

Dunera News

Issue No. 117
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83rd Anniversary Melbourne Event



Three wives of Dunera Boys (left to right) - Edith Unger, Lotti Eisinger & Herta Koppel

A publication for former refugees from Nazi and Fascist persecution (mistakenly shipped to and interned in Australia at Hay and Tatura, many later serving with the Allied Forces), their relatives and their friends.

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From the President

Dear Dunera family and friends,

Happy New Year. I hope that 2024 proves a kind and happy year for us all.

At the most recent Annual General Meeting, in November 2023, I had the honour of being elected President of the Dunera Association. This development heralds something of an unusual situation for the Association for unlike all previous Presidents, I have no direct connection to the story. Indeed, I came to the Dunera story, and the Dunera Association, through historical interest rather than a familial link, and while it remains that I am not a Dunera descendent, I am lucky enough to have developed personal connections to the story. The Dunera community is a welcoming and happy one, and through it I have made many friendships here in Australia and around the world - friendships that have enriched my personal and professional lives. I am committed to serving the Association to the best of my ability.

At the most recent AGM, Ron Reichwald retired as President of the Dunera Association, and Peter Felder, Kristin Otto and Karen Wayne retired from the committee. I thank them for all they have contributed to the Dunera Association over many years. I am delighted that Ron will remain as a committee member.

Our next commemorative event is the annual function at Tatura on Sunday 14 April. Details of this event will be sent to members closer to the time. I look forward to seeing you there.



Seumas Spark

SAVE THE DATES

84th Anniversary Events 2024

Tatura, VIC - Sunday 14 April

Sydney, NSW - Sunday 1 September

Hay, NSW - Saturday 7 September

Melbourne, VIC - Sunday 10 November

Melbourne Event - 83rd Anniversary

Ron Reichwald

Another successful annual event took place in November 2023, at a different venue, Emmy Monash Aged Care. Over 60 people were in attendance to hear two excellent guest speakers, Professor Paul Bartrop and children's author Claire Saxby. A highlight was the attendance of three Dunera wives; Edith Unger aged 94, Lotti Eisinger 102 and Herta Koppel 103, (see front cover). We were honoured to have them at this event.

Paul Bartrop is well known to us as an eminent historian who has written extensively on Dunera history including the seminal work *The Dunera Affair*. He fascinated us with an insight into part of Dunera history that many of us had not thought deeply about; the policy context in which the Australian Government considered its response to the British Government's instruction that 'enemy aliens' were to be interned in Australia and the subsequent process that was followed.

Claire Saxby has written many books for children including poetry. Incredibly for us, she decided to write about the Dunera story. Claire found this part of Australian history fascinating but something that would not fit into her usual picture book texts, hence the novel *Haywire* resulted. She questioned every aspect of the events that took place and this ended up in a most interesting novel aimed at upper-primary and early-secondary readers.

More details of these speakers' presentations are included in this issue.

Attendees of the 83rd Anniversary Melbourne Events



My Insights

83rd Anniversary Melbourne Event

Karin Morrison

Once again, there was an excellent event where families of Dunera Boys came together! In November, we met at Emmy Monash Gandel Besen House and were so fortunate to hear and speak with guest speakers, Professor Emeritus Paul Bartrop and Claire Saxby.

Paul Bartrop is a multi-award-winning scholar of the Holocaust and genocide, and Professor Emeritus of History and Holocaust Studies at Florida Gulf Coast University, USA. He is the author of many books, including *The Dunera Affair*. The way Professor Bartrop spoke about the Dunera story, and the Dunera Boys, was not only engaging and informative, but you had a sense that he knew these boys and understood how they were feeling with all the major life changes they had experienced, and respected them for how they moved on with their lives. Whilst the tragic loss of family members was always part of them, most had two new families, one with their own much-loved children and another, the boys who travelled together on the Dunera. It was natural for their children to address them as “Uncle Bernie” and “Uncle Gary”.

