

## 85th Anniversary Events Sydney, Hay and Melbourne Shrine of Remembrance



Descendants at 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Obelisk in Hay

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# From the President

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Dear Dunera and Queen Mary family and friends,

On Sunday 31 August, we held our annual Sydney function at the Tribute Room, Pyrmont. Those of us lucky enough to attend heard from Dr Belinda Castles, a well-known author and the granddaughter of a *Dunera* boy. Belinda spoke about her family's *Dunera* past and the ways in which she has come to understand and write about this history. I thank Belinda for her stimulating talk, and the staff of Doltone House who so generously provided the venue and food for our Sydney function. And my deep congratulations to Tom Wolf, who was awarded honorary life membership of the Dunera and Queen Mary Association for his many contributions to its work.

A week later came our annual weekend at Hay. A day or two beforehand, I was struck down with the flu and was unable to attend, much to my regret. But my understanding is that a terrific weekend was had by all. Carol Oatway, Mayor of Hay Shire, was our guest of honour. Carol's speech on Hay's place in the *Dunera* story was stirring and evocative. My thanks to Carol, and to Alison McLean, Gaylene Stephens and all those at Hay Council who always make the weekend a highlight of the *Dunera* calendar.

This is my last column as President. I will step down from the role at our annual meeting in November. I thank you for the honour of serving as President of the Association - it has been a privilege - and I wish my successor well.



In the meantime, I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at our annual Melbourne event on Sunday 9 November.

**Dr Seumas Spark**  
President

## SAVE THE DATES

### **85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Events 2025**

Melbourne, VIC - Sunday 9 November

### **86<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Events 2026**

Tatura, VIC - Sunday 17 May 2026

Sydney, NSW - TBA

Hay, NSW - 4-6 September 2026

# Mick Beckwith OAM

## *Various Contributors*

Mick Beckwith was presented with his Dunera Association Honorary Life Membership certificate in 2013 by Mike Sondheim. It was these two who forged the initial relationship with their collaboration in organising the 50th Anniversary events at Hay in 1990. The following years saw the relationship strengthen as Mick led the efforts to establish an internment and prisoner of war museum at the Hay railway station. It was, in his view, “probably one of, if not, THE most significant event in our history” and he was grateful for the support, financial and donations, received from the *Dunera* boys.

He was a member of the separate groups involved in telling and showcasing the local internment story. In 1991 he wrote a short history of the Hay camps published by the Hay Historical Society. He also gathered material relating to internment, some retained and used by the Hay Historical Society in their *Haywire* publication. Other items were initially held by the Hay Gaol Museum, of which he was Committee Chairman, and was later moved to the Dunera Museum on permanent loan. As a councillor, he was a strong advocate for tourism, including the establishment of museums.

Mick had a personal connection to the Hay camps in that late in the war his father was a member of the Garrison. He also had a personal connection to the town of Tatura as his paternal grandfather was a blacksmith there.

Tatura’s Arthur and Lurline Knee, and Mick’s successors at Hay, David and Coleen Houston, also received Honorary Life Memberships in 2013. The five were acknowledged for the “wonderful friendship and enormous contributions all had made to welcoming former internees and ensuring that their stories are preserved locally.”

Mick had a great love of Hay and its history and worked hard in many ways to help the town thrive and ensure the past was not forgotten. His leadership and work were exceedingly important to the town, and the ongoing relationship with those associated with Dunera is an enduring legacy of his efforts.

Ron Reichwald was fortunate in meeting Mick in hospital during Dunera weekend last year, only a few months before his passing. He was obviously unwell but made it clear how proud he was to have served both the Hay and Dunera communities in a way by promoting the first reunion in Hay on the 50th anniversary of the arrival of the Dunera Boys in 1990. Mick was proud of the association with Mike Sondheim, which was instrumental in cementing the relationship between the Hay and Dunera communities, and presenting the opportunity for all reunions and events in Hay since.



## Obituary Michael Beckwith

Michael Beckwith's earliest memory was when the family lived at the river end of Orson Street, past Hatty Street.

It was a dirt road and Mick remembered as a toddler running down the street with the other kids in the street to the boat at the wharf end.

His was a happy childhood, filled with love and a large family.

The family later moved to Strachan Place, to a house today occupied by David and Margaret Beckwith.

Nearly Beckwith Lane was named after the family, something they are all very proud of.

The Beckwiths are a very big family. Growing up in Hay, Mick and Alice's children had 15 Beckwith cousins in Hay, another seven in Deniliquin plus others living further afield.

Mick was one of eight and attended St Mary's School where he only once got the cane from the scary nuns, and said it was worth it.

It was the day he decided to decorate the convent dog with ribbons to its tail and around his belly and turned it loose into the school.

This caused a lot of amusement and disrupted the classes with all the kids laughing.

As was normal at the time, Mick left school at 14 and got a job at the Lands Office.

His first boss taught him to always be well-dressed, and to remember that they were there to serve the public.

In keeping with that advice, Mick wore a suit to work on his first day, borrowed from Lindsay Kelton.

He always stuck to the 'well dressed' theory, and wore a tie all of his life.

A year later, he got a job in another Department in Sydney but that didn't last very long, and Mick returned to Hay and to his job in the Lands Office.

Mick had an amazing capacity for work, knowledge of the workings of the Crown Lands Act, the workings of Government, an amazing network of politicians and the know-how of how to pull the right strings.

Shortly after returning to Hay, Mick met Alice and they were together for 64 years. Michael junior came along, and then

Fiona six years later.

They were a happy family in a happy home.

Mickael remembers visiting his father at work in the Lands Office, an amazing workplace where everyone got their work done, and at the same time have a real camaraderie and a lot of humour.

