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Lastly, the thousands-strong crowd joined the band in a spirited rendition of ‘Rule Britannia’. Flags featured, as the *Advertiser* reported:

> There was a spontaneous outburst of cheering when a large Union Jack was hoisted from an office window near the band. Smaller flags seemed to spring up simultaneously in various parts of the crowd, and these were waved to and fro by the holders until the ceremony was concluded.

The reporter suggested that the flying of the Union Jack symbolised the ‘deep affection of the Dominions which were ready to sacrifice everything’ for Britain.\(^{15}\)

The newspaper reported similar scenes in towns around South Australia. In Kapunda, the news that England had declared war was received with silence at first, and then a flag of the Empire was unfurled in front of the Post-Office. A crowd joined in singing the National Anthem, Sons of the Sea, and Rule Britannia, winding up by prolonged cheers for King George.\(^{16}\)

The mobilisation of South Australian infantry, artillery, army medical corps and naval reserves started on the afternoon of 5 August.\(^ {17}\)

The following day’s *Register* included an editorial headed ‘Fair Play, Britons!’. Referring back to the pledges of loyalty made by Pflaum and Homburg, ‘prominent and esteemed State legislators of German descent’, it exhorted ‘Britons’ to ‘be generous and fair and big-minded and big-hearted in their relations with men and women of German extraction in this community’; to ‘play the game as they would like the game to be played with them in similar circumstances’.\(^ {18}\)

**The enemy within**

On Monday 10 August, five days after the announcement that Australia was at war, a proclamation was issued calling upon German subjects to report themselves to the police station nearest to their residences. On 12 August, war was declared against Austria, and the following day the measure was extended to Austrian subjects.\(^ {19}\)

The process of registration at the police station involved the completion of a form which included personal details, length of residence in Australia, naturalisation details and nationality, whether a member of the armed forces or reserves of an enemy country, possession of any firearms, as well as the names of ‘reputable persons’ to whom the person registering was known. Those being registered were asked to give
their ‘parole’, to swear that they would ‘neither directly nor indirectly take any action prejudicial to the British Empire during the present war’. The police officer could then make a ‘provisional order’, stating any requirements, such as reporting at the police station at stated intervals (usually weekly). The officer was then required to complete a confidential ‘Report on Person reputed to be an Enemy Subject’, which was filed with military intelligence.20

The Australian Government detained enemy aliens using discretionary powers delegated by the Imperial Government. Enemy reservists were a source of particular concern. Instructions from London, received on 7 August, required the arrest of enemy reservists in Australia. Most were then released on parole. In September further instructions were received stating that all enemy reservists and enemy subjects of military age found on ships should be detained. The following month the regime was extended: all enemy subjects whose conduct was considered ‘suspicious or unsatisfactory’ were to be interned. In December 1914 the Australian Government adopted the practice being followed in the United Kingdom of treating all internees, civilian or otherwise, as prisoners of war. From this point no distinction in terms of treatment or terminology was made between interned enemy reservists, enemy civilians, and interned British subjects: they all became ‘prisoners of war’.

These instructions received from Britain between August and October necessitated the establishment of internment camps in each military district. In South Australia, the 4th Military District, an internment camp was established on Torrens Island. In both common and official usage, and following British practice in the Boer War, it quickly became known as Torrens Island Concentration Camp.

Initially, those interned at Torrens Island after it opened on 9 October 1914 were enemy reservists and those of military age taken from ships, and enemy subjects whose conduct was considered ‘suspicious or unsatisfactory’. Even before the camp’s establishment, by the end of September 1914 over 50 men had been refused parole or taken off ships in South Australia. By the end of October, the number of internees held on Torrens Island was just under 100, and just under 200 by the end of 1914. Internments at Torrens Island continued until mid-August 1915.
Once a Hun, always a Hun. By 1915 more reports of alleged German atrocities were appearing in the Australian press. The Australian Government used images of the horrible Hun to promote enlistment in the AIF. This recruitment poster was produced by the Government Printer in 1915.

State Library of New South Wales a184021
Johann Gerdes

Johann Gerdes arrived in Australia in May 1914. He was among those Germans paroled after the outbreak of war, but on breaking the terms of his parole he was interned on Torrens Island on 8 January 1915.

Later that year he would prove himself a nuisance to military authorities. He escaped from Torrens Island in June 1915 but was recaptured. He claimed to be an American citizen, though had allegedly made no earlier mention of this, nor did he have papers to support his claim.

Gerdes was transferred to Holsworthy in August 1915 and then managed to escape again in March of the following year. There is no record that he was recaptured, or at least not during that war. During the Second World War, however, he found himself in Melbourne’s Pentridge Prison, having been convicted of assault. Once again he claimed to be an American citizen, and once again he provided no evidence to prove his case. He remained in Australia after the war and was eventually naturalised.

Johann Gerdes after the Second World War, when he was finally naturalised.

