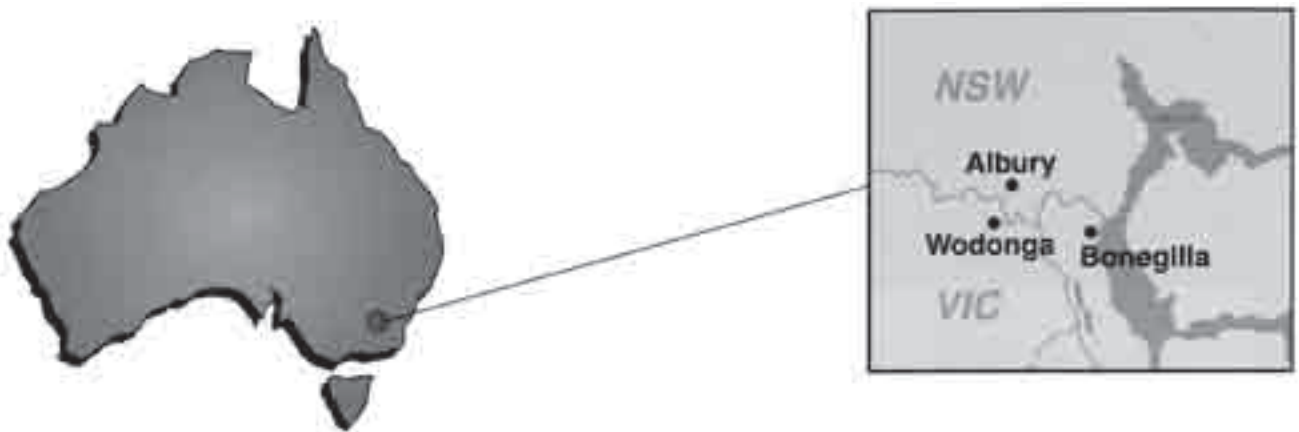


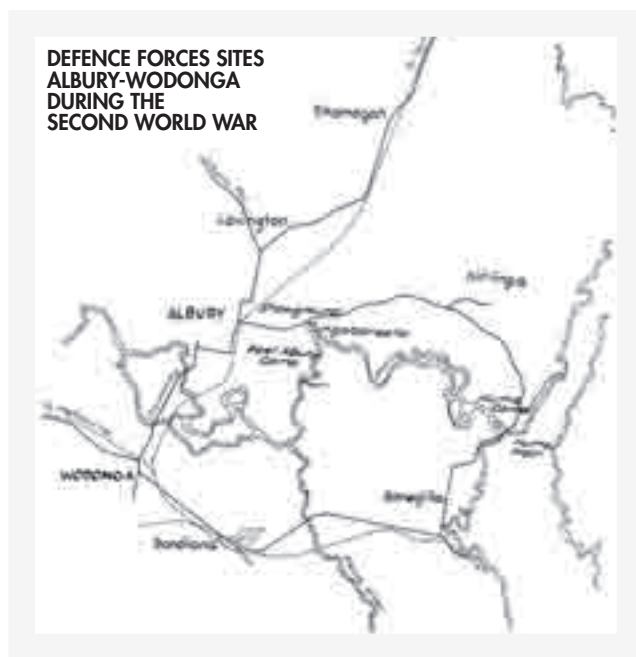
THE ARMY AT BONEGILLA

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Bonegilla 1961 - National Australian Archives (NAA) A1200, L41006. Location map *From the Steps of Bonegilla*, Albury City, 2000.



Albury-Wodonga was strategically important during the Second World War. It was situated at the break of railway gauge allowing army personnel and their equipment to be easily dispatched north or south in case of attack. There was a large military camp and military hospital at Bonegilla, a massive ordnance depot and vehicle park at Bandiana and large munitions and explosive depots at both Wirlinga and Ettamogah. Altogether about 11 000 service men and women were in the district during the war. About 5 500 were at Bonegilla Camp.

Bonegilla Camp

1940	June	Funds allocated to build Bonegilla Camp.
	July	Builders began to erect about 600 huts.
	Sept	Army moved in.
1941	Jan	Governor-General visited and inspected Bonegilla.
	Dec	Pacific War began.
1942-43		Bonegilla enlarged to 848 buildings. Training provided for small arms instructors, signallers, transport workers, bomb disposal and gas warfare personnel. 106 General Hospital received American and Australian soldiers often convalescing from malaria and tuberculosis (TB). An ordnance depot and vehicle park with engineering workshops for military vehicles and equipment established at nearby Bandiana. Service women undertake training at Bonegilla and Bandiana.
1943		Australia's worst railway crash. Bus driver and 24 service members killed at a rail-crossing near Wodonga.
1944-47		Italian Prisoners-of-War held at Bonegilla and Hume Camp.
1944-46		106 General Hospital partly specialised in treating service personnel with TB.

