977, after Bersu's sudden death in 1964.<sup>53</sup>

There is little doubt that Bersu so enjoyed his excavating on the Isle of Man that he made limited efforts to be released, though there is not space here to disentangle the complex sequence of correspondence, negotiations, and shifting policies that impeded any change in circumstances. Indeed, Bersu remained excavating and writing up his fieldwork on the Isle of Man until 1947, when he moved to become Professor of Archaeology at the Royal Irish Academy in Dublin.<sup>54</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

The Isle of Man internment experience affected each internee differently, but for many this was a relatively short, if traumatic, experience of only a few months. For those interned for longer, it had a differing effect, depending on beliefs. For the minority of Nazi sympathizers, both male and female, it was a period of disillusion as the end of the war brought defeat and an uncertain future. For the majority of longer-term inmates, however, it was a hiatus which release ended, allowing some element of normal family life to resume. Many intellectuals taken from Oxford returned there after a brief spell of internment, especially those who were able to contribute to the war effort through their scientific and medical expertise. For others the wait for release was longer, as was the experience of Wellesz, dragged from his life as an Oxford don but able to resume this happily with his family after several years, returning to his college and recommencing teaching, research, and composing. Schwitters was traumatized by his incarceration but turned this to artistic creative advantage, developing new friendships within the art world and able, despite the paucity of materials, to continue a

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<sup>51</sup> <IBT>Bersu Archive, Manx National Heritage</IBT>.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Bersu (1977).

<sup>54</sup> Ralegh Radford (1965).

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substantial output of works throughout. The lively stimulation of an artistic community, lost during the rise of fascism and in exile, in part returned, albeit in straitened and psychologically challenging circumstances. Even better able to adapt was Gerhard Bersu, who seems to have been happy enough to be interned as this was the only way in which (thanks to his network of contacts) he could continue his love of excavating archaeological sites.

Whereas Wellesz ceased any productivity during his time on the Isle of Man, both Schwitters and Bersu both made the most of their opportunities. Bersu even had the benefit, from 1941, of the companionship and support of his wife, a privilege many in wartime did not have. For artists and intellectuals, the logic of internment was unfathomable, and for some it was a period that just had to be survived. For many, however, it forced a level of self-reflection, created a self-reliance, and forged new bonds of friendship that would affect the rest of their lives.

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Table 5.1 Activities at Hutchinson Camp, 21–27 October 1940

Sunday 21st		
11.45	Dr Reich	Agricultural Seminar: Bacteria in the economy of nature.
4.00	Dr Wiener	Vignettes of History: From Prince Metternich's secret files.
7.45	Professor Isaak	History of Therapeutics (continued).
8.00	Mr Stadler	History of Mediaeval Culture (continued).
Monday 22nd		
12.00	B. L. Frank	Physical Chemistry: Nutrition (Hormones, enzymes, and vitamins).
2.45	Mr Rosenberg	The Rise of English Democracy.
4.00	Dr Wartenberg	From the Childhood of Aviation.
4.30	Dr Unger	Greek Philosophy: Plato (continued).
8.00	Recital	German Poets (Hoffmannsthal, Rilke, and Altenberg).
8.00	Dr Bratu	Circle Francais: Quelques aspects de la pensée française actuelle.
Tuesday 23rd		
11.45		Chemical Colloquium.
4.00	Mr Sheppard	India: The Jewel of the British Empire.
(Sheppard was a Manx vicar).		
8.00		Great Historians: Gibbon, Macaulay, and Trevelyan.
8.00		Youth Group (see special programme).
Wednesday 24th		
4.00	Dr Lachmann	Law and Lawyers in England and in Germany.
8.00		Technical School (see special programme).
8.00	Rev. von Deutschhausen	Evangelical Bible Lesson.
Thursday 25th		
2.30	Concert	J. S. Bach.
4.00	Dr Preuss	Vignettes of History: Portraits from the Third Reich (Meissner, Schacht, and Feder).
8.00	Dr Krapalik	The Jewish Exodus from Vienna 1938/9.
8.00	Mr Zuntz	How the Bible Came Down to Our Times.
Friday 26th		
12.00	B. L. Frank	Physical Chemistry.
2.45	Mr Loewenberg	The Banishment of the Jews.
4.00		Debating Society Meeting.
4.30	Dr Unger	Greek Philosophy: Plato (continued).
8.00		Study Group on Photography.
8.00	B. Ahrends	Why Town and Country Planning is Indispensable.
Saturday 27th		
4.00	H. Bardt	The Economic Structure of South America and the Problems of Emigration.
8.00	F. Burschell	Recital from Faust (continued).
8.00	Professor Marx	Study Group on Goethe.



