

Exhibition Tours and German Prisoners of War

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This Saturday is **Doors Open Day** in Scotland, and like thousands of other buildings across the country, our George IV Bridge building will be open.

Exhibition curator Graham Hogg will be offering tours of **Imprentit** at **10 am** and **12 noon**, and you can also sign up for a general behind-the-scenes tour of the George IV building at **11 am** and **2 pm**. You can visit the exhibition hall as usual on Saturday from 10 am to 5 pm.

All tours are free but booking is recommended. To book, get further information, or join the events mailing list, please phone 0131 623 4675 or email: events@nls.uk.

I asked Graham to write about his favourite item in the exhibition for the blog, and he has chosen an unusual newspaper, the **Stobsiade**:



Graham says: One of the items I was keen to include in this summer's exhibition was an issue of **Stobsiade**, a German-language newspaper printed for German prisoners of war (POWs) held in a prison camp at Stobs near Hawick, in the Scottish Borders. It is a great example of printing in Scotland being done for non-Scots in a non-native language. An army camp had been at **Stobs** in 1903, but when the 1st World War broke out in 1914, it was converted to a prison camp to hold interned German civilians and POWs. During 1915 the civilians were moved elsewhere, leaving a camp population of around 5,000 German soldiers.

By all accounts Stobs was a bleak, depressing place, some of the inmates complaining of the rain and mud (although it cannot have been half as bad as the conditions endured by soldiers fighting on the Western Front!). A highly-organised **mini-society** sprung up in the camp, with a library, school and hospital, and its own newspaper, written and edited by the POWs. I had originally assumed that the actual printing was done in the camp itself, but on closer inspection it turns out that the type was set by one of prisoners in the camp, and then was sent to **Hawick** for printing. The appearance of a **prison camp newspaper** every three to four weeks must have been a welcome break from the monotony of life in Stobs. The first issue of **Stobsiade** for the POWs (there was apparently an earlier version produced for the civilians, which I have not seen) appeared in October 1916 and a further 24 issues were produced until January 1919, when the POWs were finally repatriated. The title is a pun on the popular 18th-century mock epic poem *Jobsiade* by the German physician and writer, **Carl Arnold Kortum**.

The **content** of the four-page newspaper was devoted largely to the cultural and sporting events held in the camp, as well as handy DIY tips, short stories and poems. The print-run of each issue was an impressive 4,000, as copies were sent to subscribers back in Germany. The money raised from subscribers presumably subsidised its production (these copies were sent direct from the printing press in Hawick rather than the camp, as the newspaper was subject to British **ensorship** and the authorities wished to avoid these copies containing extra remarks from the prisoners). Similar newspapers appeared in POW and civilian internment camps all over Europe during the 1st World War and provide a fascinating insight into this comparatively neglected area of the history of the period.