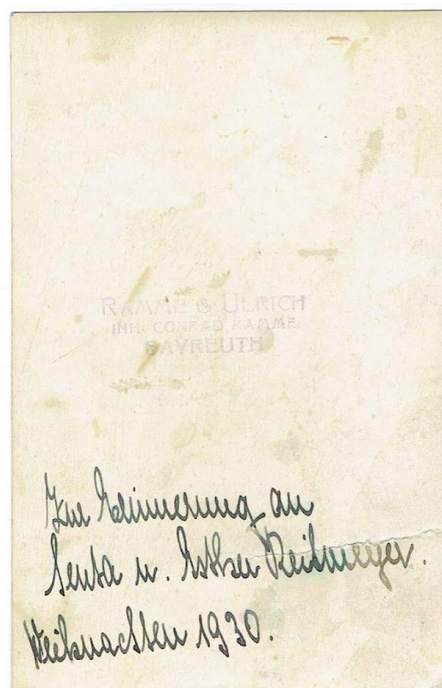


## Senta and Esther Reitmeyer



This heart-warming photo was part of a "blind" photo lot I purchased on German eBay. The back of the photo says, "**Senta and Esther Reitmeyer**, Christmas 1930". The photo was taken in **Bayreuth**, Germany.



My quick search on the German genealogy platforms came back with nothing. I had to broaden my search and turned to good old Google. I came across a photo from the [Australian War Memorial](http://www.australianwar memorial.gov.au) website of German internees at No. 1A Camp, Tatura Internment Group in Australia from December 1943. What a discovery - the whole family Reitmeyer was in Australia of all places during WWII - mother Senta, daughter Esther and father Heinrich!



WAR MEMORIAL

#### Conflict

Second World War, 1939-1945

#### Copyright

Item copyright: Copyright expired - public domain



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#### Description

Tatura, Australia. 4 December 1943. Family groups among German internees from overseas and now interned at No. 1A Camp, Tatura. Back row, left to right: Franz Degen; Herbert Weissenberger; Heinrich Reitmeyer. Front row: Lisel Degen; Irmgard Weissenberger with Elis.; Mary Degen; Ester Reitmeyer; Klaus Weissenberger; Senta Reitmeyer; Margarete Schwab.

Source: [Australian War Memorial](http://www.australianwar memorial.gov.au)

Another photo from the same source shows the same families in 1945 in Camp no. 3 of the same internee camp.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

030245.17



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#### Description

Tatura, Australia. 10 March 1945. Family groups of German Internees at No. 3 Camp, Tatura Internment Group. Back row, left to right (standing): Dr Heinrich Reitmeyer; Ester Reitmeyer; Herbert Weissenberger; Irmgard Weissenberger; Franz Degen. Front row (sitting): Lisel Degen holding baby Franz Degen Junior; Mary Degen; Senta Reitmeyer; Elisabeth Weissenberger (standing); Margarete Schwab; Klaus Weissenberger (standing).

Source: [Australian War Memorial](#)

Honestly, I didn't even know there were prisoner of war camps of WWII in Australia! I had to learn more. I came across this document on the internet: "[Tatura, German Heritage Trail](#)" which gave me some more insight into the camp life. I would like to quote this paper:

*"Before the outbreak of war, Britain was temporary or permanent home to approximately 73,000 persons from Germany and Austria who had left those countries due to the rise of the Nazi regime. When the British Army suffered defeat in France and was evacuated from Dunkirk in June 1940, it was believed that some of these refugees were*



enemy agents who would assist the German army when it invaded Britain. (..) In the Tatura region, land suitable for the seven camps was commandeered from the farmer-owners (..).

Camp 1 was the first camp set up. It held 1,000 German and Italian men, most of them already living in Australia, in two separate compounds. (..)

Camp 3 was a family camp and held 1,000 people in four compounds. (..)"

Apparently Esther and her peers attended school at the camp and formed study groups. Here is another photo from the No. 1A Camp, Tatura, collection at the Australian War Memorial archive.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

030241

#### Description

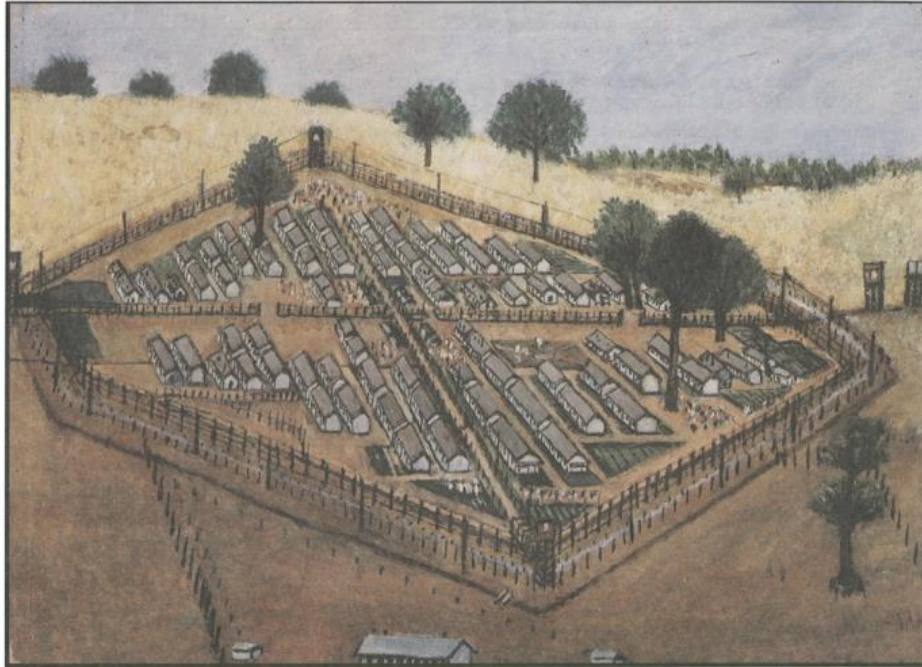
Tatura, Australia. 10 March 1945. A study group formed among German Internees at No. 3 Camp, Tatura Internment Group. Back row, left to right (standing): Gretel Steller; Ester Reitmeyer; Ilse Katz; Ruth Stoll; Elsbeth Frerck; Isolde Beck; Helga Beilharz; Sigrid Eppinger. Middle row (standing): Hildur Fuchs; Hannelore Beck; Margot Koenig; Berta Krafft. Front row (sitting): Hanni Vollmer; Ruth Palmer; Mitzi Swoboda; Helga Lewandowsky.

