

(Sm)all Things Remembered: Material Accounts from POW Camps in Northern Norway

Introduction

Memory is a difficult thing to grasp and concretize, as memory is largely perceived as something cognitive, something that is shaped in our minds. However, is memory just a purely human property, a process that is managed without any kind of "non-human" features? In this chapter, I want to approach the complex process of memory through our encounter with things, through an ecology of memory, and take the backstairs into the world of recollection. I want to explore memory through my archaeological study of prison camps from WWII. These marginalized, unpleasant objects and structures of war often reflect a dark and negative past, but the material itself also has an eerie and peculiar nature that is worth considering. As ongoing putrid refrains singing out against the esthetic, peaceful and the ready-ruined, they have never clearly separated themselves from nature, nor accepted a separation from their ecological surroundings. The material relics expand by spreading into the surroundings and by forming new constellations with the vegetation, the landscape and with the changing seasons in a natural process of conservation.

We depend on things, not only in our everyday tasks, but also as eminent triggers for memory - a memory that can generate involuntary and unedited recollections. In this chapter, I will show how things and archaeological structures in prison camps are experienced in their present state, and argue that these things, in their ecological presence and natural conservation, can be perceived both as uncanny strangers, and at the same time, feel uncomfortably close through their sheer existence. Just as this archaeological material is partially forgotten, it also contains fragmented, material memories that include the trivial and "antihistoric" elements that conventional and linear history have forgotten. What is left in these prison camps and what is this material able to tell? How are these camps today perceived in their natural conservation, and what memories do they elicit in our meeting with these things and structures? How does this material and their stories relate to the written memories of the prisoners who stayed there, and how can these fragile and broken things make memories that written stories do not cover?

I. (Sm)all things forgotten

I am in the middle of what was once a German prison camp for Soviet prisoners of war. The place, which was baptized Kitzbühel by the Austrian soldiers, is located in a desolate mountain landscape in Norddalen, Nord-Troms in Norway, at about 800 meters above sea level. At first glance, you cannot see them, but gradually they emerge, small groups of circular structures

resiliently placed on a small ridge. Scattered around are visible remains of stoves, barbed wire, oil barrel and glass. Moving around in the area, new structures and things are still revealed; things and traces that have fallen into a kind of dormant peace only affected by the shifts of the seasons.



Figure 1: Kitzbühel 2016. The PoW-camps appear as circles in the landscape. Photo: I. Figenschau.

Closing in on one of the structures, the traces of so-called plywood tent - *Finnenzelte*, I come across a large amount of rusty tin cans. In a way, they are conspicuously strange in such a landscape, but at the same time disturbingly familiar. The remains of the German field kitchen arranged among rocks and heather, stubborn remnants that involuntarily invoke how disturbingly visible - and redolent – the food must have been for the many Soviet prisoners of war who starved close by throughout the winter.

Having been here several times, having believed that the place had been exhaustively and minutely examined: two broken German helmets appear. The vegetation and the many seasons after 1945 had camouflaged the helmets well, and at first glance the rusty parts of the outer shell could look like stones. The contrast between the outer shell and the internal bands' weathering was striking. The hard steel could no longer stand against the corrosion of nature as well as the soft aluminum. What would once protect a soldier against enemy fire had in this case given up. Leather chinstraps were still attached to the liners as a sign of personal adaptations.

The aluminum is somewhat greyed, but it looked surprisingly new. The stamp into the internal band revealed the manufacturer «Schuberth-Werk» and «Werner Zahn». The helmets were manufactured in 1938 and 1939 and marked with "66 nA, 58" and "62 nA, 57 (nA: Neues Art). The liner is a German M31, which was used in the well-known helmet M35 (Sáiz 2008:16-18).



Figure 2: Two German M35 smashed and camouflaged in a small scree in Kitzbühel. Photo: I. Figenschau

This was one of the first mass-produced helmets and it was made in the period from 1935 to 1940. The quality of M35 was considered to have been very good since it was made mainly of molybdenum-blended steel (Sáiz 2008:22). Perhaps the helmets used in Kitzbühel were highly appreciated, a symbol of the German army, its invulnerable being, quality and function. A value that disappeared in the spring of 1945 when it was no longer needed. The helmets were broken, but if the smashing was done in delight, anger or relief we will probably never know. Nevertheless, their camouflaged pieces were left in the deserted mountain scenery where they persist as distinctive memories of both the local and worldwide events they were once part of.

In one of the sites of the plywood tents there were many shards of both faience and porcelain on the surface. As the sunlight reflected in the smooth enameled surfaces, they appeared as somewhat invasive and not naturally at home here. Our archaeological research brought forth nuances in this material as well. Many shards were made of white-painted faience specifically made for the German army, but there was also pieces of porcelain with colorful print designs.

Several of these shards could be assembled into platters and cups. Among these, there was a smaller coffee cup and even a cake platter with sturdy color printing. The cake platter is produced by Porsgrund Porselen and is hand-painted with steel plate printed decorations. This was the first type of print decoration used in the period from 1887 to about 1905. These platters were relatively expensive to produce, costly, and not everyday items. The cup had a nice floral motif with gilded edge at the top and bottom. In the bottom it was stamped with "Porsgrund Porselen" and a hand-painted number in brown. The stamp is green, encircled with a circular boundary, typical for the period 1913-1937 (Eek pers. Med. 2017).

