



Canadian  
Battlefield Tours

## Stalag VIII B Lamsdorf and the Working Parties



May & September 2017

A poignant and fascinating tour to honour the brave men of the Commonwealth and other allied countries who endured imprisonment at one of the largest prisoner of war camps of the Second World War.

Stalag VIII B, later renumbered Stalag 344, was located near the small town of Lamsdorf (now called Łambinowice) in Silesia, Poland. More than 100,000 English-speaking POWs were held there, either at the base camp or in over 600 working parties in the area.

The Lamsdorf story is an incredible mixture of bravery, endurance, ingenuity and resourcefulness, as well as the triumph of the human spirit over adversity, sometimes in the most extreme conditions. This is a story that is as little known as it is amazing.

There are not many specialists on the subject of Stalag VIII B/344, and this tour includes those who know more than most about this camp and the working parties: the staff at the Lamsdorf Museum, of course – this museum is said to be unique in the world for its research, record keeping, education and exhibitions about prisoners of war; Philip Baker, as operator of [www.lamsdorf.com](http://www.lamsdorf.com) for 15 years or so, and leader of many Lamsdorf tours; Edward Haduch who knows more than anyone about the POW experience at Blechhammer; the staff at the Zabrze Coal Mining Museum who have researched the use of allied POWs in Poland's mines; the local guides at Pyskowice and Kaniów who demonstrated their knowledge on our previous visit.

**To book on-line click here: [on-line booking](#)**  
**To see the booking conditions click here: [booking conditions](#)**

**Next: TOUR SUMMARY**



## TOUR SUMMARY

### Stalag VIII B Lamsdorf and the Working Parties

Monday 15th May 2017 - Saturday 20th May 2017  
Monday 18th September 2017 - Saturday 23rd September 2017

**Price: €1,320**

*A deposit of €500 is required when booking*

#### **What is included:**

Coach transport from Krakow, Poland, to visit

- Krakow Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery
  - The former POW working party sites at Zabrze (former Hindenburg Mine), Peiskretscham (now Pyskowice), Blechhammer (now Kędzierzyn-Koźle) and Hirschfelde (now Kaniów)  
*[Some background information HERE](#)*
    - Lunch\* stops
    - To Opole for 3-nights hotel accommodation\*
  - The site of Stalag VIII B/344 at Lamsdorf (now Łambinowice)
  - A tour of the Polish Central Prisoner of War Museum, and the site of the camp, at Łambinowice with an expert guide
    - Video presentations
    - Return transport to Krakow
  - Coach travel in comfortable and safe air-conditioned vehicles
  - The services of an experienced Tour Manager throughout
- \*accommodation and meals are not included in the price

**Please note- A Minimum of 20 tour participants required for tours to proceed.**

#### **Not included:**

**Flights, Hotel accommodation and meals, Gratuities, Travel Insurance.**

*It is a condition of booking that you have adequate travel insurance.*

**For advice about booking flights, accommodation etc, see the relevant section below.**

*A uniquely close-textured experience, quite impossible to have arranged and executed independently, which has given us a treasure of impressions and thoughts.*

*John & Gillian Drinkwater – UK*

*My sister and I took part in this tour as our father had been a prisoner of war between May 1940 and April 1945. We were part of a group of eleven who took part and we shared information and learnt from each other. The programme was well planned and we certainly fitted a lot into the time we had. Because of Gary's contacts we also were invited to meet with some Polish people who were very interested in our trip and our Father's stories. This included being invited to a school and to two Civic receptions. We all learnt a lot from the trip and the people we met. At times the experience was moving, emotional and sad, but we also had fun together as a group and got on well, supported by Gary McKay and by Philip Baker. Memories of this trip will stay with me forever.*

*Thank you for giving us the opportunity to make the journey to Poland to honour the memory of our father, and to gain more understanding of his experience of being in Stalag VIII B at Lamsdorf.*

*June Johnson & Kath Downton – UK*

**Next: TOUR DETAILS**



## TOUR DETAILS

**Monday 15th May 2017 / Monday 18th September 2017**

Arrival in Krakow for 2-night stay - Welcome Dinner at a local restaurant.

