

THE DUNERA BOYS SEVENTY YEARS ON

Imagine that the world is at war. Fearing for their lives, your family has fled to Britain looking for a safe place to live. While you are trying to settle into your new life, the war is sweeping through Europe, closer and closer to your new home. Meanwhile, people around you are beginning to worry that you might be a spy for your old country! The government classifies you and your family as 'enemy aliens' who might join the 'other side' if it ever reached Britain.



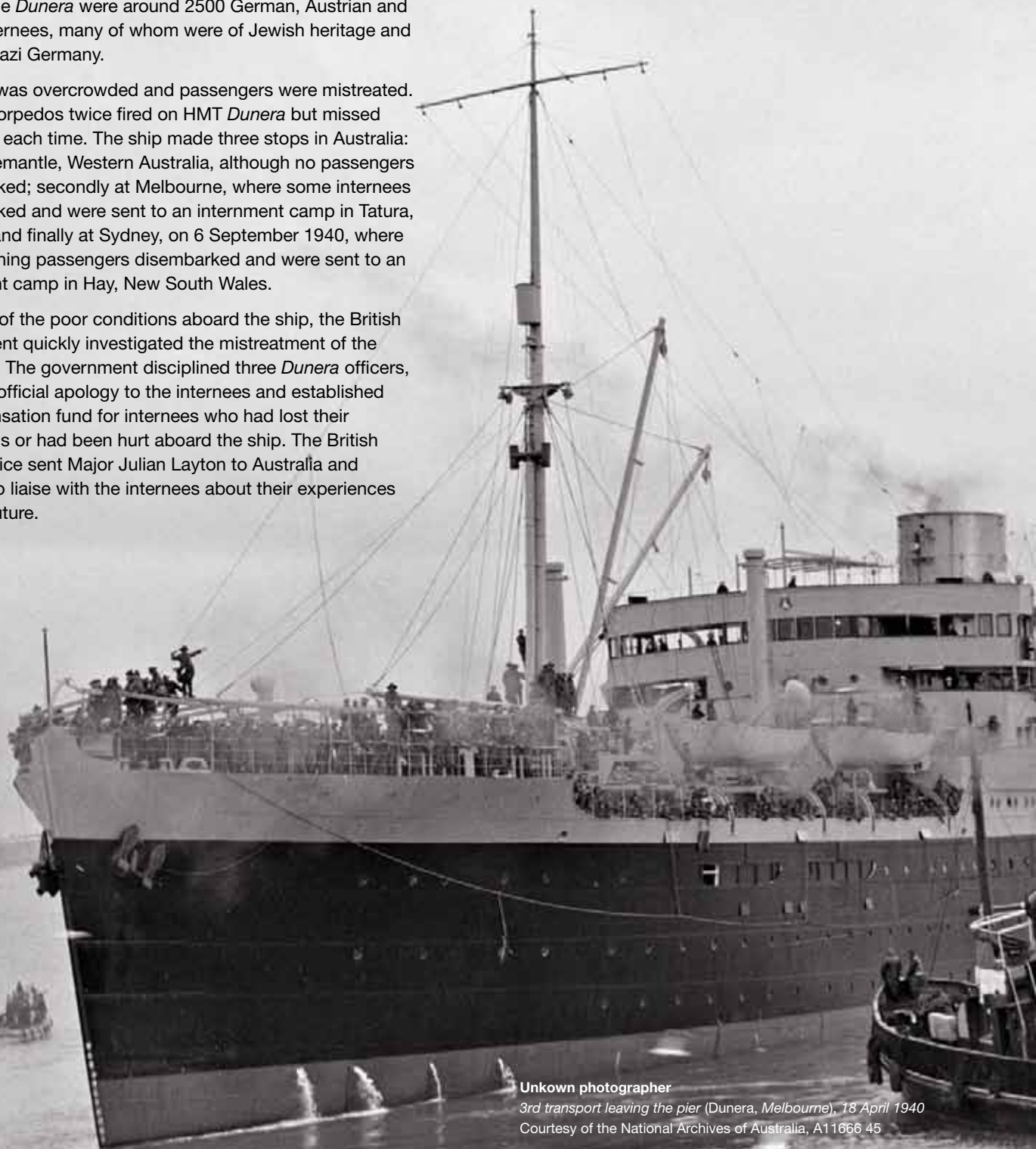
This is what happened to most German, Austrian and Italian males living in Britain in 1940. By mid-1940 the British government had ordered all male 'enemy aliens' between the ages of 16 and about 60 into internment camps—prison camps for people who were considered to be of risk to the British people.

Britain asked Canada and Australia to take thousands of the internees. Four ships embarked for Canada and one was sent to Australia, Hired Military Transport (HMT) *Dunera*.

Aboard the *Dunera* were around 2500 German, Austrian and Italian internees, many of whom were of Jewish heritage and had left Nazi Germany.

The ship was overcrowded and passengers were mistreated. German torpedos twice fired on HMT *Dunera* but missed the target each time. The ship made three stops in Australia: first at Fremantle, Western Australia, although no passengers disembarked; secondly at Melbourne, where some internees disembarked and were sent to an internment camp in Tatura, Victoria; and finally at Sydney, on 6 September 1940, where the remaining passengers disembarked and were sent to an internment camp in Hay, New South Wales.

Informed of the poor conditions aboard the ship, the British government quickly investigated the mistreatment of the internees. The government disciplined three *Dunera* officers, made an official apology to the internees and established a compensation fund for internees who had lost their belongings or had been hurt aboard the ship. The British Home Office sent Major Julian Layton to Australia and Canada to liaise with the internees about their experiences and the future.



