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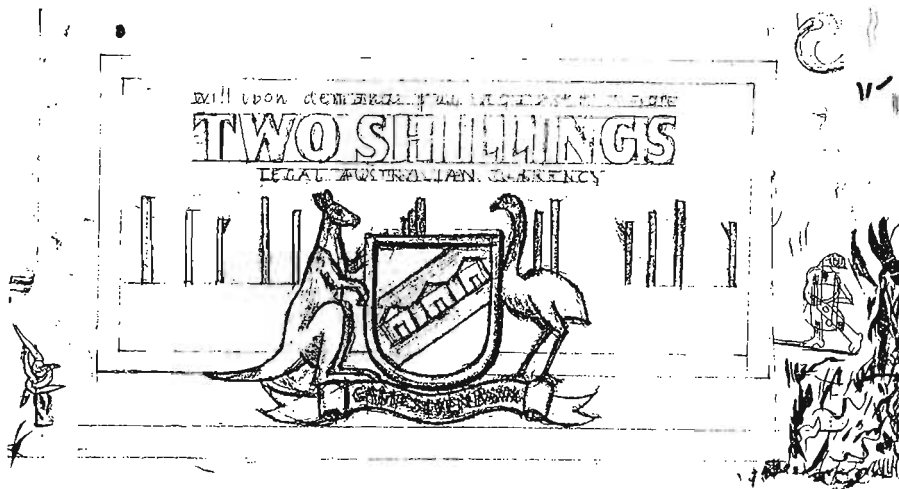
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HAY INTERNMENT CAMP NOTES

BY MICHAEL P. VORT-RONALD



Drawing from the belongings of the late George Teltscher, sold at auction with other material on 20.7.84 Spink Auctions, Melbourne

During World War Two, Australia was “host” to a group of people now known as the Dunera Internees who produced and briefly circulated internal paper money numismatically referred to as Hay Internment Camp Notes.

Most Dunera Internees were originally refugees in England from Nazi Germany for religious and political reasons, but after Dunkirk the English feared a German invasion. The possibility of German spies among the refugees prompted the rounding up of the refugees. A total of 2,542 German and Austrian Jews left England via Liverpool on July 10, 1940 aboard the *Dunera*, a ship of 11,162 tons, bound for what the refugees believed was Canada.

However, after about ten days at sea they were informed that their destination was Australia. Many accounts have been published about that journey and the treatment they received from their British Army escort. Suffice to say that much later, reparation of £80,000 was handed over by the British Government for the indignities and losses on the *Dunera* voyage. The *Dunera* was used for a variety of purposes after the war and was finally broken up in 1967.

A moving and graphic account of the 3,300 internees who arrived in Sydney on September 6, 1940, is given in an article by Jeffrey Turnbull “Note issue capped a journey to Hay” which appeared in *The Australian Coin Review*. Consequently that aspect of this story will not be repeated here.

After a thirty hour train journey from Sydney the internees arrived at Hay, New South Wales and were escorted to Camp 8 situated on the tarmac of an abandoned airport, pending completion of Camp 7 nearby.

After Camp 7 was completed, 1,000 internees were transferred there, and all contact between Camp 8 and Camp 7 ceased. It transpired that Camp 7 was comprised of a large number of younger men who had assimilated to British culture and ideas and therefore their loyalties were towards the British. Another component of Camp 7 internees were Orthodox Jews, who feared the agnostic Communists.

The internees arrived in the area during a time of drought, when dust storms were constantly blowing over Hay, a far cry from the weather patterns of Europe. However, once they arrived at their new camp, they were more

or less left to organise themselves. They set up kitchens with chefs and developed an internal legal system with a judge and juries. There were actors who set up a theatre and musicians who formed orchestras (considered world class) and choirs. University lecturers set up courses and many of the internees began their degree courses in the camp at Hay.

Because the internees were not allowed to use or possess cash, the first medium of exchange at Hay was cigarettes. This started on the Dunera where cigarettes were considered the most convenient and “valuable” form of exchange. On the voyage the internees each received a “Granny Smith” apple which was considered of such delicacy that it too became a medium of exchange!

Initially, the whole economy at Hay was based on cigarettes. No distinction of brands was made at first, and all private dealings were

also conducted in cigarettes, preferably American cigarettes. This was later extended to chewing gum and pencils. People were paid in cigarettes according to the type of work they did. A cook may have been given perhaps ten a week and a mess hall orderly five, but in any case, it was not much.