Claire Saxby is an award-winning author who writes for young people. Her novel *Haywire* is a historical fiction book where a story of Dunera Boys is told through the lives of two boys from different countries: one living in Hay and the other from Germany. This young ‘enemy alien’ came to Australia on the Dunera. Despite their very different life experiences and unlikely friendship, these boys meeting each other and getting to know and understand each other, sharing insights and perspectives, leads to a strong friendship. As well



Right - Lotti Eisinger

Bottom Left - Erica, Jan Arndt & Clare

Bottom Right - Seumas Spark presenting to Claire Saxby



as engaging us with this book and her writing process for it, Claire also conveyed the message that books are a very accessible way to learn about powerful truths. Not only was this event another important and enjoyable experience that the Dunera Association organised for us, the thoughtfulness of the venues where Dunera Boys' children and grandchildren catch up with one another makes the events even more special!

The docks where the Dunera actually berthed in Sydney, Emmy Monash Gandel Besen House where some Dunera Boys lived for a while and where I often met with parents of friends who were very interested to hear more about my father, including one who had met my father, as well as people interested in the story of the Dunera Boys, all make these event times something to look forward. These events enable us to speak with people with shared histories, who understand how important it is to us the keep this true story alive and valued.

Thank you very much Paul, Claire and the Dunera Association.



Left - Elisabeth Lebensaft & Christoph Mentschl (Austria)
Right - Melinda Mockridge, Jan Arndt, Eva de Jong-Duldig & Gina Panebianco (Duldig Studio)

From Our Facebook Page

Posted by John Ebert – 30 October 2020

Last night was 29 October 2020. It was on that day 78 years ago that the Abosso was sunk after being struck by two torpedoes fired by U Boat U 575. On board, were 390 passengers and crew, of whom 44 were Dunera Boys returning to England after choosing to go back following internment in Hay and Tatura.

Sadly, 359 died through drowning or in the explosion. Of the 44 Dunera Boys who were on board, 43 died. There was only one solitary survivor - an Italian man who I found was named Ugo Achille Bonelli. I have also ascertained that there were 29 Jews among the 43 Dunera Boys who drowned.

I am preparing a report to send to Yad Vashem and aim to have the 29 Jewish men who died on the Abosso recognised as being numbered amongst the 6 million+ who perished in the Holocaust. I have comprehensive details about each of the Dunera Boys who died on the Abosso. Some of the Dunera Boys had also earlier survived the sinking of the Arandora Star.

Ugo Bonelli led an amazing life - he survived three separate U Boat attacks - the Arandora Star, the Dunera and the Abosso. As a result of my intensive research, I managed to find his son in England. When I asked him about the three U Boat escapes told me that his father was a very strong swimmer who had never been known to panic under any circumstances, a born survivor. He became a Director at Jantzen - the swimwear company.

Since posting a similar message in other years, I have been in contact with several family members of men who drowned on this night 78 years ago, as well as family members of several of the 31 who survived.

I have also learnt so much more about the sinking of the Abosso, including obtaining the minute-by-minute log (and an English translation) of the U-boat for the night of the sinking. I have also received several letters that discuss the sinking including the letters sent from the Home Office to the families of those who drowned. One lady who wrote to a survivor of the Abosso sadly informs the reader that her youngest son died on the Abosso. He was 18 and a radio operator.

One interesting story I heard was that the lifeboat containing the 31 survivors sprang a leak in the middle of the Atlantic. QUESTION - How did they bail the water out of the lifeboat? ANSWER - One of the lady survivors had a hat and handbag and she was asked to loan these items so that they could be used to scoop the water out. How amazing - the Abosso is struck by a torpedo and the ship is sinking fast. A lady passenger has the presence of mind to grab her handbag and put on her hat before getting into the lifeboat - just as well that she did - otherwise there may have been no survivors. Who was this lady? My search continues.

For those of you who are interested, I enclose a photograph of the lifeboat as it neared the rescue ship HMS Bideford.