Mick made lifelong friends there.

They helped each other and influenced each other and had a great time. And they learnt that public service was its own reward.

Mick ran for Council because he was motivated to step up and do more in the town. He wasn't successful on his first attempt but was voted in the second time that he ran.

His mentors were Max Lugsdin and Ralph Davies whom he watched and learnt from.

He was also a union man, and was active in the public sector union which represented his workmates.

In those days, the public service had a role for a government coordinator in country areas, set up to assist local people in contacting Government in various ways.

Mick volunteered for this voluntary role and got into it. He would write letters for people on their behalf to their local member or to the relevant Minister.

People came to know that he was someone who could help them with their problem.

It might have been about their welfare situation, it could have been their housing, it could have been a legal problem, or about their immigration case, or might have been seeking a government grant for some purpose.

This was how he became so involved in the lives of so many people. Mick became known around the district as someone who could help people with government business.

He didn't win every cause, some causes can't be won, but he won most.

Mick later joined the Labor Party, attending all the meetings and rallies and met famous politicians who became his friends.

His connections in the Labor Party, the Union and the Lands Department meant he

knew a lot of Ministers and a lot of senior people in the public service as well. This helped him to get things done as he often knew just who to write or speak to, or call.

Politics became the family's thing. Politics is what they talked about. Around the dinner table, while other people might have talked about sports, or what was happening on the farm, they talked about politics.

Mick was very involved in the "It's Time" campaign in 1972 and was responsible for a lot of activity in the town at that time.

Mick's involvement in the establishment of both the Hay Gaol Museum and Dunera Museum is well-known. He was a member of 54 local organisations, often as chair, secretary or honorary auditor.

For service to his community, Mick was made a Rotary International Paul Harris Fellow, an honour usually deserved for Rotarians only.

Mick always continued to promote Hay as a place to visit speaking on regional radio or television.

When the news media wanted a story about Hay, they would call Mick to get it.

Mick loved his Catholic Religion and served the church in whatever way he could.

He took communion out to people who were sick and when there was no priest, he and Marg Tighe would run the church services. He also trained to be a funeral celebrant so that he could carry out that role.

For many years, Mick was interested in running for State Government.

It was his driving ambition at one time, but changed his mind and decided to focus his life on local Council and on town affairs for the rest of his life.

Mick served as Shire President and later as Mayor of Hay.

He had the opportunity to meet The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh, Charles and Diana, Governors and Prime Ministers, and always talked to them about Hay, always promoted the town.

Mick loved his sports. He played and refereed in basketball, played rugby league and he was a big fan of the Parramatta Eels.

He didn't like violence. He believed that people should keep themselves under control and behave with dignity.

Mick was not a fan of guns; he had a 22 rifle, but wasn't really a shooter.

After the Port Arthur massacre a rally was held in Hay against the new gun laws. Mick stood up to speak; they were formulating a message to send to Prime Minister John Howard in pretty harsh language. Mick wanted them to tone it down a bit and sound more reasonable.

In response, he was chased off by a lot of angry men, some of whom got a bit threatening. The next day one of the men called Alice to say that he didn't agree with Mick, but he respected him for having that courage to get up in front of an angry room and put an opposing view.

Nothing really scared him; he stuck with his principles without fear. It wouldn't have mattered how many didn't agree with him, he would have stared them down.

One of Mick's proudest moments was when he led the Hay Band down the street on ANZAC Day. Many of his family were band members and the culmination was when he carried the mace and led them on the march.



Another proud moment was when he was presented with his life membership in the Labor Party, the result of 50 years' membership.

Mick was a very happy person all of the time. He was always in high spirits. Nothing ever got him down.

His eyes were always shining and he was always ready to laugh about something.

He had an inexhaustible source of energy and could go all day and half of the night at whatever work was going on.

And after an extremely long day working on the One Tree Races or the Gaol or whatever, he would turn up the next day and start again another venture. He was always able to juggle several projects on the go at the one time.

His achievements in community life are many. Things that are taken for granted now - like filtered water in Hay, improvements to Hay Showground, Tilly Towns, The Hay Gaol, Australia Day, Hay Show and Dunera Museum are just some of the causes that Mick fought so hard for.

Mick Beckwith will be remembered by many as Hay's greatest townsman of all.

He had a huge influence on the running of Hay; he was honoured with an Order of Australia Medal and the Freedom of the Shire.

He was the driving force behind Australia Day becoming a National Day of Pride - celebrating the day with Citizenship Awards and parades long before they became fashionable in other parts of the Country.

In his later years Mick suffered from a number of health problems that slowed him down and forced him to withdraw more and more from the public affairs that he once loved to be a part of.

But he was still Mick Beckwith, still smiling, and writing to people in the community from his hospital bed to cheer them along, congratulate or support them.

Mick passed away on May 30 at Hay Hospital, aged 85.

He is survived by his wife Alice, children Michael and Fiona, and their partners, grandchildren Elia, Steven Mitchell, Luke and Caitlin and his brothers William, George and David and their partners.



The Dunera and Queen Mary Association mourns the death of Mick Beckwith.

Mick's contribution to Dunera history cannot be overstated. More than thirty years ago, he worked with our president, the late Mike Sondheim, to develop a Dunera museum at Hay. He and Mike were the key figures in organising the 1990 Hay reunion, which remains a pivotal moment in Dunera history.

Hay's continuing commitment to telling the Dunera story owes a great deal to Mick's pioneering contributions. He was a man of foresight and generous spirit.

Our deepest sympathies to Alice and the Beckwith family.



### Mick Beckwith - a champion for his people

The Editor

I am writing to you in response to the recent passing of former Hay mayor, Mick Beckwith.

