

Tony Burton: Flagging Indifference – Emblems of the Adelaide and Barossa Germans in South Australia 1838-1972 - Symbols of Authentic Patriotism and Citizenship

Abstract: *Against a contemporary background of rising national tribalism and an associated waving of flags, little known outside Australia is the story of the German settlers of South Australia.*

Hardworking and sober Lutherans were among the first to establish themselves in the fledgling British colony, on the Adelaide plain, in the hills behind the city and then to establish farms and vineyards in the Barossa Valley to the north. Their compatriots who followed built on their reputation for reliability, and attained prominence in South Australian society, to include deputies elected to the colonial Parliament. The legacy of this multi-faceted community is their major and gemütliche contribution to South Australian society, economy and tourism.

This paper examines the range and extent of symbols of cultural identity usually associated with flag display, as this significant community integrated within the larger society, and was later shunned by it. Particular reference is made to the State emblem approved in 1904 and its possible connection to German influence.

As a measure of practical and informative vexillology, the relevance to the contemporary world of this kind of flag use is touched upon. The German pioneer community provided a model of unobtrusive and adaptive patriotism, their allegiance and proper use of flags in contrast to the xenophobia brought against them long after their arrival and, though now directed to other more recent immigrants, resurgent in Australia.



Cover:

Emblems of Prussia and South Australia together with an abstract painting in the Hans Heysen Centre at Hahndorf, evoking the peeling bark of the gum trees Heysen loved to paint, and in the combined German colors of black, red and gold and black white and red. The German Arms hotel is also in Hahndorf.

Preamble

A generation ago, when debate was intense (when was it really not?) about Australia's quaint insistence on retaining the British flag on that of a supposedly independent country - a full century after Federation and half a century after formal ratification of the Statute of Westminster [1] - one wit seriously suggested that Australia needs a *transparent* flag.

Simpler even than Libya's, devoid of any symbols at all, such a flag would invite national self-reflection and insight. It would bring home the point that the business of nations is beneath and above nationalism, that the nation is nothing if not ourselves, and how we treat each other. This is the substance beneath outward symbols. Symbols as such ought not become the fetish that many make of them.

Little-known outside Australia (and even for many there), but throwing light on the difference between nationality, nationalism and jingoism, are the immigrants from east and northern Germany, and Austria, pioneers in the 19th century, and their successful descendants. Settled chiefly in the Barossa Valley, north of Adelaide, they also later settled other parts of South Australia [2].

Australia may still have a head of state imported from German royalty, but our country owes more to ordinary German settlers, among others, than to its ersatz monarchy. This paper considers flags and analogous symbols used - or not used - to reflect a sense



of identity and nationality tempered by the circumstances of an adopted new homeland. A related question for a conference of this kind is what, if any, emblems of *Germanitas* - such as flags, Arms, badges and the like from the old country - expressed, however discreetly, the underlying *volksgeist*, and after Bismarck, any new sense of nationality. The somewhat sparse evidence of specific flag images and records is interesting for what that suggests about flags and their usage in civic life. Australia's youth are no longer indifferent to flags [3], as their parents seemed, so it may be useful to enquire what an apparent indifference to flags means as a lesson to both young and their mentors: are flags primarily a tool of nationalism or are they necessary to foster a sense of nationality?

Background

The wars of the 18th century had prompted a diaspora from the German heartlands to find new opportunities and a quiet life in the Russian steppes along the Volga and on the prairies of North America. The upheavals of the Napoleonic wars in Europe and the struggles for national unification in their aftermath prompted a further exodus to the British colonies in Australia [4].

Arriving in 1838 from what was then Prussia, Lusatia and Silesia, and now part of Poland, Germans were among the earliest settlers in the British colony of South Australia established at the end of 1836. Unlike other parts of Australia, no convicts were sent to what was



chartered as a Government/private enterprise joint venture. Good, reliable and free labour was in demand. The initial 486 and those following in the 1840s were farmers - first of wheat and later of wine. The world-renowned vintages of Adelaide and the nearby Barossa Valley, settled from 1842, and soon "thickly populated with Germans from one end to the other" ¹⁵ are the result.

By the turn of the 19th century and up to 1914 (when immigration from Germany stopped) it is estimated that German-born or people of German descent in South Australia comprised 8-10% of the total population - in numbers to have stirred resentment among certain of the British majority. As early as the 1850s some felt that Germans were already too numerous ¹⁶, and should be grateful that they were even allowed to come to South Australia without their demanding equal political rights with the establishment ¹⁷.

The xenophobia of many Australians, including more recent arrivals who ought to know better, began with attitudes towards the indigenous people. And from the first days of European settlement in 1788, the issue of loyalty and harmony within even that community, and by implication, to which flag and sovereign citizens should show allegiance and respect, has aroused irrational animosity towards many culturally distinct groups of Australians, including the Australian-born.

Irish and Catholics were once viewed as especially seditious. That suspicion also touched the Germans of South Australia in particular - and as noted, from early on, in 1855 when the issue of equal rights for all settlers came before the new colonial Parliament. "To have the rights of Anglo-Saxons, they must cease to be Germans" wrote one, prompting a public meeting and petition for precisely those rights, a protest that had the support of the Governor and the more enlightened German-language press, urging "a new confederation of settlers united as South Australians under one flag" ¹⁸.

Wider resentment surfaced later at the end of the 19th century, with the arrival of urban immigrants justifiably enthused by the establishment of the unified Reich, but not always diplomatic about saying so in a British colony, and in taking sides over the Boer War in South Africa.

Hostilities grew in the period of imperial rivalry that led to and sustained World War I, when anti-German hysteria culminated, most virulently, in South Australia, making that state a justified study-focus.

Even after that first war, suspicion of fifth column culture reverberated to the eve of World War II and well after that conflict, as this writer remembers from his own school days. (Germans in general were perceived as not only having "lost the War", but as having unilaterally *caused* both international conflicts: a very short-sighted view of history, especially after Versailles). In the popular mind, though not officially at government level ¹⁹ anyone with a gravel accent and Teuton manner - was suspect and fair game, in the schoolyard as much as anywhere, for appalling and ignorant harassment.

As outlined in *Crimx Australis* over the last year or so, the same issue is much to the fore in Australia today, even if the community now often targeted and expected to "kiss the flag" acknowledges Mecca before bowing to the Queen ¹⁰. Fascism wears many guises and is no respecter of national borders. As Berthold Brecht implied in *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, one dictator may be dead, but "the bitch that bore him is in heat again" ¹¹, for this evil is a radically human vice, a hard wiring that suggests a fundamental flaw that we all have yet to overcome.