Let us remember the 359 who died on the Abosso, especially those Dunera Boys who died when almost home. At Yom Ha'Shoah this year I named several Jewish Dunera Boys who drowned on the Abosso. **MAY WE NEVER FORGET THEM.**

Thank you to all who encourage me on this remarkable and amazing journey of discovery. I look forward to discussing with you in the near future.

Australia and the Internees from Britain and Singapore in 1940

*Paul R. Bartrop, PhD, FRHistS
Professor Emeritus of History
Florida Gulf University*

On 15 June 1940, Britain's High Commissioner in Canberra requested that the Australian government accept "enemy alien internees" for internment in Australia. On 3 July 1940, Australia agreed to accept up to 6,000 internees from Great Britain and the Straits Settlements for internment in Australia.

Yet in a memorandum dated 13 September 1940, Australia only agreed to accept prisoners of war and internees for internment in Australia. Britain was informed that the only persons to be sent to Australia were those interned in the United Kingdom, and these would remain interned in Australia until they were returned to Britain for release there.

This policy was based on a 1933 determination about Jewish refugees that "no undue influx" of Jews should be permitted entry to Australia, a position adhered to throughout the decade. The thinking was that vast numbers of Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi Germany would dilute the country's racial homogeneity—97% British according to racial purists. Worse was a fear that Australia would fall under Jewish "domination", and the Australian standard of living would drop. It was also recognised that the deliberate exclusion of refugees would deny Australia the chance of acquiring useful skills and capital brought by potentially "good" Jews.

Australia compromised; some Jewish refugees would be accepted. Australia would not be seen as renouncing its humanitarian obligations, and the nation's racial composition would remain essentially intact. The racial criteria adopted by Australia resulted in 90% of all eligible applicants who met all the Australian immigration requirements being rejected solely because they were Jewish.

With war's outbreak in September 1939, Australia refused to take Jewish aliens of enemy nationality if they originated from within Nazi Europe and would only grant landing permits to aliens residing outside of European countries in exceptional cases.



Paul Bartrop speaking at 83rd Anniversary Melbourne Event

This is the context into which Australia's acceptance of the Dunera and Queen Mary internees must be placed. To be released, the Australians held that the internees would first have to be repatriated to Britain or Singapore and released there. There would be no possibility of them remaining in Australia, and it was never intended that they would add to Australia's Jewish population.

Australia accepted over 2,300 Jews from Britain and Singapore in 1940. The internees lived in remote camps in New South Wales and Victoria, with no contact between them and the wider Australian population. They were in Australia but not of it. Their position remained constant throughout the rest of 1940 and 1941.

Meanwhile Britain's House of Commons reconsidered the arrests that converted refugees into internees. In October 1940, its White Paper contained exemptions which affected most internees sent to Australia. In November 1940, Britain asked Australia to consider the release of eligible internees for movement to the United States and other countries.

The UK Home Office sent Major Julian Layton to Australia to liaise between the British government, the internees, and the Australian authorities. With Layton's visit pending, Australia cabled the High Commissioner in London that it had no objection to the repatriation of the internees to Britain "provided such persons are not released from internment until outside the Commonwealth's jurisdiction."

On 10 April 1941, Layton first visited the internees in the camp at Hay, New South Wales. He advised that internees would not be released into Australia and negotiated that several hundred internees would be repatriated to Britain on condition that they would join the Pioneer Corps. Internees who did not want to transfer to Britain, or considered that it would be less risky to remain in Australia, stayed in internment.

On 5 September 1941, outgoing Interior Minister Harry Foll stated that any limited release of highly skilled internees for use in the war effort "should not imply in any way that the individuals concerned will be allowed to remain in Australia after the war," and subject to this proviso, in November 1941, skilled internees could be released to work in projects of national importance.

