
BULLARTO BALT CAMP

Location

CAMP ROAD, WOMBAT STATE FOREST

Municipality

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7723-1268

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - July 11, 2023

What is significant?

The remnant features of a Balt camp

How is it significant?

Due to its integrity and condition

Why is it significant?

The site is historically significant as a place that is associated with Australia's post Second World War immigration policy and developments in Victoria's forest management. The place provided European immigrants with their initial contact with Australian culture and environment. Many of the men married local women and became part of the community and history of the district.

Interpretation of Site Remains of Balt camp

Hermes Number 209708

Property Number

History

At the end of the Second World War, the Commonwealth Government began to accept large numbers of immigrants (known as displaced persons) from Europe. One of the conditions of entry was that each immigrant would work for two years in a government-directed job. A relatively small number of these immigrants was directed to work for the Forests Commission and was employed in firewood cutting, thinning operations, road making, and fire protection. The immigrants were accommodated in better conditions than earlier workers had been, with timber huts replacing the former standard issue of canvas and bush poles. As many of the immigrants came from the Balkans, their camps were locally referred to as 'Balt' Camps. By June 1949, 180 European immigrants were engaged in work, and by the end of the next year the number had grown to 361, with eleven camps in operation. These were at Broadford (84 men), Beaufort (3 camps?48 men), Castlemaine (19 men), Cohuna (30 men), Daylesford (45 men), Brisbane Ranges (42 men), Graytown (31 men), Scarsdale (20 men), and Bullengarook (42 men). An additional camp was also planned during the year for Holcombe. Wherever possible, existing buildings and ex-Army buildings were used. In all camps of a permanent nature, amenities such as electric lighting, hot water services, and septic tank systems were installed. The large immigrant labour force at work in 1950 resulted in a dramatic increase in firewood production: 156,369 tons were cut, compared to the 66,568 tons the previous year. To assist in maintaining a reasonable distribution of wood from the Commission's metropolitan depots, local men were employed as road hauliers, transporting the firewood direct from production centres in the forests. New camps to accommodate from 25 to 50 men were established at Bullarto, Bullengarook, Brisbane Ranges, Snake Valley, and Mirboo East. Some of the existing camps were extended and improved. By 1952, the scheme was winding down, as 'New Australians' left the Forests Commission after completing their two years' contracts.

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/>