The mixed German community was by no means monolithic and in that variety has contributed much to the development of the economic, cultural and social life of South Australia - eminent in public life and the professions ¹², working with Aboriginal people, maintaining choral traditions in the *Liedertafel*, marksmanship in the *Schützenfest*, and fitness through the *Turnverein*, and bonhomie in the good grape of the Barossa and other places. Distinct stages in migration patterns can be discerned. Each expressed German pride in different ways. All however without the aggressive flag displays that distorted Germany itself in the 1930s, found among other ethnic groups, or exploited recently and infamously, in Australia on beaches and at public events linked to national day celebrations ¹³.

Among the settlers, a German sensibility, a *volksgeist*, existed nevertheless from the start, centred, as all nationality is, around common customs, language and shared history, and sustained until virtually smothered in the community backlash provoked by the First World War. Their revival is relatively recent.

Symbols of a flagless *Volksgeist*

The Germanity of cakes, carts, and other externals of culture that draws tourists today is in large part a celebration of Bavarian or Tyrolean kitsch.

The original pioneers were of a

A CELEBRATION OF TOURIST KITSCH?
Scenes and tourist artefacts at the Adelaide hill town of Hahndorf; Lederhosen at the Schuetzenfest. Flags of Bavaria and Baden (abolished 1952)



Prussian stamp, and for the greater part, from Bavaria and Austria the Clare Valley in the colony. In the early period, from 1838 to the consolidation of the Reich and among the largely rural and strict Lutheran communities, very little in the way of secular symbols such as flags seems in evidence, for until 1867 the German peoples were politically fragmented from Schleswig to Austria, the Baltic to Switzerland. For the early Prussian pioneers, if any symbols at all remained of the lands that they had left, these might have been the insignia of Friedrich Wilhelm III, but whose drive for

sober Lutherans though Catholics also settled later in mid-north of the

uniform worship they had really wanted to leave behind. Revolutionaries these people were not.

Also, Lutheranism is a very sober faith, having evolved as a protest against superstition and corruption in the established Church. Symbols of Lutheran piety, found in stained glass in the pioneer churches of the Barossa, for example, are restrained and, unsurprisingly, biblical. Not flags, but devices abound of a simplicity that goes to the core of good flag design: a star, a stylised myrtle bloom (still the Lutheran emblem in South Australia) [14], a cross, an anchor, a heart, symbols of steadfastness, seen on altarpieces or on gravestones in the Barossa from this time. Lutheran faith focused on just that, faith, rather than upon the distractions of this world, though the latter - especially land - are seen as a gift from God, held and worked in trust [15]. The machinations of political strife, especially new-fangled secular notions of "socialism" that reverberated through Europe from 1848 on, were considered less important. No flag waving here but a hard-working determination to make the earth yield, and life better. There were deep disputes, but no revolutions in this church [16]. For people in the country, the church *was* the revolution.

SYMBOLS OF LUTHERAN PIETY



The German communities in South Australia, especially the urban-based in Adelaide, were not all of this kind of piety. And even in the rural villages, hints of feeling for identity are discerned in the handcrafts and artefacts often unregarded and poorly catalogued in small museums and historic huts of the Barossa - such as Luhr's cottage at Lights Pass near Tanunda. On the one hand is this sampler that speaks enigmatically and ambiguously of the primary values of good citizen and Christian alike: ***Habe deine Lust an dem Herrn, der wird dir geben was dein Herz wünschet*** ...Put your desire in the Lord Who will give what



MIXED SYMBOLS OF FAITH AND NATIONALITY

your heart wishes, but there is also a portrait of the Kaiserin Auguste Victoria (though not the Kaiser himself).

The Adelaide and Barossa Germans might have been flagless in a place where only the Union Jack ruled, but were no less

German for that. Flagless,

for the revolution of 1848 raising the black red and gold tricolour had been firmly suppressed, and the black, white and red of a uniting German state lay 19 years in the future. Even if they had been interested in such fripperies, it was the banner of Christ these settlers looked to and His realm in their hearts. Life was a daily discipline in a harsh land. They had to contend with their own sometimes cantankerous natures and, for the women especially, with the intense loneliness of life in the Australian bush. The pioneers had fled a world that oppressed peasants and dissenters; they had no time for the panoply of emperors and kings. The piety of cross-stitched emblems that humanised their very basic houses demonstrates this, even as they squabbled in parochial factions, the steeple of one church flaunted ironically like a banner before the other across the road. In the meantime, earthly kings (of England openly, and discreetly the Kaiser -

Seek The Lord Who will give you your heart's desire
Luhr's Cottage Barossa Valley

or at least the Kaiserin), were respected, if only for a quiet life. On the sparse records available, it appears that overtly German flags and symbols were not for display in the rural communities that were the mainstay at that time of remembered German culture and identity.

Australian political development itself was hardly revolutionary. It was evolutionary, with elected colonial Parliaments established from the mid-1850s in a process of devolution that Britain had come to appreciate after losing its American colonies. In South Australia, as a first step towards a kind of independence within the British Empire, Responsible Government in 1857 reflected and also promoted the development of both Adelaide and the rural and mining economy that served it. Other immigrants were attracted from the German lands, often by "the letter home" and many of these tended to settle "in town" - i.e. Adelaide. Some realised that if the cultural tedium of the still rather stark colony was to be relieved, they would have to inject a heavy dose of *Gemütlichkeit*, of cheer and charm, themselves. The biennial and international Adelaide Festival, with its own pageantry of flags was still a century away, but it had its motivation and foundation here. By the turn of the century German-born settlers of an urban type were active in public life, in the colonial parliament and in their own press - a success story owing nothing to the jingoism of flags [17].

The Eagle has landed

Emblems were perhaps another matter. One possible and tantalising connection with German influence in the community may be found in the new emblem adopted for the state on Federation [18] and placed on the State flag. In 1901 new seals were required to reflect the change of status from colonies to states. South Australia took opportunity to redesign its seal (and hence its flag



the badge) to replace the colourful but complex allegorical painting officially used since 1878, of Britannia, an Aborigine and a rock carving of a kangaroo.



Designed in 1901, approved by Warrant of King Edward VII on 20 November 1903 and for use on the Governor's flag on 14 January 1904, the new Seal had been described by the Governor, Hallam Tennyson, in his dispatch to Whitehall, as "the South Australian shrike in the rising sun of the Commonwealth ..."



