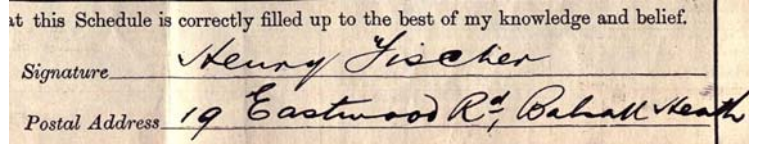




THE CASE OF HENRY FISCHER

Sergeant Henry Fischer lived with his wife, Gabriele at 19 Eastwood Road. Both were born in Kiel in Germany. In spite of his responsible position and character he had little choice but to resign due to his nationality.



(Above) Fischer's signature and address on the 1911 census

PROCEEDINGS IN BIRMINGHAM.
POLICE-SERGEANT'S RESIGNATION TENDERED AND ACCEPTED.

This morning Detective-superintendent Daniels and a small force of detective-sergeants and detective-constables removed to the concentration camp at Newbury sixty-five alien enemies who had been arrested in Birmingham during the past day or so. This is by far the largest contingent of aliens sent away from the city. They left Snow Hill Station at 7.30 a.m., a number of carriages on the London train being reserved for the foreigners and their escort. Since the declaration of the war something like 150 Germans and Austrians domiciled in Birmingham have been arrested under the Safety of the Realm Act and placed in concentration camps at Newbury, Queensferry, near Chester, or Lancaster.

Sergeant Fischer, of the B Division of the Birmingham Police, who is of German extraction, has resigned his position in the force. It appears that, in consequence of the high feeling now not unnaturally running against Germans in this country, his official position has become of late very irksome and painful, and so he has, acting on the advice of his friends, tendered his resignation, and we understand that it has been accepted. Fischer, although a German by birth, has lived in this country since he was three years of age, and he has served for fifteen years in the City Constabulary, and during the last three years has held a sergeantcy. His superior officers speak of him in the highest terms. He speaks German fluently, and this has been of advantage to him when requested to act as an interpreter.

(Above) Birmingham Daily Mail, 24th October 1914

It seems likely that Henry Fischer was interned as a "threat" to the nation. What happened to him afterwards remains a mystery.

ALIENS RESTRICTION ACT 1914

At the outbreak of World War One, all aliens (foreign nationals) over 16 were required to register at local police stations and to demonstrate a good character and knowledge of English. This was partly due to a fear of spies.

Did you know?

- The Security Service (MI5) kept files on suspected German agents during the war years, including the famous agent Mata Hari.
- More than 32,000 alien men were interned during World War One.
- German and German-Jewish public figures felt compelled to declare their support for Britain in 'Loyalty Letters' published in *The Times*. The contemporary cartoon (above) satirises the situation many Germans found themselves in.
- 28,744 aliens were repatriated at the outbreak of war, of these 23,571 were Germans.