What is restored to the picture by delving into the Tavistock archive?

Alice White
University of Kent
aw419@kent.ac.uk
@HistorianAlice
Civil Resettlement Units (CRUs)

• What was the context?
• What happened? How were the CRUs created?
• What difference does access to the Tavistock archive make?
The Tavistock staff were interested in POWs from 1940:

- They repeatedly drew attention to the situation which would arise with the return of over 100,000 men from Germany... and urged that this question be given careful and sympathetic consideration by the appropriate authorities.

Ahrenfeldt, p.226
The Creation of the CRUs

In March 1945, the War Office agreed to proceed with the creation of 20 CRUs.
What do other archives tell us?

**Prisoners of War**

While the Committee is unable to make recommendations as to any privileges or priorities which might be accorded to prisoners of war, we feel their case, especially in regard to rehabilitation, presents many difficulties which should be taken into consideration when the time comes for their repatriation.

Published by the Central Committee on Post-War Reconstruction set up by the Conservative and Unionist Party Organization, 24, Old Queen Street, Westminster, S.W.1

Price 6d.

September, 1943.
British Prisoners-of-War: From Resilience to Psychological Vulnerability: Reality or Perception

Abstract
In contemporary culture, soldiers held as prisoners-of-war (POWs) or as hostages are considered at significant risk of mental illness, in particular post-traumatic stress disorder. This paper reviews the historical literature to explore the extent to which the term ‘resilience’ has been used in relation to the psychological response of POWs to their captivity.
What do other archives tell us?

Army Civil Resettlement Units

Resettlement after Demobilization. Army Civil Resettlement Units.

Held by: The National Archives
Date: 1945 - 1947
Reference: LAB 12/352
Subjects: Internment | Labour

CIVIL Resettlement Units established by Service Depts for ex-prisoners-of-war.

Liaison arrangements with Ministry of Labour...

Department of Employment and predecessors: Establishment Division and predecessors:
Registered Files (OE Series and other series). CIVIL Resettlement Units established by Service Depts
for ex-prisoners-of-war. Liaison arrangements with Ministry of Labour Staff.
GET IN SHAPE FOR CIVVY STREET

CIVIL RESETTLEMENT UNITS

Imperial War Museum,
IWM PST 2977
Technical Mechanics
Constructional Designing
Agriculture

Textile Machinery
Tropical Planting
Business Organising

Imperial War Museum, IWM PST 13812
What does the Tavi archive reveal?

• Surprisingly basic information not easily found in other places
• How much work went into creating the CRUs (and how much of this was flying-by-seat-of-pants planning!)
• The involvement of many invisible actors
• Links to WOSBs & Northfield (learning from mistakes…)
• The crucial role of communication & the exchange of ideas.
Locations of CRUs
The Big Battle: Bion vs. Wilson

Bion, No. 21 WOSB, Selsdon Court, Surrey

Wilson, No. 1 RAMC Barracks, Crookham

Wilson, No. 10 Special Reception & Training Unit, Derby, November 1944
Invisible Actors...

Wellcome Trust, RAMC/801/22/42/46
2. Estimated Resources.

The position as regards accommodation for C.R.U.s is as follows:

(a) No. 10 S.R.T.U. at Derby is still in existence. Though unsuitable in many ways as a C.R.U., it could be used to accommodate 60 volunteers at a time. There are already about a dozen in the camp. It could, however, deal with part of the 150 volunteers referred to in 1 (b) above.

(b) Negotiations are well advanced for taking over Hatfield House, Hatfield, which will require relatively slight alteration, to hold the planning staff and an attached C.R.U. It is just possible that the requisite staff can be selected and trained, and the essential local contacts made in six weeks; and that the necessary alterations can be made and equipment installed also in that time. If, however, there is any delay in completing the negotiation, in selecting or posting the staff or in carrying out the work services, it will not be possible to have the unit in operation in time.

There is a possibility, therefore, that this unit may be ready to accommodate 250 volunteers by 15th May. To function adequately it should have completed a trial run by that date.
Communication & the CRUs

Box 37765502, Planning Memoranda, Approx. April 1945

MINISTRY OF PRODUCTION

MARSH DISTRICT

Report of 151 (sponsored by the Kodak on the 29th March,

Attended by the National Service, Managers of Ministry of Production Division, and clerical staff of Division.