Source: [Australian War Memorial](https://www.awm.gov.au/photography/030241)

According to the paper "[Tatura, German Heritage Trail](#)" the school was established in Camp 3 in 1941 in order to "occupy the young people interned constructively and to ensure the continuation of their education". But there were neither a suitable building nor qualified teachers nor text books. So internees with skills and knowledge in their subject matter would teach at the school, using their own private books they had brought to the camp. The school council faced further challenges as more internees arrived at the camp in the following years and the classroom sizes grew. But despite those challenges, the paper says that "the students were taught at a very high standard. In addition,

*advanced education courses were established at Camp 3. These consisted of a trade course for boys and a home economics course for girls."*

"[Tatura, German Heritage Trail](#)" gives a really good overview of the camp and the life of the internee families, how they lived and how they spent their time. I've borrowed this picture of Camp 3 from the authors of the paper.



Tatura Internment Camp 3 - Painting by Wilhelm Kübler

Source: "[Tatura, German Heritage Trail](#)"

Now I was really curious about how this German family ended up in Australia, especially as internees and how their lives turned out in Down Under!

I tried my luck with the [National Archives of Australia](#) website. I found records of the family members' with their full names:

- Reitmeyer, Heinrich Franz Anton, Date of birth 03 August 1896;
- Reitmeyer, Senta Eva Constanze, 22 January 1902;
- Reitmeyer, Esther, (born 1929/1930)

The family arrived in Australia in 1931 and then again in 1939. Looks like upon their arrival in 1939, Heinrich was detained as prisoner of war and put to live in the Tatura internees camp.

I can read in these documents that Heinrich was born in Constantinople in today's Turkey to a father Reitmeyer and an Italian mother Antoinette de Paviro, living in Dolo, Venice in Italy at the time of Heinrich's arrest. Heinrich's occupation was manager and in some other documents he is referred to with a PhD. title. The record also shows his service as a Commissioned Officer in the German Army during WWI. At the time of his arrest, he had been a resident of Australia for 9 years.

Senta was detained in 1942, and I wonder if that was perhaps voluntary since she had been separated from her husband for more than 3 years by then, raising their teenage daughter alone.

Senta Eva Constanze née Hohf was born on 22 January 1902 to parents Rudolf Hohf and Maria née Aussem in Mönchengladbach, Germany. [CLICK](#) to see her birth certificate available on Ancestry. Her parents married in 1898 in Amsterdam. According to the information available on Ancestry, Senta had 4 siblings: Antonie Hohf (1899-1984), Rudolf Hohf (1908-1980), Hanna Hohf and Esther Hohf (1904-1927) ([CLICK](#)).

So what happened to the family after WWII?

Sadly, Heinrich passed away in 1949. He was buried at the Mona Vale (Turimetta) Cemetery in New South Wales, Australia. I found his gravestone on Billion Graves site.



Source: [Billion Graves](http://BillionGraves.com)

Looks like Senta returned to Germany after Heinrich's death. She is listed in the Munich address books from 1952 till 1980. She travels to New York from Bremerhaven, Germany, alone in 1958. I wonder whom she visited? The birth certificate of Senta has a remark that she passed away in March 1981.

Esther did her leaving certificate at the Sacred Heart College in Shepparton, Australia, and majored in English and German.

LEAVING CERTIFICATES

Margaret Kearney:	English, French.
biology, modern history.	commercial principles.
Robert Hynam:	English, maths. 11.
geography.	
Esther Reitmeyer:	English, German.

Source: Shepparton Advertiser, 31 January 1947, available on [MyHeritage](http://MyHeritage.com)

#### Updated:

After I had shared the original blogpost on my previous blog, a gentleman commented in November 2020 that Esther had indeed returned with her mother. She married a man named Breimann, a representative of Maizena, and was sent to Japan with his family. Eventually, they returned to Europe and live in Montreaux, Switzerland.

If you know Esther or her descendants, please let me know. I would love this photo to go home to its family!

Photos Without Families, originally shared on [www.photoswithoutfamilies.blog](http://www.photoswithoutfamilies.blog)