

---

# Foreign POWs around Gatehouse

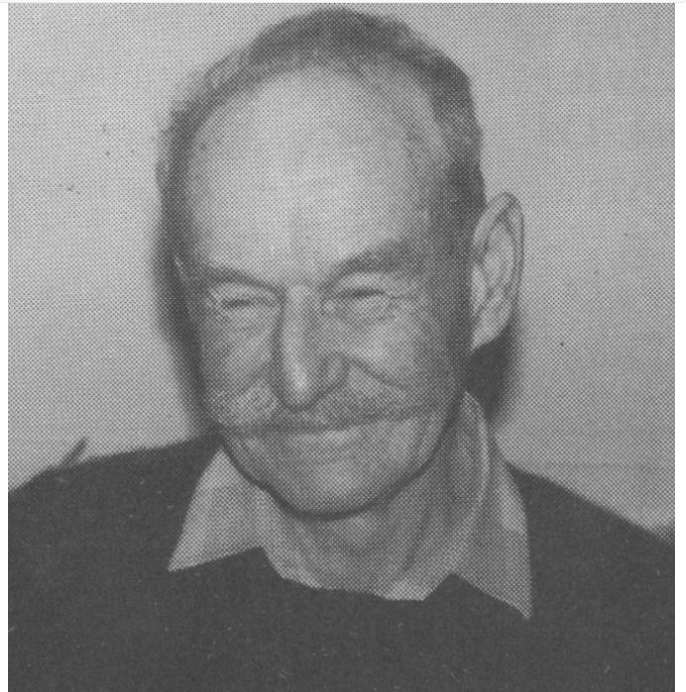
*The Galloway News reported in June 1945 that there were between 8 and 9 million displaced persons in Europe. Some would have been driven out of their homeland and some had become prisoners of war.*

A Prisoner of War is someone who has been involved in armed conflict who has been 'captured' by his enemy. POWs are held under the conditions of the Geneva Convention, which ensures that prisoners should be treated humanely. A large number of enemy forces who had been captured after battles in Europe were held in camps all over the UK and there were several around Galloway. The Isle House Stables Camp at Kirkcudbright held Italians as did a camp near Twynholm graveyard. The Kirkcudbright town council expressed concerns for the local female population with so many handsome young Italians around! Holm Park at Creebridge, Newton Stewart initially held Italians and later German Luftwaffe pilots. After the war it became a camp for displaced persons - people who could no longer return to their homeland which was now behind the Iron Curtain. It is now the site of a caravan park.

Some of the men were given work to do in gangs - for example in the forestry. Others were chosen to work as individuals on farms sometimes being billeted at their place of work. **Herman Heil** was an example of the latter. He first worked for the Finlay family at Ross, near Borgue, when he was in the POW camp near Twynholm, and then at Rainton Farm. After the war he remained friendly with the Finlay family and returned for visits to Rainton with his family for holidays.

When the war ended some of the POWs could not go back home. A number had been reluctant to fight at all and feared reprisals, others now found that their homes were behind the Iron Curtain. They chose to remain in Britain after the war ended.

**Josef Salfenmoser** from East Germany and **Nikolai Rotomir**, from Sarajevo, Yugoslavia are two who remained in Gatehouse after the war ended.



Herman Heil

As well as working on farms and in the forestry, towards the end of the war POWs were used in road building and constructing the new council houses being built in most towns.

Josef Salfenmoser and Herman Heil both fought in the German Army.

Josef Salfenmoser chose to remain near Gatehouse after the war ended. He married Elspeth McMillan in 1949 and the couple raised a family in the area. Josef died in 2008.

Nikolai Ratomir was from Sarajevo, Yugoslavia. He had married Spasenija and had a son Milan before the war but, afterwards he became a 'displaced person' as his home was now behind the Iron Curtain. He worked for Andrew Graham the builder and latterly was a popular employee at the Cally Hotel. He died in 2010.

---