A pomegranate ("the king of fruits") in the draft of 27 February 1901 that appeared like a crown above the bird was dropped by Tennyson [19]. The badge was designed through the Adelaide School of Arts, with credit given (or taken by)

noted artist of the time Robert Craig, Senior Master of the Adelaide School of Arts and Crafts. Described in the heraldic blazon as a "piping shrike", the bird is actually a white-backed magpie, but Ralph Kelly's *Australian State Badges Revisited* alluded to a possible Prussian influence, a notion published in the Adelaide *Advertiser* in 1989 [20] and it is curious that a number of visitors to the Flags Australia display at Newcastle on Australia Day 2007 independently asked about the flag "with the eagle".

A Prussian provenance is not proven, but is at least plausible at a time when German immigrants comprised 8-10% of the South Australian population, and were prominent in the public life of the colony. The original painting of the emblem, held in the Public Records Office, is unsigned. Although the design is credited to Robert Craig of the Adelaide School of Arts, who "carried out" [21] the



original drawing, a claim has been made that the design is actually based on the work of Miss Frances Jane Illert, another artist and student under the Director of the Art Gallery of South Australia, HP (Harry) Gill, who had submitted the painting on 27 February 1901. It is also claimed that the drawing is based on the Seal of the Prussian Consulate

in Adelaide. Consul from 1849 to 1854, Maximillian Weidenbach had in fact been a close friend of the Illert family.



The stylising of a bird in splendour is indeed similar to that used for the eagle in the German (and Austro-Hungarian) Empires at the time - for example, the Seal of the Royal Botanic Museum in Berlin, and the major

expansion of the Royal Botanic years under Dr Richard be noted. The likeness can also



Gardens over 30 Schomburgk might



The Austrian Eagle (post 1918) and the South Australian emblem in stained glass - post 1904.

Sevenhill monastery and winery founded by Austrian Jesuits 1851

be discerned in the stained-glass window in the monastery founded at Sevenhill near Clare in 1851 by Austrian Jesuits.

Independently of this speculation, an interesting point about the 1904 badge is reported by Martin Grieve on FOTW on 15th June 2006, quoting David Prothero. *When the design was being circulated in the Colonial Office*, [Prothero wrote] *the following comment was written on the minute*; "This looks to me too much as if 'Made in Germany'; I expect HM will think so too" [22].

An eagle, unsurprisingly, is still used as the badge of the *Allgemeine Deutsche Vereinigung* (The German Club in Adelaide). Two main German cultural clubs (there were several) - one catering to high classical culture and the other with more of a social focus - coexisted until 1907, when the former disbanded. Its members were absorbed either by the mainly Anglo-establishment Adelaide Club of elders that ran the city, or went over to, and augmented, the ADV, the German Club active to this day.

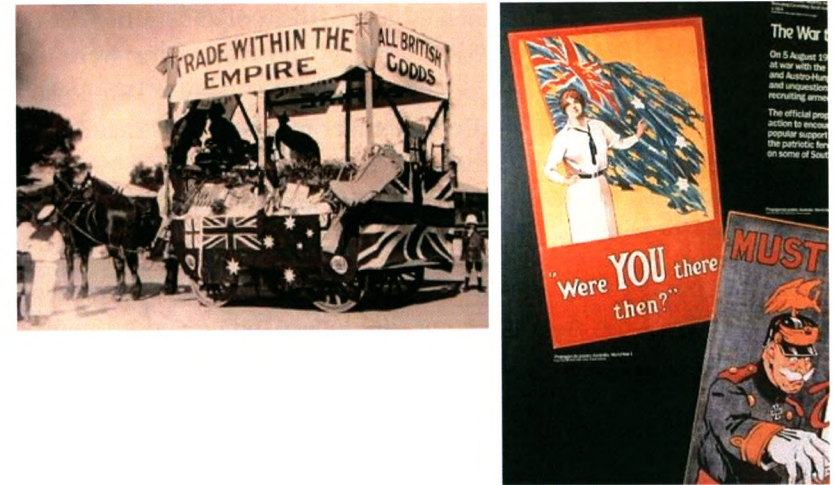
However the tendency to factions in the city, as in the country and that continued within the Lutheran Church for another 80 years, weakened the German community in South Australia, and elsewhere, at a time when it needed to challenge a worsening tide of xenophobia.

Dark times

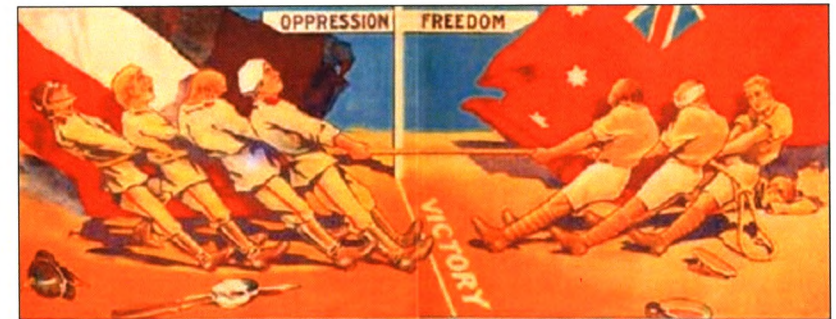
As we have seen, prejudice among the British majority against people perceived as alien was not new then - nor is it much diminished now in Australia [23]. A residue of lineal descendants of earlier toffee-nosed bigots still want to be second-hand British, as if membership of the Anglosphere were a ticket to Paradise and justify the Union Jack as their idea of a national flag for a country no longer - or indeed, never - British other than by theft.

What of flags in the Barossa? The German Union, black, white and red, might flutter at the Consulate in Adelaide, the Prussian eagle flex its wings over the lintel (if not quite on the State's blue ensign) but by the turn of the 20th century, thoughts in Australia turned toward a local Federation, and perhaps for some the real independence of which the new Commonwealth was assumed to be a form.

Though proud of the achievement of their kin in Germany, a sense of separate German nationalism had not swayed South Australia's *Deutsches Volk* from a practical policy of "separate, but not exclusively so" [24], "True Germans ... are always highly patriotic South Australians" - *Australische Zeitung* in 1896 [25]. A clear distinction could be made between a cultural German and a political South Australian, loyal under the flag of the British colony. One could at the same time be true to the *Volkgeist* and yet "promise cheerfully to obey the laws" [26] of British authority. There was no contradiction in having the German colours lead the procession of bands at the *Liedertafel* or *Schützenfest* [27], whilst the Consul-General visiting from Sydney in 1913 quickly assessed that the German elders of the Barossa and in Adelaide had so identified with South Australia as to offer little political comfort to Germany for the impending war [28].



