

hostility, but the Berrima villagers soon accepted the strangers as ordinary people making the best of the circumstances.

Because of their maritime background, most of the internees spoke adequate English and had little difficulty in communicating. They were polite and well-behaved, buying large quantities of bread, meat and provisions from the local stores. Some rented houses for their families who had come to live near them. But it was not just the economic benefits that made the internees popular. It was their goodwill, ability and industry that the majority of the villagers came to appreciate. The internees were often called by village women to remove snakes from their houses and they saved the Berrima School from a bushfire.

The internees created a pleasure garden and a flotilla of canoes on the Wingecarribee River. By 1915 the fame of the Germans' bridge, huts and gardens had spread far beyond Berrima. People from other areas came to sightsee, swim and picnic. All were anxious to see the Germans, or 'Huns'. It was ironic that the internees, in the middle of the war, brought about Berrima's first tourism industry. Some people came to pick fights and cause trouble.

The solution was for the internees to erect a high barbed wire fence enclosing 17.5 acres on the left bank of the river known as 'The Compound'. It retained a small section for the exclusive use of the internees. The stretch of water in front of the compound was for internees and civilians, except when large numbers of tourists were expected. The right bank was free for all to use. It was expected that villas and huts would only be built within the compound, but soon the huts extended far beyond its fences.

Gymnastics, wrestling, football, swimming and athletics were organised to promote health and fitness. Work parties cleared and prepared the sporting areas and vegetable gardens.

Funding came from the camp canteen which was managed as a commercial enterprise. The internees ran it to trade German delicacies from Sydney. This enabled the purchase of vegetable seeds, the renting of grounds for the growing of crops, buying instruments for the camp orchestra and purchasing materials to make Christmas presents for the children of the camp. Funds were also used to employ internees who received no wages from their companies.

Education classes were established. English was popular as all letters sent out of the camp had to be written in English. Other classes included theatre, music, carpentry, joinery, shorthand, photography, sketching and painting. Classes on navigation and marine skills were given by Captains for juniors aiming to take qualifying examinations after the war. Wireless courses were popular as simple crystal radios could pick up local transmissions. Often the internees knew the latest world news well before the villagers.

Camp improvements were carried out by the internees that included the introduction of a water supply from the river and the installation of a generator well before the village received power. This was no doubt driven by the internees' theatre group for more flexible stage lighting.



*'The majority had to build their furniture from timber found in the forest.'*

Frau Hurtzig would never have moved had her husband told her how dirty the place was. Frau Hurtzig wrote in her diary, *I pray never again to have to clean up after a mob of soldiers*. The large house conveniently divided into two self-contained areas by closing and locking several of the internal doors. In August 1918 all internees with families were relocated to Molonglo Camp.

Two other identifiable houses that still stand in Berrima were occupied by the Brauns and the Wallners. The Brauns initially lived in the house now named *Sovereign Cottage*, in Argyle Street next to the court house. Later they moved and the Wallners moved in. Frau Jepsen eventually moved from the boarding house and took a cottage which, according to Frau Hurtzig *was so far away from us that she could neither bear the sounds of the soldiers nor see the activities at the camp*.

The war did not formally end until Germany signed the peace treaty in June 1919. This led to 10 months of waiting, creating depression among all. This mood was exacerbated when the oppressive peace terms demanded by the Allies were fully realised. When news reached Berrima of the vandalism of the Trial Bay Memorial to four companions who had died there, the internees vowed to burn their huts and sink their canoes rather than leave them as a memorial.

On 12 August 1919 the internees assembled to depart. The Berrima Guard took the head and rear of the column and the band struck up *Muss i' denn, muss i' denn aus Städelein* (Now, now must I from this little town). At the Surveyor General Hotel the procession stopped and the men gave three cheers then marched to Moss Vale railway station. Many of the villagers had mixed feelings as the internees not only brought an alternative culture but prosperity to the village.