As mayor, he stood up for Government jobs and services in Hay, and to that, I would like to highlight his commitment in one of many cases.

In the 1980s, the NSW Government downsized the then Department of Main Roads (DMR) to become the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA).

The DMR works office was to be downgraded to a maintenance depot with the prospect of losing many jobs.

A delegation of employees approached Mayor Beckwith and explained the situation, highlighting the effect of losing local jobs and the impact it would have on the town.

The mayor took up the matter with the government and received a favourable response, saving most of the jobs.

There were redundancies offered, and some were taken up.

But overall, the office was retained and still is a major employer.

Vale Mayor Mick and champion of Hay, Greg Parr, Church Street, Hay.

# Sydney Event - 31<sup>st</sup> August 2025

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## *Geoff Winter*

A small but enthusiastic crowd recently gathered at the Tribute Museum, Doltone House, to celebrate the Dunera 'experience' again this year.

Our guest speaker was Professor Belinda Castles, grand-daughter of Heinz Schlosser and his wife Fay, the subjects of her historical novel entitled Hannah and Emile. She gave fascinating insights on how the book came to be interwoven with the Dunera story, and how some of her other books came to be written.

Another highlight on the occasion was the awarding of Life Membership to DA member Tom Wolf, who has built scale models of the Dunera, explaining how the second model was an improvement on the first, not that any of us would have noticed!

Again Doltone House 'turned it on' for us, for which we were most grateful.

Left: Professor Belinda Castles  
Right: Tom Wolf



# Hayward Bound - 85 Years

## *Ron Reichwald*

I embarked on my 20th trip to Hay. The unmistakable and continuous changes in the Australian landscape always amaze me and is a feature of Australia I miss when travelling overseas. The landscape changes from the comparative lushness of the Murray Valley in northern Victoria to the flat plains of south-west NSW. As one progresses northward, the vegetation becomes more and more sparse until it becomes semi-arid salt bush country, as flat as the eye can see; a deserted landscape, only a dead straight road, with the tragic sight of road-kill (usually dead kangaroos) by the side of the road.

This visit was special not only because I was with my older son, but I would be meeting two important people, who epitomise the country spirit of Australia. For the first time, I also participated in the traditional re-enactment of the Dunera Boys, stepping off the train at Hay railway station as an actual internee, dressed in my long old trench coat and a misshaped fedora hat.

Another special highlight was the presentation to the Hay Dunera Museum of a model of HMT Dunera created by our member Tom Wolf. This is the second such model he has made, and more are in the pipeline.

I visited Alice Beckwith, the widow of past Mayor of Hay Shire, Mick Beckwith OAM, who is highlighted in this issue. She is a great supporter of the Dunera community and was always on hand to make sure our visits were a success. I also visited Laura Bunyan, mother of our honorary archivist and historian Carol Bunyan. She spent countless hours working for the local community, particularly in managing the Hay Gaol Museum. I had great conversations with these ladies, reminiscing over previous visits and their important roles in the community.

About twenty attendees made this visit very memorable, none more so than the great David and Coleen Houston who are Hay and Dunera royalty because they have made the Dunera visitors so welcome and worked tirelessly to make sure the Dunera story stays alive in Hay.



Re-enactment of Hay Dunera internees

## **Exerpts From The Welcoming Speech Of The Mayor Of Hay Shire, Councillor Carol Oataway, On The Occasion Of The 85th Anniversary Of The Arrival Of The Dunera Boys In Hay**

It is a great honour to welcome you all to Hay for the 85th commemoration of the Dunera Boys. This is more than a remembrance - it is a celebration of resilience, humanity and the bonds that grew in the most unlikely of circumstances.

In 1940, more than 2,500 men - mostly Jewish refugees from Germany and Austria - were wrongly deported from Britain on the HMT Dunera. After enduring appalling conditions on the voyage, they were sent by train to Hay, arriving on 7 September 1940. Behind barbed wire, in two high-security camps, the men transformed adversity into opportunity. They created orchestras, newspapers, plays and lectures, taught languages and skills, referring to themselves as the "University of Hay."

Though the beginning was harsh, understanding soon grew between the internees and the people of Hay. The town came to recognise them not as enemies, but as men of intellect, warmth and culture. Many went on to extraordinary achievements in science, medicine, education, and the arts - leaving an enduring legacy in Australia.

For Hay, the Dunera story is woven into our identity. It lives on in the Dunera Museum, in local memory, and in the values of inclusion and multiculturalism we hold today. The Dunera Boys may have arrived as prisoners, but they remain part of our story.

To the descendants gathered here, thank you for keeping this history alive. It is so important to share the stories with future generations. The legacy continues in your families, in your memories and in the way you honour your fathers and grandfathers. Your presence ensures the lessons of courage, dignity and hope are passed on.

Welcome back to Hay.



Mayor Carol Oataway, David Houston and Carol Bunyan.  
Photo by Lou Gardam

# His Majesty's Most Loyal Internees

A Joint Duldig Studio/Dunera & Queen Mary Association Event  
Shrine of Remembrance, 14th September 2025  
85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the arrival of the HMT Dunera and Queen Mary

## *Eva de Jong-Duldig*

*There is no superlative that can remotely do justice to today's beautiful Anniversary at the Shrine of Remembrance. What a perfect and most moving "send-off" to our parents, other relatives and friends. Dr George Fink (child internee, Queen Mary) 14 September 2025.*

A Panel Talk and Last Post Service was held at The Shrine of Remembrance on 14 September to commemorate the internees who arrived in Australia from Great Britain and Singapore 85 years ago. Shrine Governor, Squadron Leader Peter Meehan, who led the moving Last Post Service said:

