

Anti-German feelings during the Great War

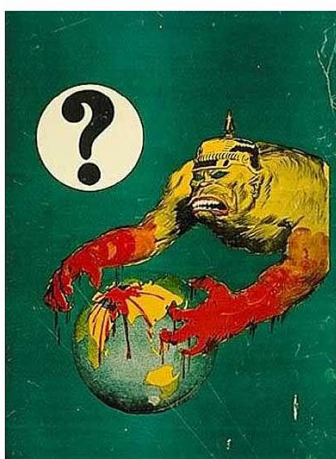
With this article I wanted to reveal how anti-German feelings affected one Wendish family at home in Australia during the Great War.

The project, Australian Wends in the Great War, has shown that many Australians of Wendish descent enlisted to fight for their country. John F. Williams, author of *German ANZACS*, has estimated that 18,000 Australians of German and Wendish ancestry enlisted, many of whom served overseas in World War One.

However, back home there were strong anti-German sentiments mostly based on surnames and place names, especially in South Australia with the renaming of towns, for example Blumberg to Birdwood. It was even to the extent that King George V by royal proclamation changed the name of the British Royal Family from the German Saxe-Coburg and Gotha to the English Windsor.



Anti-German poster



Anti-German poster

My branch of the Kollosche family has no documentation of such sentiment and was not adversely affected by the Great War as my

grandfather was a boy of 14 years in 1914. By war's end he was still too young to serve.

However other branches of the Kollosche family were not so fortunate!

In 2016 Jim Dunstan of Vacluse, Sydney, who had become interested in Kollosche family history, contacted me. Jim is the son of Sir Donald Dunstan, former State Governor of South Australia. He related a Great War incident told to him as a boy of the Dunstan family.

Sir Donald's grandfather, Johannes Kollosche (B.A., M.A. 1901) was a well-liked South Australian primary teacher of some 16 years. In 1915 he was headmaster of Croydon Public School, when unexpectedly while teaching class he was arrested, taken to the local police station and locked up, classified as an 'enemy alien'. Parents, students and teachers made a delegation to the police station demanding his release. Thankfully because of their intervention he was released later that day.

I have tried to verify this story by searching the South Australian Police Gazette online, but have found no report of the event!

Some years earlier, before being informed of the above incident, I had obtained a copy of a letter from Mary Langley (Johannes' daughter) to Ern Kolosche, dated March 1970. In the letter, as support of the above incident, Mary writes, "*To this day, Croydon signifies for me anti-German feelings bluntly expressed, family worries about the boys (brothers Harold, Gustav & Oscar) who were away at war, and the beginnings of my father's very serious illness*".

Following their return from the Great War, Harold, Gustav and Oscar changed their surnames from Kollosche to their mother's maiden name of Dunstan.

If you would like to read more about enemy aliens during the Great War visit "The Enemy at Home" website:

<http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/exhibition/enemyathome/the-enemy-at-home/index.html>.

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(pronounced Kollo-sch-a.)