Later on, as internees began to receive funds from outside, they were obliged to open a bank account, managed also by the internees, by people who formerly had experience in banking. Simultaneously a camp canteen was installed where some essential goods were on sale, but always against cigarettes. This proved inadequate, and a decision was made to produce internal camp paper money.

The existence of this camp money has long been acknowledged and at various times has been the subject of much comment and speculation as to its origins, purpose and features.



In attempting to expand and correct the information known about these notes I have been corresponding with various internees in America, England, Italy and Australia since 1985.

Some features of the notes are well known. Others have been clarified or "discovered". All details about the notes may never be known as many of those directly involved in the production of the paper money have since died. Information can only be gained from survivors who were mostly spectators at the time. After all, with a span of forty-eight years between events and recollections, one cannot expect internees to remember a great deal, and what is remembered, may be dimmed or distorted by time. Nevertheless, it is important to record what is now available, and to present the information so that others may be able to further contribute and perhaps build upon it.

It was originally hoped that the notes could be produced with a local picture in the design. However, Gavin Johnston, then principal and editor of the local newspaper and printing firm "The Riverine Grazier" (often mis-spelt by writers as Riverina Grazier) discouraged the suggestion as it was considered that the bond paper to be used would not reproduce the detail sufficiently. He suggested to the camp leaders that their own artists produce their own original drawings.

The designer of the notes was George A. Teltscher, a professional artist and/or engraver, credited with designing some of the Austrian currency in 1934. His name appears on the front of the notes in the bottom right corner.

One former internee remembers watching George Teltscher working on the designs. He was particularly interested because he was hoping to become a graphic designer, as indeed he did, and wondered how Teltscher managed to produce such a flawless professional job in camp conditions. Teltscher was of course, an extremely competent craftsman.

Teltscher held many poignant memories of the whole episode and spoke often about the wholesome practical acceptance of the internees, the early formative days of the Hay Camp, and later the determination of the Australian authorities once the extent of the frustrating muddle became apparent. He later

changed his name to Adams, his mother's maiden name, and died in England in about 1981.

The people of Hay had little or no contact with the internees, but apparently realised that they were only civilian internees and thus there was no resentment against them. Many considered there was more talent inside the camp than outside!

The notes were printed by the late Harry Byers, (a printer employed by the Riverine Grazier for over fifty years) by letterpress on a hand fed "Arab" platen press.

There were three denominations, sixpence, one shilling and two shillings, printed with black wording over light blue, light green and light red-brown respectively. The size of the notes was 138 mm x 76 mm. The totals printed are not known and estimates have ranged between 2,000 and 4,000 for each denomination, often taking the serial numbering as a guide.

However, it is possible that the numbers in each denomination did not commence at number one. The numbering is thought to have included all the internment numbers of the residents of Camp 7, the theory being that each internee would wish to keep (out of circulation) the notes with his own number. As most of the internees were very poor, this may not have been an extensive practice. Certainly, many of the internment numbers of the residents fell within the serial number ranges of the notes observed.

The following serial number ranges have been observed on the Hay Internment Camp notes.

- 6d. C39136 to C41598
- 1/- D20317 to D22767
- 2/- E39203 to E40699

The notes were issued to facilitate disbursements and deposits, being used to pay the volunteer workforce. They proved very useful as legal tender for purchase in the canteen, coffee-house and at the work and repair shops, although some of the internees remember only using the notes in the camp canteen.

The notes designed by Teltscher were apparently done with tongue-in-cheek, evident by various and sometimes "hidden" messages and features.

The most obvious of these was the cursive message in the barbed wire outer border on the front of the notes, "We are here because we are here because we are here". This was the motto of the camp song.

The heraldic shield flanked by a kangaroo and an Emu contains a merino wether with the name Eppenstein in cursive writing.

Andreas (A.H.) Eppenstein was the camp leader. He changed his name to Andrew Elliott before he joined the British Army after repatriation, and died about eight years ago.

Barbed wire entanglement at the foot of the fencing in the centre of the front of the note contains the wording "H M T (His Majesty's Troopship) Dunera Liverpool to Hay".

