
FORMER WEST SALE RAAF BASE SITE

Location

10 WILLIAMS DRIVE FULHAM, WELLINGTON SHIRE

Municipality

WELLINGTON SHIRE

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H8221-0020

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - June 4, 2019

This site is significant to the Sale region for its association with the former World War II RAAF Base, Bombing Gunnery School and Air Gunnery School. This site also represents Victorian's significant contribution to aviation and military heritage, particularly the important role Victoria played in the training of air force personnel during World War II. This site has the potential for research based on several of Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes (Heritage Victoria, 2019), including:

Theme 03 - Connecting Victorians by transport and communications. Of this theme, the following sub-themes are identified for further exploration:

3.6 Linking Victorians by air

Theme 07 - Governing Victorians. Of this theme, the following sub-themes are identified for further exploration:

7.4 Defending Victoria and Australia

It is also important to note that although not yet 75 years old, this Place also holds value for its use as a Displaced Person's camp in the years following World War II both to the town of Sale and the greater Gippsland area, and also to the descendents of those who lived there.

During recording, at least 33 building foundations associated with the former RAAF base were recorded or observed (allocated 'H' for 'Historic' on attached map), in addition to a number of other features such as drainage facilities, gravel driveways/access points and outdoor foundations. These mostly comprised of concrete slabs set into the ground surface, however at least three examples of a concrete slab sitting atop concrete foundations (around the 'outline' of the buildings) were also observed. One extant building (the house 'Raeshaw' as discussed previously) is also present and currently serves as the dwelling of the landowner.

Building locations were compared with early plans of the RAAF base provided by the landowner. The foundations for some of the following structures were identified:

- Airmens laundry and boiler house;
- Airmens Ablution and latrine;
- Trainees Ablution and latrine;
- Trainees
- Airmens paved sport area; - Gymnasium; - Boiler room;
- Airmens mess;
- Incinerator and compound;
- Drying hut;
- WAAAF changing rooms;
- Canteen;
- Sick quarters and associated structures;
- Fumigation hut;
- Barracks office and store; and
- Fuel Storage facility

The concrete foundations appear to be for wet areas (or areas which required plumbing) such as laundries, latrines, and shower blocks.

The locations of former (and probably pre-fab or portable) structures which have since been removed are visible both on the ground (as large rectangular depressions or rises) and in aerial photographs. Early plans of the RAAF base provided by the landowner indicate that these features represent the following:

Interpretation of Site

- Airmen's sleeping huts;
- Trainee's sleeping quarters; Similar rises and depressions representing the former locations of structures were also identified to the east of the north-south driveway, which are also evident within the landscape and in aerial photography. Early plans of the RAAF base provided by the landowner indicate that these features represent:
- Sergeants mess and sleeping quarters
- Sergeants paved sport arena;
- Officers sleeping quarters; and - Officers mess

Furthermore, concrete and asphalt paving (e.g. for possible paths or open areas) was present to the eastern side of the driveway. This paving is considered to be in poor condition and its extent is unknown. Further archaeological investigation may be able to provide additional data. A large pile of broken concrete slabs, ceramic plumbing, corrugated iron and other artefacts such as plain whiteware and glass fragments is also located in the south-eastern

Archaeological Significance

Documentary evidence indicates the site originally formed part of the 16,000 acre "Fulham" squatting run, taken up by Peter Imlay during the 1840s. From December 1941, the No. 3 Bombing and Gunnery School (later renamed the Air Gunnery School) was established in West Sale. The site formed an integral component of the West Sale RAAF Base, accommodating the living quarters, men and women's bathroom blocks, mess halls, sports grounds and other features associated with the base. The dwelling located within the north of the property served as the nurse's station during this time. In 1945 the RAAF base converted into a civil airfield and from 1949 until 1953 the barracks within the property were utilised as a Displaced Persons Migrant Holding Centre. It is evident from plans and ground surface features that the accommodation/living quarters, mess hall, sports arena, domed well, drainage features and outbuilding remains that could potentially be identified through sub-surface investigations. The current site comprising of three Lots is currently a series of fenced paddocks with multiple concrete building foundations, a residence (Raeshaw) and has identified historical artefacts. Although most of the site demonstrates that there is potential for historical archaeological features, deposits and artefacts which are 75 or more years old, it is important to note while not yet 75 years old, the Displaced Person's camp phase holds archaeological value.

Historical Significance

This site is significant to the Sale region for its association with the former World War II RAAF Base, Bombing Gunnery School and Air Gunnery School. This site represents Victorian's contribution to aviation and military heritage, particularly the important role Victoria played in the training of air force personnel during World War II. The site presents the opportunity for further research, such as military building design, military diets and gender segregation associated with the Military during World War II. It can also aid in our understanding of the pastoral practices during the early development of the Gippsland region, prior to military establishment.

Hermes Number

202800

Property Number

History

Historic Parish Plans indicate that one of the first leasees of the property was a pastoralist by the name of "Pearson", however; the property originally formed part of the 16,000 acre "Fulham" squatting run, taken up by Peter Imlay in the 1840s (Synan, 2002: 37). From December 1941, the No. 3 Bombing and Gunnery School was established in West Sale and was later renamed the Air Gunnery School. In particular, 10 Williams Drive formed an integral component of the West Sale RAAF Base, accommodating the living quarters, men and women's bathroom blocks, mess halls, sports grounds and other features associated with the base. The dwelling located within the north of the property served as the nurse's station during this time.

In 1945 the RAAF base converted into a civil airfield and from 1949 until 1953 the barracks within the property were utilised as a Displaced Persons Migrant Holding Centre, accommodating families from Europe (specifically Germany, eastern Europe and the Baltic states) who had been displaced during World War II. The centre largely housed women and children, who's husbands worked on infrastructure projects in the greater Gippsland area during the week.

The former nurse's station ('Raeshaw') was then utilised as the home of the Director and Headmaster of the Migrant Holding Centre. Activities which occurred on-site during this time included classes, a pre-school, dances, plays, and sports facilities.

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/>