# DARLEY MILITARY CAMP SITE

#### Location

48 CAMERONS ROAD LERDERDERG AND 222 LERDERDERG GORGE DARLEY, MOORABOOL SHIRE

## Municipality

MOORABOOL SHIRE

#### Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

### Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7722-0080

### **Heritage Listing**

Victorian Heritage Inventory

#### Statement of Significance

Last updated on - January 1, 1900

The Darley Quarry site is assessed as being of local historical significance for its association with pastoral use and activity in this, later settled portion of Victoria. It is also assessed as being of local historical significance for its association with use of the site as a World War 2 military encampment from 1940 - 1946.

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# What is significant?

Darley Military Camp comprises the remains of the AIF training camp, situated to the north of Darley, between Lerderderg River and Goodman Creek. Concrete slabs, chimneys, sumps and gully traps, and manholes comprise much of the evidence found across the site, which confirms the presence of many of the buildings and the water network as indicated on the 1942 plan. This can provide evidence of the types of quickly-built standard buildings used at Australian military camps during World War II. Additionally, occupational deposits, particularly those related to the barracks, mess and sanitary huts, comforts buildings, canteen, post office, and hospital buildings, are significant for what they can tell us about life at the military camp during its operational period.

Evidence of roadways and pathways provide evidence of circulation patterns implemented by the military, while that of garden beds provide evidence of a more informal attempt to make the occupants' life at the camp more comfortable. While many of the building remains typically comprise concrete slabs, this features present are evidence of Australia's military response to World War II, in a local setting.

# How is it significant?

Darley Military Camp is of local historical and scientific significance.

# Why is it significant?

It is historically important for its use as a military training camp during World War II from c.1940-1946. This place has the potential to provide information on the construction, layout, and occupation of the camp and associated subsurface services, and about the daily lives of those living and serving at the camp, between c.1940-1946.

It is scientifically significant because the archaeological evidence which may be identified at the site would likely be able to reveal information on the daily lives of the people who lived and served at the camp, and how they may have spent their leisure time at the camp, and show the differences between how the military personal lived, based on gender division.

# Archaeological Significance

Documentary evidence suggests that the site at 48 Camerons Rd, contained part of the Darley Military Camp which occupied the site from 1940-1946. Historical background research also indicated that a small structure likely related to pastoral activity was present in this area in 1917. The remains of camp structures are visibly present at the site comprising; concrete pads, footings, drainage features and access tracks. This area has been subject to ground disturbance from construction of a residence and associated infrastructure such as storage sheds, landscape features, roads as well as a large dam cut. Additional features located in the southern portion of the site within the 222 Lerderderg Gorge Rd property include an irrigation channel constructed c.1905 -1940. The site has the potential to contain archaeological features, deposits and artefacts that could provide insights into the military and early pastoral use of the place.

### Historical Significance

Darley military camp is assessed as being of local historical significance for its association with military history and pastoral uses in this area of Victoria. The site presents an opportunity to reveal further information of the early settlement of Darley, and twentieth century military use.