*Today, we recall the nearly 3,000 people, most of them Jewish, who were deported from the United Kingdom and Singapore in 1940. The Singapore group included women and children. Arriving in Australia as 'enemy aliens', and sent to internment camps, they were released in 1942 after many of the men joined the AIF 8th Employment Company. After the war, most went on to enrich Australian society in lasting ways. I am joined by Tonia Eckfeld, the daughter of a Dunera internee and former child internees from the Queen Mary, Eva de Jong-Duldig, Dr George Fink, Miriam Gould, Grace Moray and Ruth Simon, as well as other descendants of those who came to Australia on the Military Transport Ships Dunera and Queen Mary. They will lay a wreath at the Eternal Flame in memory of all those internees who eventually made their homes in Australia.*

The Panel Talk, titled 'His Majesty's Most Loyal Internees', preceded the Last Post Service. The conversation was chaired by Monash University Historian, Seumas Spark, President of the Dunera and Queen Mary Association. Panellists Joy Damousi (Australian Catholic University), Eva de Jong-Duldig (Founder Duldig Studio), Tonia Eckfeld (University of Melbourne) and Kate Garrett (Dunera and Queen Mary Association), reflected on the challenges faced by these wartime refugees, the legacy of their internment and how their stories continue to resonate across generations.



Left: Former child internees laying a wreath at the Eternal Flame.  
Right: Former child internees and other descendants.

# Biography of Heinz Dehn - Part 3

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*Heinz Dehn was father and grandfather of the operators of Dunera. de Peter and Paul Dehn. Like many other Nazi victims, he told little about this time and about his family at all. It was only long after his and his wife Ida's death that the two began intensive research into the stories of their ancestors, their relatives, and some of the people around the family. Thus, and including Peter Dehn's memories of his parents, a relatively comprehensive picture of Heinz Dehn's life emerged.*

**Peter Dehn, January 2024**

## **Interned behind barbed wire in Australia**

The survivors of the *Arandora Star* and some other internees are disembarked a few days later in Melbourne and taken to a camp near Tatura (Federal Country Victoria). Most of the men must endure on board until September 6. Their ordeal on the *Dunera* ends in Sydney Harbor. They are immediately taken by rail to a newly built camp at Hay in the state of New South Wales. There they are trapped behind triple barbed wire and guard towers. There are weather conditions unfamiliar to Europeans, with almost abrupt changes between extreme heat and cold nights. In June 1941, they are transferred to Tatura, which has a somewhat milder climate and is surrounded by several camps. Once again, the internees find themselves behind triple barbed wire and under military guard. In Hay, as in Tatura, the internees use the self-government left to them to organize daily life. In addition, expert comrades offer continuing education in many subjects. There are sports and cultural activities, and they even create artworks and their own plays.

Heinz Dehn is involved in these self-governments. In Hay, as "Hut Captain," he represents the fellow internees from Hut 18 in the camp council. In 1941, on the occasion of the transfer to Tatura, the spokesman of Camp 7 Hay Andreas Eppenstein thanked him for his "excellent work"<sup>1</sup>. "Under often unfavorable conditions" Heinz had "selflessly and in the best sense of comradeship contributed to alleviating the distress of our internees". He is also active in the Tatura camp. On the occasion of the dissolution of the camp and his farewell from the camp council, comrade Ulrich Laufer<sup>2</sup> paints a watercolor as a personal gift. He caricatures Heinz in numerous situations of his activity for the internees.

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1 Camp spokesman Andreas Eppenstein to Heinz Dehn, Hay, May 1941.

2 The talented artist from Berlin-Schöneberg is one of the youngest "Dunera Boys". He was only 20 years old and a working soldier when he and his comrade Max Schwarz (26) drowned in a swimming accident in Tocumwal (NSW) on December 30, 1943.



Dunera Boy Ulrich Laufer created this satirical picture of Heinz Dehn's work as a hut captain on his departure from the Tatura camp council at the end of 1942. Source: Dehn family archive.

## Internment as a “regrettable mistake”?

As early as the summer of 1940, the internment policy in England in general and the events surrounding the Arandora Star and the Dunera in particular were discussed publicly and critically - even in Parliament. On August 22, 1940 - the Dunera had not yet arrived in Australia - Major Victor Alexander Cazalet, a member of the Conservative Party, admonished the House of Commons:

“No ordinary excuse, such as that there is a war on and that officials are overworked, is sufficient to explain what has happened. (...) Horrible tragedies, unnecessary and undeserved, lie at the door of somebody (...). We have, unwittingly I know, added to the sum total of misery caused by this war, and by doing so we have not in any way added to the efficiency of our war effort. (...) Frankly, I shall not feel happy, either as an Englishman or as a supporter of this Government, until this bespattered page of our history has been cleaned up and rewritten.”

Source: British House of Commons<sup>3</sup>, Minutes of 22 August 1940.

3 House of Commons, Minute of Aug 22, 1940. Quoted from court documents and [https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1940/aug/22/internees-1#S5CV0364P0\\_19400822\\_HOC\\_405](https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1940/aug/22/internees-1#S5CV0364P0_19400822_HOC_405), retrieved May 10, 2023.

Prime Minister Churchill shrugs off the events surrounding the more than 11,000 men deported by superficial saying<sup>4</sup> it was “a deplorable and regrettable mistake”.

The government is providing a rather modest 35,000 pounds<sup>5</sup> in financial compensation. This may satisfy the material losses, but hardly does justice to the broken lives of the 2,500 men. A British military court conducts the trial of only three accused guards. It refuses to bring internees to England to testify. Even written testimonies from those affected are not wanted and are ignored. After a lengthy delay, an officer and two enlisted men from the Dunera guards are sentenced to rather light sentences. Officially, government files on the entire subject are blocked for 100 years. By the time “history can be cleaned up and rewritten,” it may be forgotten if possible.

