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## **HISTORY OF UNITS AT BONEGILLA**

### **General History**

Bonegilla is a rural locality within the City of Wodonga local government area, 10 kilometers east of Wodonga and some 390 kilometers 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<sup>rd</sup> Brigade locating from Seymour in August 1940.

The 2/23<sup>rd</sup> 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<sup>st</sup> Infantry Battalion was formed on 11<sup>th</sup> July 1940 at Trawool in central Victoria, and the 2/22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Battalion was raised and headquartered at Victoria Barracks, Melbourne and 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<sup>st</sup> Bn departed from Trawool on foot for the 235-kilometre march to Bonegilla. They were followed by the 2/22<sup>nd</sup> Bn on 24<sup>th</sup> September 1940, also on foot.

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

In addition to the three 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, 2/2<sup>nd</sup> Aust Pnr Reinforcements, Medical Reinforcements, elements of Armored Div, 143<sup>rd</sup> General Tpt Coy, 67<sup>th</sup> Dental Unit, the RASC Training Brigade, and numbers of CMF Troops after Japan entered the War.

During the War, signals training units were also stationed at Bonegilla. The Victorian signal training depot had travelled between Albert Park, Caulfield, Balcombe, Bonegilla, and Bendigo, before settling back to Bonegilla. On the return of the AIF to Australia, a central Signals training battalion was formed at Bonegilla with the LHQ School of Signals (from Casula, NSW) and a combined Signals training battalion made up of 1 Aust Signals Training Bn (Middle East (ME)) and the two training depots (from NSW and Victoria). Later the Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS) Signals Training Centres at Ingleburn and Ivanhoe were amalgamated at Bonegilla as the 2 Aust Signals Training Bn (AWAS). Later again, 2 Aust Regimental Signals Training Unit moved to Bonegilla followed by the Signals Wing of the Second Army Junior Leaders School. The School of Signals eventually moved to Balcombe in December 1945.

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 host, 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 that 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 million 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 Apprentices School commenced moving in 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 Honorable G.G.D. Scholes MP, Minister for Defence, and given the name Latchford Barracks. The name honors Colonel EW Latchford MBE MC, who 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, Latchford 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 the 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 was created through the amalgamation of nine logistic, health and personnel services schools, and ACOT. 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.

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