These are just some of the things we came upon. Representative of the finds from Kitzbühel but also Spittal - another and low-lying prison camps we investigated - are shoes, bakelite equipment, sardine boxes, canned goods, ammunition, tallow lights, ski bindings, fountain pens, medals, fragments of fabric and bottles. These finds appeared both on the surface and through the archaeological excavation. They all tell the story of concrete and everyday conditions in the camps. Secondly, there are objects representing military everyday life of food rations, field equipment, clothing, special equipment, hygiene products and other practical equipment. Nevertheless, there are also things that point to other aspects of life in the camp, such as gaming pieces, beer and wine bottles, bones and production materials.

What does this material express? How does it remember? What can bakelite residues after a Czechoslovakian-produced thermos, ammunition from Raufoss, Hirtberg and Saxony, porcelain from Porsgrund, Mettlach and Kronach, canned goods from France and Denmark, a fountain pen from Heidelberg, Finnish *Markka* coins, American-produced toe plates, *Bergschuhe* mountain boots, a bottle of *Haarwasser* and a *Hitlerjugend* medal from Munich tell us? All of these objects were the result of a worldwide war, a war that brought soldiers, prisoners, structures and things to a European periphery. Although the military presence lasted for six cold and dark months, the material traces are still there, and have not let themselves be removed.

All of these items which were manufactured in different parts of the world, were brought together in the high North, and left behind, stranded. Why did they end up here, far from the well-known battlefields, far from the war's main arena in Central Europe? Along the Lyngen Line's inner valleys and mountainous areas, prison camps were named after German, Austrian and Swiss cities: Spittal, Mallnitz, Gastein, Kitzbühel, Kufstein, Windeck, Würgel, Seehof, Seefeld, Salzberg, Zermatt and Landeck. Whether it was homesickness, a recognizable landscape or a dark sense of humor that was the reason for the naming is uncertain. Apart from

the somewhat inept place names, little links this remote northern landscape to the war's well-documented narratives and closely researched main themes. What was the reason why soldiers and prisoners occupied this remote landscape in what would be the last winter of the war? What happened before they arrived at Lyngenfjorden, and where did they go, the soldiers, the officers and the prisoners of war?

II. Austria, the Soviet Union and the Third Reich in Norddalen

The German *Operation Silberfuchs*, part of the *Unternehmen Barbarossa*, was stopped at Litza and Titovka, Kola Peninsula, and had since the autumn of 1941 been characterized by locked standoff warfare (Jaklin 2006:267-268). On October 7, 1944, the Red Army initiated an attack; an operation that resulted in German retreat and which in less than two months would bring the German army to Lyngenfjorden, North Troms, 480 km to the west. The German authorities had been prepared for such a development. The "Führer Directive" No. 50, dated 28 September 1943, proposed a complete withdrawal from Finland, Finnmark and Nord Troms to the Lyngen area. The operation was nicknamed "Operation Nordlicht" (Fossum 2014:43), and was implemented shortly after the Soviet attack at the Litzafront. In their retreat to Lyngenfjorden, the forces utilized the scorched earth tactics, and burned down all physical structures – houses, barns and even churches - that could be used by the advancing Soviet army. Civilians in Finnmark and Northern parts of Troms were forcibly evacuated under threat of fines, some resisted and hid while others followed the evacuation order (Gyllenhaal og Gebhardt 2001:90-91, Isachsen 2016:147, Westrheim 1978:55-56).

Under orders from Berlin, the Lyngen line commenced late in the fall of 1944 and should be completed on 1 May 1945. Narrow valleys and lofty mountains offered topographical advantages for the establishment of the line. The main position was between Skibotn and Kitdal area, with flank guards in Rostadalen and Bjørnefjell. (Fossum 2014:43, Sunde 2014:62-63).

In the preparation of the defense line, about 10 000 Soviet, but also Yugoslav and Polish prisoners of war were brought along the withdrawal. They were set to carry out most of the heavy labor in inhumane conditions. Much of this occurred in high mountain areas in very difficult circumstances, and with little clothes and facing constant abuse, the death rate of the prisoners in the camps was high (Soleim 2009:119).

Kitzbüchel is located at the top of a group of four prison camps in Norddalen, the other being Spittal, Mallnitz, and Gastein. Both Mallnitz and Kitzbüchel were investigated immediately after the war by a war crimes commission after several sources had reported war crimes in the area

(Lund 2014 [1982]:71). Mallnitz was eventually referred to as the "death camp" of the Soviet prisoners of war, "many were sent there and no one left" (Gallagher 1945b). The investigations in Mallnitz revealed four mass graves with a total of 143 bodies (Jenney 2014 [1945]), in Kitzbühel another six bodies were found. It is assumed that the construction of the Lyngen Line cost up to 1,000 human lives (Hesjedal og Andreassen 2015:12), more than the present-day population in the Austrian town of Mallnitz.

