

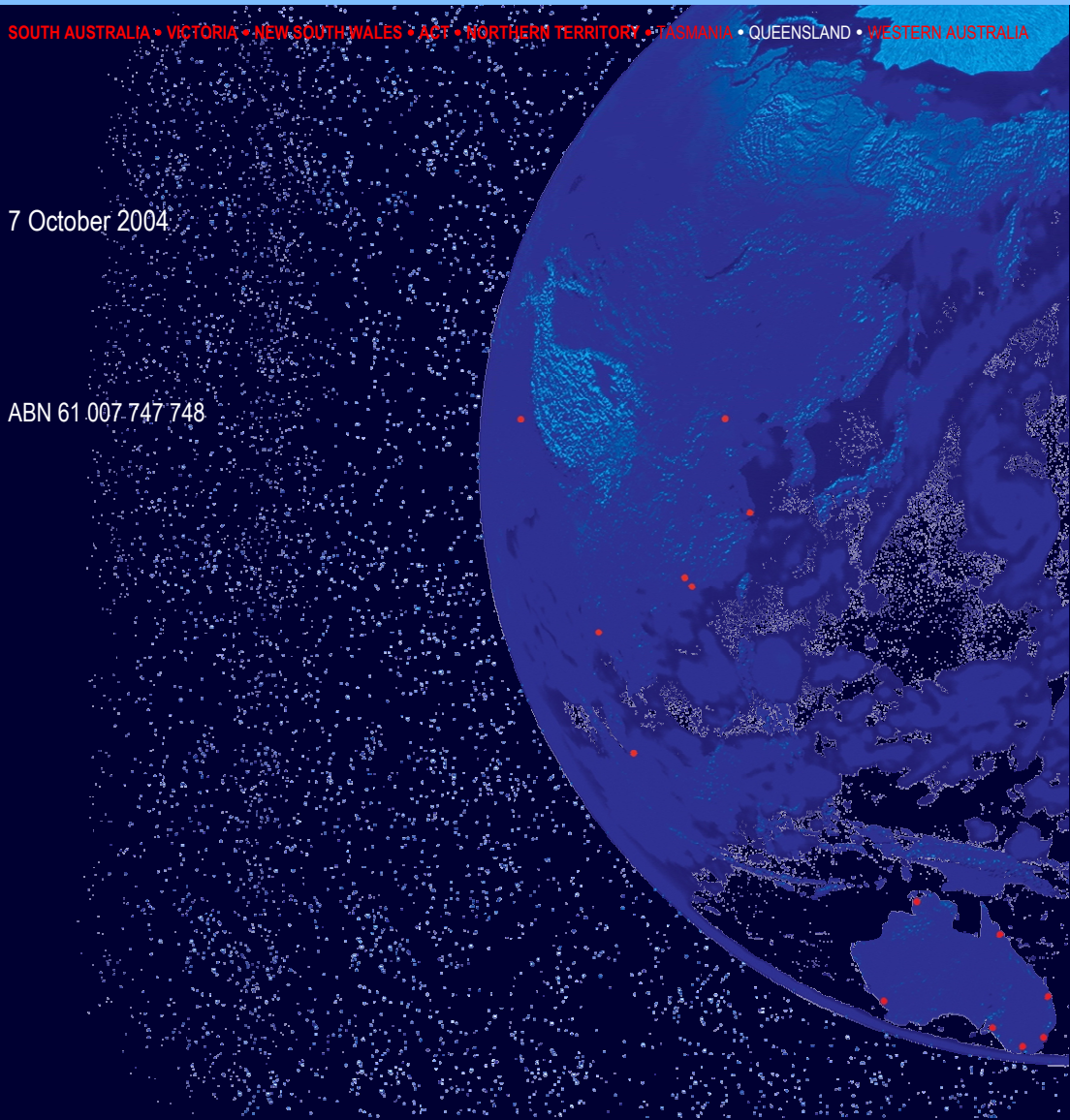
MT LOFTY (TOOWOOMBA) RIFLE RANGE

Heritage Assessment

SOUTH AUSTRALIA • VICTORIA • NEW SOUTH WALES • ACT • NORTHERN TERRITORY • TASMANIA • QUEENSLAND • WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

This Heritage Assessment for the Mount Lofty (Toowoomba) Rifle Range buildings and structures has been commissioned to inform the Department of Defence as to built heritage related issues applicable on the site, and specifically how such issues may relate to the potential disposal of the property.