This changed as a result of Japan's entry into the war after December 1941, when invasion seemed likely. Over 100,000 Australian men were conscripted for full-time service, including many previously in reserved occupations such as agriculture, and a labour crisis emerged. The Army Minister established a labour corps along the lines of Britain's Pioneer Corps, the 8th Employment Company, to be comprised of released unskilled internees.

Finally, by 1948, the war service of those who had been organised into the 8th Employment Company forced a government rethink on the permanency of their migration.

Writing *Haywire* - A novel

Claire Saxby

Mostly, I've written picture book texts, even when writing about history. My historical picture books include *My Name is Lizzie Flynn* (convict women), *Bird to Bird* (migration, recycling), *The Anzac Billy* (war at home, WWI), *Meet The Anzacs* and *Meet Weary Dunlop*. I've written about Australian animals in Walker Books' Nature Storybook series and funny stories about sailors, dogs, grandfathers and pirates. But when I found the story of the Dunera Boys, it refused to fit a picture book form. It had to be a novel. Sigh. What did I know of these? Not a lot, beyond a couple of failed attempts and a long history of reading them. But I wanted to share this story.

And so it began. First the research, which started with the stories of Germans rounded up in England and interred at Huyton in the early days of WWII. Then the ill-fated journey aboard the *Arandora Star* that cost more than 800 lives. The men scooped from the sea to board the *Dunera* only a week later, a shipload of engineers, musicians, artists, scholars. The nightmare voyage to Sydney, then the 12-hour train ride to Hay, in the middle of New South Wales. I assembled a timeline of world and local events. Each new fact generated a raft of new questions. Why Australia? Why Hay? What would Hay look like to the internees? Who were these internees? What did they look like to the residents of Hay? Were they welcomed? Elbow deep in this emerging-from-the-shadows world, it became obvious to me that it had to be a dual narrative story. I needed a German boy (Max) and I needed an Australian boy (Tom). I wanted to understand how two young teenagers would begin to process the madness of a world war. Two boys swept along in a world gone haywire. Would they accept the opinions of those around them? When the opinions varied so much, which would they take on, which would they reject in forming their own world view?

Along the writing way, Tom's family grew and shrank. Tom's attitude to school improved and deteriorated. His mother's anger peaked, then cracked. His uncle's mentor role grew smaller and stronger. Tom's acceptance of his fate waxed and waned, but his yearning for a different life was there from the beginning. His townscape and life emerged from the dust cloud via the pages of 1939-1940 Trove twice-a-week newspaper, then altered substantially following a 'site visit'.



Claire Saxby speaking at 83rd Anniversary Melbourne Event

Google earth can only reveal so much. Max appeared earlier and earlier in his own story, his mentor and uncle morphed, he moved house and town, country and hemisphere, gained and lost relatives and friends. He began bemused, continued mostly compliant and adaptable, but the anger he needed to find grew ever stronger. By the final draft, both boys had discovered there was a limit to tolerance and a power to rebellion.

Tom and Max first meet when the first of the 12 internee-loaded trains arrived in Hay on an early September day in 1940. Their friendship is born of loneliness, frustration, empathy and a shared need to escape the life they have been swept into.

Along the way there were more than 20 drafts, multiple changes of direction and much questioning of my ability to wrangle this piece of history into a readable story. *Haywire* was published in March 2020, after a full six years in the making. It emerged into the beginning of a pandemic as unimaginable as WWII must have been. It is published by Omnibus Books, an imprint of Scholastic Australia and pitched at upper-primary, early-secondary readers.

Letter To The Editor

While I know that this group is mainly for the Dunera Boys: the German and Austrian Jewish refugees who came to Australia on the Dunera, I would like to reach out to families of the Dunera Italians.

The Dunera Italians

I am currently researching and documenting the journey of the 200 Dunera Italian internees concentrating on their time in Australia. It is a chapter in Australia's history for which very little has been written. The working title is Hell of Journey, The Dunera Italians.