III. Memories of Spittal and Kitzbühel

After the WWII, during and after the Cold War, the prison camps were largely omitted from the historical narratives - both as a result of the changed political climate, but also because of its inherently problematic and negative content. Perhaps there was an implicit desire to neglect the "dead load of history» and let time itself bury them into eternal oblivion (cf. Arendt 1976:ix). It was not until 2010 that there was an official change of attitude. The war remains were almost forced into the public eye due to a power line development, and it was argued that an archaeological registration of Mallnitz and Gastein ought to be carried out (Drageset et al. 2010). This eventually resulted in a larger archaeological registration along parts of the Lyngen Line, which led to a 2015 heritage management proposal, where a larger area of the Lyngen line was proposed listed, including the prison camps in Norddalen (Hesjedal og Andreassen 2015).

A large amount of material that had been left out of the historical narrative was suddenly given wider public recognition. Irrespective of what had been felt, lived, written and told, what had been kept silent, hidden away and actively forgotten, the structures and things lived on and the material memories of war persevered. The material memories of the war are still there, as they were when I began my research at the sites of the former prison camps Spittal and Kitzbühel in 2016.

Spittal

The prison camp Spittal, established and operated by Organization Todt, had by April 1, 1945, 232 Soviet prisoners (Hesjedal og Andreassen 2015:122). Today there are no soldiers or prisoners left, just a well-hidden conglomerate of structures and things. The camp itself is located on an old river surface north of the Kitdal River. The area is relatively wide and lies between the river in the south and the mountain foot of Raikiskaisa (1369 mas) in the north. Today, the area consists of deciduous forest, rough grazing and grassy heather. Although the camp is located in an area that is easily accessible, it has been well hidden by the natural

conservation. The registration of the camp in 2016 revealed almost 100 structures spread over an area of approximately 900 by 300 meters. Structures range from small firing positions, cooling pits and roads, to larger dry-walled structures, plywood tents and cleared areas.

Among deciduous forests and grassy heather, stone structures appear that seem both unfamiliar and natural. Unfamiliar by virtue of being beautiful dry-walled structures with stairs, entrances, and foundations that provide associations to prehistoric structures of unknown origins. Natural by virtue of being adapted to the landscape and topography, and through the use of natural stone which is assembled with great care. A fascination for the arrangement of individual stones, which, through its immovable presence, is not only beautiful but also carries a building quality that is approved by time.



Figure 3: A mountain of barbed wire saturates and percolate out of the ground, Spittal 2016. Photo: I. Figenschau.

A stone staircase constructed in front of a plywood tent testify to an adaptation to the environment and landscape, carefully designed and constructed. Even today, the staircase is steady and solid, and it feels almost natural to utilize this when entering the structure. At the same time, one knows that these appealing structures, things and stones is also part of a prison camp. My first meeting with Spittal, a camp that was assumed to have been removed and covered with layers of agricultural land, disclosed a rubbish heap of barbed wire, oven residue, shoes, bottles and other objects filled in a creek bed between two fields. The large amount of barbed wire saturates the ground around the rubbish heap, and yields an almost metallic sound when walking on the surface. An extraordinary material and bodily reminder of what was

happening here in the cold and dark winter months of 1944-1945, and of the 232 prisoners that were imprisoned in Spittal.

At the bottom of the rubbish heap, almost completely hidden by barbed wire are parts of a bicycle; only the head tube and parts of the fork is visible. A white emblem labeled with “*Vaterland. Fr. Herfeld Söhne. Neuenrade*” lights up in the amounts of rust-colored material. Close by, two rusty but surprisingly intact bikes hanging from a tree; make a metallic sound as they rattle in the wind. The leather on the seat is long gone, but the characteristic spring feathers are left. Someone has taken the trouble of hanging these up, either as a gesture to attempt to preserve them or to make them visible.



Figure 4: A German helmet left to linger on in the leftovers of a barrack, Spittal 2016. Photo: S. Farstadvoll.

Near one of the many dry-walled structures we come across a gas mask container, *Tragebusche*, filled to the edge with cement. The container is located in an old streambed and is probably just the tip of a waste heap. This is also the only trail for use of cement in the area, which, in combination with the climatic challenges here, may also be the result of the Wehrmachtführungsstab in Oberkommando der Wehrmacht in September 1944, stopped all supply of cement (Sæveraas 2016:114). In an area further east, in a relatively large structure, lies a lone German helmet, another M35, slightly overgrown with lichen and moss, almost camouflaged as a stone. At Myrhaug, a small ridge in the western part of the camp, there is a

red cabin. Apart from the outer tin roof, the cabin is built of old roof elements from German plywood tents. At the entrance, there is also a large stone slab with "1945" cut into the surface - allegedly made by Austrian soldiers.

Both the object matter and the many structures are sometimes difficult to spot and, through their decay, have grown into nature's surroundings - perhaps more than initially intended. Spittal, which, although located in a relatively open landscape, conceals a large number of structures and things. While several of the dry-walled structures are large, they allow themselves to be camouflaged in the landscape. Even the largest structure, which has a measurement of approximately 7 by 15 meters with foundation walls over one meter high, was well hidden between birch and grass.

