

Peter Monteath, Mandy Paul and Rebecca Martin. *Interned: Torrens Island 1914-1915* (Wakefield Press, 2014)

Interned: Torrens Island 1914-1915 by Peter Monteath, Mandy Paul and Rebecca Martin immerses the reader in a grim and often forgotten chapter in South Australia's history. The prevalence of German culture was strong in the state from the mid-1800s through to World War I due to a large number of immigrants from Prussia, Bavaria and Hanover. At the breakout of war, many German and Austrian nationals living in Australia were imprisoned in internment camps. Adelaide's internment camp was Torrens Island, located in the Port River estuary, opened in October 1914 and closed just under a year later in August 1915. Monteath, Paul and Martin use a multimodal approach of written language and photographs to reveal the story of the Torrens Island Internment Camp and of those interned there. A combination of photographs taken by Torrens Island internee Paul Dubotzki, extracts from the diaries of internee Frank Bungardy, and additional information and images providing historical context give the reader a comprehensive and firsthand perspective of life on Torrens Island.

The book is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the reader to the sentiments of the time through the story of the *SS Scharzfels*, the vessel which was unfortunate enough to sail into Adelaide on the day it was announced Australia was at war with Germany, flying a German flag and unaware of the news of war. Despite the fact there were British subjects aboard, the men were not allowed to disembark the ship. Chapter 2 looks at South Australia's German heritage and the role of German culture in Adelaide, stating that 'decades before the term "multiculturalism" was invented, South Australia had provided something of a model of how it might work' (9). The British Australians and German Australians lived and worked amicably side by side for many decades. Chapter Three examines how the Torrens Island internment camp came into existence. At the breakout of war, German and Austrian nationals were required to report themselves to their local police station. The Australian Government had the power to detain enemy aliens as delegated by the Imperial Government:

Enemy reservists were of particular concern ... 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. (19)

Chapter 4 delves into what life was like on Torrens Island for those detained there. During this time the detained men lived in tents and worked 'collecting wood, digging latrines and cooking' (43). The men who were not occupied by such duties faced empty days with little to fill the hours. Chapter 5 concludes with the implications of the closure of the Torrens Island camp.

In the beginning, life in the camp and discipline was relatively laidback. Then in early 1915 Captain George Edward Hawkes took over as commandment of the camp 'owing to his reputation as a firm disciplinarian' (47). The tone in the camp changed dramatically, and this change 'might never have become known outside the camp, except that word got out of abuses being perpetrated on prisoners by Hawkes and his men. As a result, the military authorities had to confront some awkward truths' (47). Paul Dubotzki's photography provided evidence of the abuse, and prisoners managed to get a photo smuggled off the island in a boot sent to the mainland for repair. The authors suggest, but

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do not know for sure, that the evidence of abuse in the camp may have been one reason for the eventual closure of Torrens Island.

The respect and consideration Monteath, Paul and Martin have taken in creating *Interned* can clearly be seen in the thoughtful composition of text and pictures which allows the reader to become immersed in the reality of that time. The included text is succinct and provides essential historical context while also introducing the reader to many of the internees held on the island. The text is there as a support to the photographs, which carry the narrative. The writers never allow the text to intrude onto the photography's space, granting the reader the opportunity to discover Torrens Island through their own interpretation of the picture narrative. Chapter Four is a striking example of the consideration taken when composing the text. The first sections of the chapter describe what life was like for the men living on Torrens Island, often through extracts in Bungardy's own words taken from his diary:

Owing our tent being small, and very inconvenient to use it as Bedroom, Kitchen and Dining room combined, we wher forced to procure bags at 4p a piece, old Potatooe Bags. Went out into the Busche under guard, procured some sticks, and we soon had a rough and ready Bush Kitchen and dining room. (43)

The text is interspersed with images of the internees, accompanied by short snippets introducing the reader to these men, along with images which illustrate their lives in the camp. One of the included images is the cover of Issue 2 of *Der Kamerad* (The Comrade), a magazine the internees published and distributed amongst themselves in June 1915. These aspects humanise the internees into individuals and invites the reader to consider them as such rather than as a collective, nameless group. In the second part of the chapter the text is silenced and a series of Dubotzki's photographs take over the narrative. The photos are given space to breathe, with only one image per page or double-page spread. A short caption for each photo is the only text the reader has for guidance as the photographs illustrate the sombre atmosphere and primitive conditions in the camp. A particularly poignant photograph shows a group of seven of the internees, all young men, posing for the photo in front of their tent (56). They could easily be a group of young men on a camping trip together, not prisoners. Another photograph depicts the injuries inflicted by a guard on an internee's backside with a bayonet (85). Without such images the truth of what occurred in the camp may never have survived. Respect is afforded not only to the reader, but to the subjects and the subject matter in allowing the internees' own recollections and observations to shape the reader's perceptions.

Yet what is most confronting about this book is not the poor treatment suffered by the internees but the public's ignorance of the abuse taking place in the camp and the fact that this part of South Australia's history is so little-known. It resembles the years of silence surrounding Australia's treatment of asylum seekers in offshore detention centres. If not for those willing to speak out, these important parts of history would be lost.

Interned: Torrens Island 1914-1915 presents the reader with an otherwise hidden piece of South Australian history. Monteath, Paul and Martin respectfully capture the experiences of the internees through the internees' own eyes, shading in gaps with historical context to give the reader a rich understanding of the circumstances surrounding Torrens Island.

Raelke Grimmer