Above left: Framed memento of 20th Berrima Permanent Guard April 1916, Berrima District Museum. Photograph Lyn Hall  
Above right: The 29th Berrima Guard. Known as the 'Permanent Guard' as they served the longest. Berrima District Museum  
Below left: German Concentration Camp Guard insignia from Holsworthy Camp. Liverpool Regional Museum. Photograph Stephen Thompson



Above: Internee's zither. Berrima District Museum. Photograph Stephen Thompson  
Far left: Internees' canoes on the River. The canoe to the right is *Störtebeker*. Berrima District Museum  
Top left: The Camp Canteen. Berrima District Museum  
Bottom left: The hull on display at Berrima District Museum is *Störtebeker*. Berrima District Museum. Photograph Lyn Hall



Top left: The Guards outside their new quarters c.1916. Paul Dubotzki Collection  
Bottom left: Zither players Ernst Schönfuß and Karl Pfingst rehearse at the Internees river hut Alstertal Villa c.1916. Berrima District Museum  
Far left: The Hertzig family outside the 2nd house they shared with the Glinz family. Berrima District Museum



Far left: Principal of the Berrima Girls School, Dierke Voss with students Hanna Hurtzig, Carmen Machoika and her sister Eva 1917. AWM H12155  
Top left: The last roll call was taken then the internees formed a column for the march to Moss Vale Station. Berrima District Museum  
Bottom left: SS *Ypiranga* of the White Star line that took most of the internees back to Germany. Berrima District Museum

Berrima and Trial Bay were satellite camps of the very large Holsworthy Internment Camp at Liverpool. The German Concentration Camp Guard was made up of units of 25 men which were rotated frequently between camps. The system of rotations was aimed not only to minimise guards becoming too friendly with the internees, but also to reduce any opportunity for guards to exploit internees. Initially the Guard units were rotated fortnightly, then monthly from 1915 until 1917 when the 29<sup>th</sup> Guard was on duty for most of the year.

Generally the relationship between the guards and the internees was of mutual tolerance, respect and friendliness. Like the experience at Trial Bay, internees were allowed as much freedom and independence as possible.

#### Camp Committee

While Berrima Camp was formally controlled by the Australian Army, the day-to-day management was left largely to the Camp Committee consisting of ships' captains, officers and seamen. The Committee dealt with the organisation of the camp in liaison with the Camp Commandant.

Many of the shipping companies' shore-based employees had lived in Australia for some time before the war. Most had Australian friends who provided many books to the camp library that had been transported complete from the German Club in Singapore. The Committee also supplied books. The library contained books relevant to the various classes held and a comprehensive collection of German classics and general literature.

#### Family Life

There were five families that sought to be close to their husbands and fathers in the camp: the Hurtzigs, Glinzs, Jepsens, Brauns and Wallners. Later the Machotka family arrived to discover that most of the suitable rental houses had been taken by internees.

The Glinz and Hurtzig families had to share a house. This house was the large, two-storied stone house that still stands outside the south-eastern corner of the gaol. It had been the residence of the Gaol Superintendent and for a while the Guard.

#### *Die Deutsche Tochterschule Berrima: The German Girls' School Berrima*

The *Tochterschule* was housed in a bark hut located on the right bank of the river upstream from the Hansa Bridge. It was easily reached by the girls who had only to step from their houses and walk a short distance from the village.

The Committee equipped the *Tochterschule* with a blackboard, tables, chairs, books, charts and writing slates. Subjects offered depended on the availability of competent people to teach, with a good range of subjects offered.

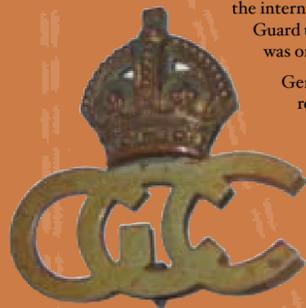
#### The Camp Closes

In 1917, German submarines began to attack American cargo and passenger ships, drawing the United States into the war. Meanwhile a revolution in Russia changed the government which made a treaty with Germany. Germany's allies Austria and Turkey, weary of the war, gave up. Without support an overwhelmed Germany had to accept defeat. In November 1918 the guns were silenced and an armistice signed. The internees expected to be on their way home within weeks.