Kitzbühel

Kitzbühel is located in a relatively deserted mountain landscape 800 meters above sea level, approximately 5 km south west in a straight line from Spittal. The camp is confined to an area of roughly 150 by 230 meters. In the camp itself, 32 structures of plywood tents are registered, 15 of which belong to the prison camp (Hesjedal og Andreassen 2015:146-154). The camp consists mainly of three different concentrations with circular (plywood) tent structures carefully organized in the landscape. The prison camp itself is located on a terrain crest exposed to wind and weather with a view to the northwest and southeast. About 100 meters northwest, the soldiers' accommodation is divided into two concentrations. One is placed in a west-facing slope, while the other is located on a drained surface. Some of the structures clearly emerge in the sparse and low vegetation like circular ramparts or embedments. They also reveal their presence through, among other things, ovens, pipe hats, coke, barbed wire, roof panels, flat-tin buckets, spades, hooks, canned goods and footwear.

Building remains and objects lie scattered in and around the structures. On the one hand, they are dissonant with the landscape, while at the same time merging with the terrain in the process of being camouflaged in their natural surrender. An oil barrel cut in two, handily reconstructed to an oven¹, seems conspicuous in the landscape. A copper-clad wooden box with remains of ski bindings and a gas tank has also been left in peace and gives an impression of something partly intact. In and around the many structures there are small pieces of broken glass, porcelain, faience, window glass and bakelite that seem to have been intentionally crushed and broken. There is an overwhelming material presence in this windy landscape, ranging from large to

¹ <https://bit.ly/2Oh3IY3>, a 3D model of a barrel reconstructed to an oven.

small. Large unused rolls with German barbed wire, ammunition and helmets, and intimate and personal things like gaming pieces, personal clothing, a fountain pen, a lighter and a nameplate with a street address in Berlin.

It is a strange feeling to walk among the structures, several of which give a sense of "prehistoric heritage" as they are covered by vegetation, but through the many remains of the immediate, familiar and everyday they create a special force of recognition. As material reminders they attest not only that the war also reached far into remote regions, but also that, even though the soldiers and the prisoners are long gone, the landscape is still sieged by its matériel. The remains of war have not settled down to a normalcy, but are fronted with a decay that is both alluring and repulsive, and which, through their very recency, touches us in a personal and sometimes inconvenient manner (Burström 2015:38). In this tension between exposure, ongoing decay and natural surrender, the war remains have acquired a very distinctive potential to trigger memories and recollections.

The question is how can such rejected objects influence how we recall, and how can such broken and secluded objects hold some form of memory in themselves? Ruining and decay are often linked to something negative, which is lost, abandoned and resigned, and war remains in particular as they also are associated with something negative through the human sufferings that took place here. Nevertheless, it is precisely this negative and disturbing element that also helps to trigger memories - they reveal aspects of the war that have never been conveyed in historical narratives. This is especially evident in the prison camps in the Norddalen, which has previously been forgotten and largely omitted from the national history of war.

The strength of all the rejected objects and structures is their democratic ability for survival that reveals and remembers what has never been conveyed, that is too banal or too unpleasant. However, they should not be perceived as merely passive mediators of a past which has been abandoned and ended. It is also because of just being present, in their ruined and rusty state, that they can convey their own lives of use and oblivion - a memory of functional pasts that at the same time give the opportunity to call to mind people and presences that no longer exists (Olsen og Pétursdóttir 2017:93). All these things and structures have withdrawn from human influence. Nevertheless, how do the things and the archaeological material relate to the historical sources? What can the reports from surviving prisoners who had stayed in Kitzbühel communicate?

IV. Accounts from Kitzbühel

In June 1945, an international war crimes commission conducted interviews of Soviet prisoners who had survived the captivity. Most of the interviewed prisoners were in a provisional field hospital or at nearby camps at this time. The participants from the commission were: “*Capt. P.H. Gallagher, US, legal representative for Tromsø Civil Affairs detachment together with Mr Bjorn Waarhuus, statsadvocate of Troms and Finnmark, Mr Gabriel Lund, politimeister of Troms, Mr Welja, Russian representative, Alexander Elissejew, No. 32569 of 5 Norwegian Bn and Lieut Yens Odvar Hankoy of the Norwegian army*” (Lund og Waarhuus 1945:63). The situation must have been complex with many people scattered over various camps, and language difficulties have probably not made the job easier. The following interviews are from the prison camp Kitzbühel.

Witness No. 18, Michail Karakosian. Born 18 oktober 1913.

“[...] He said there was a grave at this Camp and that German soldiers had told him that 250 Russians had been buried in the snow. They were not buried in the ground because the snow was so deep that it was difficult to dig through it and to make a grave in the ground. He has never seen anyone buried there but saw a large cross indicating where the grave was supposed to be. If there were bodies in this alleged grave they were buried there by some other company. He heard that those buried there died from starvation, freezing and shooting. He said there was no fuel at this Camp. He also said that he saw one Feldswebel of Company No, 1 beat four or five PW but they were not killed. The above information was obtained on June 8. Then again on June 9 I talked to this PW and found out that he had been sent to this camp on March 27 and that he left there on the 18 April to go to MALLNITZ. [...] He said that this large grave was just outside of the barbed wire enclosure around the camp and that there was a road running between the Camp and the grave” (Lund og Waarhuus 1945:83a).

