

## **This easy bush walk highlights the location of some of the German internees' constructions during their enforced stay during World War I. Photographs on interpretative signs are at seventeen locations of interest along the existing path that follows the river down stream from the Berrima camping ground.**

**Of all the Australian WWI internment camps, Berrima was the only one not to confine internees within the camp perimeter. More than 300 German nationals were interned in the derelict Berrima gaol from 1915 to 1919.**

The internees were merchant naval captains, senior officers, the senior executives from German shipping companies with offices in Australia, and a small number of prisoners-of-war from the German light cruiser SMS *Emden*. They were permitted to leave the gaol from 6am and return for roll call at 6.30pm after which they were locked in for the night.

They were free to shop in the village. The men from the larger companies were on half pay – forwarded from Germany throughout the war.

The men were used to confined shipboard life and a disciplined routine. As they were not required to work they put their energies into recreational pursuits.

The Wingecarribee River was their playground.

One of their first projects was to build a bridge over the river, which they then dammed to obtain better depths adjacent to the gaol. The banks were soon adorned with brush huts, wooden huts, substantial log villas and gardens for day time recreation.

Boat building was pursued with energy and boats were built using bush timber or scrap metal from an old mine. To celebrate the Kaiser's birthday regattas were held and these boats were decorated with great imagination and skill.

They included a four masted barque, a Zeppelin, a copy of the Kaiser's yacht, a hydroplane and many others. These events were spectacular and were well attended by the villagers and guards.

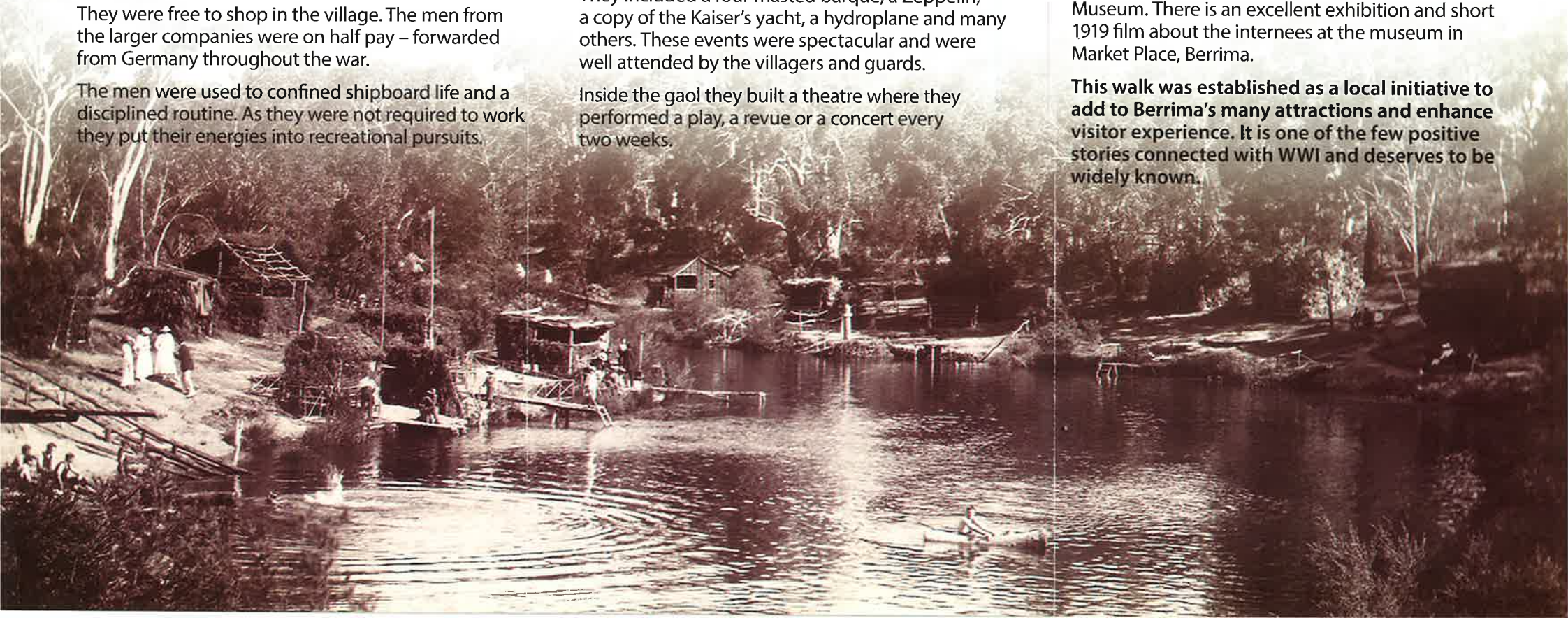
Inside the gaol they built a theatre where they performed a play, a revue or a concert every two weeks.

Following the departure of the internees in 1919, the boats, villas and gardens gradually disappeared and the river became badly overgrown by willows.