However the kind of ostracism that cultural ghettos are frequently



accused of fostering themselves was about to be visited upon German-Australians by others who saw themselves as British before they were Australians - and allegiance to the flag of Union (British, not Bismarck's) would be one of many tests of loyalty, not least in the state public school system imposed on the Lutheran community.

At the end of the 19th century absolute victory in the Boer War seemed elemental to the Empire, but the war was not universally supported. In a free country, German-born and other Australians felt entitled to criticise policies that led to the pursuit of an imperial war in a far away land and on whose necessity they had not been consulted.

An element, if not of racism, then of a separatism of superiority felt by the majority, distorted the debate. While Anglo-Australians were not held in suspicion for expressing criticism, (or was there a latte-loving chardonnay-sipping socialist set of surrender monkeys even then?) only Germans, the “towel head” turban wearers - or cabbage eaters - of their time, were looked at askance. Some citizens were painted as more loyal than others.

Public resentment escalated in the lead-up, and during, the so-called Great War. In South Australia some 300 long-standing and prominent residents of German descent were interned. Lutheran community schools were closed or had non-German principals imposed on them. Some 69 German place-names were anglicised - or ironically (they were hardly returned) - given Aboriginal names.

Britain’s network of Treaties aimed at containing imperial as a trading rival and power for influence - and the Kaiser’s personality - made



Artefacts at Lühr's Cottage Light Pass village, Barossa Valley.

Note the anomalous red ensign 1927; Local enlisted in the RAAF

conflict almost inevitable. Yet the jingo reaction of myths and character slurs that today rebound on the Muslim community especially, were then, as now, rather shrill and artificially stoked [29]. The consequences were far reaching not only for this group of Australians, for society as a whole was coarsened. The Adelaide and Barossa Germans had brought prosperity and good order to their adopted land, to be hounded now for not having been born (it was so wrongly assumed in many cases) under the red white and blue. Yet many German-born boys fought for adopted King and country. Where God stood is not that clear, but every township of the Barossa and Adelaide Hills has its memorial to the soldiers with German names who fought and fell under the flags of the British Empire.

Suddenly flags there were aplenty, emblems of honour subverted to the cause of propaganda. The British Empire, “Honour Bound to Defend Freedom” fell into the war it had provided for. The aggravated squabble that brought Europe and its empires to ruin a century ago was portrayed as a game, a tug-of-war between boys barely out of school, and like the Halliburton enterprise in Iraq, promoted on the false premises that reserves right to one side. War is still often conceived and portrayed as a game, or even a holy rite of manhood, and flags



WHICH FLAG FOR THE NATION, WHICH FOR NATIONALITY?

unfolded as its vestments. Those who love flags for their beauty and the pride of culture they convey should strive to resist this noxious connection still deeply entrenched in almost every nation. As vexillophiles we are shamed if we lend our passion and enthusiasm to the narcissistic cult of nationalism that ultimately is a cult of death.

Josef Goebbels may have subsequently finessed the art of state propaganda, but the original textbooks for the lies of war were written in English; the first "strategic detention" camps for civilians were those set up for Boers and their children. Even by the standards of the day, and even for those indifferent to the abuses of Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib, the internment of prominent German-Australian citizens, and the muzzling of German-language expression, was overkill, for in Australia it was not the *Deutscher Adler* that the German diaspora displayed, but a confusing and illogical array of British flags and ensigns

A CONFUSION OF FLAGS

Canada 2; South Africa 2; Germany 2; **Australia 3 1901-1953**



- illogical for an independent country, confusing if any country has two flags - or as in Australia then, even three.

The portrait of the Kaiserin might hang on the wall in private homes, or the Kaiser's likeness decorate soda siphons, but in the displays in Luhr's cottage are the Union Jack and the new Australian land-flag, the red ensign version of the Government's official blue one. The black, white and red German tricolour is seldom seen, or displayed selectively.

Citizenship and selective flag use

The triband of the newly united nation and empire was still seen by most German-Australians as something "for over there". The irony in that, is that the *Australian* flag that today gets such jingo airing carries still in its corner an emblem of equally "over there": Cornwall and Kiel are closer than either to Canberra. Yet the German-Australians saw themselves as members of the British empire and acknowledged the

emblems of a king who happened to be their cousin ^[30] - perhaps expediently. Germans in Australia were Australians while taking pride in their ancestral language and culture - "with other Germans but not exclusively so" - but even this heritage waned in the face of peer pressure to conform, prejudice and ignorance of the majority who could not conceive of a world worthwhile outside the rule of John Bull. Even as German continued as the second living language taught in South Australian public schools, the further irony was that the prizes in many cases, and in that of my own mother, were won by non-German Australians.

Of special interest for Australians who think they had a distinctive flag since 1901 is that if any flag was displayed in the German communities (and the relics in Luhr's cottage suggest they were) it was the then national flag - the Union Jack. Elizabeth Kwan has researched this phenomenon, deeply detailing ^[31] the manner in which loyalty to the British empire was inculcated in public schools, and into which confused, not to say intimidated, Lutheran children were dragooned. Kwan's research focused particularly on the pledge, in its various formulations, of allegiance to the British Empire and Union Jack.

Anti-German paranoia against the Barossa Deutschen was so pronounced in South Australia that it was deemed necessary there to express allegiance more explicitly than elsewhere: "I love my country, *the British* **WHO'S AUSSIE NOW?**

Empire", with school principals later given discretion to add the words: "I am an Australian" ^[32] - either to overcome confusion between being British and Australian at the same time, or to grind in the condescending and gratuitous insult: "*not German!*"

Of course, apart from the "educational"



The Church of England displays flags IN churches but not ON them; In 2007 Muslims debated flags ON mosques not IN them.

Nicholson cartoon
The Australian 17 February 2007

requirement to infect young minds in this ritualized way, it might be argued that the times were ruled by a spirit of jingoism on all sides, not just in the British Empire, and that in the general climate of antipathy and harassment it made sense for a minority to fly the flag with even more zeal than any one else, just to keep the wolves at bay. We see this history repeated today when Australians of Arab and other Middle East background are among the first to fly the national flag [33] and in February 2007, to engage in a bizarre debate about flying the flag on mosques.