Witness No. 24, Pawel Nuchtikow. Born 23 august 1920.

« [...] He now states that the first camp he went to was one near the end of the aerial tramway which is probably camp KITZBUHEL. He claims he went there on the 12 March and left about April 6 for camp MALLNITZ staying there until April 28 when he was sent to KVESMENES. When asked about the conflicting dates given in the previously interview he said they were wrong and that after having time to think about it he was now giving me the correct information. [...] While he was there he saw KNOPFLE beat a PW to death with a stick, also that ARNOLD had killed several men of this camp by dropping heavy poles on them. [...] He has seen other Germans beat prisoners with gun butts and stick and on several occasions stab the PW with a

bayonet. He stated that the men who had died or had been killed at this camp were taken away by mules and small horses and then buried at camp MALLNITZ. He had never seen anyone buried at this camp while he was there but heard that there was a grave in the snow which 300 bodies were buried. He said this grave was marked by a large cross and a large pole which was stuck up in the snow” (Lund og Waarhuus 1945:89).

Witness No. 29, Ivan Kamarow. Born 5 July 1911.

«[...] At KITDAL Camp No. 3 – the camp at the end of the aerial tramline known as KITZBUHEL – on the 9 Jan 1945, a Russian prisoner was shot by UFFs SCHAFER of the 3rd company of 204 Bn. Orders for this company were generally given by Capt ROLLBUSCH. The witness did not see this but he knew the prisoner was shot. ROLLBUSCH was reported to be a Gestapo member according to the German soldiers. This PW knows the ranks of the other persons who mistreated the PW but does not know their names. He could identify many of them” (Lund og Waarhuus 1945:94).

Witness No. 30, Alexander Komarow. Born 30 Dec 1919.

*“[...]On Jan 9th, 1945 at No. 3 Camp at KITDAL a Russian prisoner was shot by UFFs SCHAFER because he had some documents in his possession. The Germans told the PW that SCHAFER had been given orders to do this by Oberfeldwebel OTTO and that he in turn had received his orders from the Camp Commandant of the 2nd company 204 Bn. This witness helped bury the PW that had been shot. At the end of Jan 1945 in the same camp UFFs SETSCH shot a Russian prisoner. The Capt (sic) gave the order [...]. This man was shot because he was ordered to lift a large stone which he could not because he was so weak from undernourishment. The PW complained about the food and Oberfeldwebel OTTO heard about it and took this information to the Camp Commandant and in about four hours SETSCH was ordered to shoot the prisoner. This witness helped bury the victim close to the victim mentioned above. Another death he knows about occurred in the middle of February 1945 at a spot between the two camps up from MALLNITZ. The men were carrying wood and one man got behind. He asked the one in charge if he could leave the wood. This witness also asked if the weak man could leave the wood there. He was told to go on and when about 60 metres (sic) away heard a shot. When the one in charge came up this witness asked why he shot the man and was told that the man would not carry the wood. The man who did the shooting is a German soldier and is now (*12th of June 1945) stationed at OVERGARD hospital. His family name is something like “IHME”, he is quite tall and has a little moustache. The men doing the shooting in all three cases were from*

the 2nd or 3rd companies of 204 Bn. He states that the men were very poorly fed and all suffered from under-nourishment". (Lund og Waarhuus 1945:95).

V. (Sm)all things remembered

Although the interviews with the survivors of Kitzbühel tell a specific story, about named persons, about specific dates, war crimes and an inconceivable ideology, they are largely guided by specific human aspects, aspects that try to order memories, events and actions in a logical and linear sequence - memories that will make sense in a historical narrative. The War Crimes Commission highlights the problem they encountered, even shortly after the events: *"The information contained in these statements was all obtained through interpreters and in many instances is confusing and not in the best order [...] It was often difficult to make the witnesses answer a particular question and this accounts for the variety of matters mentioned, in no regular order"* (Lund og Waarhuus 1945:63). In addition, Captain Gallagher comments: *"Also the Russians are liable to make changes in their statements, if they are to repeat them, as they frequently did before"* (Gallagher 1945a:135).

One should not undermine the importance of historical documents; they contain important information about actual circumstances and war crimes. They also contain information that things cannot provide. However, it is also another important feature of the interviews, and the memories that are brought forward, which give rise to reflection. Although the interviews to some extent follow specific questions, the answers are often marked by unrelated sequences, sometimes confusing and nonlinear, and sometimes they do not correspond to these. This is what distinguishes written sources and the archaeological material. There is also striking similarity between the recollection pattern presented in the interviews and how the archaeological material from the prison camps meets us. In such a way, the interviewees and the things left in Spittal and Kitzbühel meet as merged and seemingly random memories and not always as understandable (cf. Olsen og Pétursdóttir 2017:91). Moreover, as Gallagher points out, the prisoners statements tend to constantly change, as if they are not subject to any kind of logical and coherent story - they break and oppose the logical-linear structure that characterizes historical narratives.