In parallel, the British Home Office sends an officer<sup>6</sup> to Australia to recruit soldiers among the internees for pioneer units or other war-related duties. From mid-1941 until the end of the war, 1,131 men are released from internment and sent to England for military service<sup>7</sup>. Attacks by German submarines<sup>8</sup> during these voyages claim 47 victims among them.

## **As a Soldier Down Under**

Several hundred ex-interns wanted to travel from Australia to third countries to join their families or relatives. About 500 internees want to stay in Australia. They join the Australian military under voluntary duress<sup>9</sup>, but are not allowed to serve with weapons. Heinz Dehn and most of the other ex-internees are assigned to the 8th Australian Employment Company, newly formed exclusively from Jewish ex-internees. Among other things, they have to transfer military and civilian goods between trains of different gauges at Albury station (on the border of the states of Victoria and New South Wales). There and at other operational locations, they replace the manpower of Australians on duty with weapons. It was not until March 21, 1946 - almost a year after the end of the war - that Heinz Dehn was released from the army<sup>10</sup>.

Unlike other ex-interns, he renounces naturalization in Australia. Before his discharge from the army, however, he applies for permanent residency.<sup>11</sup>

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4 Cf. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMT\\_Dunera](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMT_Dunera), retrieved May 11, 2023.

5 The value of the amount is given as around 2 million pounds as of 2021. (For reference: This corresponds to around €2.3 million in 2023); see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMT\\_Dunera](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMT_Dunera), accessed on May 11, 2023.

6 Major Julian Layton, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julian\\_Layton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julian_Layton), was a Brit with German-Jewish roots who had already committed himself to the Kitchener Camp. He was sent to Australia as a Home Office liaison to deal with the internment camps.

7 Cf. Inglis, Spark, Winter, „Dunera Lives. A Visual History“, Melbourne 2018, page 518.

8 Cf. Interview of J. Layton, quoted from Bartrop/Eisen „The Dunera Affair. A Documentary Resource Book“, Sydney 1990, page 101.

9 Vgl. Note from the Adjutant-General to the Australian Parliament, March 29, 1946. National Archives of Australia (NAA), NAA\_ItemNumber4938132, sheet 28, paragraph d.

10 Cf. „Service and Casualty Form“ Heinz Dehn, service no. V503914, National Archives of Australia NAA\_ItemNumber6259383.

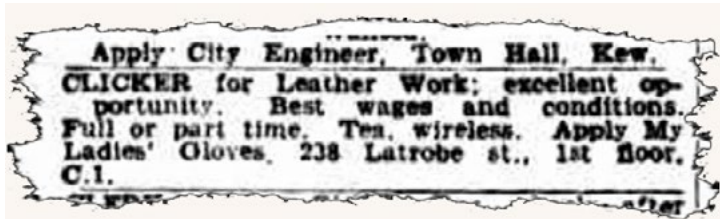
11 NAA\_ItemNumber7841298.



Work break at Albury Station. 2nd right: Heinz Dehn.  
Photo: Harry Jay. Source: Dehn family archive.

## Life in Melbourne

Like many former internees, he settles in Melbourne and finds employment in companies in the clothing industry, among others. His first known home of freedom is at 57 Wellington St. in the Windsor district east of Melbourne's business district. In March 1947, "My Ladies Gloves" advertises for a "clicker". Did Heinz apply for this?



Did Heinz successfully apply for this advert for "My Ladies Gloves"?  
Source: "The Argus", 22 March 1947; National Library of Australia

In early 1948, he names this company as his place of employment. He now lives a few houses away at 109 Wellington St.<sup>12</sup> The building is near the corner of the then shopping mile Chapel St. and the "Astor" cinema<sup>13</sup>. Heinz provides

<sup>12</sup> NAA\_ItemNumber6025111, page 13.

<sup>13</sup> The Austrian refugees Karl and Olga Bodan ran a hairdresser and a tobacco shop (Bodan & Kann) there in the

this postal address to the actress [Eva Schwarcz](#) as the address for the Heinrich Heine League<sup>14</sup> (League for German Democracy), which she founded. [Ida Flieder](#), the only survivor of a [Jewish family from Hanover](#), soon moves into the new address.

From July 1949 Heinz Dehn runs the company Hyman & Wieselmann<sup>15</sup>, a button and belt making business in Melbourne's Chinatown.

Ida and Heinz get married<sup>16</sup> on March 12, 1951. Their witnesses were the "Dunera Boys" Walter Fuerst from Vienna and Eric Towers (Erich Tichauer) from Ratibor (Racibórz, Silesia), who had become naturalized citizens during their time in the army. Heinz and Ida now live in a semi-detached house at 47a Henry Street, also in the Windsor district. Their son Peter is born in 1953. Later in the year, Ida, like Heinz, receives a salary from Hyman & Wieselmann based on halving the net profit earned.

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1940s. There might have been a connection to Heinz Dehn through Eva Schwarcz, who came with them from Shanghai - apart from the immediate proximity.

- 14 A head arch is preserved in the Dehn family archive. Eva Schwarcz returned to Berlin in mid-1947. She went to Freiburg in 1961, where she died in 1966.
- 15 The founding is not documented. It could be speculated that Heinz took the company over, which was possibly founded by the Austrian Dunera Boys Ladislaus and Victor Wieselmann.
- 16 Marriage Contract of the Caulfield Hebrew Congregation, March 12, 1951, Dehn family archive. Secular: NAA\_ItemNumber6025111 (Heinz Dehn); NAA\_ItemNumber6025112 (Ida Dehn).

