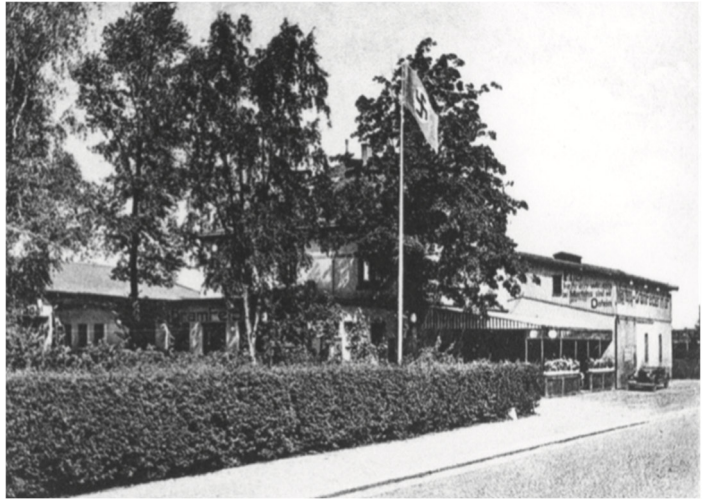


## DEPORTED TO GERMANY STRAIGHT FROM THE FACTORY GATE

Harmen Gerritsen was just 20 years old when, in 1942, after work and still in his work clothes, he was arrested in front of the factory gate in the Netherlands by the German occupiers and deported to Hamburg – without getting a chance to say goodbye to his family. He was housed in an inn in Bramfeld (*Gaststätte Kähler*, today at the corner of *Bramfelder Chaussee* and *Werner-Otto-Straße*). Like at least three other inns in Bramfeld (*Martens*, *Runge* and *Thäder*), this inn had been converted during the Second World War as accommodation for foreign forced labourers. The young Dutchman had to work as a labourer in a construction company.

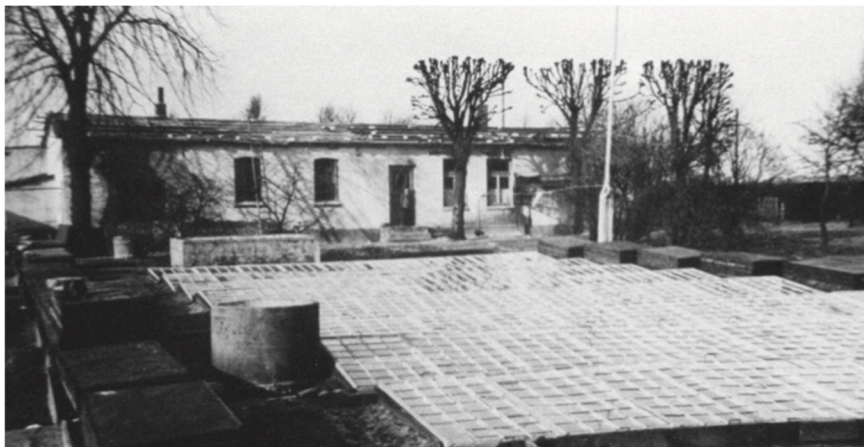
### Mrs. S. became his "second mother"

He tried to earn extra food after work or on weekends by working in private households. When the opportunity arose to work in the garden at the S's family home, the family befriended "Hermann," as they called Harmen. He helped the family, took the place of the children's older brother who had been drafted, and got a hot meal every night, writes local historian Ingrid Seeler in 1988: "Mrs. S. became his "second mother".



Bramfeld restaurants such as "Martens" served as accommodation for forced labourers (Photo around 1938, Stadtteilarchiv Bramfeld)

More than 50 men who worked as forced labourers in Bramfeld – Italians, Poles and Dutch – are documented by name. Their total number must have been considerably higher. The 32 Italians were presumably military internees who had to work in Germany. Since commercial gardeners had made Bramfeld an important vegetable-growing area in northern Germany since the 1870s, more than two-thirds of the Italians were employed by gardeners and farmers, for example at the *Cornehl* nursery. The average age of these workers was less than 27.



Forced labourers worked at the *Cornehl* nursery where vegetables and fruit were grown (Photo around 1943, Stadtteilarchiv Bramfeld)



Harvesting cabbage was typical work  
(Photo from the 1930s, Stadtteilarchiv Bramfeld)

### **Work in the sand-lime brick factory**

Forced labourers also worked in the few industrial enterprises in Bramfeld, such as the sand-lime brick factory on *Im Soll* Street. According to a list from 1946, two Dutchmen and 16 Poles worked in the factory which was classified as essential for the war effort.



Forced labourers produced up to 100,000 bricks a day  
in the sand-lime brick factory  
(Photo from the 1960s, Stadtteilarchiv Bramfeld)

Harry Schaub (1933 - 2016) lived on the site of the plant at that time. His father Carl Friedrich Schaub, persecuted as a member of the KPD, was conscripted to make sand-lime bricks. According to Schaub's assessment, the forced labourers had "a certain freedom of movement" but were not allowed to leave the shed that served as their accommodation (which was not winter-proofed) between 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.