The train took the internees directly to Pymont wharf in Sydney. There the SS *Ypiranga*, a former Hamburg American Line steamer seized by the Allies, was berthed. It would take 950 internees from Berrima and Holsworthy and 200 men, women and children deported from other parts of Australia, to Germany.

Trial Bay Camp closed in July 1918 and the internees transferred to Holsworthy Internment Camp for repatriation. Holsworthy Camp remained open until the last internees were deported to Germany in 1920. The total number of people deported was 6,150. Of these, 5,414 people had been interned, the rest were family members or those ordered by the Defence Department to leave the country. Over 1,000 people appealed to the Commonwealth Alien Board against deportation. Only 306 were successful. They included 179 naturalised or native born Australians. The 306 were the only people allowed to stay from the 5,600 internees still at Holsworthy at the end of the war.

*'Berrima and Trial Bay were satellite camps of the very large Holsworthy Camp at Liverpool.'*



Over 30,000 Germans lived in Australia in 1914. In 1915, German and Austrian men who were of enlistment age were put into internment camps. Within one week of the declaration of war, all Germans in Australia were declared 'enemy aliens' and were required to report to the Police. In February 1915 the meaning of 'enemy aliens' was changed. It included naturalised migrants as well as Australian-born people whose fathers or grandfathers had been born in Germany or Austria. Since it was impossible to intern all enemy aliens they targeted the leaders of the German-Australian community including consuls, Lutheran pastors, doctors, lawyers and successful businessmen. Anti German sentiments intensified in Australia after the Battle of the Somme and Pozieres saw significant Australian casualties in France.

In New South Wales the main internment camp was at the Holsworth Military Camp where between 5000 and 6000 men were detained. Women and children of German and Austrian descent, detained by the British in Asia, were interned at Bourke and later Molonglo near Canberra, former gaols were also used. Men were interned at Trial Bay Gaol and Berrima Gaol.

#### Berrima Internment Camp

In March 1915 the first group of 89 internees arrived on foot at Berrima. The gaol was hastily cleaned up and made secure. The internees' luggage had not arrived and there was no furniture. They were supplied with basic sleeping



Above: The internees came to the rescue of Prince, a valuable horse that had fallen into a large underground cistern. Prince was rescued by the mariners who, with a system of ropes and planks, and a large version of a boson's chair, lifted the horse out. c.1915-6. Berrima District Museum  
Top right: Hansa Bridge c.1916. Photograph David Speers. Paul Dubotzki Collection  
Right: Schloss am Meer (Castle by the Sea) hut of the Emden prisoners of war c.1916. Berrima District Museum



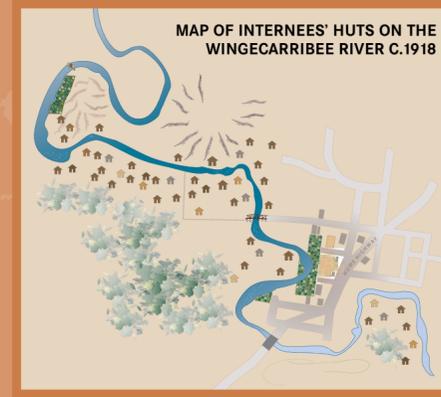
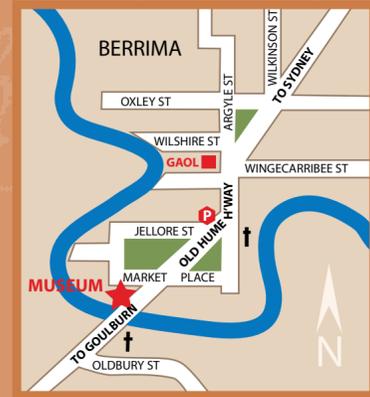
#### How to get there

Berrima is 130 kms south of Sydney just off the Hume Highway. Berrima District Museum is located at the southern end of the village just north of the bridge over the Wingecarribee River at the south western corner of Market Place. The exhibition on the Internment Camp is located there.

Berrima District Museum is operated by volunteer members of Berrima District Historical & Family History Society Inc.