Mr. Slater

I have attached the amendments which I suggest should be made to the pamphlet “Settling Down in Willy Street”, in so far as they affect the advisory and job finding aspect of a C.M.U.

If you agree with the wording suggested I shall pass the amendment to Miss Batten.

32nd October, 1945

Send to Miss Batten 23-0-4
Lessons Learned

Box 37765502, Planning Memoranda, Approx. April 1945

(From the Second Northfield Experiment begun in January 1944), how far a continuously changing population of patients and staff could develop its own type of community within the premises of a military psychiatric hospital of 800 beds. The average length of stay was between five and six weeks. It would be impossible in a short article to describe or trace the ever-changing scene in detail; on the other hand it would be misleading to discuss the results of the experiment unless considered within the context of the whole. That certain aspects which are social cannot be isolated from the rest, and that certainly cannot be treated solely by a Social Therapy Staff. The "departmental" approach would be as unwise as the treatment of an individual without relation to the society in which he has lived, is living, and will live. Nevertheless the same way as an administrative staff should serve a community by helping it to function from within and without, so a social therapy staff can play its part in providing opportunities and channels for the development of the community's needs.
Communication & the CRUs

MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND NATIONAL SERVICE

Ref: R.1191.

Telephone No:
AMBassadro 1312.

Dear

We have not as yet heard anything of the Allocation Centre from Air Ministry headquarters and our view is that, in the absence of a lead from headquarters assistance on the lines described in your letter, i.e. in relation to advice about R.A.P. address should not be provided. It would be appropriate for Air Ministry to contact our headquarters on this question and for G.A.E. department to be consulted, and we should want to have fuller information about the whole scheme before undertaking to give the amount of assistance suggested.

(2) The making the necessary contacts with industrial and other undertakings, and that the services of G.T.C. staff can be enlisted for the purpose of visits as described in the note. Office people attach considerable importance to an opportunity being given to the men to visit "behind the scenes" at a local office. Apparently the experiment at Derby has proved the value of this beyond doubt. It occurs to us that such visits should be made towards the end of the official day, e.g. between 5 and 6 p.m. and that a number of local offices near the centre should be used for this purpose to relieve the load on any one.
Visit to Civil Resettlement Unit
From Our Special Correspondent

The King and Queen to-day visited the Army's first Civil Resettlement Unit, opened a few weeks ago at Hatfield House, the lovely Jacobean home of the Marquess of Salisbury. Here, and in the adjacent old Palace (where the future Queen Elizabeth was imprisoned during the reign of her sister Mary), some 250 repatriated prisoners of war, in the serene atmosphere of one of England's most lovely country houses and estates, are learning how to become civilians again.

Twenty other centres of the kind will be opened within the next month or two. One of these began operations to-day at the Middleton Hotel, Ilkley.

Other selected centres are Havanna Camp (near Newcastle), Knutsford (Cheshire), Oundle, Knetler Hall (the former Military School of Music at Twickenham), Richmond Park (Surrey), Wolverhampton, Cardiff, Tonbridge, Cirencester, Edinburgh, and Ballymena (Northern Ireland).

Object of the Units

The object of these places is sound and simple. In the Army's own colloquial phrase, it is to provide opportunities for repatriates "to get the hang of things in civvy street before they leave the Army."

Centres are run like leave camps. There is no "training" in the military sense. Guards and fatigues are unknown. Even working hours are extremely elastic. No one is "put on a charge" if he is late in a workshop, although men are sensibly reminded that it is courteous to be punctual.

The Royal Visit

The King and Queen—he in Field-Marshal's uniform, she in her usual shade of blue—spent a long time at Hatfield.

The Queen talked with Sapper J. Parker, R.E., who was formerly a surface colliery worker at Langold, near Doncaster, but whose health now forbids him to resume coal-mining. He is learning to be a bricklayer.

She chatted too with Corporal J. W. McPherson, who has served in the...
Thank you for listening!