What good does it do to carry out archaeological investigations of war remains, modern ruins that are so close in time, and that we have written information about, that is documented in interviews with prisoners of war and surviving witnesses who remember the war? Several books about the war and the fate of war prisoners have been written (e.g Figenschau 2014, Fjermeros

2013, Soleim 2009, Soleim 2016, Stokke 2008). To a large extent we know what happened in the camps and how the German army mistreated, starved and executed Soviet prisoners in the construction of the Lyngen line. We know when the war started and when it ended - so what can archeology contribute to?

Being present in these camps, the wandering between the remains of plywood tent, ovens, shoes, barbed wire, broken glass and porcelain - all these fragile things - make me realize that the war never left us. Although the Austrian soldiers eventually returned home, although the Soviet prisoners Karakosian, Nuchtikow, Kamarow and Komarow fortunately survived Kitzbühel, the material traces of the prison camps lay as a viscous reminder of the war's continued presence.

Although the interviews appear to be somewhat fragmented, they are, by virtue of their purpose, directed by efforts to uncover war crimes and thus, guided by questions focusing on the prisoners' daily struggle to survive hunger, ill-treatment and illness. The material memories, on the other hand, are not controlled by any political or social bias; in fact, many of the archaeological artefacts that emerged during our investigations are remnants of the 2nd and 3rd company, 204 Battalion, traces of Knepfle, Arnold, Schäfer, Rollbusch, Otto and Setsch. Regardless of how unpleasant, wrong and irreverent the conduct of the Third Reich's Austrian soldiers was, the material memory does not suppress the extended presence of the occupying forces.

The material remains of the soldiers, be it clothes hanger, helmets, porcelain, checkers pieces or bottle glass, shows the unsettling proximity of murder and mistreatment of detainees with the mundane, almost banal dimension of camp life, a proximity which is not conveyed through historical narratives. The material remains have no censorship or political correctness to them, no emphasis as "dark", "negative" or even "evil", they only show the plain presence of soldiers; playing board games in the light of a trench candle, consuming alcohol to deaden a nagging distress and to create a distance from the war, from homesickness and war-weariness. In this way, historical sources such as witnesses can create an unbalanced recollection and while it may still feel uncomfortable to take in the events of the war, material memories reflect a broad, fragmentary and democratic memory - no matter how unpleasant it can be.

By virtue of the afterlife of things, a material resistance is expressed to the established and linear understanding of time which excludes duration and chronological hybridity (Olsen 2013:204). Just as all of these structures and things have been intertwined with soldiers and

prisoners through use, they are also very tangled and complex in their transgression and overlaps of time. They melt together past and present, making them contemporary, and in their afterlife as pure "thing memories" they are potentially as important as they were in their practical lives. It is in this active decay, or the absence of humans, that objects are marginalized. It is in such a process that known things become alienated and thus create a germinal for rediscovery - they reveal and make available close and unexpected secrets of a lived life, the undistanced, "non-historic", the unseen and the fragmented.

Moreover, perhaps, through their fragmented and messy state, as scattered and weathered bits without clear and continuous narratives, they have more resemblance to memory and archeology than with the linearity of historicism (Olivier 2011:95-96). And maybe archaeologists can contribute with a different story, an angle that takes things seriously even in their fragmented state - they are modern ruins, marginalized, ugly and aesthetically unpleasing. Currently, these characteristics do not make them deserving as cultural heritage, but it is precisely because of being trapped between modern waste and history that they create a tension by not fulfilling any functional, ideological or political utility, that they have alternative, material properties to trigger critical and involuntary memories (Olsen 2013:205).

Of course, the object matter tells us about human suffering, war and captivity, but at the same time, they provide alternative memories that take us behind the façade, behind historical narratives. By keeping in close touch with the banal aspects of the war, the cake platters, gaming pieces, cups and personal belongings show other aspects of human presence. Not only are there unexpected and involuntary memories in encounter with, for example, a plate or a coffee cup from Porsgrund Porselen in a prison camp 800 meters above sea level, but they also point to different places and other conditions. The fragmented remains, which consist of very different things of diverse materials, origins and uses, trigger not only contextual and involuntary memories, but they also pose some questions. It is precisely the everyday and rather trivial objects that can take us behind the façade, into the almost inappropriate, the embarrassing and that which does not find the way to either the historical accounts or the interviews.

Between rocks in a small scree in Kitzbühel lies the remains of two German helmets, *Stahlhelme*, an iconic symbol of the German army. These helmets were considered superior to the later models that came into production in 1942. But they were certainly not warm to wear and even though the quality was high, for example, the square chinstrap rings, made of aluminum, often became uncomfortable and gradually brittle (Sáiz 2008:18) - something that was certainly accelerated in the cold climate.

