



The Boettcher Family

46 Park Grove

Otto Boettcher came from Germany to work in the hosiery industry in Derby with his wife Ida and their four children around 1900.

When their youngest son, William, was born in May 1902 they were living at 110 Bridge Street, near the textile mills. William's niece, Gladys, recalled that Otto was valued for his expertise with machinery, devising in the course of his work an improved needle for use on the knitting machines. In the 1911 census Otto was working as an Overlooker and his two daughters also worked in the hosiery industry. Gertrude (21) was a Forewoman and Elsa (14) worked as a Cotton winder – both in a hosiery mill.

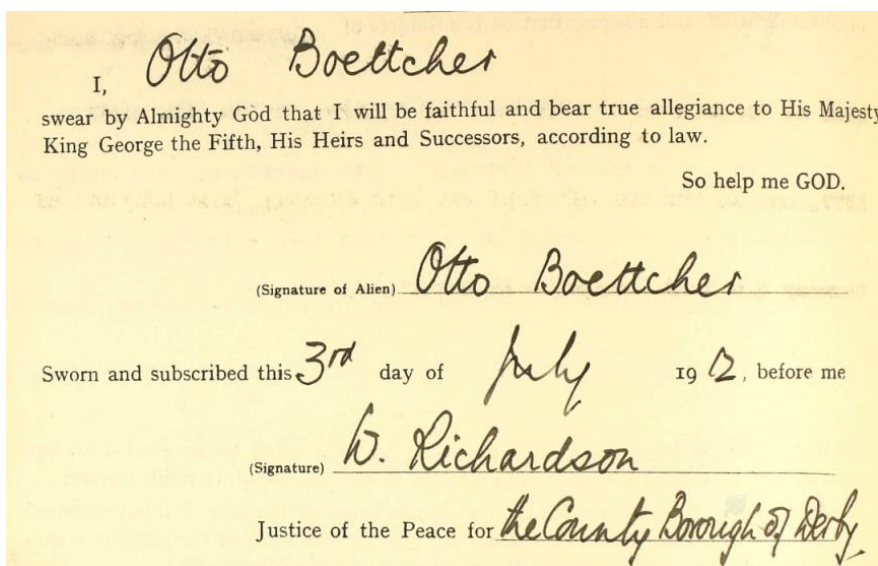
The family applied for British Citizenship and on 3 July 1912 Otto has to swear his allegiance to the King in front of a Justice of the Peace.

By 1916 the family were living at 46 Park Grove – we know this because William, the youngest child, applied for a copy of his birth certificate in that year and gave his address as “Fernbank, Park Grove” and here they lived for some years until Otto and Ida moved to a bungalow in Alvaston, around 1930.



This family photograph was taken in the 1930s when Gertrude was home on a visit from Argentina to where she emigrated with her husband for his job.

Left to right: back row: Otto, his daughter Elsa and son William
Centre row: Gladys (William's niece); Ida and Gertrude
Front row: Gerald (William's son); Pauline and Peter (Elsa's children). (photo loaned by Gladys Kidd)



Extract from Otto's Naturalisation records signed by Mr William Richardson, J.P. © The National Archives

Interestingly their eldest son Walter Ewald enlisted with the British Army in January 1911 aged 18 years and 9 months – this was while he was still technically a German Citizen so whether he lied about where he was born or the Enlisting Officer turned a blind eye we shall never know.

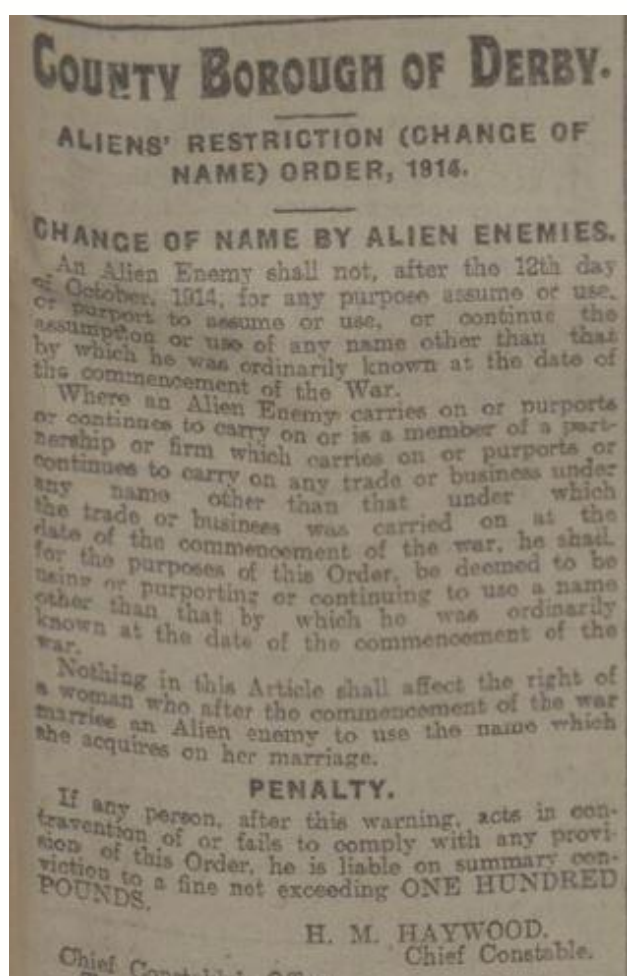


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His army career with the 6th Battalion of the Border Regiment must have been reasonably successful as he rose through the ranks to become a Sergeant, but in January 1915, well before his Short Service Attestation (or contract) expired, he was declared “Surplus to Requirements” under King’s Regulation and dismissed from the army. We can only assume that because of his birth nationality he was deemed unsuitable to serve in war time. He returned to Derby to live and work – on his marriage certificate in August 1918 he is described as a Hosiery worker. After his marriage to Kathleen Canty the couple moved to Leicester. Ewald died in 1962. Even as British citizens life cannot have been easy for the family with such an obvious German surname.

Various official announcements appeared in the *Derby Daily Telegraph* about what would happen to enemy aliens and there were arrests of German men reported in the newspapers. Rumours of spies were rife and at the Normanton Picture Palace there was even a drama entitled “*The German spy Peril – an exclusive and most exciting Topical Drama, showing the great menace German Spies are in this country.*”

Derby appears to have escaped the worst of anti-German resentment. However, following the torpedoing of the ocean liner “Lusitania” by a German submarine on 7 May 1915 feelings were running high and the following week a florist’s shop on East Street known to belong to a German was mobbed.



©Local World Ltd (image created courtesy of the British Library Board)
Derby Daily Telegraph, 26 October 1914



©Local World Ltd (image created courtesy of the British Library Board)
The *Derby Daily Telegraph* for 15 May 1915 reported that the police kept watch on the unruly crowd and no damage was done.

Thanks due to Mrs G Kidd who contacted us to tell us about the Boettcher family and loaned us photographs