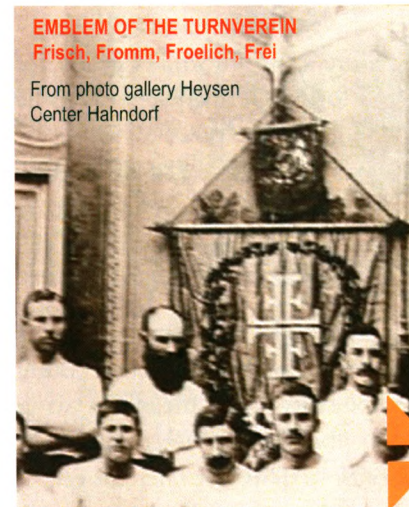
A contemporary account of the Easter community festival at Tanunda in April 1874 records that among flags displayed were the green and white banner of the *Liedertafel*, that of the gymnastic *Turnverein*, along with the "old German colours" of 1848 and the flag of the *Schuetzenfest-gesellschaft*, based apparently on the new flag of the Reich unified by Bismarck in the Kaiser's name – all of them celebrated on these soda siphons at left, displayed at the Heysen Centre, Hahndorf. The photo above shows the Imperial flag (adapted for the Schuetzenfest) still in use in the 1920s.

Despite the prejudice against minorities and dissenters, which governments of the time did little to deter (the war effort saw to that) a sense of German nationality - the *Volksgeist* - was indelible, evident through the activities of the German clubs. Though the Imperial German flag was honoured - as apparently in this photograph of the Hahndorf *Schützenfest* contingent in the 1920s [34] - the emblem of real importance was the crossed rifles and wreath of the local contest.

A history of the Tanunda Kegel (skittles) Club also refers to flags and banners", describing three with a German flavour at the Easter festivities in Tanunda on 8 April 1874 [35]:

Monday was the grand day for the sports. In the morning, with the flags [sic] flying in all directions ... our township had a cheerful appearance. At half-past 12 o'clock a deputation of the Liedertafel, headed by the Gawler Brass Band, marched up to Mr J. Basedow's residence, to fetch the beautiful banner of the Liedertafel, together with the grand German banner, which had headed the procession at the great peace Festival in 1871. In the meantime, the members of the Schuetzenfest-gesellschaft and Liedertafel formed in a marching order at the Tanunda Hotel, and as soon as the two banners had arrived, started for the shooting grounds in Mr Fischer's gardens, headed by the Gawler Brass Band in the following order: - First the German banner escorted by 20 riflemen in their neat uniforms; then the members of the Schuetzenfest-gesellschaft, with their handsome green and white silk flag, and their banner in the old German colours, black red and gold; the Liedertafel with their banner followed; and the Gymnasts with their flag closed the procession. The gardens were nicely decorated with flags [sic], and soon after the arrival, the shooting commenced, the King, Mr R. Homburg, of Adelaide, firing the first shot.

We have clear detail only of the "old German colours" - the vertical tricolour of 1848, and the design



(but not colours) of the Turnverein gymnasts' banner - a vexillum rather than a flag, its emblem a cross formed by the four letters F, for *Frisch, Fromm, Fröhlich, Frei* - Fresh, Faithful, for Fun, and Free (*or mens sana in corpore sano*).

But even this kind of homage to the German soul was suspect. Building on the bitter memories of the earlier European conflict, harassment of the German-speaking population returned in particularly nasty forms in the lead-up to the Hitler war. A South Australian Police Special Branch file ^[36], reporting to the Criminal Investigation Bureau (CIB), a forerunner of current Australian security services, records the process, in the days before fridge magnets, of surveillance and search warrants prompted by denunciations from "loyal" and "vigilant" citizens, alarmed and in many cases over-alert.

The same records reveal the serpentine tactics of informers, including the postmaster opening mail, and those, themselves of German descent, bearing personal grudges ^[37]. German spoken in coffee shops was supposed to be proof of some sinister plot hatching. Not even a "Jewess" [sic] was safe from scrutiny as she spent her husband's money, and all sense of humour went out the door as in two cases of prank Nazi salutes. The Port Lincoln butcher who sent Hitler a case of homemade sausages did not go unnoticed. More rabid informers called for the "disloyal" to be shot; the RSL asked for all German schools to be closed; the security agencies sought detention powers to cover Australian citizens, not just "resident aliens". All farcical, if not for the risk of internment for family men, many Australian-born, and ordinary labourers well into their fifties - obvious risks to the security of the British Empire.

These are practices alive and well in Australia today. Muslim Australians and their friends attract similar specious suspicion, as misguided youth, ignorant of the national flag's real history and meaning, wrap themselves in it lest they earn the Mufti's jibe of "uncovered meat" ^[38]. For their part, defenders of the flag mouth slogans not far removed in spirit from those who love to see themselves as of British "stock", distinct it seems implied, from other "inferior" ethnicities - and there, if anything, is the fascist pot calling the Nazi kettle black.

The rise of National Socialism was at first greeted by some as a sign of German recovery, and Lutheran pastors were accused of stoking sympathies for the Nazi ^[39]. However the new Reich also had admirers among the Anglo population in Australia as elsewhere - especially among the "upper classes". Well before Hindenburg handed the keys to Hitler, Australia's New Guard of sulking soldiers, though a tiny minority, was well organised and for all their patriotic monarchism, hardly less fascist than their counterparts on the continent and in Britain. Small wonder that, the Reich government sought, albeit clumsily ^[40], through its Sydney Consulate to engage the Barossa heartland in the naïve belief that its own weird notions of racial superiority would weigh more than the entrenched local allegiance. The few that did respond, like Tanunda medico Johannes Becker, were interned or deported before the swastikas swarmed ^[41]. The fact remains that the Nazi Party, even in the new-broom mid-1930s, and even in the "little Berlin" of Tanunda ^[42], the so-called hotbed of sedition in South Australia, was hardly more than a club, and some reluctant at that ^[43].

A rare 1935 photograph shows that the Crooked Cross was representative of hardly anyone in the thousands-strong German-born community in South Australia. The main street of Tanunda was never likely to be festooned with this version of the black, white and red.



The Tanunda Nazi Club ca 1935. Tanunda-Gomersal Road
Australian National Archives (Adelaide) D1918/0 S35

Australians think they have less reason to be nervous about this flag than Europeans understandably are. It has to be recognised however that the *Hakenkreuzfahne* was at the time the official flag of Germany, and in that context received airing in Australia.

It was proper that it and the Australian flag were displayed together at the Adelaide German Club's celebration of the Fuhrer's birthday in April 1939. It was proper also, at a private function that the Australian

flag displayed was the non-government red ensign, clearly discernible as such in this photograph.

Even so, neither flag was flaunted - the one because of general

distaste, the other as Australians were confused about their own identity under three distinct British flags. In Australia the dictatorial tendencies of a National Socialist government should have been evident early but who laboured with the turgid prose of *Mein Kampf*?) The greater issue, the serpent's egg so to speak, was - and perhaps in some quarters, such as Australians for a Constitutional Monarchy, still is - the extent of the suspicion that being of non-British origin was to be anti-British (and Australians saw themselves British by nationality well into the 1950s) ^[44]. And on that sensibility hangs the future of the flag debate in Australia.