Adding a migrant reception centre to an army camp

1947		Bonegilla Reception and Training Centre began operating. Army provided transport, security and catering services.
1949		Last Citizen Military Force training camp. Army withdrew temporarily from Bonegilla.
1949-65		Bonegilla Reception and Training Centre operated without a military presence.

Adding army units to a migrant reception centre

1965-72		Australia increased commitment to Vietnam War. National Servicemen, new recruits and non-commissioned officers trained in surveying, transport services, catering and ordnance. Instructors and trainees co-located at Bonegilla with migrant reception centre.
1971		Reception Centre closed. Site reverted to the Army.
Beyond 1971		The Army undertook a major site redevelopment with the construction of Latchford Barracks as the Army Apprentice School. Later Latchford Barracks was redeveloped into part of the Army Logistic Training Centre. Block 19 became Bonegilla Migrant Experience Heritage Park.

BUILDING AN ARMY CAMP AT BONEGILLA

With the outbreak of the Second World War, army installations and war-related industries were moved to country districts away from vulnerable capital cities and coastal centres. Country towns vied with each other to win the economic stimulus that came with such decentralisation.

Pressed with the need to increase troop accommodation, the War Cabinet approved funds for a large hutted camp at 'Hume Weir' in June 1940, and then, additional funds for a hospital. Wodonga Shire Council was pleased as it had suggested there be a camp at Hume Weir in 1939. Council wanted the camp to be known as 'Wodonga Camp', but the Minister decided on the property name 'Bonegilla'.

Four core teams of civilian contractors, employing over 800 men, built the 600-hut camp within three months. The builders worked 54-hour weeks to transform the 'bare hills' of Bonegilla, into a 'tin city' on a 250ha site.

The camp consisted of twenty-three basically self-contained blocks and a hospital block. Each block had rows of about twenty huts, a kitchen, messes (eating places), ablutions and laundry buildings. The buildings were for the most part standard P1 army-type huts. They were generally unlined, timber-framed huts with corrugated iron cladding. They had low-pitched, gabled roofs clad either with corrugated iron or asbestos cement. They commonly accommodated twenty men and had no internal partitions.



When war broke out there was a strong demand for labour as the defence force gathered recruits and built facilities. Building contractors had difficulty in getting experienced workers for a rushed job in a remote district. Colin Frauenfelder from Albury recalled, 'You only had to report with a hammer, and you were employed as a carpenter'. H2001.94/8, State Library of Victoria.

USING BONEGILLA CAMP

At first, the camp was to be used for mustering units for initial training. The first camp commandant, Lieutenant-Colonel CB Story, and unit advance parties moved into the camp on 23 September 1940. In the next few days men of the 2/23rd Battalion marched in from Albury Showground. They were joined by men of the 2/24th Battalion who marched from Wangaratta over four days. Two battalions, the 2/21st and the 2/22nd marched in from Seymour, 240km and 10 days away. The 2/11th Field Regiment of the Royal Australian Artillery arrived by train. By the end of the year 5 600 troops were in camp.



Members of the 2/21st and 2/22nd Battalions marched along the Hume Highway to Bonegilla. CT Harrison, *Ambon, Island of Mist: 2/21st Battalion AIF (Gull Force) Prisoners of War 1941-45*, TW & CT Harrison, North Geelong, 1988.



An unarmed man disarms an armed attacker at Bonegilla. The shortage of essential items made it difficult for many to take training seriously. Some recruits were issued with roughly shaped pieces of wood to act as rifles. Wooden ratchets were used to resemble the sound of machine gun fire. H2001.94/8, Argus collection of war photographs World War II, State Library of Victoria.

The preparation for war involved getting fit. There were route marches and sporting contests, including preparation for inter-unit tunnel ball and tug-o'-war matches. Pre-embarkation, the dental unit examined 1 500 men in ten days. It provided 750 with fillings, fitted 476 with new dentures and extracted teeth from 100.

The army needed leaders quickly. Selected NCOs were offered a ten-week officer training course at Bonegilla. Those who graduated returned to their units with recommendations that they might be considered for a commission. Nine courses were held through 1941.

By the end of 1940 Bonegilla was gathering all the trappings of a self-contained country town. Roads were made and sealed. The railway siding was enlarged and better lit. A water-supply had been installed with 13 km of reticulation pipes. The hospital was built, staffed and functioning with an initial 600-bed capacity. There was a 'Civic Centre' with a large canteen, post office, bank, barber, Everyman's and Red Shield recreation huts. Gardens and lawns were laid out at the Civic Centre for the troops to enjoy in the evening. The YMCA was showing films twice a week under canvas while a large theatre building was 'nearing completion'.



Learning parade ground drills at Bonegilla. The 2/23rd Battalion was known as 'Albury's Own', the 2/24th Battalion as 'Wangaratta's Own'. H99.201/436 Argus collection of war photographs World War II, State Library of Victoria.