The vast amounts of canned food in Kitzbühel are somehow disturbingly recognizable as they provide associations to contemporary canned products, but also seem like strangers in a desolate mountain scenery. The content has been consumed and is long gone, but the many rusty cans also refer to the structured and ordinary, mass-produced and mundane. They testify to German occupation, but also as a routine features for a soldier in a dark and cold existence and momentary bliss in the form of a hot meal. Perhaps the can of mutton stew from Denmark, meticulously marked "*Denmark, 352, S 42 HR*", a long-awaited meal that may not be home-made, but if possible, memories of something home-cooked or just as a necessary and nourishing meal. Even though the many tinned cans now are rusted into the landscape, they also carry the recollection of the smell and taste of warm food. At the same time it emphatically illuminates the brutal asymmetry of the camp, where weak and malnourished prisoners could only sense the smell of what they could not get.



Figure 5: Canned food, Kitzbühel 2017. Photo: I. Figenschau.

Even more disturbing and polarizing are the many fragments of high quality porcelain with beautiful colors and elaborate decor. The porcelain is different from the ordinary faience that was mass-produced for the German army, and perchance this is exactly why such objects are found in this foreign context. Conceivably there was a need for tired and war fatigued soldiers to be able to have something that was not military, which had no clear references to the army,

but might even awaken memories of domestic and homelike social gatherings, family and civil life. A foreign porcelain cup or richly decorated cake platter could possibly create a distance to the current war, giving references to something dear and normal.

They can also be an indication of something different and unique among the many identical cups, mugs and platters that were often issued from some military warehouse, mass-produced items without distinctive character, without any kind of individuality. Perhaps it was an attempt to distance oneself from the wars while attempting to maintain one's own identity among the mass-produced, the conform and the numbers on the *Erkennungsmarken*. Perhaps they were acquired from locals through exchange or simply "requisitioned" as spoils of war? They do not speak of the larger war narrative, or the human suffering, but they survived the soldiers, the prisoners and the war and are concrete material accounts and remembrances of the mundane events that have taken place in this desolate area - as a colorful fragment of a different memory.



Figure 6: Kitzbühel 2016: Excavation work. Leftovers from the Austrian soldiers: Among others porcelain from cake platters, bakelite, a fountain pen, buttons, playing pieces, a candle and a heel plate made of wrought iron.

All these objects have been naturally preserved through an ecological conservation that evolves with the material to articulate the memory of past life. Arguably archaeology is also a form of memory practice, where the archaeological survey, fieldwork, interpretation, post-excavation work and, certainly, this very text is a further method of emphasizing and re-membering certain

objects and recollecting past events. In this context, González-Ruibal (González-Ruibal 2014:370) describes archaeologists as postwitnesses and hyperwitnesses: «*As archaeologists, we do not document the events as they happen, but we become witnesses of a kind when we dig them up*», and through the intimacy of the objects, we gain a closer insight into the events. Thus, one can also define the very fieldwork as a contemporary archaeological way to produce knowledge, but also as a concrete recollection work.

The helmets, rusty cans and porcelain are all examples of objects that have been retrieved, investigated and witnessed through the archaeological survey. The archaeological investigations reveal only fragments of material memories through small excavation pits and documentation. Thus, there are several different memory types, on the one hand, having historical narratives based on a linear framework with logical and coherent representations. On the other hand, the interviews with the prisoners contrast this logic through being incoherent, nonlinear and fragmented, and closely related to the material recollections. Furthermore, a contemporary archaeological survey activates another type of memory media which illuminates and increases the visibility of objects, including contextual finds in the field, photo documentation, 3D modeling and photogrammetry. In post-excavation work things are subjected to new forms of care and an interest that differs from their intentional use-driven attention. Practices such as cleaning, measuring, describing, photographing, identifying and contextualizing objects is also a form of memory ecology which renders the objects proximate through the technologies which presence the past. It is in this process that we become post- and hyperwitnesses, creating new connections and new reminiscences: "*We see too late, but we see more*» (González-Ruibal 2014:369-370).



Figure 7: Post-excavation work: a new care and new reminiscences. A single jar from Rosenthal with some of the original ointment still present. Spittal 2016. Photo & editing: I. Figenschau.

VI. Present things, past memories

Much of memory studies has so far been characterized by an intangible angle that promotes past memories as a consequence of cultural mediation with emphasis on textualization and visualization (Tamm 2013:461), where memory is first and foremost viewed as a deliberate human process (Olsen 2010:109). However, even if one has included a potential material dimension in memory studies in the introduction of concepts such as mnemohistory, presentism and afterlife/survival (*Nachleben*) (Tamm 2015:9), there is little account of the active role played by things in this form of memory (Olsen og Pétursdóttir 2016:40).

Crucial for such remembrance is the persistent quality of things; many of them are stubborn and often outlives their human counterparts. In addition, in this ensuing pursuit of things, they have fallen out of their urgent role of being useful, that things live in an uncensored material world free of historically adapted narratives or ideological manuscripts. It is precisely in this democratic presence, the ruin and decay, which things may appear in a different light thus generating or enabling alternative memories. They have largely avoided a human influence, and unlike, for example, the Kitzbühel interviews they are free from a rational logic which orders events in a more coherent manner. Things do not correct themselves or “post-rationalize”.

