



NSW  
Heritage  
Office

Thematic Study:

# World War II Aerodromes and associated structures in New South Wales

Prepared by Andrea Brew for  
Deakin University and the NSW Heritage Office

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# Foreword

This thematic study on World War II aerodromes and associated structures in NSW was possible through a History Internship with Deakin University, Melbourne and the NSW Heritage Office.

It was initiated by two officers, Andrea Brew, third year student, Deakin University and Bruce Baskerville, Historian, Heritage Office, for use by the Heritage Office to assist in assessing the heritage significance of WWII aerodromes and associated structures in NSW.

The recommendations may also benefit heritage consultants, local councils, property owners and the community who are interested in the conservation and management of the State's heritage.

It is hoped the overview of the formation of the RAAF and military aviation will assist in promoting a better appreciation of Australia's cultural heritage.

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\* The Inventory forms are in draft form and are not attached to this document but are available from the Heritage Office on request.



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# Abbreviations

The list is in addition to those provided in the glossary in Part Two.

AAL	Australian Air League
AAF	Allied Air Forces
ADCC	Air Defence Cadet Corps
AIF	Australian Imperial Force
AFC	Australian Flying Corps
ASC	Air Service Committee
ATC	Air Training Corps
AWFC	Australian Women's Flying Club
AWM	Australian War Memorial
DCA	Department of Civil Aviation
EATS	Empire Air Training Scheme
EFTS	Elementary Flying Training School
HDF	Home Defence Force
ITS	Initial Training School
LEP	Local Environmental Plan
MTF	Mobile Task Force
NAA	National Australian Archives
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RAF	Royal Air Force
RAN	Royal Australian Navy
REP	Regional Environmental Plan
SFTS	Service Flying Training School
SHI	State Heritage Inventory (form)
SHR	State Heritage Register
SWPA	South-West Pacific Area
US	United States
USAAF	United States of America Air Force
VAOC	Volunteer Air Observers Corps
WAAAF	Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force
WATC	Women's Air Training Corps
WJAC	Women's Junior Air Corps
WWII	World War II (Two)

# Part One: Project Outline

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This study was prompted by the need for the NSW Heritage Office to respond strategically to community concerns that World War II aerodromes and associated sites, coastal fortifications, tank traps and bombing ranges, located in various areas in the state of New South Wales, may be of State heritage significance and are potentially threatened by urban growth and expansion.

Old Bar Airfield, Old Bar (Taree Council area) was listed on the State Heritage Register (Register) in February 2000. Since then the Heritage Office has received at least three nominations for aerodromes for consideration by the Heritage Council of NSW for listing on the Register.

These aerodromes are of cultural value in terms of their ability to demonstrate their importance in the history of the formation of the RAAF, the development of the Department of Defence and military aviation and training in Australia, in the lead up to and during World War II when the nation was under threat of attack from Japan.

The presence of these aerodromes collectively are significant to individual communities and the people of the state of New South Wales.

## 1.1 AIM

The aim of this study is:

- A. to provide a thematic study on WWII aerodromes and associated structures within the context of the history of the RAAF, air defence and military aviation and training in New South Wales; and

- B. to identify existing WWII aerodromes in New South Wales, determine their level of significance, whether local or State, and make recommendations for their appropriate heritage listing.

Aerodromes that are considered likely to be of State heritage significance in the study will be referred to the Heritage Council for consideration for listing on the State Heritage Register. Those assessed to be of local heritage significance will be referred to the relevant local Council for inclusion on their Local Environmental Plan (LEP).

The information therefore contained in this study will provide the basis for sound decisions to be made for the heritage protection, management and future use of WWII aerodromes and associated sites.

It should be noted that although the title of this study includes associated structures, this applies to only a few aerodromes where wartime infrastructure remain *in situ*. Acknowledgement of these is given in the analysis section of Part Two.

## **1.2 METHODOLOGY**

### **1.2.1 Thematic History**

In Part Two a brief history is given on the formation of the RAAF, its developments prior to the Second World War and its participation in the war. This illustrates Australia's significant role and contribution to air defence, the development of aviation and aviation training and highlights strategic thinking of government and defence leaders in the planning and construction of aerodromes in New South Wales in response to the perceived and actual threats to our coastline during the war in the Pacific.

The basic questions posed behind this research phase are how many aerodromes were built, where were they located, what were their functions, how many survive in the landscape and what is their significance.

## 1.2.2 Research

Research commenced by first liaising with officers of the Heritage Office and heritage advisers via the Heritage Office email network to survey and gather existing knowledge on the subject.

Information was then sought from a number of primary and secondary sources: the RAAF Historical Section, Canberra, the RAAF Museum, Victoria, National Archives of Australia, the State Library of NSW and Deakin University Library. Some information was also gathered verbally from enthusiasts and heritage contacts at local Councils.

## 1.2.3 List of Aerodromes

When the Project Outline was first drafted, an initial list of aerodromes was compiled from a number of sources available at that time. This list was 13 in total. Since then, the total number of aerodromes and landing grounds identified is 125. A complete list is provided at section 2.11.1 and the total has been divided into two tables: Table 1 lists the 'parent' aerodromes which totals 22 and Table 2 lists satellites and landing grounds which totals 103. These tables are also provided in Part Two.