**Tuesday 16th May 2017 / Tuesday 19th September 2017**

### Krakow



In the morning we visit the Commonwealth Cemetery where nearly 500 men who died whilst prisoners of war at Lamsdorf, are buried. Many died from illness whilst in the camp hospital, but others died in more tragic circumstances. We pay our respects to all these men and show that they are not forgotten. We then travel on to Zabrze.

### Working Parties in the Coal Mines



There were hundreds of working parties in the area between Krakow and Lamsdorf, with prisoners made to work in mines, quarries, forests, factories, railways and many other situations. The majority of Lamsdorf POWs were rarely at the main camp, being based at working parties spread over a very wide area. Most of the stories that the former POWs passed on to their families were of experiences in these working parties, and it is appropriate that this tour visits sites where these men were forced to work in mines, forests, on railways and in chemical factories. Their experiences were typical of many in all kinds of working parties.

After leaving Krakow we will visit **Zabrze**, the location of the former Hindenburg Coal Mine where there is now an extensive coal mining museum. Here, many Lamsdorf prisoners-of-war were forced to work. The mines here are deep and it was frightening as the cage plummeted down to the shafts. The prisoners of war did the hardest tasks, and conditions were not pleasant - the mines were damp and wet, there was water everywhere. There were three 8-hour shifts each day. The morning and afternoon shifts dug out the coal and the evening shift moved equipment and supports into position for the next day's work. It was unpleasant and dangerous work (original German photo, right).

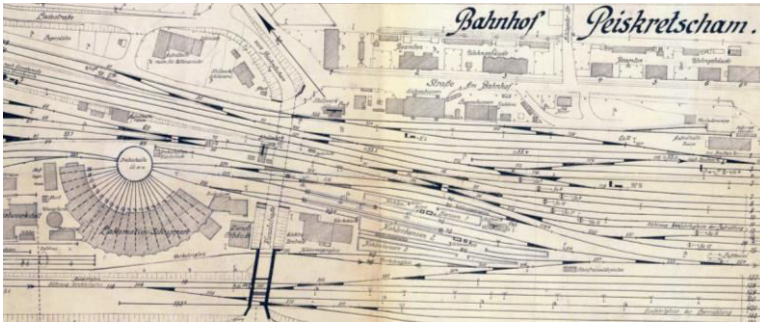
The men on different shifts were billeted together, this made it very difficult to get any real sleep. The food was the same as at the other camps - bread and coffee for breakfast and one meal a day of soup. Thankfully the men were still able to receive their Red Cross Parcels; without them they might not have survived.



There will be a lunch stop at a local restaurant, and after the tour we will return to Krakow.

**Next: WORKING PARTIES: RAILWAYS AND FORESTS**

## Working Parties: Railways and Forests



Today we visit **Peiskretscham** (now Pyskowice) where Canadian and British POWs were involved in railway construction work, some of which can still be seen. Canadian Vern Richardson of the Calgary Tankers was captured during the Dieppe raid in 1942. He kept a meticulous diary of his time spent at Stalag VIII B as well as time spent at two working parties).

One of these was at Peiskretscham (now Pyskowice), where the prisoners were made to work on the railway. One of the tasks was building a railway roundhouse, that can still be seen (see the wartime map of Peiskretscham above). The experiences of the prisoners of war in this place mirrors those at many of the working parties in this region. It was from Peiskretscham that Vern Richardson and his comrades were forced onto the Long March on January 22, 1945.

*We were sent out on a railroad job E578 .... a place called Peiskretscham. They were building a new Round House and R.R. Yard. It was to be the largest in Europe when completed. The P.O.W.s were mostly employed as unskilled labourers on excavation work for bridges and cement tunnels and subways. Some helped to lay new track and switches, others made large fill-ins, unloaded cement and gravel for the concrete work. Helped to lay the telegraph lines, build air raid shelters, etc. A few worked later as brick layers and carpenters. The whole of the project was being done by conscripted labour. Us, Poles and Ukrainians. The Germans only were in supervision as engineers and meisters. A large number of Ukrainian women were employed. They were doing the same type of work as we were doing but worked much harder. There was little machinery used, most of the work was being done by hand. We worked for 12 hrs on a shift then the Poles would relieve us. At first when I went to work on the job, we worked from 7 till about 4:30 with 1 hr for noon. Then one day when we were moving a conveyor I got my foot under the wheel, and smashed my foot.*

from Vern Richardson's diary

50 men including Vern Richardson also made up a working party at **Hirschfelde** (now Kaniów). They were engaged on forestry work, mainly felling timber and trimming branches in winter months.

