
MOUNT MARTHA BUNKER 1

Location

ESPLANADE MOUNT MARTHA, MORNINGTON PENINSULA SHIRE

Municipality

MORNINGTON PENINSULA SHIRE

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7821-0136

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Interpretation of Site	In 1939, military camps were developed at Mount Martha . The role of these camps, known as the Fourth Army Division, was to defend Port Phillip and the Mornington Peninsula. The Mount Martha Army camp was established north of Bay Road (4 km north east of the bunkers) in 1939. These bunkers were probably used as lookouts, or for military training purposes, during World War"
Archaeological Significance	The site was not inspected and therefore it is difficult to assess the archaeological significance at this stage. From a distance the site appears to be intact. Very few bunkers are registered on the Victorian Heritage Database The Mornington Peninsula has 14 registered historical places associated with the military however only two sites include bunkers in the description (H 1502 South Channel Fort & H1098 Fort Franklin)

Historical Significance	The site has Victorian military significance. It contributes to Victorias Heritage Framework theme 7: Governing Victoria, 7.4 Defending Victoria.
Hermes Number	194513
Property Number	

History

As early as the 1820s, it had been realised that the Mornington Peninsula might have a major defence role if Western Port ever came under attack, and by the late 1870s there were concerns that Australian ports could become targets for invading forces. As a result, seaport defences were improved and fortification at the Heads was increased in 1884, in case an enemy tried to form a colony in Western Port. These works resulted in Melbourne being one of the best defended ports in the British Empire. From 1887, there were annual encampments within the Langwarrin Military Reserve (22 km north east of the activity area), and training manoeuvres ranged over much of the Mornington Peninsula (Calder 2002: 139). During the Second World War, the district near Mornington was used for Victoria's annual military camp in. In March 1939, paddocks at 'Beleura' (an Italianate villa in Mornington) and open areas at Mount Martha provided encampment sites for 750 men of the 101st Infantry Brigade. Mimic warfare was staged for six days, with Gallipoli-like scaling of beaches between Mount Eliza and Mount Martha, and a mock battle for the key position of the Mornington pier. In 1939, military camps were developed at Mount Martha. The role of these camps, known as the Fourth Army Division, was to defend Port Phillip and the Mornington Peninsula. Mount Martha was selected for its central location on the Mornington Peninsula, railway access, suitable terrain for training exercises, potential rifle range sites, and abundance of partly developed farmland. The first army camp was set up by the 5th Battalion in empty paddocks in Mount Martha. The Mount Martha Army camp was established north of Bay Road (4 km north east of the activity area) in 1939 (plate I). Tents were also set up along Watson Road (4 km north east of the activity area) for the Balcombe Army Camp, and eventually all of the land between Craigie and Hearn Roads (1.8 km north east of the activity area) was absorbed by what became known as 'Camp City'. The American 151st Marine Division stayed at the Balcombe Army Camp from December 1942 to September 1943, using it as a place for rehabilitation, recuperation and training (Calder 2002: 140-1, 145-9).

During the CHMP fieldwork, two bunkers were identified on cliff slopes to the west and south west of the activity area, facing Port Phillip Bay. These bunkers were probably used as lookouts, or for military training purposes, during World War II (plate 2).

Once the Second World War ended in 1945, the Mount Martha Military Camp was closed. Balcombe Army Camp continued initially as a rehabilitation centre for injured soldiers, then as a place for prisoners-of-war, and finally became the Australian Army Apprentices School in May 1948. The School was relocated to Latchford Barracks in December 1982, and the land was purchased by the Shire of Mornington for residential development in 1984 (Calder 2002: 151-2).

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/>