World War I internee, alien and POW records held in Sydney

Alien registration and internment

With the outbreak of war in 1914 a government proclamation (issued on 10 August) required German subjects in Australia (soon extended to include Austrians as well) to report to their nearest police station. By 1916 the War Precautions (Alien Restriction) Regulations required all aliens (that is, non-British subjects) aged fifteen and over to register.

The *War Precautions Act 1914* provided that citizens of enemy countries could be interned for the period of the war. Internment was not applied universally; some enemy aliens merely had their movement within the country restricted and were required to report weekly to police.

Until November 1915 there was a provision for destitute alien men to be interned on a voluntary basis, and to leave when their circumstances improved. Many who were unemployed because of their German connections took advantage of this provision under which a small weekly allowance was paid to their families.

Those interned in Australia included sailors arrested on ships in Australian ports, internees (including women and children) from British possessions in Asia, and Germans held as prisoners of war (including the crew of the raider, *Emden*, and personnel captured in German possessions in the Pacific).

Liverpool internment camp

The largest internment camp in Australia during World War I was at Holdsworthy (later spelt Holsworthy), near Liverpool on the outskirts of Sydney. Sources may refer to it as 'Liverpool camp' or 'Holdsworthy camp'. The camp held 6890 internees, most having German or Austrian antecedents. While most of the 4500 interned from within Australia had been resident in New South Wales, some were brought from all Australian states once camps established locally in the early years of the war were closed. Many from Western Australia, who had been employed in gold fields around Kalgoorlie, had originally come

from states within the Austro-Hungarian Empire such as Serbia, Croatia and Dalmatia. About 700 of those interned were naturalised British subjects, and 70 were Australian born. Many internees were deported after the war.

Records of the Liverpool camp

The National Archives in Sydney holds a range of records relating to the registration of aliens in New South Wales during the World War I period, and to the internment of aliens and prisoners of war at the Liverpool camp. Examples of these records are provided below.

2 Military District, New South Wales [I] (CA 6335)

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
Register of World War I Internees in New South Wales – A microfilm copy of this register is available in all research centres, with the exception of the Melbourne research centre	1914–19	C440
Album of identification photographs of enemy aliens (civilian and POW) interned at Liverpool Camp, NSW during World War I – A more complete version of this album (and the name index to it) is available on microfiche in all National Archives' research centres as D3597, with the exception of the Melbourne research centre	1914–21	SP421/4
Name index to album of identification photographs of enemy aliens (civilian and POW) interned at Liverpool Camp, NSW during World War I	1914–21	SP421/5

Special Intelligence Bureau, NSW (CA 909)

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
Aliens registration forms	1916–22	SP43/3

For more information

Internment camps were also established in former gaols at Berrima and Trial Bay, at Bourke, and at Molonglo in the Federal Capital Territory. While no records created by these camps are held by the National Archives, records about them may be located using the RecordSearch database.

Other fact sheets dealing with records of internment during World War I are:

- *Fact sheet 58 - WW I internee, alien and POW records held in Canberra*
- *Fact sheet 106 - WW I internee, alien and POW records held in Adelaide*
- *Fact sheet 180 - Wartime internee, alien and POW records held in Perth*