What do families know of life in Tatura Camp 2 or why the men were sent to Loveday Camp? What work projects were established for the men to engage in? What classes were on offer? How did the camps operate? What was community life and daily routine like for the Italians inside the barbed wire? How many of the Italians remained in Australia? What happened after the men returned to UK? Were they free to go home or did internment continue?

If families of the Dunera Italians would like further information or would like to make a contribution, please email me at auro2fer@gmail.com

Kind regards
Joanne Tapiolas

What happens to children in wartime?

*Karin Morrison daughter of Hans Neuwahl - Johnny Newall
Janusz Korczak Association, Australia*

War can take many shapes or forms, all horrifying and frightening with much destruction and many everlasting impacts. Despite children being considered by governments as too young to have a say in matters that impact their country, children are not spared the danger that war causes them.

War can be defined in many different ways, yet it comes down to a struggle between opposing forces for a particular goal.

What is happening to children in Ukraine currently? And Russia too? Syria is not at war, but are children safe there now? The soldiers are not the only people that suffer because of war. While wars with powerful weapons that kill people and destroy towns are the ones that most people are aware of, there are struggles between opposing forces within many countries at any one time with the death of civilians, families broken up, homes destroyed and more.

We are fortunate that there have never been wars targeting Australia, but its history includes a struggle between opposing forces for a particular goal. While a struggle that commenced more than 500 years ago continues, albeit slowly lessening in impact in the last 80+ years, new struggles have arisen and some of these are becoming more intense every day. All heavily impacting children. When will Indigenous people be valued as equals with so much to share that can benefit our country for so many?

Despite being valued for its cultural richness in the diversity of its population, why is it a country where people of minority groups are constantly victims and children's voices not listened to and taken seriously?

Stories and photos of Holocaust survivors give a very rich but heartbreaking picture of children whose childhoods were stolen from them.

Children hid or were hidden. They were separated from their families.

Some wouldn't talk at all about their lives as children.

Some kept diaries, but to my knowledge many of these were not written until later.

Some next generation individuals wrote their fathers' stories, putting their fathers' words directly from their fathers' mouths to paper or screens.

Dunera Boys' stories were also captured sensitively and thoughtfully by Ken Inglis, Seumas Spark and Jay Winter.

Books also referred to include *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *Tragedy and Triumph* by Freda Hodge, *Under a Lucky Star* by Ron Pila, *Gift of Time* by Frances Prince, *You Don't Know What War Is* by Yeva Skalietska (a young Ukrainian girl) and *Who Am I* by Anita Heiss.

The experiences of survivors remain part of them, whether in nightmares, anxiety, storing food, anti-social behaviour. Some branched out into new directions later, eg, a woman who starting sculpting 40 years later. Yet, as Dunera Lives shares, the Dunera Boys built new lives for themselves, established new families, and became active and responsible citizens of Australia, pursuing careers in different directions.



Some things don't change. There are still wars with inhumane actions.

Maheen, a young Afghani girl in Australia, told me the following about children in Afghanistan. "The war in Afghanistan has had a heavy impact on many lives but especially the children as they have been exposed to such violence at a young age. Some young boys are forced to join armed forces and are taken away from their families to train and take part in violence. They are taken at ages as young as 6! Many children have no access to education anymore as just a normal walk outside may be considered dangerous especially for girls wanting an education. There is always the risk of schools getting bombed when you send your daughter to get an education. Due to the bombings and continuous violence, many children have either been harmed themselves or their parents have been hurt, meaning they're forced to step up and look after the family. This undoubtedly leads to stress and a toll on their mental health as well as education. Even when children are harmed, there is not much that can be done as even access to healthcare facilities is dangerous."

There is much that can be learned from Janusz Korczak, the pen name of Henryk Goldszmit, whose commitment to children formed the basis of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Tragically, he and the children he cared for in an orphanage he established for Jewish children in Warsaw died together in Treblinka.

In Korczak's words, "One should not leave the world as it is."