## MERCHANDISE

We are delighted to share our new Dunera and Queen Mary merchandise. Items will be available at all events or can be posted (Australia only at this stage) for \$12. Pricing has been kept to a minimum with purchases financially supporting the Association.

<https://www.duneraassociation.com/merchandise/>

**Mug \$12 | Beanie \$15 | Cap \$15**



# From the Archives - Hans Meyer - Mt Stromlo - And 55 Years In Between

No.37 October 1996 - page 6

Hans Meyer came from Berlin. He answered Bern Brent's notice in the recent "BERLIN AKTUELL" re former Goethe Schule students, resulting in this correspondence.

Dear Mike Sondheim,

Thank you very much for your letter of 1.5.96. I was interned in London where arrests were made in alphabetical order. So I packed my bags the night before the event. The civilian officer looked at my assembled belongings and stated "You don't need all that, we know who you are and you will be back in 2 weeks." It took me 35 years to get back the first time.

In the back of the open lorry taking us to the outskirts of London (and into the tender arms of the military) the guard was passing around the hat for donations for the driver - "because he had been at it since 4 am."

Well, then came the DUNERA and the Loewenjaeger which needs no comments from me. I remember the guard on the train from Sydney to Hay stating in response to lengthy laments: "You'll be right mate, you'll have a bloody good home and you'll be frigging well looked after." And how right he was. I don't remember my camp number but I landed in hut 25 with Hein Heckroth, Dr. Baer und viele anderen, and I also recall the red-haired brothers Eppenstein - so we much have been neighbours [yes, camp 7 hut 26 "The Roebucks"]

You will also recall that we had access to Sydney weekend newspapers. The one that exhorted the local population to guard us well - as we are dangerous. One day it contained an article about the Government trying to establish a facility to build military optical instruments which, of course, were no longer available from overseas.

The Astronomers at Mt.Stromlo Observatory were going to use their mathematical skills to design optical systems but skilled labour to produce these was just about non-existent at the time in Australia. As I knew something of what was involved, I volunteered, was interviewed in Hay and released in Tatura on 30.6.41. With me came one George Froehlich [Camp 8] who was also found to have some useful knowledge in the field.

Apart from one other skilled person who knew how to manufacture syringes, we were the very first to be released to work in industry. Some burly policeman escorted us, keeping an eagle eye on us, delivered us in Canberra the next day. We learnt later that the person most strongly objecting to our release, was a Colonel Cohen from Military Intelligence.

At any rate our conduct at Mt. Stromlo must have been acceptable because it resulted in the release of Gus Krentler (a mechanical draftsman) and Erwin Freye (a fitter and turner) as well as Ernst Froehlich [ the first two Hay camp 8, the latter from no. 7 whose story in Dunera News 28, Oct.93].

Both Krentler and Freye as well as a good few others on the Dunera, as you will remember, were there not because of their Abstammung but because of their political and humanitarian views. Krentler was a socialist and Freye a communist - and I have often wondered whether in all the hype about the Dunera, anyone ever gave a thought to the memory of these Germans and their courage and decency.

After the war I went into business in Sydney, I lived in St. Ives. I retired in 1986, went to live in Leura in the Blue Mountains and have finally settled on the Central Coast.

Since leaving Canberra, I had no further contact with anyone from the Dunera until the 50th Anniversary of our arrival in Sydney where I recognised and met Claus Loewald.

I am happy to join the Association and enclose the required contribution.

Best wishes and regards

# Kurt & Wally Arndt

## *Janet Arndt*

My parents, Kurt and Wally Arndt, left Germany via Hamburg in February 1939. They were married on 22 December 1938 and were able to catch a ship, the Fushimi Maru, bound for Shanghai. A relative who worked for a shipping company was able to get them tickets.

They disembarked in Singapore, the only passengers to do so as dad's brother-in-law Helmuth Jacobowicz, (later Jackson), came on board and said he had a job for Kurt Arndt. (His wife Lolo was dad's sister). After one and a half

years, in 1940, the British Government declared them Enemy Aliens due to their German passports and so in September 1940 they had to pack up and leave once again. They arrived in Australia via the Queen Mary, a luxury liner converted into a troop ship, with over 200 others, men women and children.

From their point of disembarkation, they were transported to Tatura in Victoria. From 1940-42 they were in the camp. In 1942 the Australian Government said they needed a land army/labour core to fight bushfires, can fruit at Ardmona, pick grapes in Mildura, load and unload ships on the docks, etc. Internees (men only) were given a physical and if okay became part of the Eighth Employment Company (EEC). My dad passed and was to be part of the EEC from 1942-45. And now they were "Refugee Aliens"! They did all that was required and in 1945 were "honourably discharged".

When the men were enlisted, they and their families were released from the camp. Families were found accommodation in people's homes (billeted) in Melbourne with the help of the Jewish Welfare Society, often a room. I was born on 6 June 1944 while dad was in the army, so as maths would have it, conceived during a leave pass.

In 1945, after my first birthday, mum and I went on a train to Albury where the EEC were stationed, for the last three months of dad's service. I had my first haircut from Erich Eisinger, the army barber! We remained friends for always, and I still see Lottie Eisinger/ Phillip now, she's 104! When I was about two, we moved to a couple of rooms upstairs in a cake shop owned by Edith and Arnold Bayer (Helmut's sister and brother-in-law). I went to Christ Church Kindergarten from the age of two until I was five, as the shop was in Toorak Road near Punt Road.

