

## Wartime internee, alien and POW records held in Perth

### **The wartime treatment of aliens and prisoners of war (POWs)**

On the outbreak World War I in 1914 and World War II in 1939, the Australian government of the day took action to require the registration of all 'enemy aliens' residing in Australia. As the conflicts progressed, and particularly through times when the advantage seemed to be moving against Australia and its allies, concerted efforts were made to restrict the movement of those considered to be a threat on the homefront. Enemy aliens, naturalised and Australian-born persons of enemy alien descent, and Australians whose political activities or loyalty was called into question were interned in camps administered by the Australian Army. Enemy aliens transferred from overseas and prisoners of war captured in war zones were also held in Australian internment camps.

### **Internment in Western Australia**

#### **World War I**

Registration of aliens resident in Western Australia at the outbreak of war was conducted by 5 Military District. Among those required to register were many involved with the mining industry in the Kalgoorlie area who had come from states within the then Austro-Hungarian Empire. An internment camp was established on Rottnest Island, located off the Western Australian coast from Fremantle. Many internees from Western Australia, including the crew from the German vessel, Emden, sunk near the Cocos (Keeling) Islands by the first HMAS Sydney, were transferred to camps in New South Wales.

#### **World War II**

Different types of internee and prisoner of war institutions were established in Western Australia during World War II, depending on the level of security required. Camps were mainly located in the northern and central wheatbelt areas and the south-west of the state with the main camp located at Marrinup, some 60 kilometres south-east of Perth. The Marrinup camp administered 28 Control Centres throughout the south-west and wheatbelt areas. Control centres provided local administration and supervision of internees and POWs located on surrounding farms as rural workers. Other camps were situated at Rottnest Island, Harvey, Fremantle Prison, Northam and Woodmans Point.

Some of these camps were set up to administer the rural employment of internees and POWs in tasks such as potato digging, flax harvesting and firewood gathering as a way of overcoming the chronic shortage of farm labourers in Western Australia.

Among the first German prisoners of war to arrive in Western Australia were 315 sailors from the HSK *Kormoran*, which sank following an engagement with the second HMAS Sydney off the Western Australian coast in November 1941. The first Italian prisoners of war arrived in Western Australia in mid 1942 and in June 1943 a further batch arrived. This group constructed the camp at Marrinup which housed both German and Italian POWs. By February 1945 the number of Italian POWs in Western Australia had reached approximately 3500. Most of the POWs were repatriated to their homelands by the middle of 1947 although some were given permission to remain in Australia.

## Record holdings in Perth

The Perth office of the National Archives holds a range of records dealing with aliens, internees and prisoners of war who were interned in Western Australia during World War I and World War II. They include registers of aliens, internees and prisoners of war, case files of internees, prisoners of war and those who had come to the notice of the Investigation Branch (and later Commonwealth Investigation Service) of the Attorney-General's Department, and a selection of photographic records. Details of major holdings are listed below.

### World War I

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Reports and personal files</u>	1914–20	PP14/1
<u>Registers of internees and prisoners of war (World War I &amp; II)</u>	1914–45	PP246/2
<u>Album of identification photographs of enemy aliens (civilian and POW) interned at Liverpool Camp, NSW during WW I. A more complete version of this album (and the name index to it) is available on recordSearch as D3597.</u>	1915–21	K565
<u>Intelligence reports of internments, repatriations, affiliations and general investigations</u>	1915–20	PP14/2
<u>Register of aliens maintained under War Precautions Regulations</u>	1916–20	PP14/3

### World War II

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Registers of internees &amp; prisoners of war (World War I &amp; II)</u>	1914–45	PP246/2
<u>Correspondence files</u>	1918–59	PP302/1
<u>Aliens Declarations Form A</u>	1924–48	PP246/4
<u>Internees and prisoners of war dossiers (World War II)</u>	1939–45	K1171
<u>Internees and prisoners of war files</u>	1939–45	PP246/3
<u>Italian prisoner of war files, alphabetical order</u>	1940–46	K1174

## **For more information**

As internees were sometimes moved between camps located in different states it may be necessary to consult records held in more than one office of the National Archives in order to find all information held on a particular subject.

Other fact sheets dealing with records of wartime internment are:

### **World War I**

- *Fact sheet 58 - World War I internee, alien and POW records held in Canberra*
- *Fact sheet 171 - World War I internee, alien and POW records held in Sydney*
- *Fact sheet 106 - World War I internee, alien and POW records held in Adelaide*

### **World War II**

- *Fact sheet 59 - WW II internee, alien and POW records held in Canberra*
- *Fact sheet 101 - WW II internee, alien and POW records held in Sydney*
- *Fact sheet 107 - WW II internee, alien and POW records held in Adelaide*