Due to restricted property access, Hutment Areas 2, 5, 8, 9, and 15 were not inspected. The Hutment Areas (11, 12, 13, and 14) within Darley Military Camp (VHI H7722-0080) were not reinspected, as this site was situated outside the project area. As such, a predictive statement for these Hutment Areas, based on aerial imagery, research material, and the patterns of use and occupation discovered elsewhere at the site, is presented below. The results of the site inspection for Hutment Areas 1, 3, 4, 6, 7 and 10 are outlined in Section 6. The features identified comprise the remains of structures, including chimneys, sumps and gully traps as well as several concrete slabs indicative of former building locations, manholes providing access to underground services, mounds, channels, a garden bed, and pathways and roadways. The buildings primarily appear to have been sanitary-related structures, the most identifiable of which were shower blocks, found along the pipelines identified in the 1942 plans. No post holes or timber stumps were identified in relation to the barracks buildings. As such, the majority of features identified comprise water-related infrastructure and buildings. Demolition across the surveyed area appears to have been patchy, with concrete footings, sumps, gully traps and some chimneys being left fully, or partially, in place. There is no sign of the barracks buildings, suggesting that these were likely easier to remove. While rubble piles, likely related to the dismantling of the military camp, were also identified, no evidence of rubbish dumps were noted. However, as much of the camp site once comprised barracks, it is possible that artefacts related to daily life at the camp may be identified in a subsurface context. Concrete features appear only to have been fully removed where individual farmers have completely cleared the paddocks in which the remaining structures and features were later situated. As such, the archaeology found within Hutment Areas 1, 3, 4, 6, 7 and 10 are likely to be present within the site. Archaeological evidence of Australia's military response to World War II, particularly the construction, layout, and occupation of the camp and associated subsurface services, as well as buried artefacts related to daily life at the camp (particularly near the former barracks), between c.1940-1946. Hutment Area 2 Hutment Area 2 originally comprised a discrete area containing 14 huts, two mess huts, a kitchen, two latrine buildings, a shower building and an ablution building, a drying shed, a sergeants' showers and ablutions building, and an officers' showers and ablutions building. Two further huts, along with an officers' mess and sergeants' mess, were situated to the west of the pathway around the Hutment Area. The mapped huts without labels on the 1942 plan comprised the barracks. The 14 huts were divided in two, comprising two groups of six huts with another adjacent to each group. The two mess huts, with a kitchen between them, were centred between the hut groupings. The shower, ablution and drying shed buildings were aligned to the east of the huts, along a water pipeline. Although Hutment Area 2 was shaped differently, this layout echoes that of Hutment Area 6. Recent aerial imagery (MetroMap 2022) shows that Hutment Area 2 is situated within a tree-covered section of the landscape, similar in nature to the adjacent Hutment Areas 3 (to the south) and 6 (to the north). The pathway running between Hutment Area 6 and Hutment Area 2 is still visible adjacent to the east of the tree line. The pathway around the Hutment Area is also visible in various sections between the trees. The footings of what appears to either be one of the mess huts or the adjacent kitchen is visible in the aerial imagery, within a clearing that comprised the former Hutment Area, along with the remains of what is likely the officers' shower and ablution building (now within a small pond) and latrine within the southeast of the Hutment Area. One small concrete feature, which is not marked on the 1942 plan, is visible to the southwest of the mess hut or kitchen, in an area which would have been between two huts. As such, the archaeology found within Hutment Area 6 is likely to be similar to that found within Hutment Area 2. Aerial imagery shows the remains of several concrete slabs showing the location of some of the original camp buildings within Hutment Area 2, with the small pond around the former officers' shower and ablution building, which was near the junction of two water pipes, comprising evidence of underground sewage services. As with the other hutment areas that have not been subject to housing construction and related works, archaeological evidence of Australia's military response to World War II, particularly the construction, layout, and occupation of the camp and associated subsurface services between c.1940-1946, may still exist within Hutment Area 2. Buried artefacts relating to daily life at the camp may also be present in a subsurface context, particularly near the former barracks area. Hutment Area 5 Hutment Area 5 comprised a small area situated on the southeast corner of Camerons Road and an unnamed former roadway that formed part of the northern boundary of the camp site. It comprised 11 huts, a mess hut, a kitchen, an officers' mess, an officers' showers and ablutions building, a sergeants' mess, a sergeants' showers and ablutions building, an ablutions building, a shower building, two latrine buildings, a drying shed, and a small unmarked building. A water pipeline is shown dividing this Hutment Area in two, with a set of six huts, the sergeants' mess and adjacent hut, a

latring, a shower and an ablutions building to the south/southwest of the pipeline, and the

Other Names Darley Quarry,

Hermes Number

205931

Property Number

### **History**

SiteCard data copied on 06/02/2025:Detailed information on the Darley Military Camp is available in the existing Bacchus Marsh Heritage Study (Peterson and Catrice 1995), and the supporting information found in the Darley Military Camp site card (Willis 2019). The properties on which the Darley Military Camp was situated were leased to the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) in July 1940 under r.54 of the National Security General Regulations (Peterson and Catrice 1995; Willis 2019, p. 16). There were 357 galvanised iron and timber huts built on the site within thirty days, which housed approximately 4,000 members of the 4th Infantry Training Brigade by September 1940 (Peterson and Catrice 1995). The permanent camp housed up to 4,200 personnel between 1940 and 1946. During this period, it was home to a variety of military units including the Militia, Training Battalions, the Australian Women's Army Service, the Australian Army Medical Women's Service, the Australian Army Nursing Service, Australian Women's Army Service schools, Land Headquarters, the Royal Australian Army Medical Corps, U.S. Marines, and colonial troops from the Dutch East Indies (Peterson and Catrice 1995; Willis 2019, p. 16). The camp comprised a group of 15 hutments. According to the Melton Express (14 September 1940, p. 1), each building within the hutments was built with galvanised iron walls, lined with tar paper (purportedly for insulation against the summer heat), and the officers' huts were partitioned with plywood. The huts (which had roofs of corrugated 'durabestos' sheeting) were not fully finished, and required the installation of locks, lighting and clothing hooks. Additionally, the plumbing network, along with the cooking and storehouse facilities, were incomplete at this time. Each hutment comprised a cookhouse/kitchen, a meat house, a shower room, a laundry, a drying room, and a gaol. In 1940, each kitchen had a big island range, 10'6" by 5' (3.2m by 1.5m) in size, each range being set on a firebrick base, but did not have walls to allow for the serving of large groups of people; but the cookhouses were later furnished with corrugated iron walls on at least one side. The gaol comprised two rooms, one 40' by 22' (12.1 m by 6.7 m) room adjacent to an 18' by 22' (5.5m by 6.7m) cell. The news article also noted that the camp post office was situated 'on the northwest side' of Camerons Road, and a large canteen was to the south of the post office for the Australian Army Canteen Service. Water was pumped to the storage tank, which held 165,000 gallons, by a 65-horsepower electric motor. According to the Melton Express (31 August 1940, p. 3), new barracks would comprise 'luxury' accommodations, with rooms divided into cubicles which housed four sets of bunks. Photographs show that the barrack huts were built on stumps, and were raised above the ground, and that a number of them had small areas set aside for gardens, outlined by rocks laid in semicircles or ovals. Additionally, the latrine and shower buildings were set apart from the main body of barracks, often by means of a pathway or road. According to Willis (2019), the kitchens had Wylies steam cookers, catering for up to 300 people, and larger sheds were prefabricated off site before being construction at the camp, Other buildings included a barbers' shop, ordinance workshops, boot repairs, a farriers' workshop, religious huts, hospital buildings, and a library. The hospital was opposite the post office, and also fronted Camerons Road. Electricity to the camp was provided by the State Electricity Commission (Willis 2019, pp. 16-20). The camp also had a 'wet canteen', which served alcohol such as beer to the troops. After 1945, repatriated prisoners of war were treated at the Darley Camp Hospital. While there was debate as to the reuse of the camp as a tuberculosis hospital or sanitorium, the camp was eventually disbanded late in 1946 (Willis 2019, p. 22). After the camp was dismantled at the end of World War II, many of the camp huts were re-erected elsewhere in the region for private use, including at locations in Bacchus Marsh, Ocean Grove, Warrnambool and Gippsland (Peterson and Catrice 1995; Willis 2019, p. 22). After the removal of the military camp buildings, the Preston Motorcycle Club identified the location as a potential venue for racing, due to the remaining roadways. Club members undertook working bees at the site to remove junk, and fill in the trenches left by cabling, and to resurface the roadways for racing motorbikes. By late 1947, the track was in a suitable condition to allow for the next club meeting on 29 February 1948. This was a joint meeting with the Hartwell and Kew Motorcycle Clubs (Primotipo 2019). Open meetings soon followed; this was not a motorbike only meet, as members of the 250cc and 500cc car clubs were also invited. The club operated there until the final meet, the Wiltshire Trophy, took place there in 1962. The Preston Motorcycle Club organised to hold the 1963 Wiltshire Trophy at Darley, but the owner of the property withdrew

