

# Basic Detail Report



ANMS0542

Title

Oskar Speck's newspapers and clippings

Date

1930s - 1980s

Medium

Paper

Name

Archive series

History

When German electrical contractor Oskar Speck's business closed during the economic turmoil of the early 1930s, he decided to paddle down the Danube River in his five-and-half metre collapsible kayak SUNNSCHIEN (SUNSHINE) and head to Cyprus to find work. On 18 June 1932, aged 25, Speck departed from Ulm, Germany and eventually made his way through Austria, Hungary, the

former Yugoslavia, Macedonia, Greece, Turkey and eventually to the Mediterranean. Upon reaching Cyprus, Speck decided rather than find work, he would continue his adventure describing his kayak as a "first class ticket to everywhere". Speck headed for Syria and from there across to Iran and Pakistan. By 1935, three years after leaving Germany, he had reached India and Sri Lanka. Speck paddled onward to Burma, Thailand and Malaysia, and arrived in Indonesia in 1937. There he acquired a 16mm cine-camera which allowed him to film the remainder of his voyage. Speck then progressed on to Dutch New Guinea. He arrived on Saibai Island (in the Northern Torres Strait) with a swastika pennant flying from the bow of his 5.3 metre German built Folbot kayak only a few days after Australia declared war with Germany. As Speck was travelling on a German passport, he was promptly arrested as an enemy alien on his arrival on Thursday Island (in the Western Islands of the Torres Strait off Cape York Peninsula). Speck was detained at the Tatura internment camp in Victoria, and after escaping and being recaptured he was sent to the Loveday Internment camps in South Australia for the duration of the war. Speck never returned to Germany. On his release he travelled to Lightning Ridge to learn the opal cutting trade before settling in Sydney. He died in 1993.