THE WAR AGAINST JAPAN

Twelve months later, Bonegilla was still a 'hive of activity'. The first groups of initial trainees had been dispatched abroad. Other infantry, engineer and artillery units were in training prior to embarkation. A gas school and a bomb disposal school were established. Senior cadets and home-based militia units used Bonegilla as a training base. In one exercise Universal Trainees, undergoing compulsory military training, 'captured' Yackandandah after overcoming the gallant defence by the Volunteer Defence Corps. However, in December 1941 training exercises were disrupted by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour and the commencement of the war in the Pacific. Members of the Melbourne University Rifles spent their time at Bonegilla digging trenches.

During 1942 and 1943 Bonegilla, Bandiana and the Albury-Wodonga rail connection grew bigger and became busier after the war with Japan began. More buildings were erected, totalling 848 at Bonegilla and 235 at Bandiana. The rail yards at Albury and Wodonga were expanded. New railway tracks linked Bandiana to both state rail systems.

Bonegilla Camp was used for groups in transit and as a base for training specialist units rather than initial recruits. Signals and transport units used the bulk of the accommodation. Block 18 was used by the Gas School. Block 19 became the base for the School of Small Arms.

There was an influx of servicewomen. The first detail of the Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS) recruits arrived at Bonegilla in June 1942. Within three months there were 500 and they continued to grow in number through 1943.

Altogether there were about 1,000 women at Bonegilla and Bandiana. They served as nurses; medical attendants and orderlies; stores managers and clerks; drivers; signallers and administration trainees.



AWAS signallers learning to transmit and receive Morse code. AWM 066246.



Trainee signalmen practising relatively safely on poles just over 2 metres high as a preliminary to working on full sized poles. AWM 066253.



Members of 1st Army Service Corps learned how to pack stores in a mock-up of a Douglas C47 Dakota aircraft fuselage. AWM 066236 and 066238.



A ward at the 106 General Hospital and a group of nurses. Betty Colclough family album.

106 General Hospital increased in capacity to serve the 11 000 defence personnel in the area and to receive from the front American and Australian soldiers, often convalescing from exhaustion, malaria and tuberculosis. In 1944 it had 655 patients and was increasingly giving attention to TB cases. Even after the war ended, the hospital had 216 TB patients, and there was some discussion about retaining it as a sanatorium. That notion was dismissed because the climate was deemed as unsuitable. Further, it was difficult to get medical staff for Bonegilla.

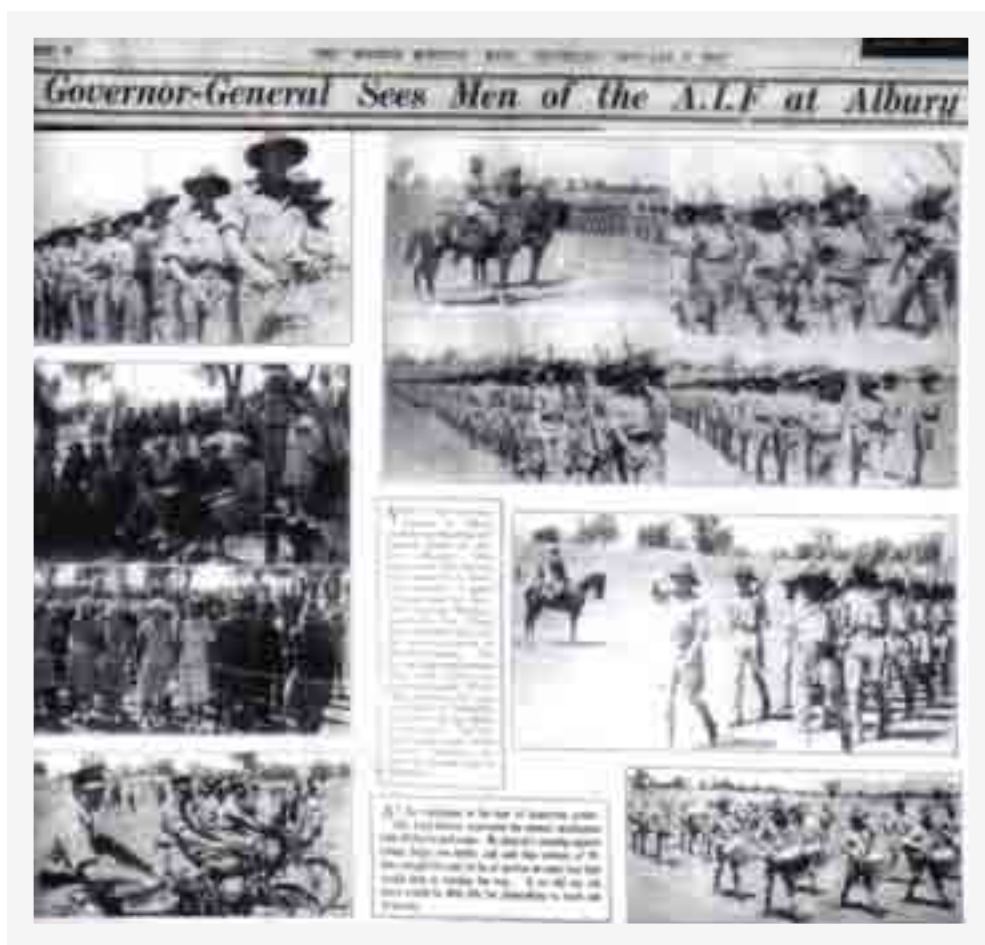
CAMP AND TOWN

Almost from the beginning military and civic leaders were intent on establishing good camp/ town relationships. As a patriotic gesture, the Mayor of Albury arranged for all arrivals to be welcomed with an illustrated greeting card. Albury Municipal Council presented the camp with 22 geese, 7 turkeys and 28 plum puddings to celebrate Christmas 1940.