NAA: B78 1955, Gerdes J.
A disproportionately large number of prisoners came from the Loxton area, where the outbreak of war triggered tensions. There were allegations of a parade of goose-stepping Germans down the main street of Loxton on 25 October 1914. One of their ringleaders was said to be a German-born butcher by the name of Karl Wilhelm Lude. Further accusations had it that a couple of days later Lude pulled a weapon on the local policeman Richard Alfred Lenthall and threatened to kill him.

Accusations of disloyalty among Germans in the Loxton area persisted through the war. At various points it was alleged that very few of them volunteered for service in the AIF, that many carried firearms in defiance of regulations concerning ‘enemy aliens’, and that a group of them had toasted the sinking of the *Lusitania*.

After the war a commission was conducted to investigate these claims. According to its report, altogether 103 men from the Loxton district were interned during the war, close to 10 per cent of the German population. This compares with just 33 internees from Tanunda, who made up only 3.15 per cent of the German population there.

The arrest and detention of ‘enemy aliens’ required the cooperation of police and military authorities. Here Loxton Mounted Constables Lenthall and Smith, accompanied by three military figures, gather Han Frohlick, Fritz Wilhelm Lessemann, Phillip Glassen and Johann August Schulz for transport to Adelaide on 10 October 1914. Lenthall seems to have been particularly enthusiastic in the performance of such duties, with the result that a disproportionately large number of Germans were interned from the Loxton district.

Courtesy South Australian Police Historical Society Inc
Seven prisoners gathered in front of one of the tents. In the white shirt in the middle, smoking a cigarette, is Paul Dubotzki.

Dubotzki Collection, courtesy Sydney Living Museums
Women from Adelaide’s Cheer-up Society visited Torrens Island to keep up the morale of the guards. Dubotzki’s caption points out Captain Hawkes, centre, describing him as ‘the dog of a commandant’. Photograph by Paul Dubotzki.

State Library of South Australia, B 46796
An undated photograph of the prisoners in the Torrens Island camp, musicians with their instruments in the front row. Photograph by Paul Dubotzki.

Dubotzki Collection, courtesy Dieter Kamper
This is one of the photographs taken by Dubotzki, printed in postcard format, and kept in an album by Frank Bungardy. Bungardy’s caption on the back reads, ‘Athletic Club, G.C.C. [German Concentration Camp] Torrens Island, July 1915. This where the only remedy to keep body and mind together to [stay] out of the Luny house.’

State Library of New South Wales, MLMSS 261/2/17
The camp closes

The Torrens Island Concentration Camp closed on 17 August 1915. At this time there was a consolidation of Australia’s internment facilities, as similar camps were shut down in all the states except New South Wales. It is possible that the evidence of the abuse of prisoners might have persuaded authorities to shut that camp down sooner rather than later, but this is not clear. In any case, most of the Torrens internees, some 350 men, were sent to the ‘German Concentration Camp’ at Holsworthy on the south-western outskirts of Sydney, where an existing camp was expanded to meet the growing demand.

The consolidation of internment in New South Wales had an international dimension, too. Australia was asked by the Colonial Office in London to take ‘enemy aliens’ from the Straits Settlements (that is, from Singapore and the Malay Peninsula) and Ceylon (today’s Sri Lanka), and an agreement was soon reached to this effect. In the next year, 1916, internees from Hong Kong, Fiji and British North Borneo followed. There were efficiencies to be gained, so the logic went, by ‘concentrating’ these 1200 internees, among them some women and children, with those already behind barbed wire in Australia.

The facility at Holsworthy, sometimes referred to as the ‘Liverpool’ camp, was much larger than the Torrens Island camp. In its basic features, however, it was similar. At Holsworthy, as on Torrens Island, the military was in control, regulating the daily lives of thousands of Germans and other ‘enemy subjects’ who, in most cases, were interned for the duration of the war. Although the abuses perpetrated on Torrens
Island seem generally to have been avoided, Holsworthy was not a pleasant place to live, certainly not over a period of months and then years. Accommodation was cramped and rough, boredom and frustration ever present. Many prisoners understandably made appeals for release, but these were granted only in very rare cases.

More fortunate prisoners were sent to a camp established at Trial Bay near Kempsey on the northern coast of New South Wales. An abandoned gaol there, located on a rocky headland overlooking the Pacific Ocean, was refitted for its new purpose. The Trial Bay internee population did not reach beyond about 580. They were drawn in large part from the upper echelons of German-Australian and Austrian-Australian society. Among them were businessmen, medical doctors, academics and German consuls. One, for example, was the renowned surgeon Max Herz, another the former Imperial German Consul in Brisbane Eugen Hirschfeld. Paul Dubotzki, the German photographer who had been interned on Torrens Island, was also sent to Trial Bay, of which he left an invaluable photographic record.

There was also a camp at Berrima, some 140 kilometres southwest of Sydney, which remained in existence until the end of the war. It provided a home for officers and crew of ships such as Scharzfels, seized in Australian ports during the war, as well as