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# Balcombe Army Camp

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## Location

MOUNT MARTHA, MORNINGTON PENINSULA SHIRE

## Municipality

MORNINGTON PENINSULA SHIRE

## Level of significance

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## Heritage Listing

Vic. War Heritage Inventory

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Construction dates 1940,

Hermes Number 126092

Property Number

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## Physical Description 1

Army camp, typical accommodation P1 huts.

## Historical Australian Themes

Providing administrative structures and authorities - defence

## Veterans Description for Public

The Balcombe Army Camp was established during the Second World War. The Annual Militia Camp was staged on Beleura farm and at Mount Martha in 1938 as a precursor to a more permanent occupation for defence forces as a build-up for the Second World War. The declaration of war in 1939 meant militia training in many parts of the

shire but the future Balcombe camp was the focus from its occupation at the end of 1939 by Melbourne University Rifles and in 1940 the 4th Division arrived with military trainees. Altogether the trainees numbered around 3000 camped at Mount Martha and further inland. A special Camp Post Office was set up at the Moore Street Bay Road corner to supplement the existing office.

Late in 1940, the Commonwealth Government purchased 209 acres of farming land from the Henty family (Glynt) and R Ostberg (formerly Latta's Nepean Park farm and orchard) and named the site Balcombe Camp. Huts were built and the camp used for AIF reinforcement training.

After Pearl Harbour in 1941 and the consequent American involvement in the war, Balcombe was used as an American headquarters and for rest and rehabilitation of American servicemen in 1942. The American First Marine Division memorial gateway (1954) commemorates this event.

As the Australian Army Apprentices School (c1949-), the site received many new buildings and landscaping, becoming one of the largest schools of its kind in the country. It would have featured the standard P1 huts, a building type favoured by the Army during the Second World War. The site was located on a former large apple orchard which remained in part along gullies. There are a few remaining buildings from the 1940s and 1950s (mess, gym) and these appear to have been built for the school rather than the camp. Rows of sugar gums (particularly in Uralla Road) and specimen cypress are possible indicators of the camp landscape but it is more likely they were established during the school tenure. Remnants of mature plantings are sugar gums 'Agonis flexuosa', 'Angophora sp.' and some indigenous manna gum.

*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.*

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>*