From the Archives

Dunera News, Issue 29, February 1994

Excerpt from a dairy: Hay Camp Hut 26 (Roebucks)

17th May 1941

ROEBUCK NEWS

Dear Roebucks,

This will be the final copy of the Hay edition of this wall newspaper. Perhaps it is a sad hour, but then it may be the beginning of better times for every one of us. We have no intention of becoming sentimental in this, our last issue, nor do we feel we can rightly claim a “big” enough past for “Roebuck News” to warrant a survey of our past 10 months together.

We feel compelled, however, to say a few words about what was last night called the “Roebuck spirit”. This spirit was called “an unknown quantity”. We do not altogether agree here.

The Roebuck spirit is a conglomeration of many qualities - good and bad - which showed up the members of hut 26. An almost rugged individualism, making the job of Hut Captain and Deputy a very difficult one, and yet one of the most attractive qualities of this hut. A happy-go-lucky attitude to life and - with few exceptions - to internment. An almost complete absence of the heavy unhumorous German “sense of humour” (so well known to us from the East End), but plenty of wit and genuine humour instead. Without wishing to be snobbish, we feel that the Roebuck spirit, was also marked by an exceedingly high level of common sense, intelligence and education, which made life in Hut 26 never dull. In spite of the individualism there was always fair play, consideration of others in big matters (though not always in small ones, such as silence hours) and an honesty which, although it may be obvious to you, has always been an outstandingly good quality of this hut. We could enlarge on this indefinitely, but we are aware that you are all quite aware of your qualities! We would say in conclusion that it has - at all times - been a pleasure to deputy and captain this hut, and that it is with a genuine sense of sorrow that we shall have to say goodbye to many of you.

Attached you will find a copy of a former edition which you asked to have. ROEBUCK NEWS has not always been fortunate enough to be able to report pleasant and “good” things: and we can well say, on all our behalf, that we have passed through many bard and tense moments; but to all our honour we can also report that, however bad the moments were, we got over them cheerfully.

It only remains for us to say goodbye to you now, to wish you all the very best - wherever you may be going - and to ask you on behalf of the Roebuck spirit: "Keep that spirit up pals! And think of us sometimes!"

Yours very sincerely,

sgn: Hans Rosenblueth (Editor & Hut Captain)

(Ziba) H.B. Spanglet (Deputy Hut Captain)

80th Anniversary of the HMT Dunera - Reflections of Professor Leon Mann AO FASSA

Permission to republish given by Professor Leon Mann & Academy of Social Sciences Australia.

Originally published on 29 September 2020.

The Wilhelm, Martha and Otto Rechnitz Memorial Fund (the Rechnitz Fund) was September 2020 marked the 80th anniversary of the arrival in Australia of the HMT (Hired Military Transport) Dunera, dispatched from Britain in 1940, carrying approximately 2,500 so-called "enemy aliens. The Dunera arrived in Port Melbourne on September 3, 1940 – 12 months after World War 2 broke out in 1939 – and most of the "enemy aliens" on board were actually German and Austrian Jewish refugees who had fled from Nazi oppression to Britain in 1938 and 1939, some even earlier. On arrival they were transferred to Hay in NSW where they were interned behind wire, many for up to two years.

The Dunera story illustrates the unjust, irrational and inhumane actions sometimes taken by Governments during War time (and indeed during peace time) when refugees become the targets of inexcusable suspicion and paranoia. Among the "Dunera Boys", as they were called, (actually they ranged in age from young to middle-aged men) were 19-year-old Fred Gruen (1921- 1997) born in Vienna, Austria and 21-year-old Henry Mayer (1919 – 1991) born in Mannheim, Germany. Fred Gruen and Henry Mayer chose to remain in Australia after the War as did many of the "Dunera Boys", contributing significantly to the intellectual, social, cultural and economic life of the nation. Fred Gruen became an economist and was elected to ASSA Fellowship in 1970 and was elected ASSA President 1975-1978. He was awarded an AO in 1986. Henry Mayer became a political scientist and was elected to ASSA Fellowship in 1965 and was awarded an AM in 1980. Henry Mayer made light of the Dunera experience and internment in Hay; like many reflecting on the fate that would have awaited him if he had been

trapped in Europe during the Nazi reign of terror and with millions of others sent to Concentration camps as part of the “final solution”.