Townpeople in both Albury and Wodonga built rest rooms. Albury Tennis Club made courts and equipment available free to service personnel. St David's Church Hall offered good 'wholesome entertainments' – table tennis, badminton, indoor bowls and quoits. Young men and women began forming entertainment groups – the Co-optimists, the Merry-makers, the Victory Vanities, the WAGS, the Gadabouts, Lavington Follies and

Culcairn Reviews – to entertain the troops and raise funds for patriotic causes. Their dance, song and comic variety shows complemented regular quizzes and community singing sessions. Raie Langley, a local chiropodist, attended the camp in an honorary capacity on Sunday afternoons to treat about twenty people on each occasion. The Victory Vanities entertainment group she organised boasted that at the end of the war it had raised £10 000 for the war effort.

The *Border Morning Mail* conveyed some of the local enthusiasm for the Bonegilla Camp. It had regularly printed photos of local recruits and of activities at Bonegilla. Townspeople felt affectionate towards Bonegilla Camp: it was 'not just a collection of tin huts'.



Using its new and not yet refined method of publishing photographs, the *Border Morning Mail* showed the Governor General, Lord Gowrie, reviewing a parade of the 8th Division at the Bonegilla racecourse. The newspaper took pride in the local recruits. *Border Morning Mail* 9 January 1941.



General Blamey reviewed a parade of servicemen and women in 1943. *Border Morning Mail* 23 October 1943.

Albury and Wodonga enjoyed the economic stimulus of having a large camp nearby. The defence force had to be supplied with fruit, vegetables, eggs, milk, meat and firewood. Arnolds delivered a truck of fruit and vegetables three-times a week. Holdenson & Nielson delivered not only large quantities of milk, but also 273 litres of ice-cream each day. Flemington Reynolds delivered more than 7 264 kg of meat each day. For local farmers that meant 200 sheep or 20 bullocks per day. The new Albury Council abattoir had difficulty in coping with the increase in activity.

Service members on leave frequented hotels, cafes, cinema, dance halls, swimming places and pools, tennis courts and billiard saloons in Albury or Wodonga. The army rationed town leave to ten per cent of the troops encamped each night so as not to stress town entertainment facilities. Military Police with red armbands patrolled Albury's business district.

Townpeople blamed the army presence for exacerbating wartime shortages of rental properties, ice, firewood, blankets, confectionery, beer and cigarettes. Wodonga Shire Council complained it was not getting sufficient compensation for the wear and tear by military vehicles using its roads.

The civilian population was reminded of the grim purpose of all the training exercises when they saw photos of bayonet practice in which recruits were 'learning to use cold steel' or heard and saw a bomber aircraft dropping dummy bombs on a test site for the bomb disposals unit to practise excavating explosives. Townpeople heard sharp staccatos of noise from the new Bonegilla Rifle Range on Mahers Road and dull thuds from the mortar bombs and anti-aircraft fire that rained down on Lake Hume and Table Top practice areas.

There was some concern about the impact of army life on the young. The *Border Morning Mail* worried whether girls in the services might not retain feminine charm. Their experience of independence from family obligations might blight their post-war marriage prospects. No man, it argued, wanted a 'terrifically tough or hard-boiled bride'. Such views were contested. AWAS's produced a play, 'These Same People' that explored attitudes to women in the forces and the ways gender roles were being redefined during the war.



American soldiers trained in bomb disposal at Bonegilla. Russell Drysdale sketched an American socializing with an Australian on town leave, JF Nagle private collection.



A supper of soft drinks and biscuits was available free of charge at dances in the Army Theatre on Tuesday and Saturday nights. Regulations specified that there would be no more than 100 women and at least 20 men in excess of the number of women. Betty Colclough (pictured) remembers enjoying such functions, but regarded invitations to the newly renovated Globe Hotel as special treats. AWM 138796.



Business houses closed for the funeral of the bus crash victims at Albury War Memorial Cemetery, *Border Morning Mail* 12 May 1943.

In June 1943 a bus carrying personnel from Bonegilla to Albury for a Tuesday night recreation leave was hit by a train at the level crossing on the Tallangatta Road to Wodonga. The driver, twenty-three service men and a member of the Australian Army Medical Womens Service were killed. Nine other service people were injured. The accident was Australia's worst rail-road smash. With it the towns endured the pain and the tragic loss of young lives.