Conclusion

- This paper has looked at some flags and near relatives of flags from a part of Australia's history. It ends with 1972 for in that year Australia seemed, with a fundamental change of government, to have accepted its destiny as a nation of many cultures, and finally to accept its destiny as a blend of many cultures, with older prejudices finally laid to rest, providing perhaps a model for others.
- It has also tried to dig away at the questions behind the meaning of flags: what are they for? If I have elaborated the level of anti-German prejudice in the past, it has not been to throw a cat among European pigeons today, but to highlight that what other minorities in Australia endure today has an historical, and troubling, antecedent. This may raise uncomfortable questions for Australians whose motto: "She'll be right!" is akin to complacency.



Birthday celebrations 1939 German Club Adelaide. Note the Australian red ensign with misaligned stars
Displayed in Migration Museum Adelaide

- In recent years there has been a good deal of fuss over flags in Australia - and over one flag in particular, and in some conservative quarters, as if this flag were some kind of *Blutfabne* that needs to be coddled and kissed and enshrined forever as the founding symbol of the nation. What kind of nation - when an excitable cleric from Giza can claim to be more Australian than either the original convicts or the present Prime Minister? When our flag seconds the symbol of suzerainty and sovereignty in another part of the world? We are it seems still a nation in gestation, a nation-state but not quite a state of nation. Indigenous Australians have a decidedly distinct view on that.
- Nationality and nationalism are separate things, but the usage of flags often confuses one with the other. Except for a very few, nationality seems an essential part of self-esteem and identity, all strengthened by a sense and assurance of home and hearth, and the cheer that friendship brings - *Heimat, Freundschaft, Gemuetlichkeit*. But ultimately *Heimat* is where the heart is: and if the magpie on the South Australian flag is really an eagle, or was inspired by one, as seems possible, there is no doubt now where Australians of German heritage consider home.
- Nationalism as an ideology is the rather modern perversion of all these things. True nationality does not need a flag or peculiar badge, just as religious faith does not - or should not - and South Australian Germans, forging a new life in a strange land, show this to be so.
- This paper has suggested that the real flags and emblems in this story are not those the newcomers might have - but on the whole did not - use or display, but the ones that the majority insisted upon, both in the past and recently, as too many callow youths want to tell us: *Support this flag or leave!*
- There is an object lesson for Australians and others in this kind of flag usage and abuse of vexillology. The exclusion and harassment of Australian-born Germans in South Australia and elsewhere had a lasting and negative consequence that did not finally evaporate until the late 1950s. The ostracism of German-born, and even those Australian-born, yet proud of their grandparents' cultural heritage, meant that members of a community by their very background were suspect.

- That state of affairs, when colluded in by government inertia, or promoted by government propaganda, and unfurling the national flag for that purpose, amounts to a corruption of the social and national fabric that can only be described as the true seat of sedition. One of the ironies of demonising the other who does not conform to petty expectations, is that such zealots themselves turn seditious by creating, and augmenting, the risk that those excoriated sometimes turn and deliver the behaviour expected of them. Any evidence gathered under duress is for that very reason suspect, and defenders of freedom - especially those who unfurl flags in that name - should tread carefully if they profess to be truly patriotic.
- This paper also alluded to the reactionary New Guard in our country in the 1930s. Their ideological heritage is found in the ranks of groups such as the National Front and its successors, Australia First and the Patriotic Youth League. It is of interest that not a few of the informants of the 1930s were returned soldiers, and indeed, a number re-enlisted.
- That mind-set persists among some, usually males, with some unresolved issues of personal identity. In recent years, flag-wavers of this ilk have gained the ear of Government, peddling myths and half-histories of the national flag. In the last decade, the government itself has done little to counteract and modify such propaganda in its own publications on the flag and national symbols.
- This paper has looked at some flags and near relatives of flags from a part of Australia's history. It ends with 1972 for in that year Australia had seemed, with a fundamental change of government, to have accepted its destiny as a nation of many cultures, and finally to accept its destiny as a blend of many cultures, with older prejudices finally laid to rest, providing perhaps a model for others.
- And some Australians have certainly provided a model. The catastrophe of the European wars of the last century left their mark on the German peoples as well as many others. And so it was that just over a century after their Silesian, Lusatian and Prussian great-parents sought refuge from privation and oppression, a new post-war wave of Deutsches Volk again planted in Australia, not their flags and emblems so much as their skills

and culture. In so doing they have provided a model of authentic citizenship and patriotism in the cross-cultural nation evolving in the Antipodes, but which at this time is very much in need of an antidote to the idea that jingoistic nationalism and patriotism are the same thing, and that either can be proven by the manic waving of flags.

- German culture is indeed *über alles*, in that, more than and before anyone, it is able to impart that lesson and wisdom so dearly won.



Notes:

1. Federation in 1901 of the six British colonies on the Australian continent represented a major shift in status within the British Empire. The 1931 Statute of Westminster provided for a greater measure of legal independence from London for five members the Commonwealth: Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Union of South Africa and the Irish Free State (which left the Commonwealth as a republic in 1937, taking the name of Ireland or Eire). Australia did not ratify the Statute's further measure of colonial detachment until 1941.
2. Migration Museum Adelaide 2003 - Notes on German settlers
3. Tony Burton *The Sydney Flag Riots 2005* Crux Australis Volume 19/1 January-March 2006
Beyond the Beach Volume 20/2 No 82, pp66-79
4. Migration Museum Adelaide 2003. Notes on the Germans cite many causes: religious persecution and harassment, economic downturn, the wars over Schleswig-Holstein.
5. The restoration of monarchies in 1815 in reaction to the libertarian ideas of the French revolution and its chaotic aftermath prompted movement of dissenters, religious or otherwise. The significant German immigration to Africa came rather later, after the Union of Germany and the expansion of its small but scattered empire.
6. This is not to suggest that all British were of the same tar. George Fife Angas, a British founding member of the South Australian Company, provided capital (at exorbitant rates) and under the leadership of their church leaders, the first settlers from Prussia and Silesia established Klemzig, near Adelaide and named for the original village (now Klepsk); Hahndorf followed, in the hills east of Adelaide, and was named for the Schleswiger sea-captain Hahn who brought some of the settlers to Port Adelaide. In the Barossa Valley, just to the north, the first settlement was at Bethanien (later renamed Bethany).
7. Ian Harmstorf OAM, **The Germans in South Australia**, (Melbourne) 1985 republished on ADV website (German Club Adelaide) as four separate essays. A gentleman signing his name "a sexagenarian Briton" in a letter to *The Advertiser* pontificated: *Our Teutonic friends have every good reason to be thankful for the refuge South Australia has afforded them ... they ought to gratefully acknowledge and quietly enjoy their*

freedom ... I would naturalise no more Germans until they made the English language a professed object in their education. To have the rights of Anglo-Saxons they must cease to be Germans.

