

## History of Units at Bonegilla

### General History

Bonegilla is a rural locality within the City of Wodonga local government area, 10 kilometres east of Wodonga and some 390 kilometres north east of Melbourne. It is not known when the location was first settled however, Bonegilla Post Office opened on 20<sup>th</sup> August 1878 and was closed in 1951.

Bonegilla Military Post Office operated from 1940 to 1947 and from 1983 to 1998 when it was relocated to Bandiana.

Much of the early development of the town of Bonegilla was due to the establishment of the Cudgewa railway line that opened in 1889.

### Bonegilla Military Area

The first portion of Bonegilla Military Area was developed for the 23 Brigade locating from Seymore in August 1940.

The 2/23 infantry Battalion, referred to as *Albury's Own*, formed at Albury showground where it undertook its initial training prior to relocating to Bonegilla in August 1940.

Meanwhile the 2/21 infantry Battalion, formed on 11<sup>th</sup> July 1940 at Trawool in central Victoria and the 2/22 infantry Battalion, raised and headquartered at Victoria Barracks, Melbourne moved on 11<sup>th</sup> July 1940 to Trawool. Both Battalions undertook initial training at Trawool. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1940 the 2/21 Bn departed from Trawool on foot for the 235-kilometre march to Bonegilla. They were followed by the 2/22 Bn on 24<sup>th</sup> September 1940, also on foot.

At Bonegilla, the battalions concentrated with the 23rd Brigade's other battalion 2/23 and as more equipment became available, more complex training began. Training continued until 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1941.

In addition to the 3 Battalions of 23<sup>rd</sup> Brigade other units listed as being in Bonegilla during the war years include HQ 23<sup>rd</sup> Inf Bde, 2/2nd Aust Pnr Reinforcements, Medical Reinforcements, elements of Armoured Div, 143rd General Tpt Coy, Signal Training Units including two groups of AWAS, 67th Dental Unit, the RASC Training Brigade and numbers of CMF Troops after Japan entered the war.

During 1942-43 Selected American Officers and Engineers underwent specialist training at the RAE Bomb Disposal School, and at the end of the war small groups of women who had been released from Japanese Prison Camps passed through on their way to rehabilitation and home.

The first unit to be established east of the Weir road was the Officers Training School built in 1941. This was followed by a School of Mechanisation and the School of Small Arms (commanded by Lt Col Latchford).

The camp was handed over to the Immigration Department and was used as a Migrant Reception Centre from 1947 until 1965 when it was handed back to the Department of Defence, and the School of Military Survey marched in. The Immigration Department continued to utilise the original camp block until 1971. In that year the entire Bonegilla Camp was handed back to the Department of Defence, but only CMF units utilised its major facilities between then and the building of Latchford Barracks.

In the interim the School of Military Survey had been hosts, for a short time, to a RAASC Transport Group, the School of Catering in 1969 and a detachment of the Survey Regiment in 1970.

During the 1960's with the realisation Balcombe Camp was being outgrown, investigations started to be undertaken for location of a suitable site for a new training facility. Consequently, Bonegilla was selected with construction of a \$43,000,00.00 purpose-built facility being undertaken.

The new Barracks started receiving units and training schools from November 1982. These included the School of Military Survey, 6 Camp Hospital, 19 Dental Unit, and the Central Food Preparation Facility RAAOC. The complex also included printing facilities for the area, an audio-visual facility, library and sporting complex. Elements of the Army Apprentice School commenced moving in early December in readiness for Apprentices to move in in January 1983.

The new Barracks were officially opened on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> September 1983 by The Honourable G.G.D. Scholes MP Minister for Defence and given the name Latchford Barracks. The name honouring COLONEL E. W. LATCHFORD, MBE, MC. Colonel E. W. Latchford, MBE, MC, joined the Victorian Militia in 1907 and enlisted in the Permanent Military Forces in August 1910, attending the first PMF NCOs Course conducted at Albury in 1911. He was commissioned in 1916.

In 1942, he was appointed Chief Instructor of a Small Arms School, Randwick, and supervised its transfer and expansion to the LHQ MMG School at Bonegilla. He retired in 1949, after 39 years' service in the Permanent Military Forces. He died in September 1962.

The School of Military Survey subsequently relocated to Bendigo in Victoria.

Then in 1991 The Army Apprentices School underwent a restructure and change in name to Army College of TAFE (ACOT). It retained this name until the Apprentice Training Scheme ceased and on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1995 the Army Logistic Training Centre (ALTC) was formed. The new super College through the amalgamation of nine logistic, health and personnel services schools and the Army College of TAFE. ALTC was established in response to the need to provide more effective logistic training which had been identified as a problem as early as 1981. ALTC's motto is "Excel with Honour".

In the early years of ALTC the training structure tended to sever corps affiliations. As a result, in late 2007 the centre was reorganised into four corps aligned trade schools and two schools of higher education. The schools being the Army School of Logistic Operations, the Army School of Electrical and Mechanical Engineering, the Army School of Transport, the

Army School of Ordnance, the Army School of Health and the Australian Defence Force Chaplains College.

Upon completion of employment training graduating members are posted to various combat, combat support and service support units.