A 25 year-old British POW, John Saunders, was in this working party. On 21st July 1944 he was shot and killed along with another POW Henry Thomson, by a German guard. Both were buried in nearby **Popielów**. For over seventy years their graves were unknown, except to anonymous villagers who regularly put flowers there. Then after many years searching, Saunders' nephew found the graves and they have now been recognised by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and given proper headstones (right).



We will now travel on to the city of Opole for a three-night stay.

Thursday 18th May 2017 / Thursday 21st September 2017

## The Blechhammer Experience

Our guide today is Edward Haduch who, with a colleague, founded the organization *Stowarzyszenia Blechhammer 1944*, which was created to commemorate the thousands of prisoners and forced labourers from around the world who were at Blechhammer during the war, and they also maintain a museum on this subject. Edward regularly guides tours and gives talks about Blechhammer and the events of that time.

In Blechhammer (now named Kędzierzyn-Koźle) there were numerous working parties, notably E3, BAB 20, BAB 21 and E769, especially in chemical factories. Our guide will show us the sites and memorials commemorating these wartime events.

This area was the location of German chemical factories, prisoner-of-war camps, and other forced-labour camps. The factories used bituminous coal in a process to synthesize oil. The US Fifteenth Air Force dropped 7,082 tons of bombs on Blechhammer, with many deaths and injuries resulting amongst the POWs who worked there.

"In June 1942 we were transported to Blechhammer, in Upper Silesia. We were now at an oil refinery, which I believe was on the point of being completed. At this camp we were forced to unload anything that came daily by rail etc. Blechhammer employed about 50,000 slave workers. Forced labour from all over Europe: concentration camp Jews - Gypsies, political prisoners, convicted felons, German Army soldiers under punishment. We laboured in gravel pits, broke up brick rubble for road building within the training area and filled in shell holes on the artillery ranges. We were made to collect the heads of sunflowers grown on acres of land. During 1944 we were bombed from June and every month thereafter by the American Army Airforce. Tragically, we lost some of our mates. We were not allowed to go into the air raid shelters, which among other things we had been forced to build. The other nationalities there were also hard hit."  
POW Eric Reeves



Stalag 344 Germany 7th December 1944

Dear Sirs,

It is with deep regret that I have to inform you that 30 British prisoners of war, details of whom are shown on the attached list, were killed during an air attack on Saturday 2nd December, 1944, at Working Party E/793 (formerly Bau u. Arbeits Batt.21) and Working Party E/3 Blechhammer, O/S.

Yours Sincerely,  
S. Sherriff, R.S.M.  
Camp Leader.

Next: LAMSDORF

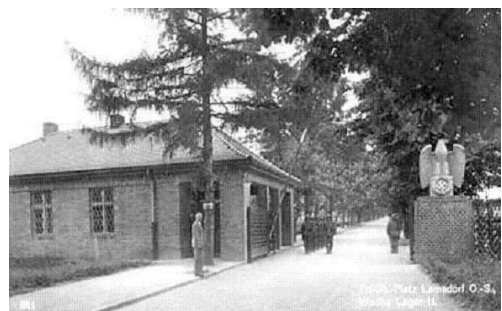
**Friday 19th May 2017 / Friday 22nd September 2017**  
**Lamsdorf**



Today is devoted to Lamsdorf itself. We will have an expert guide with us from the **Polish Central Prisoner of war Museum**, who is extremely knowledgeable about the Commonwealth POWs at Lamsdorf. This museum, on the site of Stalag VIII B / 344 Lamsdorf, is a unique institution in Europe. The Museum is involved in research and record-keeping, exhibitions and displays, publishes materials, runs conservation works, as well as activities of a commemorative nature, all related to prisoners of war of any nationality.