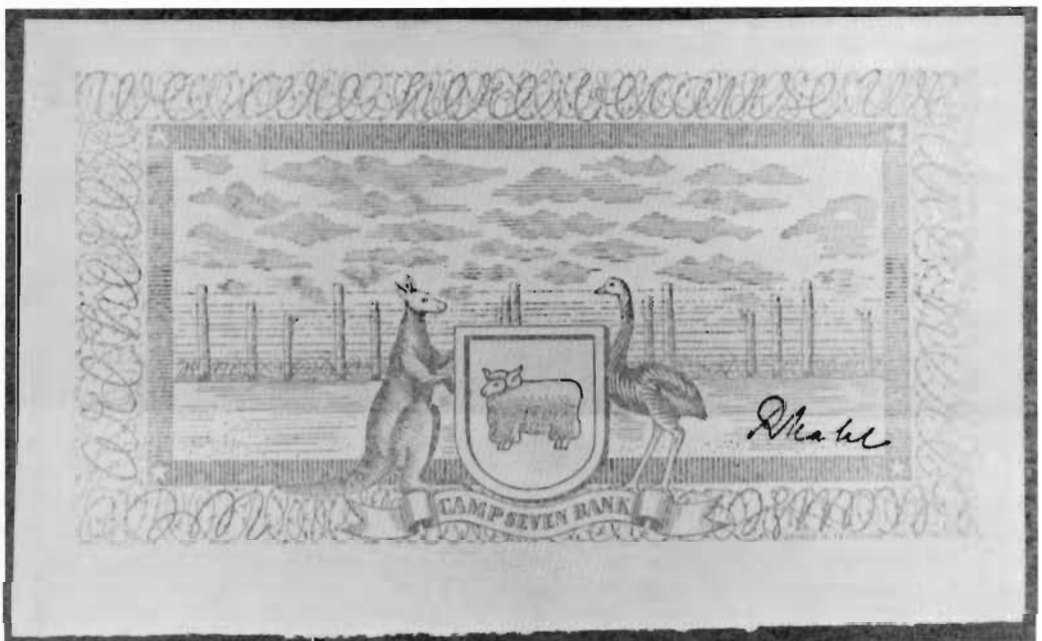


Finished drawings in scarlet and pink for both sides of proposed design by Teltscher. Sold at auction through Spink Auctions, Melbourne 30.7.84

HAY INTERNMENT CAMP - COLOUR TRIALS



Blue and black on white



Brownish pink on white

It has been suggested that the wire above this message contains further messages in morse code. However former inmates doubt whether Teltscher knew the morse code. One internee has examined the design of his souvenired note closely and believes there is morse code in the writing which reads "George" on the left side and possibly "polite glory" on the right.

The manager of the Camp 7 Bank was Richard Stahl, whose actual signature appears on the right side of all notes. A committee nominated officers and such officers were known by signing the notes. Only three signatures in addition to Stahl have been observed, handsinged on the left side of the notes.

Various articles through the years have listed incorrect names or spellings for the signatories brought about by trying to decipher the actual handwritten signatures. Contact with actual internees who know the signatories had enabled these spellings to be corrected (mis-spelt names in brackets).

E. Mendel

W. Epstein (W. Eppenstein, W. Eppestein)

H.M. Robinow (H.N. Relinson,

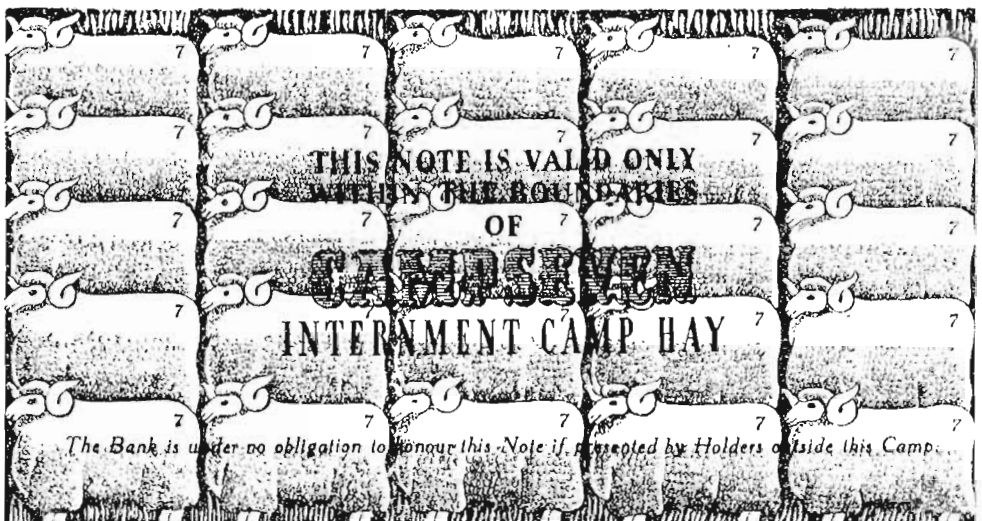
H.G. Robinson)

Eppenstein (camp leader) and Epstein (signatory) were two different people, and Hermann Robinow was the son of a well-known Hamburg barrister.