Unknown photographer
3rd transport leaving the pier (Dunera, Melbourne), 18 April 1940
Courtesy of the National Archives of Australia, A11666 45

VICTIMS OF NAZI-FASCIST AGGRESSION

BY AIR MAIL FROM LONDON

ENGLAND has thousands of refugees from Nazi terrorism, majority of whom are genuinely anti-Hitler and anti-Nazi. Many have been called before tribunals.

INTERNMENT OF ENEMY ALIENS

MALES BETWEEN 16 AND 60

ENEMY ALIENS SENT TO AUSTRALIA.

“Some Considered Dangerous.”

LONDON, August 1
Lord Privy Seal, Mr. Atlee, said
House of Commons that 9,120 German
aliens, and Italians had left for A
and C...

ENEMY ALIENS ARRIVE

Long Journey Ends in Hay

AN EXCITING VOYAGE

Find on display the drawing by Hans Rothe titled 'Kristallnacht'.

What is happening in the image?

Find out more about the event which occurred in 1938.

Australia has a long history of immigrants arriving by sea. How did your relatives arrive in Australia?

Survey your classmates about when and how their families arrived in Australia.

Discuss a recent story about refugees coming to Australia. Are there similarities to the story of the Dunera Boys?

Behind barbed wire in rural camps in Hay and Tatura, the internees created communities which encouraged education and culture. Activities included holding concerts and performances and conducting school classes.

After a period of time, the injustice of the internees' situation was realised and they were permitted to return to England. Most of the internees were released by early 1942 and many of them returned to Britain.

Many of the internees who remained in Australia volunteered for service in the Australian Imperial Force, in the 8th Australian Employment Company. Still classified as enemy aliens, the men were not permitted to handle weapons and were assigned general duties, such as loading railway trucks and ships. The skills and qualifications which they had attained before their internment were not recognised in Australia.

In 1945, at the end of the Second World War, about 850 of the internees stayed in the country and became Australian citizens. *The Dunera Boys: Seventy Years On* focuses on the personal experiences of the men during their internment, and their contribution to Australian society and culture.



The Dunera Boys were very resourceful.

Aboard HMT Dunera, one internee constructed a measuring instrument called a sextant and, with the aid of a school atlas and a watch, plotted the course of the ship. This revealed to him that the Dunera was travelling towards Australia not Canada!

Discover how a sextant works.



View online at <http://nla.gov.au/nla.ms-ms10098-1x-s1>

Hans Lindau taught English whilst he was a internee in Hay, and later, Tatura. During his internment he became fascinated by the new species of Australian plants he found.

Find on display the wooden box made for Lindau.

It contains notes written on 2500 small pieces of paper, naming and describing plants, their medicinal uses and how the plants are likely to have reached Australia. The case also holds 11 notebooks and 25 'Dunlop rubber heels' envelopes with notes and cuttings. Topics covered include English language, botany, chemistry and medicine.



What is the box made from?

What is the information written on?

Why might Hans Lindau have chosen to keep a collection like this?

Why do you think the box was constructed like this?

Search, find and
draw some items you can find
in the display made from recycled
materials.



View online at <http://nla.gov.au/nla.pic-an6561314>

Although the internees were rarely allowed to leave the camp they remained active, holding physical education courses and concerts, teaching younger internees and printing their own camp money. Many of them passed the time by reading, making art, such as woodcut prints and drawings, and writing letters, poems and diaries. The internees organised artists' workshops, lectures, discussion groups, debates, theatrical and musical performances and ballroom-dancing lessons. European handball and soccer competitions and chess and bridge tournaments were also popular. Each camp ran different activities according to the skills and interests of the internees living there.

How would you feel if you had been interned like the Dunera Boys?
What would you do to pass the time?
Why was it important for the internees to remain active?



Look at the picture of Bern Brent's room.

How does this compare to your bedroom at home?

How do you think the internees felt about their temporary home?

Brainstorm a list of words to describe their feelings.

Bern Brent (b.1922)
My room 1941
pencil and ink on paper; 26.0 x 20.9 cm
Papers of Bern Brent
Manuscripts Collection, MS 8869



Papers of Bern Brent
Manuscripts Collection,
AC 09/076

To pass the time, artist Irwin Fabian taught some of his fellow internees the technique of monotype printing, using old windowpanes and printing ink made from black shoe polish. The shortage of art materials in the basic surroundings made woodcuts another popular technique.



Attributed to **Ludwig Hirschfeld-Mack**
(1893–1965)
Hay Camp 1940–41 c.1941
woodcut, printed in black ink
14.0 x 11.2 cm
Papers of Hans Lindau (1940–1943)
Manuscripts Collection, MS 5225

Internee **Ludwig Hirschfeld Mack** was a respected modernist artist who trained at the famous Bauhaus School in Germany.

Find his woodcut prints on display.

List the titles of his woodcuts in the exhibition?

What famous constellation does he depict in his woodcuts?

At home or school, **discover** more about the artists who studied at the Bauhaus School in Germany and became world famous for their new ideas.



Listen to the Oral History display.

Who is talking?

What are they discussing?

Can you relate to their stories?

LOYALTY

An excerpt from 'Loyalty', self-published in Tatura Internment Camp by Oswald Volkmann

The Censor hinders me to tell
The story of our trip.

It is sufficient when I say
'Dunera' was the ship.

M.P.s discussed in Parliament
How we had sailed the seas.
Yet we remain His Majesty's
Most loyal internees.

And here we are, without the means
Of proving our case
Behind a strongly guarded fence
In a forgotten place.
We wait while the authorities
Consider the release
Because we are His Majesty's
Most loyal internees.

Oswald Volkmann

describes being loyal to the King of England.

What is loyalty?

Discuss whether you think His Majesty deserved the loyalty of the Dunera Boys.

Who are you loyal to?

In the space below

write a poem about loyalty.