We visit the site of Stalag VIII B/344, beginning at the **railway halt** where most of the POWs were unloaded from cattle trucks. If you wish you can walk the mile to the camp in the footsteps of the prisoners, or stay on the coach if you prefer. We see the original **POW cemetery** dating from the Franco Prussian War, where Commonwealth POWs were buried before being transferred to Krakow. The fascinating Museum itself is housed in the former German headquarters and gives an excellent, detailed presentation of the lives and experiences of the prisoners. You can spend as much time as you wish viewing the exhibits and our guide will be available to answer your questions. There will also be **video presentations** about the camp and about the Long March (Death March). Although there are very few remains of the camp, the original road through the camp remains, and you will be able to see some of the **huts** that housed Russian prisoners, including one that has been restored inside to its 1940s condition. There are various **memorials** to be visited on the site. The Museum staff will do their best to give help and advice about your own researches, and they might well be glad of information you can give them to add to their knowledge base.



**Saturday 20th May 2017 / Saturday 23rd September 2017**

Return to Krakow and end of tour

**Next: MAKING YOUR TRAVEL AND HOTEL ARRANGEMENTS**



## ADVICE ON MAKING YOUR TRAVEL AND ACCOMMODATION ARRANGEMENTS

Information given below is correct as far as we know at the time of writing, but may be subject to change. Please check with the airlines, hotels etc for up-to-date details. The information given below is for guidance, but we cannot be held liable for any inaccuracies.

### FLIGHTS

You need to arrive in Krakow\* on or before Monday 15th May / Monday 18th September and fly from Krakow on or after the afternoon of Saturday 20th May / Saturday 23rd September

\*Krakow Balice Airport also known as John Paul II Airport

**If you are travelling from UK**, there are direct flights to Krakow\* as follows:

Belfast International	East Midlands	London Gatwick
Birmingham	Edinburgh	London Stansted
Bournemouth	Leeds Bradford	Manchester
Bristol	Liverpool	*subject to change

- **Here are links for booking flights:** [Easyjet](#) [Ryanair](#)

If you are travelling from outside the UK, you might consider travelling to UK first, and you might well meet others taking this tour at the airport.

- If you need overnight accommodation at a UK airport, this link might be useful for you:  
[UK Airport Hotels](#)

### TRANSFERS FROM KRAKOW AIRPORT TO YOUR HOTELS

- Here are some links for booking transfers from Krakow Airport to your hotel:  
[Krakow Shuttle](#) [Private Krakow Tours](#) [Krakowtaxi4U](#)

### HOTEL IN KRAKOW

We recommend that all group members stay in **Kraków's Kazimierz District**, which is the historic, former Jewish Quarter. We will then all be close together. The hotels there are pleasant, typically Polish, and mostly cheaper than in the city centre. If you want to walk into the city centre it is not far.

You need a minimum of **2 night's accommodation in Krakow:**

**Monday 15th May and Tuesday 16th May 2017**

**or Monday 18th September and Tuesday 19th September 2017**

Here is a link for booking Krakow hotels in the Kazimierz District:

- Here is a link for booking Krakow hotels in the Kazimierz District:

[Krakow Kazimierz Hotels](#)

**Next: OPOLE**

## HOTEL IN OPOLE

There are fewer hotels in Opole than in Krakow. We recommend the **Hotel Mercure**, which has been used several times for Lamsdorf tour groups, and it has proved to be ideal. There are other suitable hotels too, of course. The Mercure is near the railway station, so if you are booking a different hotel, something in the same area would be best.

You need **3 nights' accommodation in Opole:**

**Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup>, Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> & Friday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2017**

**Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup>, Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> & Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2017**

- Here is a link for booking Opole hotels:

[Opole Hotels](#)

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## WANT TO EXTEND YOUR TOUR?

**Perhaps, being in Poland, there are other places you would like to visit.**

**Tour of Krakow  
Auschwitz  
Tatra Mountains  
Zakopane  
The Wieliczka Salt Mine  
Ojcow National Park  
etc**

You can do this by arriving in Krakow a day or two before your tour begins, or by leaving a day or two after your tour finishes. Here are some links about the attractions of the Krakow area, and some tour companies that can make arrangements for you. You will also find that most hotels can make tour arrangements for you.

[Krakow Shuttle Tours](#)   [Escape to Poland](#)   [Point Travel](#)  
[Krakow Info](#)   [Trip Advisor](#)   [Polish Forums – Tours Around Krakow](#)  
[Krakow Welcome](#)   [Lonely Planet](#)