

Worksheet: Internment of 'enemy aliens'

After the outbreak of war in September 1939, all Germans and Austrians in Britain became 'enemy aliens' and had to register with the police. Although most remained at liberty, in the summer of 1940, restrictions tightened and tens of thousands were interned and imprisoned in camps across the country. The largest of these camps was Hutchinson Internment Camp on the Isle of Man. People were imprisoned even if they were against the Nazi regime. Most of those interned were Jewish refugees. Living conditions in many of the camps were inadequate. There was a shortage of medical supplies and poor access to clean water and proper sewage disposal.

Wilhelm Jondorf



*Wilhelm Jondorf (1890-1957).¹
The Fifth Columnist, Onchan, Isle of Man, 1940.
Ink and watercolour on cardboard. 15.2X12.5 cm.
Gift of Mrs Betty Jondorf, London.
Collection of the Yad Vashem Art Museum, Jerusalem.*

¹ Wilhelm Jondorf, a German refugee, was interned in the Onchan camp on the Isle of Man. For more information, see <https://www.peoplescollection.wales/items/1862281>

Paul Hornig

Paul Hornig, an interned Jewish refugee who was later accepted by the British Army and trained at Aberdyfi, Gwynedd, recalled:

“It was humiliating to have been rejected by the Austrians as a Jew and imprisoned by the English as an Austrian”.²

Betty and Franz Hausner



Franz and Betty Hausner on their wedding day in London in 1939.

Image courtesy of Tony Hausner.

Franz Hausner (born 1915) and Betty Heimann (born 1911) were both Jewish refugees from Vienna. After Hitler took over Austria in what is called the Anschluss in March 1938, many Jews tried to leave as they were terrified about what could happen to them living in a Nazi country. Franz and Betty had known each other a little in Vienna, but it was not until they met again in

² Refugees from National Socialism in Wales, *Internment* <<https://wp-research.aber.ac.uk/nsrefugeeswales/history/internment/>> [accessed 15 March 2022]

London that they fell in love and were married there in 1939. Soon after the wedding, Franz, Betty, and Franz's brother Walter moved to a shared house in Cardiff. They set up a textile factory called Novel Textile Co. Ltd. on Treforest Trading Estate, near Pontypridd. Back in Vienna, the two brothers worked in the family business making lace and chenille.

After the war broke out the British government began to intern people who they considered a threat to National Security, and this newlywed Austrian couple were sent to two separate camps on the Isle of Man. Franz was interned in Mooragh Camp and Betty in Port Erin because men and women had to live separately. We know about life in the camp and its many hardships through the regular letters exchanged by the couple. Betty revealed that she had been made to share a room with a Nazi woman and was only allowed to bathe every 14 days. Franz wrote about difficulties with their business, and he eventually decided to sell their textile factory.



Letter written by Franz Hausner, interned at Mooragh Camp in Ramsey, in the Isle of Man, to his wife Betty, who was interned in Port Erin, Isle of Man, 27 November 1940.

Images courtesy of Tony Hausner.

After their one-year internment ended, they decided to leave Cardiff and move to Liverpool before finally emigrating to America in 1950.

DISCUSS:

1. How might it have felt for people to escape and find refuge in Britain, to then be interned?
2. What impact would leaving your job and your family have the second time round?

TASK:

Imagine that you are a campaigner in 1940 who is opposed to the internment of Jewish refugees. Write a letter to a newspaper voicing your concerns.

Dear Editor,

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