

# Former Ballarat Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Base



FORMER BALLARAT RAAF  
BASE SOHE 2008



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14247 Former Ballarat RAAF  
Base



14247 Former Ballarat RAAF Base Admin building



14247 Former Ballarat RAAF Base



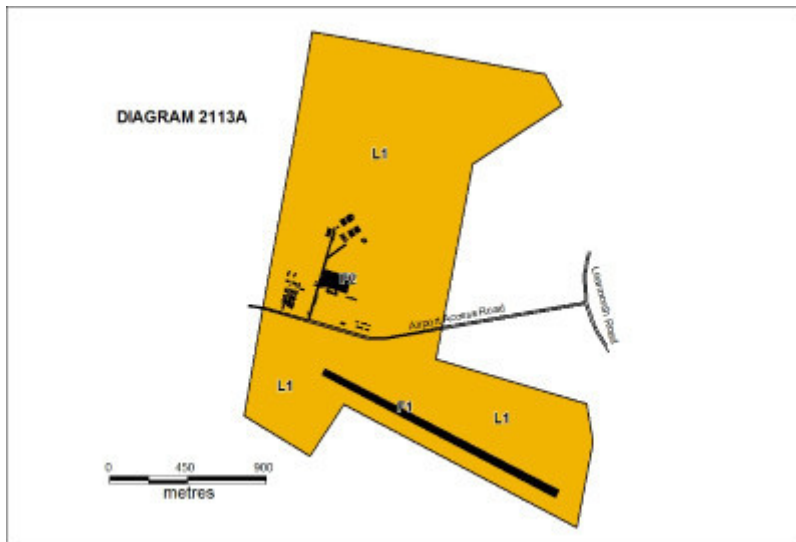
14247 Former Ballarat RAAF Base water tower



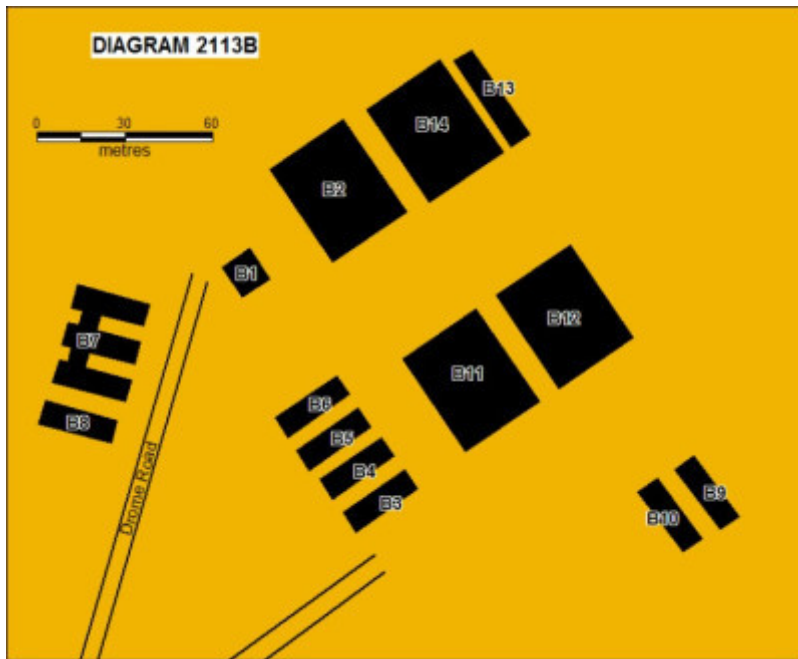
14247 Former Ballarat RAAF base Bellman Hangars



14247 Former Ballarat RAAF Base gymnasium



14247 former Ballarat RAAF plan 2113A



14247 former Ballarat RAAF plan 2113B



14247 former Ballarat RAAF plan 2113C



14247 former Ballarat RAAF plan 2113D

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## Location

1 AIRPORT ACCESS ROAD MITCHELL PARK, Ballarat City

## Municipality

BALLARAT CITY

## Level of significance

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## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2113

## Heritage Listing

Vic. War Heritage Inventory

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - July 31, 2007

What is significant?

