

One Mans's War. Part 3. Parts 1 & 2 published in The Philatelic Register Issues 10 and 12, Sept.20th, Oct 18th

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### Lamsdorf Upper Silesia A background

There had been a prisoner-of-war camp at Lamsdorf since the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, and it was in use from then right through the first and second world wars. A card from Lamsdorf to Breslau dated 23<sup>rd</sup> of July 1898 written by a German soldier shows the "Schliessplatz" or "Shooting Range" and is actually cancelled by the Schliessplatz postmark.



Figure : 23



Figure : 24

From WW1 a card is shown from the German Garrison at Lamsdorf dated 8<sup>th</sup> September 1915, and a prisoner-of-war cover from a doctor in the Lamsdorf hospital dated 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1916 addressed to the "Moscow Help Committee for Prisoners of War" located in Copenhagen. In other words, Lamsdorf was in full swing. **Figures 25 – 27**

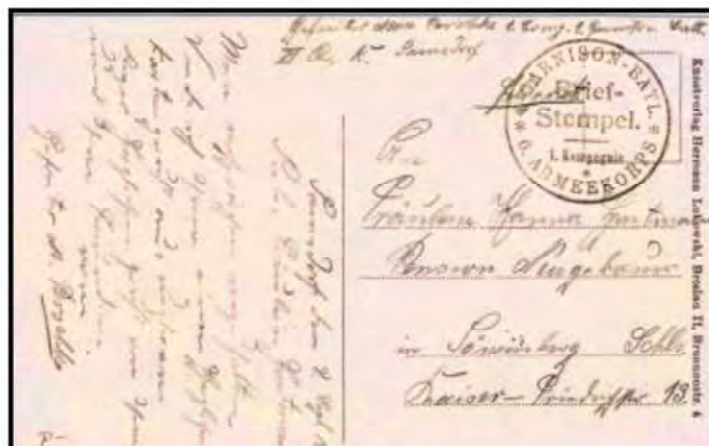


Figure : 25



Figure : 26



Figure : 27

**Back to Victor Broomhead:**

In 1943 the camp at Lamsdorf was huge and became a central administration point for many sub-camps all over Silesia to which prisoners-of-war were sent to become, effectively, slave labour. These were not the camps as shown in films where bored prisoners wandered around plotting escapes. The sub-camps were designated as “Bau un Arbeitsbattalion” or “BAB” literally “Construction and Labour Unit” and the first letters from Victor show that he had been sent to Camp E-714 (Note that E-715 was Auschwitz). E-714 (BAB21) was located at a place known then as Blechhammer, now Blachownia, close to the town of Cosel, where the German chemical giant I.G. Farben had built a huge plant for extracting vehicle fuel from the plentiful supplies of Polish coal. Work there was hard and there are several reports in the National Archive of British prisoners being shot by the German guards. I.G. Farben actually built two of these plants, the second one being designated E-711 (BAB20) to where Victor was transferred in May 1944.

German maps of the period carefully do not show any sites at the location of these plants but a 1944 American military map does show E-711 alongside the distinctive railway junction south of the town of Kandrzin, called Heydebreck by the Germans in honour of a senior officer who had fought in the Herero uprising in 1905/6 in German Southwest Africa. Ironically Heydebreck's son Peter von Heydebreck who had served in the German Army in WW1 was killed by the SS at Stadelheim prison in the Nazi putsch of 1934.

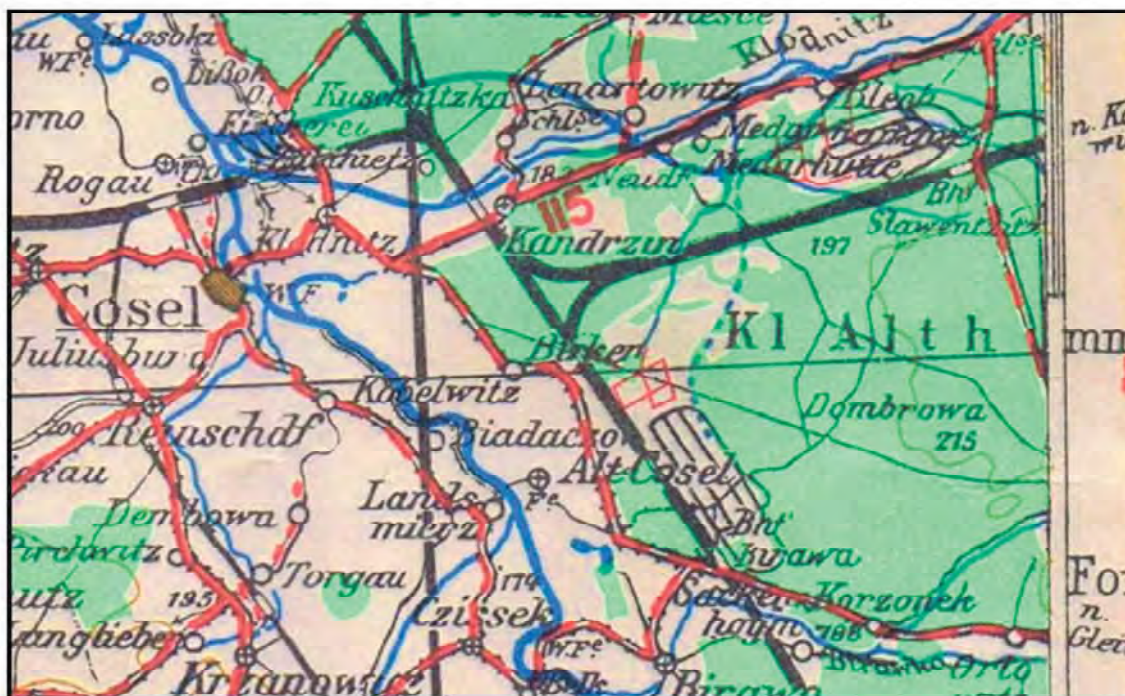


Figure : 28

Blechhammer, Heydebreck (Kandrzin) 1944 American map.

