

MUSIC IN THE INTERNMENT CAMP

As with education, music was very important to the women internees. At first, they were bored because they had little to do, but the music gave them a focus.

Many of the hotels and boarding houses had a piano and very quickly a range of musical activities began to develop. Many of the instrumental musicians had managed to bring their instruments with them and this added to the range of musical activities available.



In addition to pianos, many of the hotels had large lounges which were ideal venues for musical events.

In the early days of the camp, the women were not allowed to visit each other in other hotels, but musical groups formed in many places and overlapped when they rehearsed in church halls.

For example, The Golf Links Hotel in Port Erin (pictured above left) was the 'home' of the Golf Links Choir, organised by internee Ira Rischowski (pictured right). Ira loved singing and she sang when washing up after meals. Soon others joined in and she formed the choir. Music was hard to come by and she mentioned this to the newsagent in Port Erin. He lent her a copy of a book of songs called *The News Chronicle Song Book* and they began to learn new tunes and lyrics.



There were a number of musical groups:



- Ira Rischowski's Golf Links Choir
- Else Franke's Round Song Choir
- Eva Langetels' Choir of Women Internees
- The Deaconesses' Choir
- The Camp School Orchestra
- Johanna Metzger-Lichtenstern's Camp Choir
- Bertha Huttenbach's Ladies' Choir
- Bradda Glen Sparrows
- The Optimists
- A small string orchestra in Port Erin.

Johanna Metzger-Lichtenstern



Bertha Huttenbach

In addition to all of these groups there were two groups who were actors and musicians: The Youth Players, which incorporated a small choir, and the Ailsa Craig Group of Entertainers.

Church halls and Port St Mary Town Hall were popular venues for the musical events and often local residents as well as internees were in the audience.



Much of the music performed was by German and Austrian composers, including Schubert, Strauss, Handel, Bach and Beethoven, but there were also performances of operas and hymns plus Manx and English folk songs. In addition to these performances there were several Christmas events.

The musicians included opera singers, organists, pianists and violinists. Both instrumentalists and singers played a regular part in weekly church services at Station Road Methodist Church (pictured left) and St Catherine's



Church, both in Port Erin, (pictured upper right) and St Mary's Church in Port St Mary (pictured lower right).

Music and entertainment played a huge and very important role in the lives of the internees and helped them through some very difficult times.