LIVING AT BONEGILLA CAMP

Border district weather and flies and the army food made strong impressions.

- Donald Friend was stationed across the river at Hume Camp. 'Its heat, dust, dirt, flies, its white glaring sun, bare white slopes and hills of dry grass, mad storms, sudden cold, days and days of unutterable furnace heat and dead hot nights, gales of dry hot wind – these made up part of Hume's personality'.
- In winter Nance Holloway slept with two blankets underneath and as many as possible on top. Layers of newspapers between the blankets proved an effective insulator.
- Flies complicated eating at Bonegilla for Nance Holloway. Food was served in two dixies. She had to choose between sacrificing either the main meal or the sweets to the flies. At Bonegilla, she developed the theory that flies in a milk-can all swim in the same direction.
- In an era of food rationing, good food was hard to come by. Donald Friend liked going into Albury to eat steak and eggs at a café. After town-leave days, the AWAS Regimental Aid Post grew busy treating AWAS who had dined out in some less than hygienic cafes.



Nance Holloway (left) and the medical team providing medical services to the AWAS at the Regimental Aid Post in Block 3, 1943. Dr Gartside is on the right and Sister Glennie, behind her. Fraser family photo album.

ITALIAN PRISONERS-OF-WAR

106 General Hospital provided medical services to the large Italian Prisoner-of-War Camp (POW) at Myrtleford. From 1944 onwards some Italians were quartered at Hume Camp and at Bonegilla in a POW Control Centre. Because of the absence of shipping with which to repatriate Italian prisoners, many remained stationed in the area until at least the beginning of 1947. They were given jobs, principally at Bandiana, stacking and covering stores, painting, cleaning, clearing grass, digging a water storage tank and drains. The war may have ended, but other stores personnel were instructed not to become too familiar with the Italians who were still regarded as POWs. Staff were not to address them except to give an order or on matters related to the operations of the camp.

The Italians became a familiar sight wandering the countryside in their distinctive burgundy-dyed uniforms. In two letters to the *Border Morning Mail* they rejected complaints that they caused a nuisance and might threaten local women. They were hunting rabbits to supplement their food rations and collecting wood to keep warm at what they called 'Bonagilla'. They wanted to be returned to Italy as soon as possible. Some even attempted to escape.

Orlando Vadolato, a 35 year old POW, drowned in Lake Hume on 9 January 1947, three weeks before he was due to have started for home. The newspaper report of the burial ceremony showed some sympathy for the death of another nation's soldier.



An unnamed Italian Prisoner-of-War helps stack jeep trailers at the Bandiana Vehicle Park, 1946, AWM 131361.

FROM WAR TO PEACE



Border Morning Mail 5 February 1947

It seemed a waste to leave the facilities that had been developed at Bonegilla unused at the end of the war, especially as there were nation-wide housing and building material shortages. Some buildings were given or sold cheaply to community groups - Albury Base Hospital, the YWCA and youth clubs, for example. Others were sold and re-sited, principally onto farms. There were suggestions that huts might be broken up and the corrugated iron and flooring timber become part of disposal sales. Some thought the buildings should be kept and used by the workforce that would be needed on the promised enlargement of the Hume Dam. Tom Mitchell, the local member, thought the University of Melbourne should be invited to establish a University College at Bonegilla, like it had at the former RAAF base at Mildura. The Army was prepared to go on using at least part of the site. Citizen Military Force training camps were held at Bonegilla, and in July 1947 soldiers from Greta moved in after that camp was closed. However, Government had different ideas.



Border Morning Mail 24 July 1946

ADDING A MIGRANT CENTRE TO AN ARMY CAMP

In the immediate post-war years, the Australian Government introduced an immigration program to increase the size of the population. The Minister of Immigration, Arthur Calwell, wanted to treble the size of the Australian population to improve defence capability and to foster economic development.

Calwell decided to reuse the facilities at some military camps to provide accommodation for newly arrived migrants. Minimal changes were made at the Bonegilla Camp in preparation for the arrival of the first contingent of Displaced Persons (DPs). Army lockers, beds, mattresses and bed-side mats were supplied to the huts where the migrants were to sleep in Block 19. Long mirrors were installed in the women's quarters. Some huts got power points and window blackouts for teaching purposes. Some got second-hand carpet runners. Photographs and pictures of Australia were put on display. A copious supply of Union Jack and Australian flags was made available. Two pianos, table tennis tables and quoit sets were acquired to provide the 839 newcomers with recreation options. The long grass was cut. Funding for normal army rations was increased by 2½ pence per person per day. An extra one shilling per person was allocated for a Christmas party. A large supply of index cards for administrative purposes was dispatched to Bonegilla.