The Academy connections to the Dunera go beyond remembering two eminent “Dunera Boys” who made their lives in Australia, contributed greatly to their adopted country, and became distinguished Australian citizens and ASSA Fellows. Many ASSA Fellows have written about the Dunera story. Some Fellows who knew and worked closely with Fred Gruen and Henry Mayer have written about them, some in encyclopedias, dictionaries of biography, and reference books of Australian history and the Australian people. Some have spoken at Dunera Book launches. Some at the celebration of the life of Fred Gruen. The ASSA Fellows who have spoken or written about the lives of Fred Gruen and Henry Mayer or about the Dunera story include Ken Inglis, Frank Bongiorno, Glyn Davis, Max Corden, Murray Goot, Bob Gregory, Bruce Chapman, Peter Karmel, James Jupp, Stuart Macintyre, John Hirst and Graeme Davison.

Ken Inglis (1929-2017) was totally dedicated to the Dunera story. He met a number of the Dunera boys when he was a student residing at Queens College, University of Melbourne in the late 1940s. The Dunera boys and their stories remained with him throughout his academic career and eventually led to two posthumously published books. *Dunera Lives: A Visual History* (2018) with Ken Inglis the senior author, published to critical acclaim by Monash University Press. Frank Bongiorno performed the Canberra book launch in July 2018.

In *Dunera Lives Profiles* (2020) also published by Monash University Press, Ken Inglis and his co-authors tell the stories of 20 of the Dunera boys interviewed for the Dunera project at Monash University. Glyn Davis performed the book launch in August 2020.

Max Corden wrote an obituary for Fred Gruen in *The Australian*, October 31, 1997, reprinted in the ASSA Annual Report 1997. Fellows Bob Gregory, Bruce Chapman, and Peter Karmel spoke at the celebration of the life of Fred Gruen at ANU in November 1997. Murray Goot and Ken Inglis wrote the entry for Henry Mayer in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (2014). Graeme Davison, John Hirst and Stuart Macintyre include an entry about the Dunera in their *Oxford Companion to Australian History* (1998). James Jupp includes several entries on the Dunera in his monumental *The Australian People* (2001).

For myself, I remember Fred Gruen as a charismatic, effective and impressive ASSA President, meeting him when I was elected a Fellow in 1975, the same year as Ken Inglis. I also remember Henry Mayer as an energetic, prolific communicator, constantly questioning and making suggestions, meeting him when I was briefly at the University of Sydney in the early 1970s and later meeting him at Academy meetings. I am continually touched and inspired by the Dunera Story and by the strength and resilience of the men unjustly sent to Australia for internment as enemy aliens, who later bore no lingering resentments and remained to give so much to their chosen new country.

The Wilhelm, Martha and Otto Rechnitz Memorial Fund

Permission to republish given by the Academy of Social Sciences Australia - edited.

The Wilhelm, Martha and Otto Rechnitz Memorial Fund (the Rechnitz Fund) was established in 2022 to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scholars in the social sciences, and to support knowledge and understanding of the society, languages and cultures of Australian Indigenous peoples. It does so through:

1. Grants for early and mid-career Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social science researchers (including Higher-Degree research students)
2. Awards for excellence and research leadership in Indigenous society, culture and language, and
3. Support for symposia, lectures and other related activities.

The Academy's objective is to support this program for 10 years (2022-32), corresponding to the UN Decade of Indigenous Languages, by leveraging additional funding as the Fund is established.

The Rechnitz Fund is managed by the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia (the Academy) with guidance of the Rechnitz Fund Steering Committee.