permission for use of the circuit at the last minute, saying that continual heavy rain in the area had flooded the pit and spectator areas and damaged sections of the track. The meeting location was rearranged to be held at Calder. Afterwards, no further motorcycle or motorcar racing was held on the Darley circuit (Old Bike Australasia 2018; Primotipo 2019). By the 1970s, few features of the camp remained, in comparison to the original ~430 huts and other buildings which were once present, beyond the roadways and dams, and open areas that had been cleared for buildings (Willis 2019, p. 22). In 1995, the site comprised a "farmlet subdivision" with two domestic brick chimney ruins to the east of Camerons Road, and 'ruins only of plinth height', along with tracings of a former road entrance, to the west of Camerons Road. The historic roadside plaque and boulder was extant within a metal fence (Peterson and Catrice 1995). Some of the structural remains, including concrete slabs, have subsequently been found. In 2019, two properties which comprise the VHI H7722-0080 heritage boundary were surveyed, and were found to comprise a number of concrete pads and footings, along with drainage features and access tracks. This area has also been subject to ground disturbance from construction of a residence and associated infrastructure such as storage sheds, landscape features, roads as well as a large dam cut. Despite this, an irrigation channel constructed c.1905 -1940 was still evident. Additionally, some of the extant roadways are the remains of the motorbike racing circuit. History of land within the project area The land to the north of the existing VHI extent of the Darley Military Camp (VHI H7722-0080) site is shown to have been subdivided by the 1850s (Victoria Division of Survey and Mapping 1850s), but land within the site had not yet been taken up. By the late 1800s, parish mapping shows land being owned by: JB Perry (allotment 1), Joseph Anderson (allotments 2A and 10), J Hayes (allotment 2), and H Hayes (allotment 2B) within the Parish of Merrimu (Noone 1878); and T Anderson (allotments 1A, 1A1 and 2B) and R Elam (allotment 2A1) in the Parish of Coimadai (Victorian Shire Map Company 1892). No further subdivisions had taken place within the Parish of Merrimu by 1907, and the allotments retained their original dimensions in the 1978 parish mapping (Division of Survey and Mapping 1978; McGauran 1907). By 1910, the Parish of Coimadai shows that some subdivision has occurred: TA Anderson is shown as the original owner of allotments 1, 1B, 1A2, 1A, and 2B, while R Ealam is still shown as the original owner of allotment 2A1 (McGauran 1910). The 1967 parish mapping shows that no further subdivision had taken place (Department of Lands and Survey 1967; McGauran 1910). As with the area within the current VHI boundary of Darley Military Camp (VHI H7722-0080), this suggests that the entire site follows the same three similar broad periods: early land sales and subdivision (1840s and 1850s); early pastoral occupation (1850s to 1880s); continued pastoral occupation and agricultural development (1880s to c.1940); and the Darley Military Camp period (c.1940 to 1946). There was also an additional period: the motorcycle racing period (1947-1963).

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 <a href="http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/">http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/</a>