8. Ibid., citing the editorial of *The Adelaide Observer* and *Australische Zeitung*. Interestingly editor Krichauff did not specify which particular flag, but the context suggests the emblem of the British colonial authority – thus the Union Jack. When South Australia received Arms in 1936, under Warrant of King Edward VIII, the crest took the form of a plain blue flag with only the stars of the Southern Cross in white. On the issue of equal rights, importantly, land laws (known as Torrens Title, but based on the similar Hanseatic model) were enacted that favoured interests of the Barossa and other farmers
9. Schmorte, Jan: Attitudes towards German immigration in South Australia in the post-Second World War Period, 1947-60. **The Australian Journal of Politics and History** 1 December 2005; see also Heini Becker's recollections in **How our No. 1 Nazi was thrown out**, Adelaide Advertiser 8 June 2007, p17. While this exonerates post-War government in Australia, whether government officials were always unbiased, examination of the CIB file **Nazi Activities in South Australia during World War II**, Australian National Archives (Adelaide) D1918/0, Item S35 reveals a mixed bag, with even the Adelaide Director, R Williams in Memorandum 22 November 1945 (ff204-208) contradicting his own report to headquarters of 17 June 1940 (f38). It would appear (F. 205) that information leaked to Adelaide tabloid newspapers in September 1945, as the basis for attacks on the German-Australian community came from the part-time informant employed by Williams' office in Adelaide – see Report 9 August 1940 on folio 72. The practice of Australians informing on their fellow citizens continues to this day through the system of fridge-magnet telephone numbers.
10. Tony Burton, **Beyond the Beach**, *Crux Australis* Volume 20/2, No. 82 April-June 2007, pp66-79
11. Berthold Brecht, **The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui**, Epilogue:
If we could learn to look instead of gawking,
We'd see the horror in the heart of farce,
If only we could act instead of talking,
We wouldn't always end up on our arse.
This was the thing that nearly has us mastered;
Don't rejoice in his defeat, you men!
Although the world stood up and stopped the bastard,
The bitch that bore him is in heat again.
12. Harmstorf art.cit.,
13. *The Sydney Flag Riots 2005* in **Crux Australis** Volume 19/1 No. 77, January-March 2006, pp4-33
14. E-mail 16 February 2007 from Mrs Frances Wells (nee Heuzenroeder) of Tanunda to the author
Myrtle was sacred to Venus, the Roman goddess of love; thus, it is an emblem of love in all its forms.
15. Harmstorf art.cit.,
16. Harmstorf art.cit., The major split between evangelical interpretations within the Lutheran Church in South Australia was to last for more than a century and

served the community ill at the height of anti-German backlash from the Boer War right into the 1950s.

17. Harmstorf art.cit., for the following:

The 1850s were politically important years for the German settlers. Two German newspapers had been launched, *Die Deutsche Post* and *Deutsche Zeitung für Südaustralien*, and a German Hospital opened. The Liedertafel started as did the famous Brunswick Brass Band. Der Deutsche Club (German Club) began in 1854 and was to flourish as a centre of German culture and learning until 1907. German miners from the Harz Mountains were active in the colony's copper fields while German smelters brought their skills of how to smelt with timber (at Glen Osmond and Burra). In the 1850s numerous German silver and goldsmiths arrived in the colony to settle in Adelaide, as did cabinet and piano makers.

Martin Basedow, owner of *Australische Zeitung* led a united front against the infringement of civil liberties inflicted on Germans and their descendants in WWI. In 1857 **FEHW Krichauff** was prominent in passage of the passage of the Torrens Title land legislation, and a keen promoter of reforestation, establishing Arbor Day through the schools. His son **MPF Basedow** was involved in the establishment of Roseworthy Agricultural College and was briefly Minister of Education. German influence in South Australia reached a high point in the 1890s. In the census of 1891 Lutherans numbered over 7% of the South Australian population and it is estimated that German born and their descendants constituted around 10% of the total population of the State.

Germans were well respected in the State Parliament, holding seats with large German-Australian populations, a great many of whom were farmers. **Martin Basedow**, **Robert Homburg**, **Friedrich Krichauff** and **Theo Scherk** were all members of Parliament at some stage during the 1890s and all had a reputation for integrity and hard work. **Robert Homburg** was the most important member of the German community, owning a law firm and Attorney General in two ministries from 1890-1892 and 1892-1893.

The acceptance of "our German cousins" was unquestioned until the Boer War ... "neither in business nor in the professions was there a German exclusiveness".

18. Ralph Kelly, *Australian State Badges Revisited* in **Crux Australis** Volume 19/4 No 80, October-December 2006
19. SA Governor Tennyson to Governor-General Lord Hopetoun, on 22 March 1901, enclosing a flag with the new device for onforwarding to London, cited by Brice, below.
20. Chris Brice, Adelaide *Advertiser* Weekend Magazine 19 August 1989 pp3-4, reprinted as *What Price the Piping Strike*, in **Crux Australis**, Volume 9/1 No 37, Jan-March 1993, pp23.
21. Ibid., p25-26
22. FOTW South Australia page, Martin Grieve 15 June 2006 citing David Prothero.
23. Harmstorf, art.cit.,
24. Heysen Centre exhibition Hahndorf, Adelaide Hills, South Australia. "With other Germans ... but not exclusively so" is the theme of various panels at the Centre depicting the activities of the Liedertafel choirs, the Schutzenfest contests and the Turnverein gymnastics club.