Wilhelm Rechnitz

Dr Wilhelm Rechnitz (pictured) was born October 24, 1899 in Cottbus, Germany. He studied Classics at the University of Marburg, receiving his Doctorate in 1924, and in 1933 fled to England as a refugee from Nazi Germany. In September 1939, when World War 2 broke out, Wilhelm and another 2,500 refugees from Hitler's Germany were declared "Enemy Aliens", interned in Britain, and in 1940 transported to Australia on the infamous HMT Dunera.



Wilhelm and the "Dunera Boys" were placed in internment camps in Hay, NSW and Tatura, Victoria. At the end of the war many of the "Dunera Boys" went on to build distinguished careers in Australia, contributing significantly to the artistic, cultural, intellectual, and academic life of their new country.

Further information on the Dunera Boys and their contribution to Australian social, cultural and academic life can be found in an article by former Academy President Professor Leon Mann AO FASSA here - socialsciences.org.au/80th-anniversary-of-the-dunera/

Wilhelm Rechnitz lived and worked in the Torres Strait Islands over several periods from 1948-1972. A convert from Judaism to Christianity, he was ordained a priest in the Church of England. He moved between the Torres Strait Islands, where he translated Church services and scriptures into the indigenous languages. Wilhelm's education in Greek and Latin classics and librarianship informed his great interest in the native languages of the Torres Strait Islands. He became absorbed in the study of the cultures and lifestyle of the Island peoples. He wrote numerous articles about Indigenous languages and, with a Kodak box camera, compiled a substantial photographic record of Island culture. This rich collection of Rechnitz's material is held in the State Library of Queensland. Wilhelm Rechnitz retired to Brisbane in 1972, where he died in 1979.

Ralph O'Brien, a friend of Wilhelm Rechnitz since 1954, and as Trustee of his estate, has directed the sum of \$300,000 from the Estate to the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia to establish The Wilhelm, Martha and Otto Rechnitz Memorial Fund to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scholars in the social sciences, and to support the study and promotion of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander society, culture and languages. Professor Leon Mann AO FASSA, former President of the Academy has been instrumental in introducing Ralph to the Academy and helping to develop the concept and implementation of the Fund.

The Wilhelm, Martha, and Otto Rechnitz Memorial Fund commemorates Dr Wilhelm Rechnitz, who made a life in Australia. It also commemorates Wilhelm's mother Martha (pictured below, left of photo) and his father Otto Rechnitz (pictured right). Martha Rechnitz's property in Berlin was seized by the Nazis during the war and she was deported to the Minsk Ghetto in Belarus in November 1941 where she perished.

Otto Rechnitz's business and properties in Berlin were also seized by the Nazis. He was interned in the Wedding Transit Work Camp north of Berlin in 1943. Following liberation, Otto died in Berlin several months later.

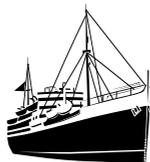
The funds for the Wilhelm, Martha and Otto Rechnitz Memorial Fund are sourced from the restitution of property by the German Government to heirs and descendants of the victims of Nazi persecution.

Newsletter Contributions

Please consider contributing an article to Dunera News.

From family anecdotes to historical research,
any contributions are gratefully received.

Simply email duneraboys@gmail.com
noting you have a contribution for the newsletter.



Dunera 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 Association website.

The association welcomes contributions of letters or articles for future issues of Dunera News: Please email duneraboys@gmail.com or visit 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.

If you have any questions about your families' connections to this subject then this is the place to post your query; the group members have an unequalled knowledge between them.

Useful contact and links

Dunera Museum at Hay

Carol Bunyan (Canberra)
Volunteer Researcher
carolbunyan1940@gmail.com

Dunera Hay Tours

David Houston (Hay)
davidhouston23@bigpond.com

Duldig Studio

www.duldig.org.au

Tatura Irrigation & Wartime Camps Museum

www.taturamuseum.com
taturamuseum@gmail.com

Dunera Stories

Online resource for stories and artwork of Dunera and Queen Mary Internees
www.dunerastories.monash.edu

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