This Assessment is a part of a broader Assessment being undertaken by HLA Envirosciences Pty Ltd, and focuses on the European Heritage at the site.

The assessment has been undertaken in accordance with the principles of the Burra Charter, 1999, the recognised benchmark document in the Australian Heritage industry. The Charter can be viewed at the Australian ICOMOS website, www.icomos.org/australia under the section 'Charters and Publications'.

1.2 LOCATION

The Mt Lofty Rifle Range site is located on the north east boundary of the regional city of Toowoomba in Queensland. The site straddles the escarpment of the Great Dividing Range with the range facilities located on the plateau, and the safety template extending over the lower portions of the site 300 metres below.

The main buildings, being two rifle club buildings are located adjacent the main entrance to the Range at the southern corner of the site. The street address is 56 Martini Street, Mt Lofty.

1.3 HERITAGE LEGISLATION

The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) governs actions that can potentially impact on places of environmental or heritage significance. Amendments to the EPBC Act brought into effect in January 2004, require any action likely to have a significant impact on the heritage values of a place, to gain approval from the Minister for the Environment and Heritage. This applies to items on the National Heritage List and the Commonwealth Heritage List, both newly created registers prepared to encompass items and places of significance.

The National Heritage List comprises places of exceptional natural, historic or indigenous significance.

The Commonwealth Heritage List contains places of heritage value that are owned by the Commonwealth, or are under Australian Government Control.

Further information regarding the legislative framework within which the Commonwealth are required to operate is available for Defence personnel in the Defence Heritage Toolkit, which can be accessed through the Infrastructure Manual at <http://www.defweb.cbr.defence.gov.au/im/>. Additional information, including fact sheets, is also available at the Department of the Environment and Heritage website, www.deh.gov.au/heritage.

1.4 HERITAGE STATUS

1.4.1 Commonwealth Heritage List

None of the buildings or structures on the site have been entered into the Commonwealth Heritage list.

1.4.2 National Heritage List

None of the buildings or structures on the site have been entered into the National Heritage List.

1.4.3 Register of the National Estate

None of the buildings or structures on the site have been listed on the Register of the National Estate.

1.4.4 Queensland Heritage Register

None of the buildings or structures on the site have been identified for inclusion on this register.

1.4.5 Toowoomba City Council Local Heritage List

None of the buildings or structures on the site have been listed in Councils, Places of Potential Cultural Heritage Significance.

1.4.6 National Trust (Queensland)

None of the buildings or structures on the site are included on the register of the National Trust (Qld).

1.5 AUTHOR AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Assessment has been prepared by Peter Hillan of Woodhead International. The assistance of Jayne Fitzpatrick, Special Collections Librarian at Toowoomba City Council and Margaret McNally, President of the Toowoomba Historical Society is acknowledged.

2 HISTORY

2.1 HISTORICAL SUMMARY

The discovery of the vast pastoral lands, known as the Darling Downs, by Mr Allan Cunningham in 1827 opened up a new era in the progress of the new northern colony of NSW established at Moreton Bay. The Darling Downs, some 160 km west of the colony (now Brisbane) is a fertile black soil plateau of more than 15,000 square kilometers, the eastern boundary of which is the 300–400 metre escarpment of the Great Dividing Range.

Squatters had been seeking new land on which to depasture their sheep and cattle, and after the introduction of a number of squatting Acts that permitted departing on Crown Land, arrived on the Darling Downs in 1840. The route taken was the inland path identified by Cunningham overland from the settled area of Bathurst, west of Sydney.

The first settlement on the Darling Downs occurred at Drayton with the establishment of a store in 1842. The settlement was to quickly become an important transport centre for the increasing traffic now travelling east to the seaboard settlement of Brisbane (opened for settlement in 1842). Passage down the steep escarpment, initially was via Cunningham's Gap, which was impassable for wheeled traffic. The first trafficable route was made through Gorman's Gap in 1840 but the route proved to be too perilous. A third route, Hodgson's Pass, was found in 1842 and proclaimed as one of the fair most important roads in the colony of NSW.

The second settlement on the Darling Downs occurred to the north east of Drayton at what was called Drayton Swamp. In 1849 the area was officially surveyed and allotments were made available for purchase. Prior to this survey, little use of the land in the vicinity of Drayton Swamp was made, apart from some timber getting.

The first allotments were slow to sell until 1851 when a group of investors bought three allotments. These were subsequently subdivided and were to become the City of Toowoomba's first residential subdivision. A subsequent survey in 1853 set out and created five of Toowoomba's main streets.