The former Ballarat Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Base on the site of the present Ballarat Aerodrome, 7 km northwest of Ballarat city centre was constructed in 1940 at the outset of the Second World War as a training school for Wireless Air Gunners under the Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS). The Scheme was established by the British with Canada, Australia and New Zealand to rapidly train air crews for the British Bomber Command to

fight the then far superior German Air Force. Under EATS which operated from 1939-1945 the RAAF was committed to training 28,000 aircrew over three years including navigators, wireless operators, air gunners and pilots, equating to around 900 aircrew every four weeks. To achieve this the RAAF embarked on a rapid and extensive program establishing a network of 28 EATS schools in eastern Australia by the end of 1941, each specialising in specific skill sets required of air crew members. The former Ballarat RAAF Base was Australia's No.1 Wireless Air Gunners School (WAGS), the first of three WAGS created under the Scheme and the only one in Victoria.

By 1941 there were nearly 800 personnel on the former Ballarat RAAF Base and by the end of March 1942 a total of 1238 air men had been trained in the operation of radio equipment and guns using Avro Anson and Wackett aircraft. A radar training wing was also established at the former Ballarat RAAF Base in 1945. Basic training for wireless operators ceased in May 1945 by which time 5025 trainees has been through the school.

In consequence of the United States declaring war on Japan in Dec 1941 a strategic alliance with Australia was formed and in 1942 the RAAF Base at Ballarat was extended to accommodate a Liberator Bomber Squadron to assist in the prosecution of the Pacific War and in the strategic defence of Australia. The US forces camped immediately south of the residential area of RAAF Base where they constructed the Liberator Air Strip for use by their B24 bombers, large planes for the long range bombing missions required in the Pacific. By 1943 there were 80 United States aircraft at the base.

The Wireless Air Gunners School was formally disbanded in January 1946. The RAAF continued to operate the aerodrome until 1961 when it became the property of the Ballarat Council. The Ballarat Aerodrome continues to operate as a civil airport and the surviving Second World War structures on the site provide accommodation for a large number of community organisations including an aviation museum.

The extant Second World War structures associated with the WAGS are primarily 'P-Type Huts' and Bellman Hangars neither of which were originally intended to be permanent structures, having been prefabricated and erected on military sites throughout Australia in response to the sudden and urgent need for semi-permanent accommodation for service personnel and for aircraft hangars at the beginning of the Second World War. The P-Type Huts, consisting of a simple timber and corrugated iron box with a gabled roof usually with doors at each end could be easily modified as required for particular functions. By 1941 approximately 160 standard P-Type Huts had been erected on the Ballarat site in two distinct functional precincts. In the northern aerodrome precinct around fifteen huts, of which twelve survive, were arranged on the outside of a group of four Bellman hangars arranged in pairs a few metres apart. Bellman hangars had been designed in Britain immediately prior to the Second World War to provide a fast, economical solution to the need for aircraft facilities. The surrounding P-Type Huts were used for equipment and clothing storage, maintenance and administrative functions associated with the operation of the aircraft. At the centre of the base was the administrative, domestic and teaching precinct where over 140 huts were erected in rows, singly or in combination with additional roofs to create larger buildings. They were adapted for various uses including sleeping quarters, recreation rooms and messes, lecture halls, radio huts, stores, offices, workshops and ablution blocks. Thirty four huts remain in the central precinct. These include the former Officers' and Sergeants' Messes, sleeping quarters, ablution blocks, Headquarters, the maintenance and transport depot, stores, the gymnasium and several ablution blocks.

Other remaining fabric associated with the Second World War includes an elevated water tower, the foundations of demolished P-Type Huts and other structures and in the southern part of the site, the archaeological remains of the United States Air Force camp and the 'Liberator Air Strip'. Landscape features associated with the former Ballarat RAAF Base include road layout and the playing fields and parade ground with its border of Monterey Cypress (*Cupressus Macrocarpa*) that separate the aerodrome precinct to the north from the central domestic and administrative precinct.

How is its significant?

The former Ballarat RAAF Base is of historical and social significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The former Ballarat RAAF Base is of historical significance for its ability to demonstrate the importance of military aviation to the defence of Australia and its Allies during the Second World War, the first conflict in which aircraft played a major role in combat for the Australian military.

The former Ballarat RAAF Base is of historical significance for its association with the technical training aspects of the wartime development and operation of the RAAF. The former Ballarat RAAF Base is a representative example of the bases constructed to train aircrew under the Empire Air Training Scheme that included a contingent suite of temporary and semi temporary buildings that in their layout and surviving the Second World War fabric reflect both the training and domestic functions of the bases and the hierarchical nature of the military and domestic life on the Second World War bases. This contingent planning is clearly reflected in the two precincts of the former Ballarat RAAF Base - the aerodrome itself with the large prefabricated Bellman hangars and workshop huts, and the domestic and administrative precinct of standard P-Type Huts.