The back of the notes featured twenty-five wethers in five rows of five. The names of friends of the designer (not necessarily hut leaders) were incorporated into the wool of the

sheep. Various former internees have examined their notes. Numbering one to 25, left to right and then down, the following is a list of the names believed "hidden" in the sheep. Where opinions differ, the preferred name is in capitals.

1. Ernie Katz
2. W.A. Brach
3. Rudi Mohr, Storekeeper in the camp kitchen
4. Hein Heckroth, creator of the camp's stage curtain, since deceased.
5. Peter Schmitz, dancer
6. P. Holback or Peter Lehner
10. Walter Herz, Alec Herz, G. Lederer
11. Erwin Fabian (see below)
15. Ernest Kitzinger, art historian and professor at an American University
16. Richard Stahl, Camp 7 Bank manager and former banker
17. Oppenheim
18. B. Wolpe, type designer and historian R.D.I. (Royal Designer for Industry) who was 81 years old in 1987. Died July 1989. (Berthold Wolpe)
19. F. Loewenstein
20. M. Koblitz or Kobliz
21. W. Epstein or Dr. Epstein
22. Danziger, Heilbau, IAN WEBER, Jan Weber
23. Werner Goldschmidt
24. Jan Weber
25. Claus Eliv, Hans Elbogen, ELI ROSENBLUTH (possibly also Elbogen).



Erwin (Teddy) Fabian has lived in Melbourne as an independent artist for many years after the war and has exhibited his sculptures there and in Sydney. One of his works was acquired for the High Court building in Canberra, and another was to be placed in the new Federal Parliament building. Fabian saw the notes being drawn at the time because he lived near Teltscher in the same hut, and also had a professional interest.

Since there were 1,000 internees in Camp 7, up to 1,000 or 2,000 notes could have been kept as souvenirs, although less than 100 seem to have survived to the present day. The souveniring by internees also proved a windfall for the Camp 7 Bank because it then did not have to honour the notes which were unrepresented.

The notes were dated 1st March 1941, and it is presumed that they went "into circulation" on or around that date. Their issue was shortlived.

A copy of a letter written by R.D. TYERS, Capt., for A.A.G. Eastern Command, dated 14 May 1941 (which is shown as received at Internment Camp, Hay on 16/4/41 – probably 16/5/41) to Group Commandant, Intern Camps E.C. HAY, outlined the Department of the Treasury's opposition to the notes.

"... The Department of the Treasury has pointed out that issue of such notes is contrary to the law in that –

- (a) the use of the word "Bank" (unless by a corporation) is forbidden by the Business Names Act of N.S.W.
- (b) if the note is regarded as a bank note it is liable to the Commonwealth Bank Notes Tax.
- (c) the note appears to be a Promissory Note in terms of the N.S.W. Stamp Duty Act, and as such would be liable to stamp duty . . ."

After detailing alternatives to the notes, the letter concluded with "... It is desired that immediate action be taken to advise the internees of the position, and to withdraw and destroy all such notes and all blocks, etc., used in their printing. The issue of token money by internees is not permitted . . .".

In due course all the notes "in circulation" were withdrawn and allegedly destroyed. Some internees believe that many may have

been souvenired by authorities, including it was rumoured, the Camp Commandant.

By the end of 1941 the British Government decided that the internees had been wrongly imprisoned and directed their release. Some of the English officers were court-martialled or reprimanded for their treatment of the internees during the voyage to Australia on the Dunera.

When later given the chance, many of the men enlisted for active service in the British Army. However, as there were few ships available to take them back to England, some 500-600 ended up in the 8th Australian Employment Company. Others joined the Jewish Brigade and the American Army. Some of those who succeeded in joining the British Army never reached England, having drowned when their ship was torpedoed on the return voyage. Some refugee soldiers were taken by the enemy and thus twice experienced imprisonment, firstly by the British, then by the Nazis!