The Army provided transport, security, and catering services to the reception centre. Army routines were adopted. The camp was run by ex-services personnel, who retained their 'military bearing'. Major Kershaw, the first Commandant, later re-named 'Director', greeted the new arrivals in army uniform at first. He assured the migrants and the public that there would be 'no sergeant major stuff'. However, in army fashion, a Quartermaster issued stores that included eating utensils, linen, grey blankets and, when needed,

army clothing. The canteen and the meals were arranged along army lines. The military character of the buildings and their surrounds remained unchanged.

Displaced Persons who had lived in refugee camps in Europe do not seem to have objected to the buildings, the routines or the army presence. Soldiers were obvious guarding the camp against intruders, driving buses and trucks, and working in the kitchens. Citizen Military Force units still trained at Bonegilla. So, for example, some military engineers practised bridge building and demolition, rafting and watermanship on Lake Hume.



H Bloomfield, an Army driver with the Dodge bus 'for DPs', 1947. Padding was added to the seats to bring female migrants from the Bonegilla railway siding to the camp. ARM 02.085.

The Army welcomed the newcomers. Units issued basketball challenges. 1 Base Workshop at Bandiana invited migrant children to a Christmas party in 1948. With school-boyish bluster and swagger, some of the engineers boasted in later life of enjoying 'nocturnal multiculturalism'. The reception centre English teachers, however, expressed unease in having to negotiate their teaching needs within a bureaucracy headed by the Commandant/ Director, who seemed more intent on processing a large number of people than trying to meet teaching/ learning or individual needs.

Bandiana, nearby, became busy dealing with the military equipment that had been returned from overseas and from elsewhere in Australia. At one time the Vehicle Park stored 16 000 military vehicles, including tanks, and 75 000 tyres. Hundreds of jeeps were parked at Bonegilla. There were huge disposal sales of items such as car and truck parts, watches, wireless parts, cutlery, periscopes, telephone wire, gas masks and even tanks. Newly arrived migrants were offered positions helping to manage the stores and the sales.



At Bandiana, on the road between Bonegilla and Wodonga, armed patrols guarded warehouses full of small arms and other equipment. Tanks, trucks, jeeps and artillery pieces were clearly visible in the paddocks or open sheds. AWM 131376.



Richard Urbanivicius, newly arrived from Lithuania in 1949, found work as a storeman clerk in wireless storage at Bandiana. Because accommodation at the centre was scarce, his wife, Hermione, and their one-year old daughter, Dana, were moved to the Uranquinty Holding Centre.

By 1949 more ships had become available to bring migrants to Australia. The number of arrivals outstripped the hutted accommodation available. Army tents were erected for some of the newly arrived men.

Things became stressful at Bonegilla. An administrative officer, Pat Smith, recalled that ex-service officers like himself had been recruited by the Department of Immigration because they had 'experience in administering large numbers of people from a movement in and out aspect, mass feeding and providing a general overall experience of service type administration . . . [By 1949] the quicker we could get people, whether workers or dependants, out of Bonegilla the better we liked it because only we and Canberra and the offices in Melbourne and Sydney knew of the number of ships carrying thousands of migrants appearing on the horizon.'

The Minister for Immigration decided that his department needed the whole of the site. The Army agreed to withdraw serving military personnel and to discontinue military activities at Bonegilla, but retained ownership in case the camp was needed again at some future time.

BONEGILLA RECEPTION AND TRAINING CENTRE, 1949-65

The Army left Bonegilla in 1949. Shortly afterwards, Australia became involved in the Korean War. The Government conducted a vigorous recruitment campaign and introduced compulsory National Service training for all 18-year old Australian men. There was much activity at nearby Bandiana.

The Minister for Immigration, Harold Holt, told the Jubilee Citizenship Convention in 1951 that the migration program was not only vital for the nation's economic development, but also for its security. The immigration program was adding tens of thousands of able-bodied men and women in the younger age groups to the population. Non-British men could join the Citizen Military Forces provided they had expressed an intention to naturalise. In 1954 the compulsion to do National Service was extended to include migrants who had not yet been naturalised.

The military character of the buildings and reception centre routines remained long after

the Army left. The second director, RG Dawson, 1950-54, was also an army man. Dawson was proud of the way the centre operated on efficient military lines 'without the regimentation'.

In the winter of 1952 the processing of migrants became less efficient. Australia was in economic recession, and it was difficult to find employment for newly arrived assisted migrants. A group of about 2 500 young Italian men made noisy protests when they were forced to remain some months at Bonegilla with nothing to do and no earnings to repay money they had borrowed for their fares. They demanded, 'Give us work or repatriate us to Italy' and threatened to burn down buildings. It seemed that their protests were getting beyond the control of the police who had been rushed to the centre. Troops from Bandiana were called out to present a show of force. There was an 'exercise' involving a parade of five armoured cars and 200 armed men 'in the vicinity' of Bonegilla, in case 'government property was threatened'.



A group of young Italian migrants from Civitella Messer Raimondo, Chieti province, Abburzzo at Bonegilla in 1952. Most of the Italians at Bonegilla at the time of the incident were in their teens or early twenties. H2002.11, State Library of Victoria.