The former Ballarat RAAF Base is the most intact surviving Victorian example of the training schools that were rapidly constructed across Australia specifically to train aircrews under the Empire Air Training Scheme in the early years of the Second World War and representative of the inventive ways in which functional requirements of the military were satisfied during the war. The Ballarat RAAF Base was the first of three Wireless Air Gunnery Schools established nationally under the Scheme and the only such school in Victoria.

The former Ballarat RAAF Base is of social significance, providing an opportunity to educate about the operations of the Air Force throughout the Second World War, in particular the relationship of the Commonwealth allies against the German forces, particularly later in the war when personnel trained here were dispersed with others to serve with the RAF in Europe, and subsequently the increasing importance of the United States and Australian alliance during the Pacific campaign against the Japanese.

Heritage Act Categories Registered place,

Other Names RAAF Buildings, BALLARAT AIRPORT, BALLARAT AERODROME,

Hermes Number 125461

Property Number

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## Physical Conditions

State of the Historic Environment survey report - Condition: Very Poor. See Events.

## Veterans Description for Public

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## **Extent of Registration**

All the land known as Ballarat Aerodrome marked L1 on Diagram 2113A held by the Executive Director. /nThe features marked as follows on Diagram 2113A held by the Executive Director /n/n

F1 Liberator Air Strip

/n

F2 Parade Ground

/nAll the buildings marked as follows on Diagram 2113B held by the Executive Director /n/n

B1 Building 184 Propeller Test House

/n

B2 Building 132 Bellman Hangar

/n

B3 Building 133 Maintenance Workshop

/n

B4 Building 141 Parachute Hut

/n

B5 Building 189 Woodwork, Fabric and Paint shop

/n

B6 Building 188 Mechanical Workshop

/n

B7 Building 138/139/140 Equipment Stores

/n

B8 Building 274 Clothing store

/n

B9 Building 191 Operations and Crew Room

/n

B10 Building 190 Operations and Crew Room

/n

B11 Building 130 Bellman Hangar

/n

B12 Building 180 Bellman Hangar

/n

B13 Building 182 Flight Office

/n

B14 Building 131 Bellman Hangar

/nAll the buildings marked as follows on Diagram 2113C held by the Executive Director /n/n

B15 Building 114 Boiler House

/n

B16 Building 212 Temporary Married Quarters

/n

B17 Buildings 116/117 Sergeants Ablution Block and Latrine

/n

B18 Building 125 Sergeants Sleeping Quarters

/n

B19 Building 118/119 Officers Ablution Block and Latrine

/n

B20 Building 126 Store



/n

B21 Building 111 Sergeants Mess

/n

B22 Building 115 Boiler House

/n

B23 Building 110 Officers Mess

/n

B24 Building 207 Laundry and Drying Room

/n

B25 Building 121 Sergeants Sleeping Quarters

/n

B26 Building 122 Sergeants Sleeping Quarters

/n

B27 Building 124 Sergeants Sleeping Quarters

/n

B28 Building 120 Officers Sleeping Quarters

/n

B29 Building 123 Officers Sleeping Quarters

/n

B30 Building 196 Officers Sleeping Quarters

/n

B31 Building 208 Garage

/n

B32 Building 213 Temporary Married Quarters

/n

B33 Building 210 Temporary Married Quarters

/n

B34 Building 211 Temporary Married Quarters

/n

B35 Building 107 Sleeping Quarters

/n

B36 Building 233 Radio Hut

/n

B37 Building 232 Emergency Power House

/n

B38 Building 112 Sergeants Sleeping Quarters

/n

B39 Building 113 Sergeants Sleeping Quarters

/n

B40 Building 154 Gymnasium

/n

B42 Building 234 Radio Hut

/n

B48 Building 209 Garage

/nAll the buildings marked as follows on Diagram 2113D held by the Executive Director /n

B40 Building 154 Gymnasium

/n

B41 Building 170 Station Headquarters

/n

B43 Building 135 M/T Office and Workshop

/n

B44 Building 136 Barracks Store

/n

B45 Building 134 Barracks Office Store

/n

B46 Building 144 Latrine and Change Room

/n

B47 Buildings 20/30/61 Sleeping Huts and Ablution Block

/nThe structure marked as follows on Diagram 2113D held by the Executive Director /n/n

S1 Elevated water tower

*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/>*