
Murchison Number One Internment Camp



MURCH.jpg

Location

1296 CRAWFORD ROAD MURCHISON, Greater Shepparton City

Municipality

GREATER SHEPPARTON CITY

Level of significance

-

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7924-0090

Heritage Listing

Vic. War Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - September 14, 2005

What is significant?

Number One Internment Camp is located on the eastern side of Waranga Reservoir, 20 kms south of Tatura. It was Australia's first purpose built internment camp for housing enemy aliens and/or prisoners of war. Camp 1 was established in 1940 and was closed in 1947. The camp housed male civilian internees, first of German origin and later of Italian origin who had been resident in Australia. The camp is a superb archaeological site with most of its features such as huts, ablution blocks, kitchens, tennis courts, gardens, ponds, skittle alley, cafe, hall, sewerage works and security fencing easily recognised.

How is it significant?

Number One Internment Camp is of historic, cultural, social and archaeological significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

Number One Internment Camp is historically significant for its association with the Australian internment policy of the first half of the twentieth century. Camp 1 was the first of eighteen purpose-built camps, a number of which were constructed in the Goulburn Valley. Crucial to the significance of the camp is its capacity to demonstrate to all visitors a direct impact of World War II on Australia. Although many of the internees were Australian residents, they were thought to be a potential security risk to the nation because of the country of their birth or their affiliations. The ruins and the landscape illustrate clearly the physical environment faced by internees and the organisational arrangements of World War II internment camp.

Number One Internment Camp is historically significant due to the impact it had on persons of German origin in Victoria. Germans represented one of the major national groups in the early waves of immigration to Australia. Although numerically fewer than British or Irish settlers, they nevertheless had a substantial impact in forming the Australian society. Internment demonstrated to them that they were not considered a part of Australian society, which was at that time dominated by British values and politics.

Number One Internment Camp is archaeologically significant because it contains an abundance of archaeological evidence on the layout and operation of the camp and life within the camp. Local historians have recorded the memories of former German and Italian internees who have returned to revisit a period of their life which had a profound effect on them. The compactness of the camp, and the quality and depth of surviving sources of information (archaeological, historical and oral history) bestows the ruins with tremendous social significance as touchstones to the experience of wartime internment.

Hermes Number 125451

Property Number

Veterans Description for Public

Financed by Great Britain and administered by the Australian Army, there were 19 prisoner of war camps established throughout Australia during World War Two, where approximately 25,720 prisoners of war were held. The Tatura group of camps held approximately 12,000-13,000 men, women and children of 23 nationalities, both prisoners and internees.

Little remains in terms of above ground structures at the Prisoner of War Camp No. 1, Camp Road, Murchison, all buildings having been removed or demolished following the closure of the camp. The site now only contains various concrete foundations, timber posts and stumps, remnants of stone walling, fencing wire, coils of barbed wire and garden bed remnants. In addition there are the remnants of the concrete skittle alley, a tennis rebound wall, tennis court and a stone gateway at the entrance.

Compound A, Camp No. 1 was established in 1940 on land owned by John B Noonan near the Waranga Basin Inlet. Sixty three German internees were transferred 5km from 'Dhurringile' to the camp containing 14 huts, two mess halls, and open wash house, shower room and latrine. One hut was used as an orderly room and another, the temporary camp hospital. By 1943 sanitation was connected and the camp became the Australian Army Administration Camp and Hospital. Later additions and amenities were established, including lush stone-terraced gardens. The Germans were also joined there by Italians.

Compound B was later established to the east when 640 local German internees were transferred from across Australia. Following Germany's surrender in 1945, the camps were decommissioned and by 1948 all buildings had been removed.

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/>