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Source: After Stent (1980, 174–5).

Table 5.2 Fellow internees, as mentioned in Jacobsthal's Internment Report

Ahrens	
Paul Berkenau	Neurologist, Warneford Hospital, Oxford
Gerhard Bersu	Director of the Roman-German Department of the German Archaeological Institute
Blumenthal	Cambridge
Dr Charles Oscar Brink	Collaborator on <i>Oxford Latin Dictionary</i> , Clarendon Press, Oxford
Frank Carsten	Wadham College, Oxford
S. Charoux	Sculptor, Austria
Richard Cohn	of Breslau, artisan, former owner of shoe business
Dr William Cohn	Keeper of Oriental Antiquities, Ethnographic Museum, Berlin
George Ehrlich	Sculptor, Austria
Dr Robert Eisler	Wilde Lecturer in Natural and Comparative Religion, Oxford
B. Ettinghausen	of Hoechst, had been owner of flour business
Oskar Fehr	Professor, Berlin ophthalmologist
Finkler	Austrian forester
Dr Forchheimer	Head of Department in Austrian Ministry of Labour, University College, Oxford
Glass	Professor (playing piano at camp)
Goldmann	Professor of Law, Vienna University—Lecturer of Etruscan Languages at University of Oslo
Grafe	employed by the Bodleian Library, Oxford
Gruenhut	Professor of Criminal Law, Bonn University—All Souls College, Oxford
Gruenspan	from Vienna
Haymann	Professor of Law, Cologne
Heinemann	Professor, Frankfurt—Manchester College
Hirschfeld	Civil servant in Hamburg—now butler in an Oxford family
G. Hirschmann	former owner of brick factory
Gotfried Huelsmann	from dairy farm in Oxfordshire
S. Isaac	Professor, University of Frankfurt
Jellinek	Professor of Medicine, Vienna University—Queen's College, Oxford
'Professor' Kastner	Music critic of the <i>Vossische Zeitung</i>
Dr Kesterlitz	Jacobsthal's neighbour; psychotherapist
Dr von Klemperer	Director General of Schwartzkopff Ltd
Leyser	Magdalen College, Oxford
Dr Loening	of Berlin, chemist—founded factory at Slough
Paul Maas	
Marcus	Rugby
S. Meier	Berlin engineer
Dr Meinhart	Keeper at Ethnographical Museum Berlin, Deputy Keeper at Pitt Rivers Museum
Dr Misch	Professor, Göttingen
Isidor Nierenstein	former Director of Witkowitz Works, Bohemia
Dr Olden	

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Franz Pariser	heir of textile factory, of Berlin?
Dr Pfeiffer	Professor of Greek, Munich University—Corpus Christi, Oxford
Dr Rothfels	Professor of History, Königsberg University—St John's, Oxford
Dr Schulz	Professor of Roman Law, Berlin University—Balliol College, Oxford
Michel Spatz	businessman, Vienna
Stein	Brasenose College, Oxford
Rev. G. Stock	former judge, studied theology in Basel—minister of the Anglian Church
Uhlmann	first barrister in Stuttgart then artist in Paris
Dr Walzer	lecturing on Plato and Aristotle at Oxford
Dr Weigert	Professor of Chemistry, University of Leipzig
Dr H. Weissenborn	Professor at School of Graphic Arts, Leipzig
Dr Wellesz	Professor of Music, Vienna University—Lincoln College, Oxford

Source: Jacobsthal (1940).