# GERMAN WAR CEMETERY
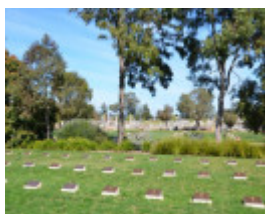


Sept 2014_1.JPG



Sept 2014_2.JPG



Sept 2014_3.JPG



Sept 2014_4.JPG



Sept 2014_6.JPG



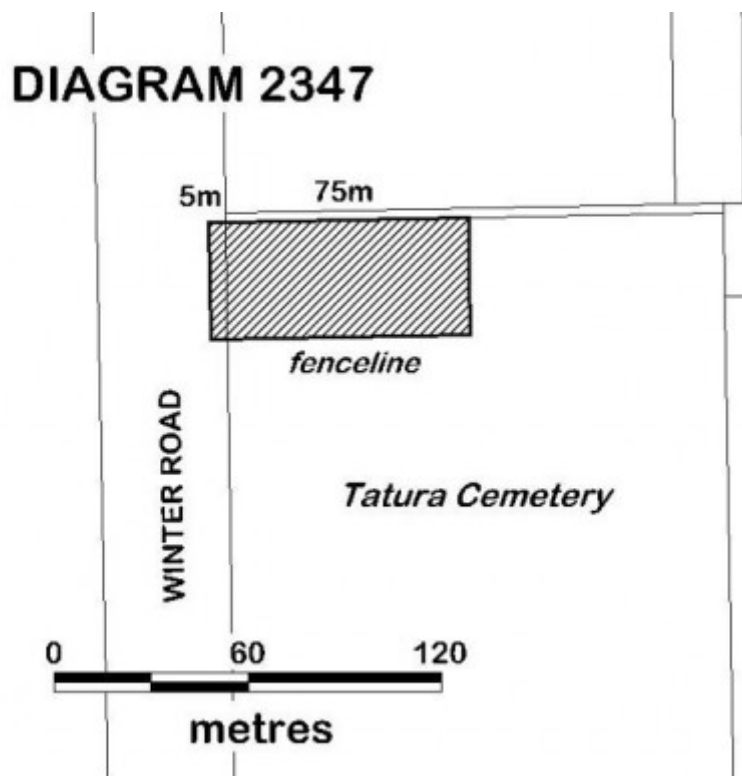Sept 2014_5.JPG



Diagram 2347.JPG

## Location

155 WINTER ROAD TATURA, GREATER SHEPPARTON CITY

## Municipality

GREATER SHEPPARTON CITY

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2347

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO121

## VHR Registration

August 13, 2015

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

---

## Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

What is significant?

The German War Cemetery, Tatura consisting of a rectangular portion of land in the north-west corner of the Tatura Cemetery. It is a fenced area of lawn with headstones and plaques, a memorial, large concrete cross, entrance gateway and paving, and perimeter garden beds with mature trees. It includes a pair of flagpoles located outside the entrance gateway.

*History Summary*

The German War Cemetery, Tatura was the first foreign war cemetery to be established in Australia by the Australian War Graves Commission. Established after World War II on land excised from the Tatura Cemetery, it provided for the reburial of German internees and Prisoners of War who died whilst detained in Australia during World War I and II. Bodies were exhumed from cemeteries throughout Australia and reinterred at this cemetery which is located in close proximity to the largest group of World War II internment camps constructed in Australia. These consisted of seven camps which housed more than 8,000 civilians and Prisoners of War largely from Germany, Italy and Japan. The first section of the German War Cemetery (on the western side) provided for World War II civilians and Prisoners of War and was opened in November 1958 by the West German Ambassador, Dr Hans Muhlenfeld, at a ceremony attended by some 1000 people. A second larger section (on the eastern side) was opened in 1961 for the reburial of German World War I internees. The German War Cemetery is one of five war cemeteries in Victoria established by the Australian War Graves Commission.