Berrima District Museum is open 10am to 4pm weekends, Public Holidays and NSW School Holidays. Closed Good Friday, Christmas Day and Boxing Day. Groups also at other times by appointment.

**Berrima District Museum**  
Market Place  
Berrima  
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materials and they had to cook their own food. It was out of this sombre mood that the men named the gaol *Abnenschloss* (Castle Foreboding).

Later the internees from the German Australian Line received beds from the company store. Internees who had money were able to order beds from furniture stores, while the majority had to build their furniture from timber found in the forest. The cells were very uncomfortable; freezing in winter, though cool in summer. Over time, the cells were made more comfortable.

The remodelling of the gaol in 1869 made it capable of housing 140 prisoners and their guards. By the end of 1915 there were nearly 200 internees. By 1918 the gaol was overcrowded with almost 300 internees. Internees were locked up at night but after morning roll call they were free to roam within a two mile radius during the day, returning for evening muster at 5pm.

#### Life at Berrima

Since the internees were allowed to free range, the village residents were made very aware of them from the first day. It was something of a culture shock when the newcomers appeared in the streets with foreign accents and culture. The arrival of the internees and the guards doubled Berrima's population overnight. This might have caused resentment and

The Migration Heritage Centre at the Powerhouse Museum is a NSW Government initiative supported by the Community Relations Commission.

[www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au](http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au)

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**BERRIMA  
DISTRICT  
MUSEUM**