Dad started to work as a stonemason for the Kerry Brothers. The Arndt business back in Germany had been stone-masonry: Great grandpa Phillip had been a marble sculptor. I bet there are still some of his statues in the cemetery in Koczalin (Koslin). Dad had trained for four years with other stonemasons. They had a yard/workshop at the back of their property which was a large triple fronted building. Dad took some tools with him when they left Germany, and it was to be his life's work here until he was seventy-four and macular degeneration stopped him. He was a wonderful craftsman, very precise. He worked in



several cemeteries around Melbourne and would sometimes do restoration work around the city on foundation stones etc. I remember him doing some on St Kilda's Esplanade. Dad did work for other stonemasons too, also with his brother Ernst who came from South Africa, until he decided to "go it alone." He erected a sign outside the house at 4 Gardenvale Road, opposite the Brighton Cemetery.

Mum, Wally, had trained as a stenographer/typist back in Germany, and was eventually able to use those skills, first in the Myers' office, also at the Jewish Welfare, and for a tax accountant in Punt Road. Mum got me a holiday job in the Myers' office for 3 weeks. That was enough to help me decide office work was not for me! From an early age I knew I wanted to be a teacher, so that's what I did.

When I was born mum used to do "piece work" a home, sewing sequins on material. Dad told me that he used to help when he was on leave - cute! My father was a great raconteur, telling me lots of stories about army life, like chaps going AWOL regularly. They were bivouacked at Caulfield Racecourse, Royal Park, Camp Pell when they were in Melbourne. Mum didn't talk much about those things, in fact, I'm sure it was dad's seeming resilience and deep sense of energy and humour that kept mum going.

Life after Singapore and Tatura was a period of adjustment. Mum worked until I was thirteen, then dad said "that's enough, you don't need to work anymore. I will provide!" and so, he did. We started going on annual holidays to guesthouses at Hepburn Springs, Marysville, Warburton. My first singing appearance was in the rotunda at Hepburn Springs when I was three and a half singing "Rudolph the Rednose Reindeer" and "Jingle Bells", lovely for the little Jewish girl! I was also born in a Catholic Hospital called Manor House run by German nuns.

After moving from the cakeshop, when I was four, we rented a duplex at 42 Albert St in Windsor. When I was twelve, dad bought a 1922 Californian Bungalow at 4 Gardenvale Road, which was to be their home for the rest of their lives. Wally passed away at 91 in Massada Hospital after a heart attack. Kurt continued to live in the house with help from me and a number of carers until a fall on the back lawn while hanging out the laundry. He continued to live quite independently until then but decided it was time for him to move. He moved to Hamble Court, a small aged-care facility in Martin Street, where he and mum had gone for respite care. He would not have managed a large place with lifts, so it was perfect for him. Wilhelmina, the owner, was lovely, so for one and a half years he was fine until his kidneys packed up. The Alfred Hospital were so caring, and towards his last breath gave him a private room where he peacefully passed away with cousin Susan Bendel and I beside him.

Our life had been full of many social and family events with my rellies Paul and Lotti Arndt and cousin Peter who had come from Bolivia, with parents Max and Ida, Ernst and Friedel Arndt and cousin Ralph from South Africa, Lolo and Helmuth Jackson, cousins Frank and Ron, dad's cousins Herman and Martin (Margulius), Herman and Hanny and cousin Judi, Martin and Raie with cousins Vivian, Yvonne, and Dennis, and that's just family!

Friends from Singapore, the Seefelds, Dunera people Edi and Henry Felder and families, Ilse Blair/Blue/Baer... she had married Werner Baer, then Hans Blau, lovely musician, daughters Miriam Gould and Noelle, Tichauers, the Eisingers, Arthur Hyman and wife and the list goes on! How lucky were we all!

# Observations, prompted by a letter from a friend, on the film ‘The Dunera Boys’, shown on British television on October 15 & 17, 1985

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## *Anonymous*

What struck me first, on a factual level, were the distortions.

People were not rounded up by uniformed bobbies coming, two at a time, to ‘collar’ one ‘enemy alien’ and march him straight from his work-bench to the nearest police station; instead, plain clothes men called at private addresses, asked you quickly to pack a suitcase and accompany them. Those suitcases were taken away from us when we boarded the ship at Liverpool. They were not jettisoned (as in the film), but when we got to African waters it dawned on those in charge that if, owing to lack of hygiene (we only had one set of underwear), an epidemic were to break out, the germs might not content themselves with the internees. Orders were therefore given for the suitcases to be opened or, if locked, forced open with bayonets, so that shirts and underclothes could be distributed. Laundry exhibitions now travelled from deck to deck. Each day, after lunch, another heap of laundry items was dumped and displayed on the tables from which we ate, and we had to file past to see if we could identify any as our own.

The point about the torpedo was not that some U-boat chap reported to his captain, somewhere in the Atlantic, that it had missed, but that it grazed the keel: there was a terrific noise and the whole ship shook. This happened within hours of the ‘Dunera’ sailing from Liverpool, as she was rounding the coast of N. Ireland; the sea was rough and people were letting themselves go completely. Morale was restored the following morning, for good.

The sadistic kick in the backside was sheer intervention. Nor did physical exercise consist in us having to move at the double in small circles. Instead, we had to do two or three rounds on the top deck once a day, walking briskly the entire length of the ship while machine guns were manned at either end. The only incident I ever heard of concerned an elderly man who had stopped for a moment and had been jabbed by a soldier’s bayonet.