The settlement at Drayton Swamp quickly became the more dominant town as a consequence of its more fertile soil, flat topography and abundant water supply. Drayton Swamp's expansion also saw the development of the fourth route across the escarpment.

The Bridal Track route exited the plateau to the immediate east of the town and followed a longer more gradual descent to the coastal plane below. The track was made into a road and officially opened in 1853, and with the introduction of a toll became known as the Toll Bar Road. Its formation ensured the future of Drayton Swamp. The rapidly growing town was renamed Toowoomba in 1858.

Industries rapidly followed the introduction of the Toll Bar Road and rural prosperity generated from the rich pastoral lands. The marshy land, which characterised the area, was drained in 1847 to minimise the outbreaks of typhoid and cholera that regularly occurred up until then.

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Toowoomba's growing importance as the gateway to and commercial centre of the Darling Downs was demonstrated and strengthened by the construction of the railway from Toowoomba to Ipswich, the first over the Divide, in 1867. Further links were made to Dalby in 1868, Warwick in 1871 and Brisbane in 1875.

The construction of the railway up the escarpment was an outstanding engineering achievement and the more remarkable as it was undertaken by the young Queensland Government and was entirely built by hand.

During the 1870s a portion of what was the Deans Helidon Run, a large pastoral lease, was excised to become the Toowoomba Town Common and the Drayton Town Common for townspeople to pasture their animals. The Toowoomba Town Common extended to the east of the escarpment indicating that land on the lower coastal plane was also used by Toowoomba residents for pastoral purposes.

In 1879 the Queensland Colonial Government established the Toowoomba Volunteer Rifles, which with other local militia units and the police force, were entrusted with the defence of the Colony. Toowoomba by this time already had a permanent police force and a 125 acre 'Police Paddock Reserve' for the pasturing of their horses being located at Mt Lofty.

In 1879 the Queensland Government set aside 20 acres of the Police Paddock Reserve as a Rifle Range for the Toowoomba Volunteer Rifles. The rifle range was a short firing range that was oriented parallel with the Jubilee Park boundary, a small hillock to the east acting as a stop butt.

The importance of individual rifle marksmanship was clearly demonstrated in the Boer War (1899–1902) where British and Australian infantry men were soundly outgunned by better trained and better armed Boers. The period 1902–1913 marked a period of rapid rifle development and focus on infantry marksmanship, particularly accurate rapid fire. The development of the Mt Lofty Rifle Range from this period onwards reflects generally the development in rifle design and ammunition.

The subsequent detailed history of the Rifle Range site however is complex, and details as to the different uses the Range has been put since its establishment, are not readily obtainable. While ostensibly a target range for the training of militia, police and subsequently Defence personnel in rifle use and marksmanship, the Range has also been used for other military training and testing purposes.

With the increase in militarization, characteristic of the decade prior to the outbreak of World War One, the introduction to services of the longer range SMLE Lee-Enfield .303 rifles and newly Federated Australia's commitment to a national defence capability the range progressively increased in size.¹

A new Rifle Range site was surveyed in 1892 and a Rifle Range Reserve 333 was gazetted in 1893. The firing positions were located at approximately the position of the current target area

¹ The subsequent sections on the development of the Rifle Range site is taken from Marie Holland's 2001 Study 'The Escarpment and Foothills of the Great Dividing Range at Toowoomba'.

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with the line of fire extending north west, and targets at the 1000 yard mark at the edge of the escarpment. The original short rifle range operating from the Police Paddock was not abandoned until the new range was complete in approximately 1906. Extensive areas of native forest were felled to create the free lines of fire required.

Up until this time the Rifle Range had been used by the 14 Australian Light Horse Regiment (formerly the Queensland Mounted Infantry); the Toowoomba State High school cadets; the Darling Down Rifle Club and the Western Districts Rifle Association.

The new range proved to be unsatisfactory for a number of reasons including safety and it was ordered closed in 1912. Adjoining owners had been required to vacate their fields during periods when the range was in use and there had been numerous instances of bullets falling into cultivated fields and corresponding complaints by their owners.

Prior to the advent of World War One and the introduction of Universal Training in 1911 there were increasing defence demands for the Range to be reopened. In 1913 the Commonwealth increased the size of the Range to 1041 acres and gazetted the site for Defence purposes. In April of 1913 tenders were called for the construction of a new rifle range in the current location i.e. 600 yard firing positions in the south corner of the site and targets due north. Intermediate firing positions were also formed at 500, 400, 300 and 200 yards. Associated works included the construction of a target scorers trench, ten shutter target machines, and two target sheds. A caretakers cottage built earlier at the old range was relocated and the entire property was fenced.