*Description Summary*

The German War Cemetery, Tatura is a small rectangular fenced lawn area located in the north-west corner of the Tatura Cemetery. It is a level area surrounded by trees and garden beds, and contains the graves of 191 World War I and 59 World War II internees, including 11 Prisoners of War. Headstones and plaques are arranged in rows around the perimeter, with the original World War II section located at the front and the World War I section located at the rear. Each grave is marked by a small masonry headstone with a bronze plaque and Iron Cross to identify Prisoners of War and a Latin Cross to identify civilians. In the centre of the lawn is a large concrete cross and a stone memorial with bronze plaque which records the names of 27 Germans who died in Australia in the two World Wars and remain buried elsewhere in Australia. It also commemorates 129 Catholic and 45 Protestant Missionaries who were buried elsewhere. Access to the site is through a rendered masonry gateway with seven rectangular columns supporting a flat-roofed canopy. The entry ground is paved with slate and a low wrought iron fence and gate with brass detail spans between each column. The entablature above bears the words 'Deutsche Kriegsgraeberstaette Tatura 1914-1918' and '1939-1945 German War Cemetery' in brass lettering. A pair of flagpoles is located adjacent to the gateway.

This site is part of the traditional land of the Yorta Yorta people.

How is it significant?

The German War Cemetery, Tatura is of historical and social significance to the State of Victoria. It satisfies the following criterion for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

Criterion A

Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history.

Criterion B

Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history.

Criterion G

Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions.

Why is it significant?

The German War Cemetery, Tatura is significant at the state level for the following reasons:

The German War Cemetery, Tatura is historically significant as the first foreign war cemetery to be established in Australia and as one of five war cemeteries established by the Australian War Graves Commission in Victoria after the end of World War II. It remains highly intact from the early 1960s and demonstrates the relationship that developed between former enemy nations soon after the end of World War II. The headstones and plaques in the cemetery record the diversity of German internees and Prisoners of War who died in Australia as a result of World War I and II, including a sailor from the German ship *Kormoran* which sank the HMAS *Sydney* in 1941, and internees brought to Australia on the prison ship *Dunera* in 1940. [Criterion A]

The German War Cemetery, Tatura is the only war cemetery in Australia dedicated to German civilians and Prisoners of War and is the oldest foreign war cemetery in Australia. [Criterion B]

The German War Cemetery, Tatura is socially significant for its longstanding relationship with the German community in Victoria. Since 1958 it has provided this community with a place for remembrance with official commemoration services held annually in November. [Criterion G]

The German War Cemetery, Tatura is also significant for the following reasons, but not at the state level:

The German War Cemetery, Tatura is of aesthetic significance at a local level for its picturesque character and evocative qualities. It is a peaceful and serene place which invites solemnity, commemoration and appreciation. The cemetery shares a close relationship with the large group of local World War II internment camps in the district.

## Permit Exemptions

**General Exemptions:**

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

Places of worship: In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must notify the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

Subdivision/consolidation: Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions here.

**Specific Exemptions:**

PERMIT EXEMPTIONS

General Condition 1

All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object.

General Condition 2

Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of works that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such works shall cease and Heritage Victoria shall be notified as soon as possible.

General Condition 3

All works should be informed by Conservation Management Plans prepared for the place. The Executive Director is not bound by any Conservation Management Plan, and permits still must be obtained for works suggested in any Conservation Management Plan.

General Condition 4

Nothing in this determination prevents the Heritage Council from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions.

General Condition 5

Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the relevant responsible authority, where applicable.

Specific Permit Exemptions

Landscape:

. The process of gardening, including mowing, hedge clipping, maintaining bedding displays, removal of dead shrubs, disease and weed control, and maintenance to care for existing plants.

. The removal or pruning of dead or dangerous trees to maintain safety. If the tree is identified as being of primary or contributory cultural heritage significance, the Executive Director must be notified of these works within 21 days of them being undertaken.

. Replanting of removed or dead trees and vegetation with the same plant species to conserve the significant landscape character and values.