On Friday, 6 September 1940, the ‘Dunera’ docked in Sydney harbour and we disembarked. Though one Sydney paper announced the arrival of ‘enemy jackals’ too dangerous to have been kept in Britain, no one turned up at the quayside to hurl missiles at us or abuse. Nor did the citizens of Hay turn out when we reached their station early the following morning. There were no lorries either to give us a lift. Instead, a procession of roughly 2,000 people shuffled untidily the mile from the station to the camp. There were two compounds, and within each there were two complexes of huts. The population in our compound (approximately 1,000) consisted partly of orthodox, or at any rate practising, Jews and partly of ‘others’ (who included the 200 Protestants and 50 Catholics mentioned in my friend’s letter). The complex occupied by the former happened to lie to the east of the one inhabited by the latter and came therefore to be known as ‘East End’. The open space at the centre of the western half of the compound was called ‘Haymarket’.

The dancing of the Chasidic Jews (in the film) was presumably inspired by ‘The Fiddler on the Roof’ – another invention. What did happen – unforgettably – was the observance of the Day of Atonement. As I walked round and round the camp that evening, after dark, I kept passing the people of the ‘East End’, standing outside their huts, rocking – beside themselves – in contrition, utterly prostrate under the night sky in (what seemed to us) the desert.

Escape from the camp (to spend an evening with a girlfriend in Hay) was impossible. There were two rows of electrified barbed wire fences, closely guarded day and night. In fact, at one point, the commandant decided that, for security reasons, the space between the fences ought to be weeded and that it was our duty to do this. Everybody in the camp, when we heard this, was furious. In the end, I believe, the camp leader and some friends did the job themselves.

Mr Layton was not a ridiculous fool who arrived with the message that, mistakes having been made, the gates should be opened, but a Home Office representative who had come to tell us that there could be no release except in the UK, that only those useful to the British war effort (including the very young) would be permitted to return, but that transport depended on the availability of shipping space.

As for omissions, the film did not mention that most people in the western half of the compound had roots in the UK, waited anxiously for the weekly Yankee Clipper which brought mail from home, and did want to return. The fact that one group of internees from our compound perished when their ship, on its way back to England, was torpedoed off the African coast, was not mentioned either.

If I had made a film about the 'Dunera' story I would have included the following:

the queue all the way up the stairs to the latrines at the top of the ship where there was a skylight through which, if we stood tip-toe, we could – while we lay in Capetown harbour – catch a glimpse of the Table Mountain;

that hot night during the sea journey when I sat at the bottom of the air shaft, listened to Hamburger and Strauss whistling, with the score open before them, Bach's Double Concerto, looked upward between movements and saw, far away, the slim circle of the moon swaying in the tropical sky;

this: the most important thing for the eyes to fasten on, outside the camp at Hay, was the night sky and, before nightfall, the daily drama of the sunset which lasted for over an hour. During daytime there were just the three trees. When we felt the approach of a storm we went out to the fence, watched the huge column of sand that appeared on the horizon come closer and closer and, when it reached the three trees, rushed into the huts, jumped into our bunk beds (for me the only authentic thing in the film) and pulled the blankets over our heads. Then the storm would sweep across the camp, to be instantly followed by a torrential downpour. (Occasionally I still find a grain of Australian sand between the pages of my Dante which survived the bayoneting of my suitcase.)

The film was hardly concerned with factual accuracy. It was an – undeniably entertaining – fantasy about the facts, full of ideas and, on the whole, well acted. On that level it didn't matter whether or not the young violinist had really stood in his underpants on the platform of the Austrian frontier station and played nostalgic tunes, whether – performing every afternoon in a Viennese café in the Swiss cottage area – he really did have a girlfriend off the Petticoat Lane, whether that girl in the middle of the war made her way to Hay to see him, or whether the commandant at Hay, once misunderstandings had been cleared up, did become chummy with the people in the 'East End'.

I only regret that the film's tenuous connection with reality was not made sufficiently clear to British viewers.

**Editor's note:** *Ben Lewin, who directed and wrote this film, was interviewed live from the USA during our 2016 Melbourne Event luncheon. As reported in Dunera News 96 of February 2016, "He, (Ben), was asked about the 'expert opinions' provided by the internees and witnesses, (about the film). The same or similar experiences were remembered differently by different people. Ben said his aim was to provide 'fictional entertainment' based on the stories he had heard."*

# Dunera & Queen Mary News



First published in 1984 this is a unique resource of information relating to the internment of refugees from Nazi oppression deported to Australia from Britain and Singapore in 1940. PDFs of all back issues can be found on the Dunera and Queen Mary Association website.

The association welcomes contributions of letters or articles for future issues of Dunera News: Please email [duneraboys@gmail.com](mailto:duneraboys@gmail.com) or visit [www.duneraassociation.com](http://www.duneraassociation.com)

Find us on 

## Friends of the Dunera Boys Public Group

**Admin and Moderators:**  
**Nathan Oppy & Michelle Frenkel**

This group is an international forum for discussing all things Dunera. The group would love to hear your stories or associations with the Dunera or Queen Mary internees.

In order for your membership to be confirmed applicants must answer two security questions.

## Useful contact and links

### **Dunera Museum at Hay**

Carol Bunyan (Canberra)  
Volunteer Researcher  
[carolbunyan1940@gmail.com](mailto:carolbunyan1940@gmail.com)

### **Dunera Hay Tours**

David Houston (Hay)  
[davidhouston23@bigpond.com](mailto:davidhouston23@bigpond.com)

### **Duldig Studio**

[www.duldig.org.au](http://www.duldig.org.au)

### **Tatura Irrigation & Wartime Camps Museum**

[www.taturamuseum.com](http://www.taturamuseum.com)  
[taturamuseum@gmail.com](mailto:taturamuseum@gmail.com)

### **Dunera Stories**

Online resource for stories and artwork of Dunera and Queen Mary Internees  
[www.dunerastories.monash.edu](http://www.dunerastories.monash.edu)

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## The Dunera Association Inc

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