1913 Target scorers Trench and target shutter machines



Target mounding and stop butt

An accidental discharge from the 600 yard firing position in 1915, which resulted in a bullet penetrating the walls of a house below the escarpment, led to the construction of the large stop butt behind the target line and further tree and stone clearing (to reduce chances of ricocheting) shortly after.

Holland records that by 1924, after the cessation of the War, that the range was being used by the Darling Downs Rifle Club (62 members), 10 offices and 60 men of the Defence Force, 346 cadets and 221 members of the Citizen Forces of the 25th Battalion. It was also regularly used by rifle men from outlying districts of Cambooya, Greenmount, Millmerran, Dalby, Bell, Mahen and Crows Nest. The existing Darling Downs Rifle Club building appears to date from this time but it is not clear as to whether the building was constructed on the site at this time or was transported there at a later date for their use.

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*Darling Downs Rifle Club Building*

It would appear that apart from the construction of two field toilets, and the Toowoomba Rifle Club Building (c1970?) very little has been altered at the site since the World War One period. In 1949 the Range was reclassified as a Rifle Club.

When not in use as a Rifle Range the range at various times has been leased for private animal grazing and in more recent times horse agistment. Some horse shelters and a corral exists in the south corner adjacent the 600 yard firing position.

*Toowoomba Rifle Club Building*

3 HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

3.1 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The assessment of significance of the buildings and structures at Mt Lofty Rifle Range has been made against the criteria for inclusion on the Commonwealth Heritage List, as prescribed by the Australian Heritage Council and set out in the EPBC Regulations. Information used in the assessment has been obtained from the Commonwealth Heritage listing, from the previous Conservation Analysis, and from research undertaken by the author. All criteria have been listed below, however, it should be noted that not all criteria need to be met to warrant inclusion on the list.

This assessment should be considered to most up to date description of the values of the place.

- a) *the place has significant heritage value because of the place's importance in the course, or pattern, of Australia's natural or cultural history:*

Not applicable.

While the Range has some heritage value because of the Ranges role in the early development of Australia's independent defence capability all remnants of the first Police Paddock range and second 1906 range have been removed.

The significant railway, escarpment crossing roads and early store quarries are all well outside of the site.

- b) *the place has significant heritage value because of the place's possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Australia's natural or cultural history:*

Not applicable.

- c) *the place has significant heritage value because of the place's potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Australia's natural or cultural history:*

Not applicable.

- d) *the place has significant heritage value because of the place's importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of:*

- i) *A class of Australia's natural or cultural places;*

Not applicable.

Or

- ii) *A class of Australia's natural or cultural environments:*

Not applicable.

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- e) *the place has significant heritage value because of the place's importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by a community or cultural group:*

Not applicable.

The Darling Downs Rifle Club building is a well preserved example of Toowoomba's Colonial style of building.

Its original design has been compromised by the installation of an aluminium sliding door and windows to the northern lean to.

- f) *the place has significant heritage value because of the place's importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period:*

Not applicable.

- g) *the place has significant heritage value because of the place's strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons:*

Not applicable.

While the southern portion of the site was used by early colonial local militia groups, most notably the Toowoomba Volunteer Rifles there are no physical remnants remaining of the range they used.

While the (1913) range has been used by a wider number of local militia groups and rifle clubs for a long period of time it is not considered that the association with the place has significant heritage value.

- h) *the place has significant heritage value because of the place's special association with the life or works of a person, or groups of persons, of importance in Australia's natural or cultural history:*

Not applicable.

The association of the Range with the Commonwealth Defence Force, most notably the 25th Battalion, Royal Queensland Regiment, is also not considered to be of significant heritage value.

It is contended that places such as Somme, Pozieres, Ypres, Passchendale, Amiens, Maraat ech Chouf, Kokoda Trail and numerous others have significant heritage value to the Battalion, while places such as the range, which was a place at which such a small part of their training occurred, is relatively insignificant.

- i) *the place has significant heritage value because of the place's importance as part of Indigenous tradition.*

Refer separate sections of HLA-Envirosciences Heritage Assessment.

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3.2 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The buildings and structures at the Mt Lofty Range site have minimal heritage significance.

