

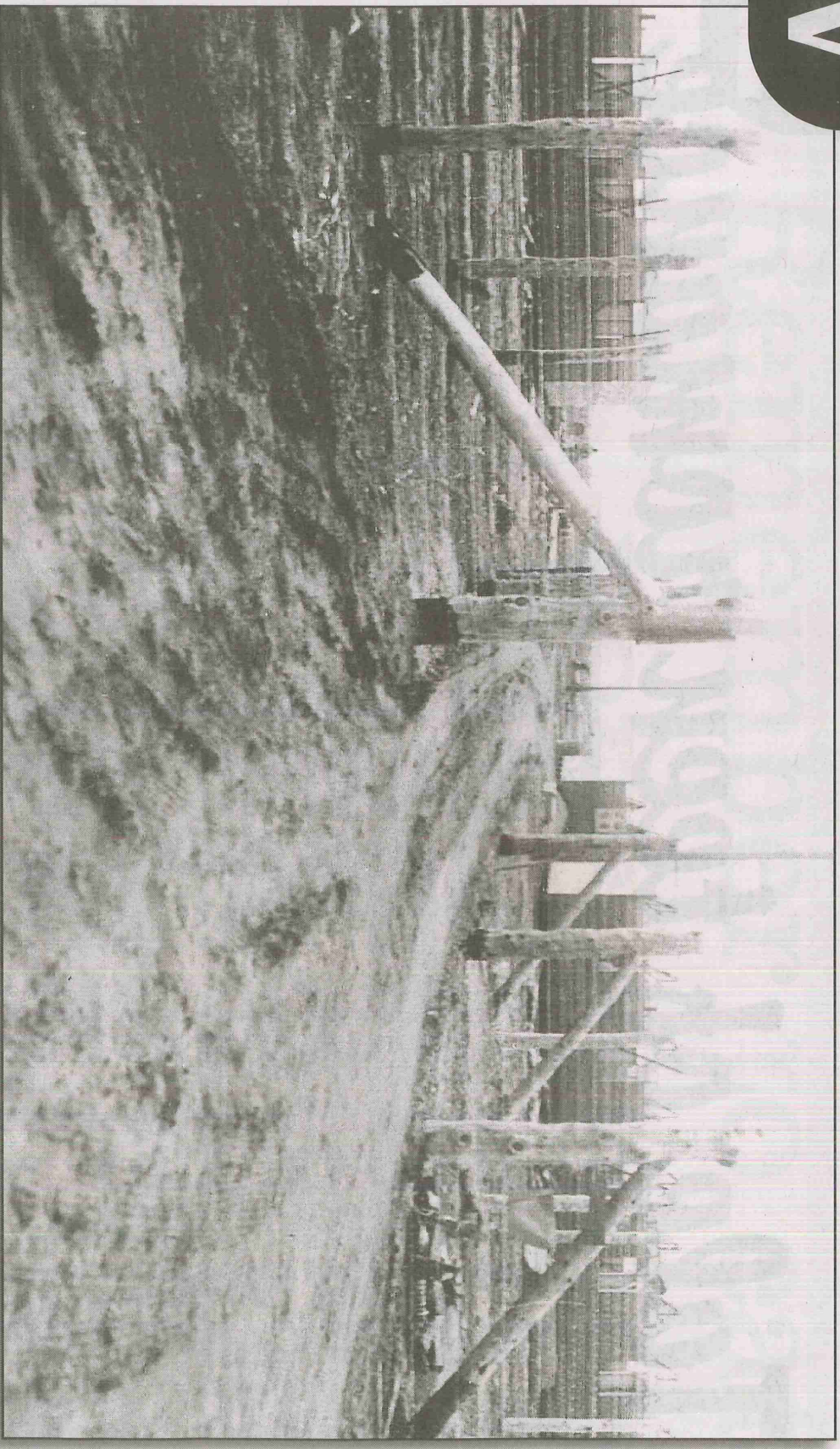
## SATURDAY OPENINGS

THE CSU Regional Archives is currently extending its opening hours to include the first Saturday of every month.

On these days, the archives will be open from 10am to 3pm.

Due to the long weekend, the next Saturday opening will occur on October 8, 2011.

This trial initiative has been put in place to cater for those researchers who are unable to visit the archives on weekdays during normal business hours. It is hoped that enough researchers and visitors will avail themselves of this service to warrant it becoming a permanent occurrence.



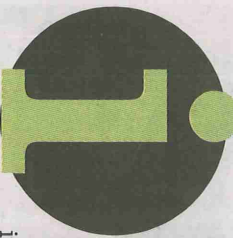
ABOVE AND BELOW: Two photos of the Hay Internment Camp taken in August 1940 prior to the first internees arriving in September 1940. (CSU Regional Archives: RW78/58-59)

# Hay Internment Camp



at the archives  
Wayne Doubleday

In June 1940 the Australian



War Cabinet received a request from the British High Commissioner in Canberra that Australia accept a large number of prisoners of war (POW's) and enemy "alien" internees. The following month the township of Hay

was chosen as the site for a number of the camps.