## 1.2.4 Site Visits

At least one site visit to an aerodrome was undertaken during the course of this study. In early September, I accompanied the Acting Principal Heritage Officer of the State and Commonwealth Heritage Management team on a trip to the aerodrome and associated sites at Evans Head. The purpose of this visit achieved a number of objectives:

- a) to meet with members of the Evans Head Memorial Aerodrome Committee who are key members of the community with local knowledge;
- b) to visit and witness first-hand the aerodrome and associated sites in the area;
- c) to take photos of the aerodrome and associated sites (including an aerial view) for a current record; and

- d) to meet with key staff of Richmond Valley Council and make a presentation on the function and role of the Heritage Council, the Heritage Office and heritage processes and procedures concerning heritage listing.

### **1.2.5 Archaeological and Movable Heritage**

It is anticipated that archaeological and movable heritage conservation issues will need to be addressed at some aerodromes. This will require additional research separate to this study. The recommendations indicate these matters will need to be addressed in conjunction with consideration for listing and advice will be obtained from the relevant heritage professionals at that time.

### **1.2.6 Regional History Boundaries**

Due to the expansive area that comprises New South Wales, the aerodromes identified are categorised according to their respective regional history boundary. This is in accordance with *Regional Histories of New South Wales*, a companion document to the *NSW Heritage Manual*.<sup>1</sup> [Appendix A](#) illustrates *Map 1: Historical Regions of New South Wales* showing the regional history boundaries.

### **1.2.7 State Heritage Inventory Forms**

The State Heritage Inventory (SHI) form is an official document of the Heritage Office and is required by the Heritage Council when considering nominations for listing on the State Heritage Register.

SHI forms have been drafted for the 'parent' aerodromes to document historical information gathered.<sup>2</sup> Forms have also been drafted for Hoxton Park, Rathmines, Schofields, Wagga Wagga and Williamtown. Of all the satellites, these were considered to have potential State heritage significance. The forms are attached at [Appendix B](#). It is intended that these forms will be completed

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<sup>1</sup> *Regional Histories of New South Wales, NSW Heritage Manual*, Heritage Office and Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, 1996. This companion to the *NSW Heritage Manual* identifies 17 regions (including Lord Howe Island) each of which incorporate a number of local government areas (except Lord Howe Island). The regions were identified following a set of broad themes of the history of New South Wales based on geography and historical development since 1788.

<sup>2</sup> Refer 2.10.1 for a definition of 'parent'. Table 1 provides a list of 'parent' aerodromes in NSW.

fully following the completion of this study as part of the listing process and prior to submission to the Heritage Council for consideration.

Each SHI form contains at least some information in the following sections:

- a) Item Details
- b) Description
- c) History
- d) Themes
- e) Application of Criteria
- g) Heritage Listings
- h) Information Sources
- i) Recommendations
- j) Source of this Information

### **1.2.8 Assessment of items likely to be of State Heritage Significance**

The *Criteria for listing on the State Heritage Register*, formulated by the Heritage Council, is used in assessing the level of significance of items for listing on the State Heritage Register (SHR). Refer [Appendix C](#) for a copy of the Criteria.

Those items that reach the State threshold will be referred to the Heritage Council State Heritage Register Committee (SHR Committee) for consideration following consultation with members of the local council and community. If the SHR Committee agrees the item is of State heritage significance, the listing process will proceed. Refer [Appendix D](#) for a copy of the flowchart illustrating the SHR listing process.

For items that are considered to be of local or regional heritage significance and are not currently listed in the heritage schedule of a local council's LEP or a Regional Environmental Plan (REP), a recommendation will be made to the SHR Committee it advise local council's to consider these items for listing.

### **1.2.9 Format of Findings**

The total number of aerodromes identified in the State are included in Table 1, Table 2 and Table 3 contained in Part Two of this study. Table 1 lists 'parent' aerodromes, Table 2 satellite aerodromes and Table 3 other aerodromes. The tables effectively provide an easy reference to the three groups of aerodromes and the summary of information contained illustrate how an indication of the level of significance has been attained. Those aerodromes listed in Table 3 have limited information and deserve further investigation in another study.

### **1.3 CONCLUSION**

This study achieves its objectives. It contains a comprehensive list of all known aerodromes and landing grounds in New South Wales - a study that is not available elsewhere - and recommendations are given for the heritage protection for the sites. It is anticipated that on completion of this study the Heritage Office and local councils will have a useful working document on which to base sound decisions concerning the protection, management and future use of items identified as being of heritage significance.

Following the study, it will be suggested that the Heritage Office engage with local councils and members of the community to discuss the recommendations given in this study and discuss options on how to proceed with conserving these heritage items while still allowing for appropriate urban uses in nearby areas. Once the items recommended have been either listed on the State Heritage Register or on an LEP or REP, the information will be available to the general public via the Heritage Office website.

Copies of the study will be provided to relevant local councils, community representatives, the Australian War Memorial Resource Centre and the RAAF Historical Section. A copy will also be added to the future Heritage Office library. Additional copies will gladly be provided upon request.