. Management of trees in accordance with Australian Standard; Pruning of Amenity Trees AS 4373-1996.

. Management of trees in accordance with Australian Standard; Protection of Trees on Development Sites AS 4970-2009.

. Subsurface works involving the installation, removal or replacement of watering and drainage systems or services outside the canopy edge of significant trees in accordance with AS4970 and on the condition that works do not impact on archaeological features or deposits.

. Removal of plants listed as noxious weeds in the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994.

. Vegetation protection and management of possums and vermin.

Hard landscape elements:

. Minor repairs and maintenance of hard landscape elements, including paths, gutters, drainage and irrigation systems, edging and fences.

Cemetery-related works:

. Hand cleaning of monuments, headstones, plaques, entrance gates and brass detailing using soft hair brush, unpressurised water and small amount of hand dishwashing detergent.

. Erecting, repairing and maintaining signage (directional signage, road signs, speed signs).

## Theme

2. Peopling Victoria's places and landscapes 8. Building community life

| | |
|---|---|
| Construction dates | 1958, |
| Heritage Act Categories | Registered place, |
| Hermes Number | 197542 |
| Property Number | |

## History

*War Cemeteries in Australia*

More than 12,000 war dead are buried in war and civilian cemeteries in Australia. Of these about half are buried in 70 Commonwealth War Cemeteries throughout Australia which range in size from several hectares to small plots, while others are buried in some 900 civilian cemeteries. The Office of Australian War Graves, as an agent of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, maintains these war graves and cemeteries.

Many war cemeteries were established during or after World War II in Australia and were commonly located near sites of World War II facilities. For example the Adelaide River War Cemetery was established near the headquarters of a large military base at Adelaide River in the Northern Territory and the German War Cemetery, Tatura was established near a number of internment camps in Victoria.

Commonwealth War Cemeteries with fifty or more war graves contain large crosses of sacrifice. The design of headstones and plaques at these war cemeteries, and the information contained on the plaques, is uniform. The headstones are rectangular in shape, generally set in straight rows and usually made of granite or marble, however low pedestals with bronze plaques are used in place of headstones at some cemeteries, such as the German War Cemetery, Tatura.

In Victoria, the Office of Australian War Graves maintains the following cemeteries:

. Springvale War Cemetery and the Victorian Cremation Memorial

. Bairnsdale War Cemetery

. Mildura War Cemetery

. Sale War Cemetery

. Tatura German Military Cemetery

Foreign war cemeteries in Australia include the Japanese War Cemetery at Cowra, NSW; the German War Cemetery at Tatura, Victoria; a Dutch Annexe at the Perth Cemetery, Western Australia and an Italian Ossario at Murchison, Victoria. With the exception of the latter, these are maintained by the Office of Australian War Graves.

*World War I Internment Camps in Australia*

Approximately 7,000 Germans and Austrians were interned in Australia during World War I, including 67 women and 84 children. They comprised: officers and crew from ships captured in Australian ports at the outbreak of war, German nationals from South East Asia, New Guinea and the Pacific Islands and Australian residents.

Camps were established in all six Australian states including Langwarrin, near Frankston in Victoria. Holdsworthy, near Liverpool in NSW, was enlarged during the war to hold 6,000 prisoners by the end of World War I. Of the total number of internees in Australia, 202 died in the camps, many due to illness in 1919 after hostilities had ceased.

*World War II Internment Camps*

In September 1939, Australia joined Great Britain in declaring war on Germany and immediately passed legislation to enable the internment of civilians resident in Australia who might represent a threat to national security. Over 15,000 civilians were interned in Australia during World War II, approximately half were civilians who were living in Australia, and the other half were living in other Allied territories when war broke out. The latter were imprisoned overseas and transported to Australia for internment. They included men, women and children, mainly German, Italian and Japanese, and were interned because their nationality posed a security risk. Internees ranged in age from babies, some of whom were born in internment camps, to the elderly.