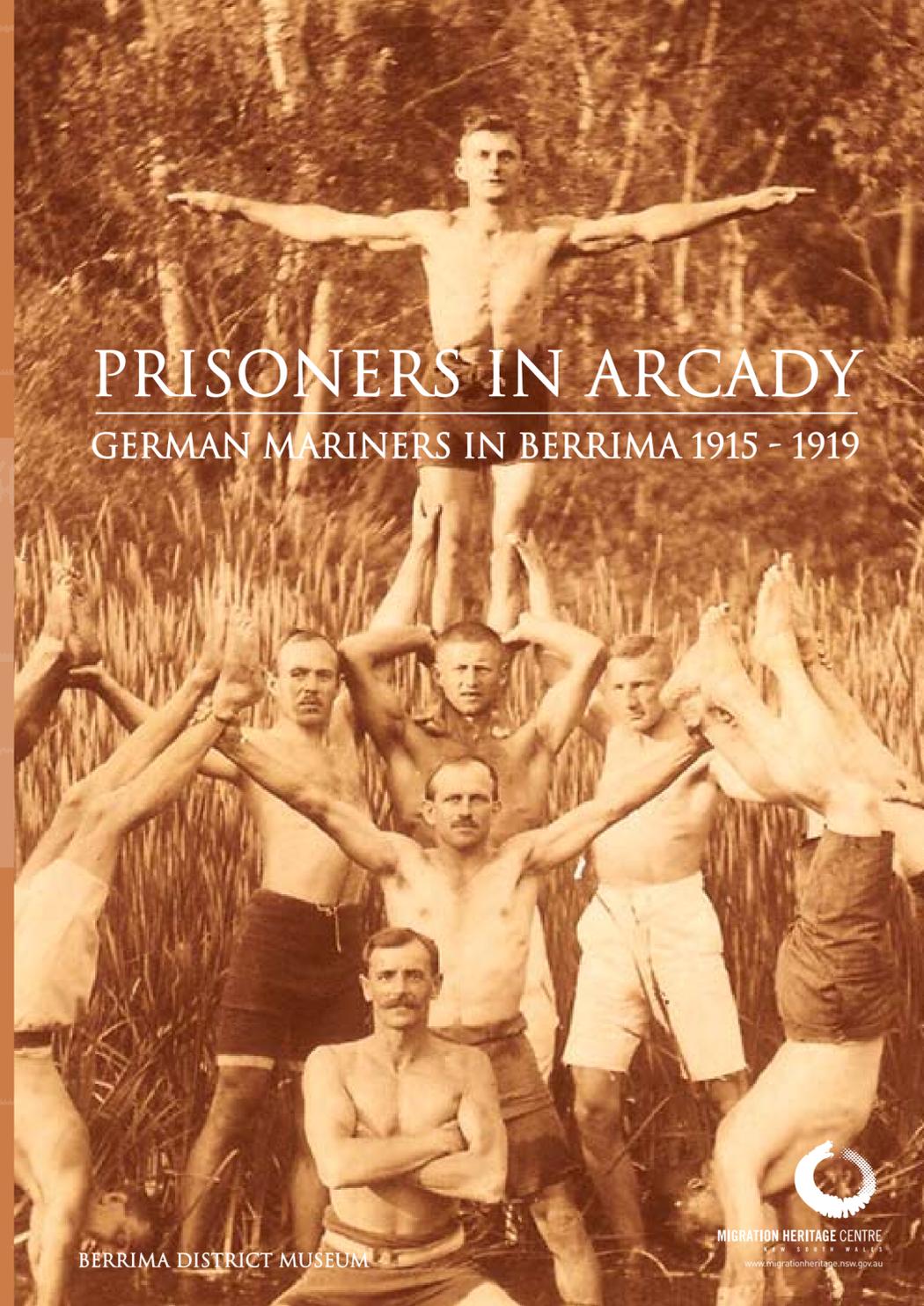


MIGRATION HERITAGE CENTRE  
NEW SOUTH WALES

**ph<sup>m</sup>** powerhouse museum  
science + design

# PRISONERS IN ARCADY

## GERMAN MARINERS IN BERRIMA 1915 - 1919



BERRIMA DISTRICT MUSEUM

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NEW SOUTH WALES  
[www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au](http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au)

#### THE HISTORY OF BERRIMA

The original plan in 1830, by Major Mitchell, the Surveyor General, was for Berrima to be the administrative centre for the County of Camden with courts and support services. The village developed slowly due to the delays in building the Southern Road to Goulburn. Once completed, the villagers found that a reliable income could be made by providing accommodation for the travellers that passed along it. In its heyday there were 13 inns and coaching houses.

The court house was completed in 1838 and the gaol in 1839. Both were built to serve the Southern Districts. However this plan was short lived. The Circuit Court moved to Goulburn in 1849, and the last District court hearing was held in 1888. The gaol was closed and remodelled between 1863 and 1869 when its capacity was increased. The gaol was closed again in 1909 and leased to a company for a freezing works from 1913 to 1915. Its existence as a place of correction seemed to be over.

From 1867 freight and travellers were carried via the new rail line though Picton, Thirlmere, Colo Vale, Mittagong, Bowral and Moss Vale. This reduced the passing trade for Berrima and gradually the small village slipped into decline until the re-opening of the gaol for German internees in 1915.



Above: Internees at Moss Vale Station March 1915. Berrima District Museum  
Far left: Berrima roll call, April 1916. Paul Dubotzki Collection  
Left: Street scene Berrima 1912. Berrima District Museum

#### The Great War and Australia

Germany was formed in 1871 with the federation of the Lesser German States. By 1914 it was a powerful nation. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century European nations had been expanding their empires around the world. Germany was jealous of the British and French who did not want Germany to gain new colonies. Russia was concerned about Germany's military strength and its alliance with Austria, an enemy of Russia's ally Serbia. Russia wanted to control the Balkans, a group of small nations including Serbia, Bulgaria, Rumania, Albania and Greece on the shore of the Black Sea, to ensure Russian ships could reach the Mediterranean. Serbia hated Austria because of its control of Hungary and agitated against it. Turkey was allied to Germany and controlled the eastern shore of the Black Sea. Turkey feared both Russian and Austrian power in the Balkans. Most of Europe had divided itself into alliances to protect each other if war broke out. It was out of this tense and paranoid situation that war exploded. In 1914, Franz Ferdinand, a member of the Austrian Royal family, was assassinated in Serbia. This triggered 'The Great War'.

Australia, tied to Britain's defence policies, was willingly drawn into the war providing troops and resources. The Commonwealth Government passed laws that gave it greater powers over the population. More than 3,400 people were sent to prison for crimes such as spreading rumours, wearing a soldier's uniform without permission, selling goods belonging to the Red Cross and hiding a German.