Soldiers based at Bandiana help migrants prepare a float for a procession to celebrate the Queen's coronation in 1953, ARM 02.031.

This military involvement was an unnecessary display to quieten a rowdy lot of unarmed men. It drew national and even international attention to their protests and to migrant discontent more widely. It proved an embarrassing incident that Australia had to explain to Italy and other donor countries. The press labelled the protests a 'riot' and expressed indignation at migrant behaviour. The Italians felt frightened and betrayed. Dutch migrants at the centre thought the show of force indicated the host society was far from being hospitable. The incident seemed to add to the discontent many assisted migrants felt about the basic level of accommodation provided and the communal washing and eating facilities. The reception centre was, for many newly arrived, no more than an army barracks – 'a military camp not suited for families'.

The third director, Colonel Henry Guinn, 1954-64, was yet another army man. Guinn, however, expressed disappointment that Bonegilla was 'still an army camp' with no heating, unlined messes and deep-pit latrines. He set about a relatively inexpensive site improvement program.

Nevertheless, in spite of the changes he made, Bonegilla stubbornly remained a camp, meeting only basic accommodation needs and operating on the established army-like routines adopted for communal living.

In 1954 the Army expressed new interest in using some blocks at Bonegilla for National Service Training, but, then, decided not to. In 1956 it rejected proposals to demolish unused huts in some peripheral blocks, when the Department of Immigration consolidated its use to a few central blocks. As Cold War tensions eased, the Army decided that it was no longer interested in retaining Bonegilla Camp. In 1962 there was a redefinition of the eastern boundary when Lake Hume expanded as a result of the Hume Dam being increased in height. The Department of Immigration acquired the camp site, which it had previously operated under permissive occupancy.

ADDING MILITARY UNITS TO A MIGRANT RECEPTION CENTRE

Pressed by the need to find accommodation to train men, especially National Servicemen for Vietnam, the Army negotiated with the Department of Immigration to take over several blocks at Bonegilla in 1965. Thirty-five huts were acquired by the Royal Australian Army Ordnance Corps as a Recruit Training Centre in which National Servicemen and recruits could attend 10-week ordnance courses. Shortly afterwards additional huts were acquired by the School of Military Survey, which established field-survey practical training areas and special astronomical observation sites as it began conducting courses in surveying. More hut-blocks were made available for a transport school to provide basic driver training courses.

Interactions between the migrants and army personnel were far more limited than they had been in the late 1940s when the army provided basic services to the reception centre. Migrant and army quarters were separated. The interactions that did occur were generally positive. Major (later Lieutenant-Colonel) John Hillier, his wife, Joy, and their three boys were the only military family to live on site in 1966. They recall companionship and friendship with the reception centre staff and the migrants.

The Reception Centre closed in 1971 and the site reverted to the Army. As the centre closed, accommodation was made available for a catering school unit to provide courses in basic catering. However, Australia's commitment to the war in Vietnam was about to end. The Army's need for accommodation at Bonegilla became less pressing.



H Block or Block 15 (foreground) looking NE towards Lake Hume. Note the tents (bottom of the picture) used by National Servicemen attending the Recruit Training Centre; the rows of huts; the H-shaped ablutions/ toilets block (lower centre left); and the kitchens, mess and recreation hut (lower centre right). The similarly configured G block or Block 13 is across the road to the left. Both G and H blocks were used by trainees in the Ordnance School. The Catholic Church and other Civic Centre buildings are at the top far left. National Australian Archives C68/22A/22.

WHOSE BONEGILLA?

Between 1978 and 1982, nearly all of the centre was demolished in a major redevelopment. The new replacement buildings were formally opened as Latchford Barracks in 1983 and used principally as an Army Apprentice School. The barracks were named after Lieutenant Colonel EW Latchford, MBE, MC who had been in command of the School of Small Arms based in Block 19 during most of the Second World War.

The demolition of buildings prompted attempts to memorialise the fast-disappearing reception centre. At first there were calls for a rock cairn. Then, the Albury-Wodonga Ethnic Communities Council began agitating for an immigration museum. This push for a museum grew stronger when Block 19, the last surviving block, came under threat of demolition. In 1987 there was a successful 'Back to Bonegilla' 40th anniversary event that strengthened calls for bicentennial funding for a museum. However, the bid for Commonwealth Government financial support failed.

Three sizeable remnants of the former Bonegilla Camp and the former Bonegilla Reception and Training Centre remained intact. A re-sited hospital ward was successfully restored to become the Bonegilla Community Hall. The Army Theatre was used as an indoor sports arena principally for cricket until it fell into disrepair in the late 1990s. Part of Block 19 was used a holiday site for army families visiting the area.