Three camps were established at Hay (numbered 6, 7 and 8), each with the capacity to house approximately 1000 internees. In late July 1940 the 16th Australian Garrison Battalion was formed in Sydney to guard the three camps at Hay.

"Overnight a whole town of timber and corrugated iron sprang up, and within a few weeks the population of the district doubled to include 2000 prisoners and up to 500 members of the garrison. Two months later a third compound opened, and another 1000 prisoners arrived."

The first internees arrived at Hay on September 7, 1940 (four train loads totalling 44 carriages) and moved into Camp 8, which was almost complete. Camp 7 was still under construction but half of the internees were moved there several days after their arrival. Camp 6 was opened later in November 1940.

The first internees had travelled aboard the HMT Dunera and were Italian, German and Austrian civilian detainees, not POW's. They had been detained as a precaution as they were perceived as security risks to both the European war effort and "national security".

This policy was to change in May 1941 when the original Dunera internees were transferred from Hay, and were replaced by Italian POW's captured during the Middle Eastern campaign. In December 1941, the first Japanese POW's arrived at the Hay Internment Camps.

Attempts to escape, or "breakouts" as they were known, did occur but it was really only after the end of the war that the *The Riverine Grazier* recounted the stories to the general public. In one instance a tunnel had apparently



been dug by the Italians which went all the way out to the outer wire fence and was lit by elaborate electric lighting.

However, one of the Italians alerted camp authorities and the tunnel was discovered before it could be used. On another occasion, an Italian POW by the name of Lieutenant Edgardo Simoni, who had a reputation for attempting breakouts, escaped from the Hay camp and made his way all the way to Melbourne, before being recognised several weeks later.

Simoni's was the only real effective escape from Hay during the entire operation of the internment camp.

He had managed to climb over the fence before making his way down the Murrumbidgee River through Maude and Bahranald, where he was able to steal a boat. He then went on foot from Robinvale to Bendigo, where he caught a train to Melbourne.

After the well known Cowra breakout in August 1944, many of the surviving Japanese POW's were transferred to Hay, which was deemed to be a more secure camp where the compounds were stronger.

(Security was so strict that in November 1943 when the lord mayor of Sydney paid an official visit to Hay, he was refused permission to look at the camp farms which had been established). Tighter restrictions were also placed on the Japanese POW's and their work parties to the camp farms.

The *Riverine Grazier* reported that, "One day it was thought that they were going to attempt a break at Hay, and there was great activity around the camp. Residents of West Hay were asked to move out for the night as West Hay was in the

line of fire from the machine guns guarding the camp. Many did so, a number spending the night at the council chambers.

However no escape attempt was made, but the prisoners staged a great demonstration, and lit a huge bonfire burning, among other things, a quantity of their rations."

The incident which gained the most publicity for the Hay Internment Camp was the murder of two Italian POW's - Pasquale Mancuso and Pasquale Francavilla, who were stabbed to death in a brawl on July 10, 1944. Newspaper reports detailed a knife fight between two groups of Italian prisoners.

The two murdered men were said to be royalists and had fought against prisoners in another hut who were fascists.

An inquest held in September 1944 found that Giacomo Passafiume, a fellow prisoner, had murdered both Mancuso and Francavilla.

Interestingly, Passafiume was not committed for trial, as the coroner had limited jurisdiction due to security regulations. Instead the perpetrator was handed over to the custody of the army for trial in a military court.

The last prisoners were removed from the Hay Internment Camps to Cowra by train, to await repatriation, on October 28, 1946.

The equipment from the camp was auctioned off during 1947, with the last auction sale occurring on June 17 and 18, 1947.

References: *Haywire: The War-Time Camps at Hay*, Published by the Hay Historical Society, March 2006; *Riverine Grazier* September 10, 1940, May 23, 1941, November 5, 1943, October 27, 1944, February 19, 1952, February 5, 1974.

## what you need to know

■ The CSU Regional Archives are open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. Located in the Blakemore Building on South Campus of the university, access can be gained via College Avenue or Hely Avenue. Members of the public are welcome to visit the search room, where professional archival staff can assist with inquiries. For those people unable to visit the archives in person, staff can provide a research service for straight-forward inquiries for a fee of \$55 per hour including copying and postage. For further information, phone 02 6925 3666, email [archive@csu.edu.au](mailto:archive@csu.edu.au), or visit our website at [www.csu.edu.au/research/archives](http://www.csu.edu.au/research/archives) for a full listing of holdings and more detailed information.