After the war the former internees in the 8th Australian Employment Company were allowed to stay in Australia if they wished as firstly British citizens and later Australian citizens. A form of reverse immigration!

Those who stayed in Australia, of more or less State-less nationalities, were moved to better conditions at Tatura, Victoria. As rumour had it that the Hay Camp was then to be used by prisoners of war, the internees built a pile of their hand-made "luxury" possessions such as chairs and tables, and set fire to them on the eve of their departure.

Later on, there were other searches, including one in a camp at Orange, New South Wales, to confiscate the illegal notes the authorities believed some of the men still held. It was freely rumoured that the true reason was that the collector's value of these notes had been recognised, and some of the army officers hoped to be able to round up a few notes for their own use.

The search still goes on today, for these now numismatic items which exemplified the brief independence of the "Dunera Boys" are now eagerly sought by banknote collectors, and at auction can fetch between \$200 and \$800 each, depending on the condition of the notes and the signature combination.

Notes with "Cancelled" in red have been reported, but unconfirmed, and one set bearing "sample" in black on the top left margin of the fronts has been observed.

By 1987 there was estimated to be only 243 of the internees still living, 43 of whom were in America. About 150 were living in Melbourne and 32 in Sydney.

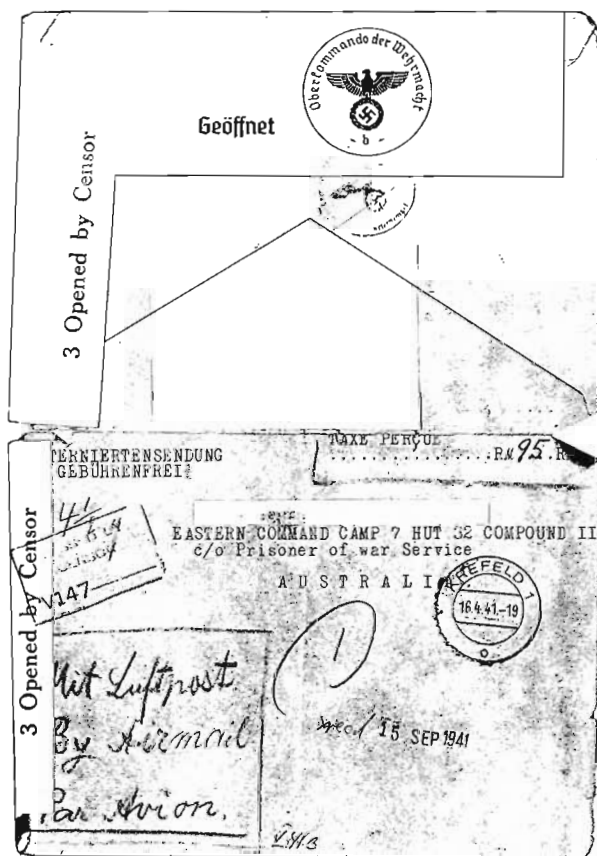
Cyril Alison Pearl's book *The Dunera Scandal* is considered by the former internees to be the most comprehensive and most authentic work. Pearl died in Sydney on 3 March, 1987.

There was a four-hour long television mini-series "The Dunera Boys" screened in October

1985 which most of the internees found they were unable to identify with and thus were disappointed in the production.

There are now three Dunera Associations, one each in Australia, Europe, and "Western Hemisphere" (including America).

On September 6, 1990, at the new National Maritime Museum at Darling Harbour (Sydney) a temporary Dunera Exhibition will be opened to coincide with a festive celebration marking the day and place of arrival of the internees fifty years previously. This will be followed by a weekend at Hay on 15 and 16 September, where a plaque will be unveiled on the site of the former internment camps.



Envelope from letter received by internee - name deleted (original held)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND REFERENCES

The "Dunera News" newsletters from September 1985 to April 1989 inclusive, and its editor Henry Lippmann for assistance. *The Australian Coin Review* March 1985, article by Jeffrey Turnbull "Note Issue capped a journey to Hay". Report of the Australian Numismatic Society 1974 Yearbook article by Leigh Burford "The Hay Australian Internment Camp Banknotes". Correspondence with former internees or their relatives now living in England, Italy and Australia, and with Walter Keats of New York, U.S.A. Ray Jewell, for illustrious and information which put me into contact with internees.