25. Harmstorf art.cit, Again (see footnote 8) local patriotism did not need debate or argument about the flag.
26. The final affirmation in the Homage to the Flag ritual introduced in Australian public schools after Federation, with confusion for all children in the 1950s as to whether “her flag” and “her laws” referred to “Australia” or to the new Queen – or both.
27. “With flags flying proudly, the competitors marched down the main street of Tanunda behind a big banner ...”. Angela Heuzenroeder, **Barossa Gardens - A History**. self-published, Tanunda, 2006, pp44-46 for this account of celebrations in Heinemann Park, Tanunda, with a photo of the processional flag and band.
28. Harmstorf art.cit.,
29. Tony Burton, **Beyond the Beach**, *Crux Australis* Volume 20/2, No. 82 April-June 2007, pp66-79
30. “Cousin-king” explained: The British and German royal families were related. Kaiser Wilhelm II was a grand-son of Queen Victoria, herself descended from a Hanoverian line, and married to the German Prince Albert of Saxe-Koburg-Gotha. Edward VII and George V of Great Britain were thus cousins to their German subjects. In a sense the first World War was a tragic squabble within a dysfunctional family.
31. Elizabeth Kwan **Flag and Nation: Australians and their Flags since 1901** UNSW Press 2006.
See also her article **Saluting the Flag: Patriotism in Australian Schools** in *Crux Australis* Volume 17/3, No. 71 October 2004 pp133, and 136-152. Also illuminating is a separate section, pp114-119 **Senate Estimates Scrutiny** on flagpoles as a condition of federal education funding.
32. Kwan, **Ibid**; Appendices provide the variations of the flag pledge.
The convolutions of the South Australian ritual are set out on p152.
33. **Flags Rise as Tribute to the Spirit of a Nation: Attitudes to the Flag** in *Crux Australis* Volume 18/3, No 790 July-September 2006, pp 142-147
34. Angela Heuzenroeder **Barossa Gardens** op. cit The date of the photo is unknown, but the author informed this writer that it would be before 1929, when the *Kegel* facility was moved from Heinemann Park.
35. Les Hampel, **Tanunda Kegel Club 1858-1978**, published by the Tanunda Kegel Club Inc 1978 (Copy held in unicipal Library, Nuriootpa, Barossa Valley, South Australia) refers on page 10 to “flags and banners” describing three with a German flavour but in no great detail.
36. **Nazi Activities in South Australia during World War II** Australian National Archives (ANA) Adelaide, D1918/0, Item S35 Hand folioed in pencil 1-208.
See also Richard Stone, **Hitler Down Under**, *National Library of Australia News* October 2006, pp10-13
ANA Adelaide file, D1918/0, Item S35.
Rifle clubs, with their links to the Schützenfest were disarmed (f69)
Iron Crosses won for bravery in World War I were confiscated. (f4).
The Returned Services League (RSL) asked the state Government to close all German schools (f72).
Letters found n German, read by non-German speakers were all regarded with suspicion and considered potential “evidence” (f3).

37. Even though informants interviewed invariably “could not produce any evidence whatsoever to support their allegations”(f161) this did not prevent some over-zealous, and bigoted, local police from being “quite satisfied”, taking as an “established fact in my mind” (f167) and “willing to wager”, perhaps, as one informant put it, that 50% of the German population of South Australia” were Nazi sympathisers (ff157-158).

The postmaster at Lights Pass (ff49 and 53-55) pales in comparison with those personal grudges nursed by the Offe brothers, ff67-68, 204-208. See also footnote 9 above).

Folio 150: A Mrs C Brown eaves dropping on Lutheran services, passing on imaginary horrors despite not comprehending a word of the proceedings, and of whom the Special Branch opined:

The opinion which I have of our informant is that he is over-conscientious and that any incident which come sighthin her knowledge is treated with the greatest of suspicion, and is incline to manufacture data to enlarge her story. Yet as it has been reported that the Lutheran church is a home for anti-British elements, some significance could be placed in the above [Mother Brown's] information.

The number of cars at German language confirmations were counted and compared with those in English and taken as evidence of seditious potential (f142). Even the security services called for extra powers to intern not just resident “aliens” but Australian citizens – the German “element” in SA (ff36-38) castigated as “disloyal British-born subjects of enemy origin”.

Sedition was suspected even in the coffee grains and among the *petit fours* at Balfours a popular *Konditorei* in Grenfell Street (folio 108).

The high spending “Jewesse” gets mention on folio 138). Fake Nazi salutes got more than one into trouble (f239). For the Port Lincoln butcher, see folio 140.

38. Tony Burton **Beyond the Beach** in *Crux Australis* Volume 20/2 No 82 April-June 2007. In November 2007, the then Mufti of Australia, Sheikh Taj el Din al Hilaly created furor in referring to immodestly clad woman (and men?) as “uncovered meat”. It is likely that the mischievous Mufti knew exactly what he was about.
39. **ANA Adelaide, D1918/0, Item S35**, folios f15 , 38, 49, 75, 106-107,142, 167, 180.
40. **Ibid.**, folios 40, 96-97.
41. **Ibid.**, folio 134 and attached correspondence (ff 112-128 passim): Australian Military Forces – 4th Military District memo 27 November 1940, signed but no name (Major GSO III (MI), to CIB and Sgt Trezona at (Adelaide) Police Headquarters. See also Dan Box, **Nation's Nazi Party leader was the David Hicks of his day, says son** *The Australian* Friday 8 June 2007, pp1 and 4, and **How our No. 1 Nazi was thrown out**, Adelaide *Advertiser* 9 June 2007,p14. David Hicks is the sole Australian to have been incarcerated at Guantanamo Bay, held without charge or trial for more than five years by collusion between the US and Australian governments, and returned to Australia only after a pressured masquerade of plea-bargaining and massive public outrage and embarrassment to a government facing a Federal election.

42. **Ibid.**, reference to Tanunda as "Little Berlin" folio 38: Adelaide Special Branch Director R Williams memo SECRET to CIB Canberra 17 June 1940.
43. **Ibid.**, ff3, 25-26, 97-98, 129. The Nazi Government in Berlin agreed that the Barossa was a lost cause – see especially the translated circular 21/1939 at folio 97 from EW Bohle on instructions regarding admission of membership of the NSDAP – "I shall personally examine each case and judge whether the various leaders are devoting the requisite amount of attention to thus exceedingly important point" [i.e. expansion of Party membership abroad].
44. As late as 1984 Australian passports bore the title British Passport (Australia)

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About the author



With a keen and native interest in Australian and international affairs, **Tony Burton** has worked in government, particularly as a policy adviser to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, the elected representative Council of Indigenous people abolished by the Australian Government in 2004. A member of the Flag Society of Australia since 1987, and of the Heraldry Society of Australia, and fascinated by flags long before that, Tony is the designer of various flags, some winning place in design competitions for a new Australian flag. He is the designer of the flag of the Australian South Sea Islanders and has represented vexillology on the ABC television program *The*

Einstein Factor. He has written widely on flags, including *Australia's Forgotten Flag* and the *Great Seal of the Commonwealth*, on Balkan flags and those of Iraq, Kurdistan, Ethiopia, Ghana, Georgia and Greece and more recently on changing patterns of flag usage in Australia.

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