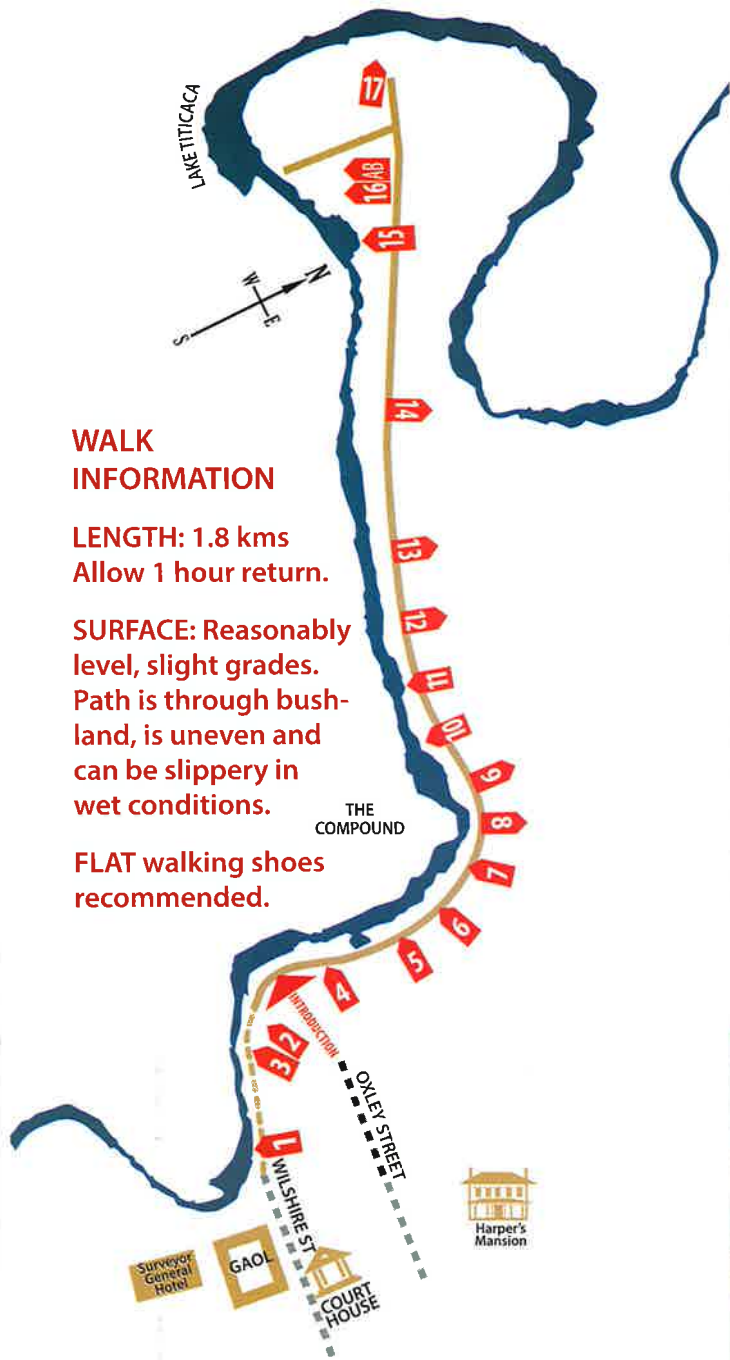
In 1998 the National Trust, using local volunteers started to clear the river and banks and in doing so unearthed remnants of the internees' constructions along both banks of the river, but particularly the right bank. Clearing and replanting with native species continued to 2009.

The history of the internees is well documented in a book 'Prisoners in Arcady' by John Simons, available from the Berrima Court House or Berrima District Museum. There is an excellent exhibition and short 1919 film about the internees at the museum in Market Place, Berrima.

**This walk was established as a local initiative to add to Berrima's many attractions and enhance visitor experience. It is one of the few positive stories connected with WWI and deserves to be widely known.**



**GUIDE SHOWING LOCATION OF SIGNS  
ALONG THE WINGECARRIBEE RIVER**



**WALK  
INFORMATION**

**LENGTH:** 1.8 kms  
Allow 1 hour return.

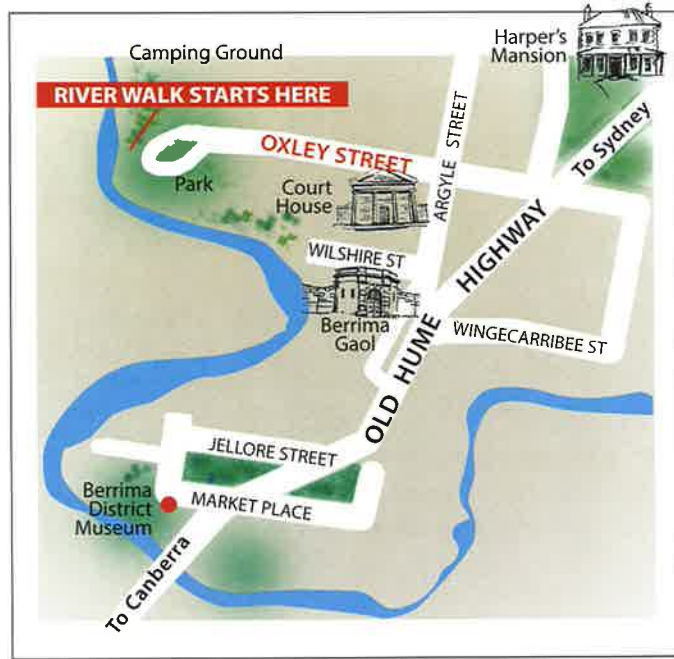
**SURFACE:** Reasonably level, slight grades. Path is through bushland, is uneven and can be slippery in wet conditions.

**FLAT** walking shoes recommended.

**BERRIMA NSW 2577**

Berrima is situated on the Old Hume Highway and is about 90 minutes drive from Sydney on the way to Canberra.

The signed walk commences in the Berrima Picnic and Camping Ground. Access by car is via Oxley Street, Berrima.



THE WALK IS ON THE TRADITIONAL LANDS OF THE GUNDUNGURRA PEOPLE  
Your respect for this traditional land is appreciated by the aboriginal elders.

**BERRIMA  
RIVER WALK**

**German Internment Camp 1915-1919**



Images courtesy of BERRIMA DISTRICT HISTORICAL & FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY Inc



Discover what the German merchant seamen built along the Wingecarribee River while interned in Berrima for four years during WWI. This new signed walk guides you along the river bank, shows you photographs of various huts and leads you to the area where they held their amazing regattas.