In addition to the internees, there were about 7,000 Prisoners of War who were detained in Australia as enemy servicemen. They were members of the armed forces of Germany, Italy and Japan, who were captured and transported to Australia.

A number of purpose-built internment camps, as well as Prisoner of War camps, were quickly constructed in Australia to the terms of the Geneva Convention, and a group of seven camps (four internment and three Prisoner of War camps) were established near Tatura. These comprised the largest group of camps in Australia. The individual camps were known as Dhurringile Mansion, Camps 1-4 and Camp 13 and an associated wood cutting camp at Graytown. In 1939 the Commonwealth government negotiated with the owner of a property known as Dhurringile (VHR H1554), located on the Murchison-Tatura Road in northern Victoria, for use as an internment camp for German and Italian internees. On completion of Camp 1 nearby, these internees were transferred from this 1870s two storey brick mansion and Dhurringile was taken up by the army for use as a Prisoner of War camp for German officers in 1941.

The seven camps held in excess of 8,000 people to which a contingent of 2,700 guards and other personnel was attached. The four camps holding civilian internees were unique among Australia's places of detention. No other camps held families, nor did they include such a diversity of backgrounds in terms of nationalities, political convictions, faiths, class and education. The other three Tatura camps accommodated Prisoners of War, including high-ranking German officers. Among them were survivors of the German raider *Kormoran*, that sank the Australian light cruiser HMAS S*ydney* off the Western Australian coast in November 1941 with the loss of the entire *Sydney* crew of 645. Captain of the *Kormoran*, Theodore Detmers, was amongst those imprisoned at Dhurringile Mansion.

Internees and Prisoners of War lived in close proximity for up to seven years. When a death occurred, the body was interred at the local cemetery and a funeral was attended by close friends and family and an armed guard. A full military funeral was held for a member of the armed forces.

After the end of World War II, the Australian War Graves Commission established war cemeteries in Australia for German and Japanese citizens who had died whilst imprisoned in Australia, including civilians. A Japanese War Cemetery was established at Cowra, where a large number of Japanese had died during an attempted breakout in August 1944, and a German War Cemetery at Tatura, in the vicinity of the seven internment camps. An Italian War Cemetery was also established at nearby Murchison Cemetery where a number of Italian Prisoners of War and internees had been buried during World War II. This was the initiative of a local Italian resident, rather than the Australian War Graves Commission.

Most of the internees grew to appreciate the Australian environment, despite the deprivations of camp life. After their release at the end of World War II, most prisoners were sent home, however many returned to live in Australia. The internment camps were dismantled after World War II and little physical evidence of these camps remains at the various sites.

*German War Cemetery, Tatura*

The German War Cemetery, Tatura was established in 1958 and was the first foreign war cemetery to be established in Australia. It memorialises the German nationals who were interned and died in the internment camps near Tatura and in other camps across Australia.

An area was excised from the Presbyterian section of the Tatura cemetery to establish the German War Cemetery and this was fenced by the Australian War Graves Commission. Local undertakers were contracted to exhume the bodies of Germans from all over Australia for reinterment in the newly constructed cemetery at Tatura. Each grave is designated by a masonry block to which is attached a bronze plaque bearing the name, date of death and either a Latin cross signifying that the grave is that of a civilian internee, or a German Iron Cross for a member of the German Armed Forces.

The initial section of the cemetery (on the western side) contains the graves of 48 internees and 11 Prisoners of War from World War II. This section was opened and inaugurated by the West German Ambassador, Dr Hans Muhlenfeld, on 16 November 1958. This was timed to coincide with Remembrance Day in Germany, where special ceremonies were held to commemorate the men and women of all nations who lost their lives in the two world wars. The ceremony was attended by about 1000 people, including hundreds of German migrants. The address was given in German and English, both German and Australian national anthems were sung, the German flag was raised from half mast to the mast head while the last post was played and local school children laid wreaths on the graves. After the ceremony, the crowd filed silently past the 59 graves which bore small metal plaques with the name of the deceased Prisoner of War or detainee.