A secret report produced in Washington in 1943 showed the true extent and location of E-711 (BAB20) and E-714 (BAB21) although they were titled Blechhammer South and North:-

164 - **SYNTHETIC OIL**  
Blechhammer N. and S.

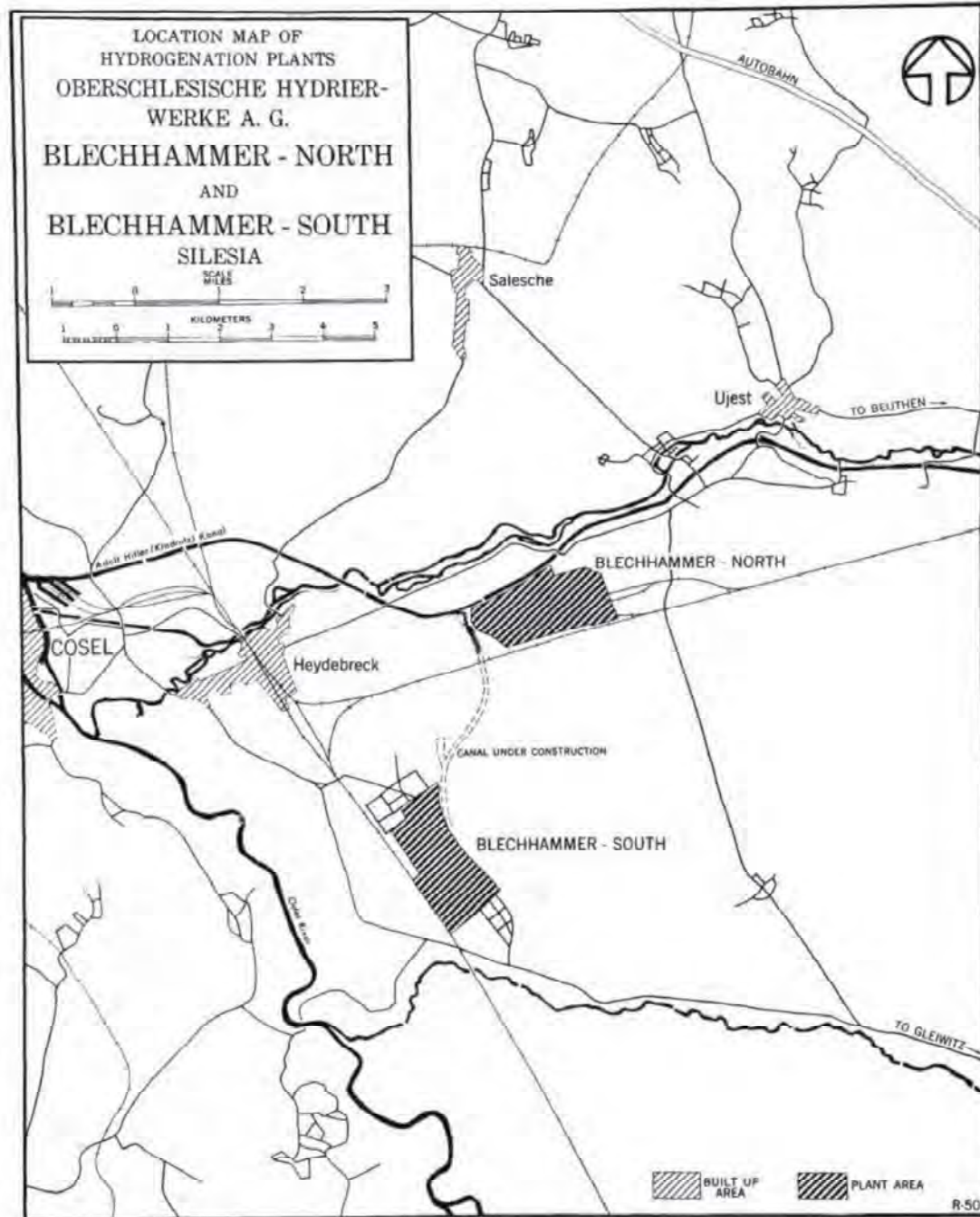


Figure : 29

Compare this to the German map from 1941.



Figure : 30

No sign of the I.G. Farben chemical plants.

The real disgrace of these work camps at Blechhammer and elsewhere is that they were constructed and run as profit-making commercial enterprises, having issued share capital and generating money for the shareholders and directors of the company. Records show that contracts were entered into between I.G. Farben and the S.S., with the latter receiving payment for providing labour to work in the plants. This is why even at extermination camps such as Auschwitz-Birkenau those who were deemed fit to work were sent to the I.G. Farben chemical plant co-located at Auschwitz-Monowitz. When they were worn out they made their last journey to the gas chambers. Take a look at a share certificate for Blechhammer:- **Figure : 31**



Figure : 31

Issued in 1942 and carrying attached dividend coupons from 1942 to 1953. Clearly someone believed in the “Thousand Year Reich”. Coupons from 1942 to July 1945 already cashed, but things were changing as we know, and not least for Victor.