However, their peculiarity is also related to their survival, which is often coincidental and vary with degrees of weathering in different types of soil as well as external climatic conditions. What is preserved in different soils, climates and places is largely random, and this happenstance factor makes us, as archaeologists, unable to predict what is left, what is preserved and what has weathered. This peculiarity thus creates archaeological material beyond our control, a recollection that we do not have the ability to override (Olsen og Pétursdóttir 2017:93-94). This was also very evident in the archaeological fieldwork at Spittal and Kitzbühel, where the aim was to try to capture an even representation between soldiers and prisoners. Nevertheless, even though we followed our assumptions of “what was where”, the objects still amassed through an obstinate and almost unruly presence in some places, while other places gleamed with their absence. The result was a great number of objects which spoke of the presence of the soldiers, and which in many ways reflected the, random, unconditional and uncensored characteristics of things.

The way things remember can be surprising and unpredictable. As mentioned, there is a small red cottage in the western part of Spittal. The cabin is built after the war, and at first glance, looks like any other cabin constructed of timber and tinned roof. It is from after the Second World War and appears to be functional. The first time I entered the cabin, it was also experienced as something secondary compared to the war remains, as something that had nothing to do with the war or with my study. However, the war soon turned out to be an inherent part of it; the floor, the ceiling and the walls were all constructed of triangular roof units from the occupation force's plywood tents. The plywood tents were assembled by prefabricated elements, and due to their usefulness, these Finnish construction kits were produced in a massive number during World War II (Pool 2016:177, US-Army 1943:75-79).



Figure 8: The red cabin, Spittal 2017. Recycled recollections evading the fictional and linear pace of history. Photo: S. Farstadvoll.

However, the usefulness or affordance of the elements exceeded their intended use and had - in their afterlife - found a new application. The element in the prison camp that apparently had nothing to do with the war had prolonged it in an unexpected way. The cabin was initially constructed to keep shelter during the harvest. Something that was also dexterously illustrated on the walls with small notes and tallies for the number of driven load of hay dated to 1962. The cabin represents in a way the post-war normalization, where reconstruction and re-cultivation of the area was in focus. In this process, there was also a widespread reuse of military equipment, something the cabin is a good example of. The prefabricated elements have acted as practical and available material for building a much-needed cabin. Through the construction of this cabin, an unexpected and involuntary memory has also been triggered, both in relation to a sort of appropriation of German material, a “conquest” taken from the German army, but perhaps also a glaring awareness of the original features of these roof elements, as the only protective element for exhausted prisoners.

There was a striking contrast between these completed, painted and wallpapered roofing elements and the remains that lay spread in Kitzbühel, as rotten timber, rivets and nails. In the cabin, they were floors, walls and ceilings - they had occupied new features, new shapes that

had a geometric attraction where they were placed as almost decorative elements. It was a strange feeling to see such a large number of complete roofing elements. It was a striking contrast, and while they were unusually decorative, they were at the same time so strange in the cabin. They had taken a new, unexpected form that accentuated their presence.

The cabin was an unexpected encounter with the war, which was not naturally concealed by vegetation and peat like the rubbish heap, helmets, tinned cans, porcelain or bicycle, it was not fragmented and scattered in the landscape, but a standing building that has been used under the harvest, later as a gathering place for the youth, and ultimately as a hide for sheep. It has not disappeared, on the contrary. Through this, the cabin has also evaded the fictional and linear pace of history, where it not only lives on in a recycled form, but also as a concrete anchored memory. Even the stone gate at the entrance, which has the year "1945" engraved, cannot resist its historical, anachronistic existence in 2018.

VII. Endless endings: Facing things, encountering memories

Just about all these things have helped shape, contribute, build, survive, establish, keep warm and live in these places every day. They have converted many events, uninteresting or obvious, to become "timeless" moments - daunting palpable and intimate. Nevertheless, there are also ambiguities in these meetings; it is also an occasional anonymous or deceptive state of all these things. We will never know who chose to bring a cake platter or cup from Porsgrund Porselen, who used the helmets or who designed and built the oven from an old oil barrel. The human specificity is repealed, but what is left in return is a direct and very intimate memory; a memory created in the encounter with the things themselves (Olsen og Witmore 2014:187).

All these fragmented objects from the prison camps have an inherent and triggering memory, but it is not like a passive translation of past meanings. They are here in their very own form, they are not complete, restored, pre-interpreted and purified; they are, on the contrary, in an ongoing process of change that lets us recall their lives through use, adaptation, discarding, weathering and forgetfulness. It is above all this property of the objects that means that they possess an ability to recall events and things that are no longer (Olsen og Pétursdóttir 2017:93). Moreover, far from shiny glass cases, illuminated cabinets, velutinous accounts and written stories, these lichen-grown, overrun and crumbled objects hold their very own nearness and intimacy, not only by showing that the war is yet present, but also as a very direct and honest connection with the war - regardless of nationality, political standpoint or pre-interpreted and fixed timeframes. They just *are*.

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