In the 1960s, the cemetery was extended to the east with reinterments of 191 World War I internees taking place in March 1961. On 19 November that year this part of the cemetery was inaugurated and an address given by the German Consul, Herr F Wussow. Since this time memorial services have been held annually at the cemetery on the Sunday closest to 11 November. These have been attended by large numbers of German relatives and friends who have also taken the opportunity to visit the Tatura Irrigation and Wartime Camps Museum to learn more about those interned in the vicinity, provide items relating to the nearby internment camps and relate further stories about those buried at the cemetery.

Important trees include 3 outstanding Angophora costata, and boundary plantings include Callistemon saligna, other Callistemon species and cultivars, Banksia integrifolia, Photinia serratifolia and low growing Thryptomene 'F C Payne', Dianella revoluta and Lomanda longifolia. The former Monterey Pine perimeter plantings have all been removed.

KEY REFERENCES USED TO PREPARE ASSESSMENT

Joyce Hammond. *Walls of Wire: Tatura, Rushworth, Murchison*. Tatura 1990

Lurline & Athur Knee. *Marched In; an account of the seven Internment and Prisoner of War Camps in the Tatura area during World War 2*. Tatura 2008

William Bossence. *Tatura and the Shire of Rodney*. Melbourne 1969

Celestina Sagazio. Cemeteries: our heritage. Melbourne 1992

*The Age*, 17 November 1958, p 11 '*Tatura War Cemetery opened with Impressive Ceremony'*

Dept of Veterans' Affairs Office of Australian War Graves. 'War Cemeteries within Australia'

Arthur Knee. 'German War Cemetery, Winter Road, Tatura, Vic Australia', complied for Tatura & District Historical Society, 1997-98

Allom Lovell & Assoc. 'City of Greater Shepparton Heritage Study Stage Two'. 2004

## Plaque Citation

The first foreign war cemetery established in Australia, this cemetery provided for the reburial of 250 German civilians and Prisoners of War who died while interned in Australia, many in nearby camps, as a result of WWI and WWII.

## Assessment Against Criteria

Criterion
The German War Cemetery, Tatura is of historical and social significance to the State of Victoria. It satisfies the following criterion for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

Criterion A
Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history.

Criterion B
Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history.

Criterion G
Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions.

Why is it significant?
The German War Cemetery, Tatura is significant at the state level for the following reasons:

The German War Cemetery, Tatura is historically significant as the first foreign war cemetery to be established in Australia and as one of five war cemeteries established by the Australian War Graves Commission in Victoria after the end of World War II. It remains highly intact from the early 1960s and demonstrates the relationship that developed between former enemy nations soon after the end of World War II. The headstones and plaques in the cemetery record the diversity of German internees and Prisoners of War who died in Australia as a result of World War I and II, including a sailor from the German ship *Kormoran* which sank the HMAS *Sydney* in 1941, and internees brought to Australia on the prison ship *Dunera* in 1940. [

Criterion A]
The German War Cemetery, Tatura is the only war cemetery in Australia dedicated to German civilians and Prisoners of War and is the oldest foreign war cemetery in Australia. [

Criterion B]

The German War Cemetery, Tatura is socially significant for its longstanding relationship with the German community in Victoria. Since 1958 it has provided this community with a place for remembrance with official commemoration services held annually in November. [
Criterion G]

## Extent of Registration

NOTICE OF REGISTRATION

As Executive Director for the purpose of the **Heritage Act 1995**, I give notice under section 46 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended by including Heritage Register Number H2347 in the category described as Heritage Place.

German War Cemetery
155 Winter Road
Tatura
Greater Shepparton City

All of the place shown hatched on Diagram 2347 encompassing part of Crown Allotment 97A Parish of Toolamba West and part of the road reserve for Winter Road.

Dated 13 August 2015

TIM SMITH
Executive Director

[*Victoria Government Gazette* G32 13 August 2015 p.1756]