

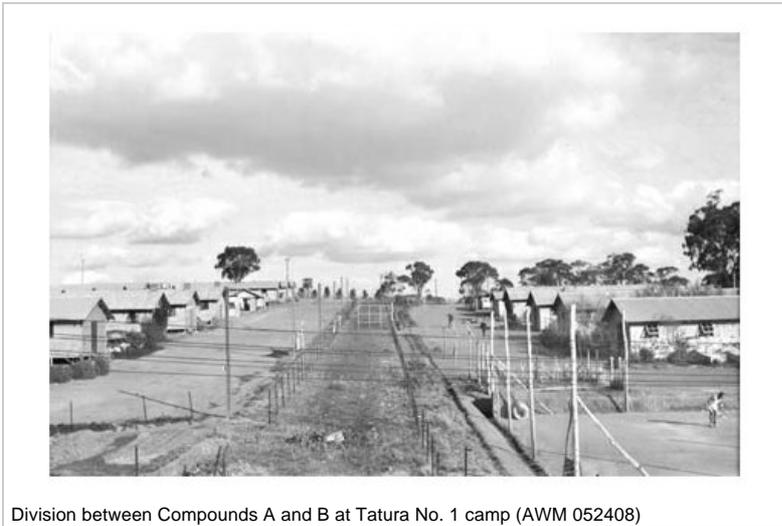
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## Tatura – Rushworth, Victoria (1940–47)

Tatura Internment Group was the first purpose-built internment camp for World War II. It consisted of four camps – two at Tatura and two at Rushworth. Camps No. 1 and No. 2 at Tatura were located less than a kilometre from each other. Camps No. 3 and No. 4 were located at Rushworth, a couple of kilometres from Tatura, and are sometimes known as Rushworth No. 3 and No. 4 camps.

### Camps No. 1 and No. 2, Tatura

Camp 1 was opened in 1940 and housed German and Italian internees. It was divided into two compounds separated by barbed wire. The men were initially housed in unlined huts and more huts had to be built as internee numbers increased. The mess halls were the only heated rooms in the camp and during the colder months these became overcrowded. The internees developed tennis courts, workshops, a newspaper, and flower and vegetable gardens. Some ran small businesses such as haircutting and tailoring.



Division between Compounds A and B at Tatura No. 1 camp (AWM 052408)

Camp 2 was opened in September 1940. At different times it housed German Jewish internees, Italian prisoners of war and German officers. The internees found life in the camp terribly boring and uncomfortable, and experienced very hot weather and severe dust storms.

The internees in Camp 2 were housed in tin huts, divided into cabins. The cabins had a table and two chairs, two beds and a window. Bathrooms were clean but only one section had hot showers. Food was adequate and a Kosher kitchen was established for the Jewish internees. A hut was also converted to a Jewish synagogue.

Both camps closed in January 1947.



Internees at Tatura No. 2 camp making fenders for landing barges from salvaged rope (AWM 030248/20)

### Camps No. 3 and No. 4, Rushworth

Camp No. 3 was used exclusively for family groups, both Italians and Germans from Iran, Australia, Palestine and the Straits Settlements (now Singapore and Malaysia). There were also some Jewish families as well as single women accommodated there.

The internees had workshops for carpentry and handicrafts as well as vegetable gardens. The children attended the camp school taught by German teachers. Camp No. 3 was made up of four sections, each enclosed in a barbed wire fence. The internees lived in huts which were very hot in summer. The facilities for washing were adequate, however, and hot water was available in all three washrooms.



A class of interned German children and their teacher, Mrs Gudrun Heider, at Tatura No. 3 camp (AWM 030245/08)

Camp No. 4 was initially used to accommodate Europeans who had been living in Australia at the outbreak of war. They included Germans, Italians, Hungarians, Finns and Romanians. Their accommodation consisted of corrugated iron huts, which were very hot in summer and freezing in winter as the windows had no glass. Although the internees had to adhere to strict discipline and routine in the camp, they could also enjoy themselves playing tennis, tending the gardens, attending concerts and musical evenings and socialising in the camp cafe.

After Japan entered the war, the Europeans were relocated to make way for Japanese internees from Australia, Java and New Caledonia. Included among these were Chinese from Formosa (Taiwan). The camp population included numbers of children, for whom a Japanese school was established, and babies born to interned parents. The women set up a sewing factory in which they made garments out of second-hand clothes they were given by Australian charities. The internees also maintained vegetable gardens.

Camp No. 3 closed in February 1946 and Camp No. 4 closed in August of the same year.



Japanese internees of Tatura No. 4 camp line up for dental check-ups (AWM 052460)

## Records

The National Archives holds records about the Tatura camps. A selection of these is listed below.

### Collection references

	Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
	<u>This Department of the Army file from 1940 concerns the acquisition of land for the camp at Tatura.</u>	1940	MP508/1, 259/739/329
	<u>Records about the laying of pipelines to the Tatura camp are found in this 1940 Department of the Army file.</u>	1940	MP508/1, 259/715/112
	<u>Matters of security, particularly concerning visitors to the camp, are the subject of this file from 1940.</u>	1940	MP70/4, 1940/693
	<u>This 1942 Department of the Army file contains a report of official visitors to No. 2 Tatura.</u>	1942	MP508/1, 255/715/490

	<a href="#">Records about the Tatura camp canteen can be found in this 1941 Department of the Army file.</a>	1941	MP508/1, 255/705/39
	<a href="#">Inspection reports can be found in this 1942 Department of the Army file.</a>	1942	MP508/1, 255/715/747
	<a href="#">Disturbances at Tatura No. 3 are the subject of this file from 1941.</a>	1941	MP70/1, 36/101/45
	<a href="#">This 1941 Department of the Army file contains records about the provision of schools and kindergarten for interned children at Tatura.</a>	1042	MP508/1, 255/726/103
	<a href="#">Official visitors' reports from 1940 can be found in this Department of the Army file.</a>	1940	MP508/1, 255/715/143
	<a href="#">This small Department of Defence file contains establishment records for the Rushworth internment camp, 1947.</a>	1947	A10857, IV/120D
	<a href="#">This 1941 file about internees at Tatura No. 3 camp is part of the collection of Sir Frederick Shedden.</a>	1941	A5954, 675/8
	<a href="#">This 1941 file from the War Cabinet Secretariat concerns internees from Singapore and the Straits Settlements.</a>	1941	A2676, 1234

\* These files have been digitised and are available online. Click on the reference number above to retrieve the item from the RecordSearch database. Then click on the 'View digital copy' icon to view the online file. It will appear in a new browser window.

### 'Aliens and others': World War II internment project

The National Archives of Australia is a partner in an Australian Research Council project titled 'Aliens and others: representing citizenship and internment in Australia during World War II', headed by Dr Ilma O'Brien of the Victoria University of Technology.

As part of the project, Dr O'Brien is interested in collecting personal memories of World War II internment in Australia. If you have personal or family memories, photographs or documents about internment you would like to share, further information about the project can be obtained from Dr O'Brien at [ilma.obrien@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:ilma.obrien@latrobe.edu.au).