The Department of Army balked at the immigration museum proposal and the prospect of Block 19 being declared a heritage item. It seemed that the military history of the site might be marginalized, subordinated or even submerged. A spokesperson for the Third Military District lodged formal objections to the interim heritage listing. He explained that access to a museum at Block 19 would impinge on the newly constructed married quarters. Most of the buildings were beyond economic repair. The

Army still had uses for those that were serviceable. Nearly all had had extensive internal changes. Perhaps more importantly for the spokesperson it seemed that - 'Block 19's role in immigration pales into insignificance compared to its status as a relic of the complex that gave birth and succour to units prominent in Australia's war efforts, and no doubt fondly remembered by the survivors of those units ... If Block 19 is to be listed on the Register of the National Estate, it should be for its military significance and not for the minor role that it played in post-war immigration.'

The Australian Heritage Commission proceeded with the listing on the Register of the National Estate. About the same time some huts in Block 19 were occupied by the Army Adventurous Training Centre. It was a base from which the unit could undertake training in rock climbing, abseiling, kayaking, white-water rafting, snow survival and ski touring on the Bogong high plains, Mount Buffalo and the Murray River.

Once the heritage listing had been made the Army appeared to change its mind and proposed to give the museum group permission to proceed with a museum through a lease or permissive occupancy arrangement for Block 19. However, the local museum group could not muster local support and was disbanded. The Albury Regional Museum accepted the artefacts that had been collected by the museum group and staged its first exhibition in 1991.

A Conservation Management Plan was prepared for Block 19 in 1996. Subsequently the Army indicated it was willing to transfer Block 19 to the Victorian Government, which in turn proposed that Parklands Albury-Wodonga assume responsibilities for managing and interpreting the site. In 2002 Heritage Victoria listed Block 19 on the state heritage register, giving attention to both the migrant and army connections with the site. The Victorian Government allocated \$2 million for a Block 19 interpretive centre which was opened in 2005. Block 19 became the Bonegilla Migrant Experience Heritage Park.

Branding and re-branding Block 19



Modification of the original logo developed for Parklands' Bonegilla Steering Committee indicated a narrowing of focus to migrant heritage, prompted by market considerations for a tourism venue. The logo change may well have confirmed fears about the possible loss of military heritage.

Almost all those who revisit Block 19 or the exhibitions based on it have a personal or family connection with Bonegilla as a migrant centre. Only a few come to recall Bonegilla Camp or the 106 General Hospital. Yet Bonegilla was first and last an army camp. An understanding of the army presence is a prerequisite to understanding not only the physical layering of the site, but also the social setting of the migrant centre, especially when there was conjoint use of the facilities by migrants and soldiers from 1947 to 1949 and after 1965.

Whose Bonegilla? Bonegilla belongs to the Aboriginal peoples who inhabited the rich riverine district where the Mitta Mitta River joined the Murray. It belongs to the pastoralists who worked the area. It belongs to the residents of the modern day Bonegilla locality. Through its connection with stories about defending and peopling Australia, the site of the former Bonegilla Army Camp and Bonegilla Reception Centre belongs to the Army, the migrants and the people of Australia. The construction of an army camp in 1940 and its subsequent conversion into a migrant centre in 1947, both, separately and together, indicate attempts to cope with national vulnerability during and after the Second World War.

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- p. 19 -Army response to museum - correspondence 24 November 1988, quoted by Daniell, p.33. Museum pressure group disbanded - BMM 2 April 1991.

COVER IMAGES

A.		B.	
C.	D.		
	E.	F.	
G.	H.	J.	
I.			

- A. A portable pigeon loft for signalmen to learn how to care for homing pigeons, AWM 066263.
- B. Lieutenant JS Rosel of the 2/24th Battalion in battle dress at Bonegilla, 1940. AWM P0237/62/06.
- C. RAP station for AWAS, 1943. Fraser family album.
- D. Nurse tent quarters, 1942. Betty Colclough family album.
- E. Nurses. Betty Colclough family album.
- F. Members of the officer training school 'attack' Albury, BMM April 1942.
- G. Doing the laundry at Bonegilla, AWM PO237/62/013.
- H. Col Fraser who trained at Bonegilla, served overseas then taught at the School of Small Arms. Fraser family album.
- I. AWAS basketballers, BMM 9 June 1943.
- J. A transport battalion's quarters at Bonegilla, Albury Library Museum, ARM B113.4e.

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The endnotes indicate other books and articles. Images are, as shown, principally from the Australian War Memorial (AWM), the State Library of Victoria, *Border Morning Mail (BMM)* or the Bonegilla Collection at Albury Library Museum. Betty Colclough and Nance Fraser made photographs available from their family albums. JF Nagle gave permission to reproduce Drysdale's sketch. I thank John Hillier, Patrick Miller, Kersten Smith, and belatedly the late Colin Frauenfelder, the late Richard Urbanivicius and the late Bob McLean for sharing memories. The staff of Albury Library Museum were, once again, a great help. The Bonegilla Migrant Experience Steering Committee made this work possible.

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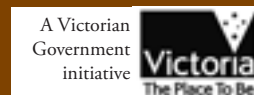
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