The Mt Lofty Rifle Range site has been associated with the training of militia groups, police cadet and defence personnel since the earliest days of settlement in Queensland. The history of one of Australia's most decorated Battalions, the 25th Royal Queensland Regiment dates from January 20th 1875, when volunteers enrolled at Toowoomba in the No. 8 Company of the Queensland Volunteer Rifles. The Mt Lofty range has increased in size and developed over time with the Battalion as weapons changed from muskets to rifles to fully automatic weapons.

All remnants of the first two firing ranges have been completely removed so there is nothing of heritage significance relating to militia use of the site pre-Commonwealth ownership in 1913.

The current buildings and structures (apart from the Rifle Club buildings) dating from the 1913 upgrade of the site (or replacements thereof) are also of little heritage significance. The target trenches and target shutter machines are of some historic interest.

The Darling Downs Rifle Club building has possibly some heritage significance but only at the local community level.

The Toowoomba Rifle Club building has no heritage significance.

4 CONDITION ASSESSMENT

4.1 THE BUILDINGS

Darling Downs Rifle Club Building

Description

A Colonial style building incorporating hipped roof and built in rear lean-to. Clad in weatherboard and roofed in galvanized corrugated iron. The roof drains to a small corrugated rainwater tank.

Condition

The building has been very well maintained and is in very good condition. Original windows and door to the rear lean-to have been replaced with unsympathetic domestic aluminium sliding door and window suites.



Darling Downs Rifle Club Building

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Toowoomba Rifle Club Building

Description

A weatherboard clad clubroom with a brick extension that accommodates toilets and a large undercover area.

The roof is steel decking.

Condition

The building is in good condition.



Toowoomba Rifle Club Building

Field Toilet 1

Description

A vertically sheeted painted corrugated iron toilet cubical with fenced privacy screen that accommodates a urinal stall.

Condition

Dilapidated.



Toilet near 500 yard firing position

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Field Toilet 2

Description

A vertically sheeted painted corrugated iron toilet cubical with fenced privacy screen that accommodates a urinal stall.

Condition

Poor.



Toilet at Target end of Range

Target Store 1

Description

A vertically sheeted painted corrugated iron storage shed with single sloped roof.

Condition

Good.



Target Store to left of Targets

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Target Store 2*Description*

A vertically sheeted proprietary double vehicle shed with ridged roof and double roller shutter access doors.

Condition

Good.



Target Store to right of targets

4.2 STRUCTURES***Target Trench and Target Shutter Machines****Description*

A formed in situ concrete pair of retaining walls that incorporate a scorer recess at each target position. Between the two walls purpose made steel target shutter machines have been set into pits within a concrete slab that allow targets to be lowered scored/changed out of the line of fire.

Condition

Good. There is some location distortion in the concrete over the scorer recesses.



Target trench and target hoist equipment

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Target embankments comprising stop butt and target trench mounding*Description*

The stop butt comprises a formed embankment built over a natural rise in the topography. The mound between the target trench and the target marker numbers has been formed against the front target trench retaining wall and has been grassed.

Condition

Good.



Target trench mounding and stop butt

Firing Positions*Description*

600 yard firing position at Rifle Club end retains its formed horizontal grassed surface for prone firing. Firing positions at shorter ranges have not been used for some time and have been severely eroded to point where slight mounds only remain.

Condition

Poor.



Remains of Intermediate Firing Mounds (typical)

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Horse Enclosure

Description

Three small galvanized iron clad storage sheds and timber post and rail fenced paddock.

Condition

Average.



Horse Fencing

5 MANAGEMENT

5.1 BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES

Should the rifle range site be disposed of and/or no longer retained as a rifle range the following strategies for the buildings and structures are proposed:

Target Trench and Target Machine Shutlers

While the target trench and target machine shutters are not considered to be significant under the EPBC Act criteria it is possible that they would meet the criteria for inclusion on Toowoomba's City Council Places of Potential Cultural Heritage Significance. Council should be asked to consider them for inclusion prior to any decision being taken by Defence to demolish or remove them. It is our recommendation that the trench and shutters be retained and incorporated as part of an historic walking trail along the escarpment rim. Interpretative signage could be added that would inform visitors of the history of the range and the target equipment.

Darling Downs Rifle Club

That Toowoomba Council be approached first as to whether there might be an alternative location for the building within Toowoomba amongst other buildings of the same style.

Other Buildings and Structures

That on disposal that all buildings and structures except where noted above, can be removed completely.

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APPENDIX A

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