

Heritage Citation

Bulimba Army Barracks (Part)

Key details

Also known as	Apollo Barge Assembly Depot
Addresses	At 167 Apollo Road, Bulimba, Queensland 4171
Type of place	Defence site
Period	World War II 1939-1945
Lot plan	L1_SP276395; L2_SP276395
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 January 2004 Date of Citation — January 2009
Construction	Roof: Corrugated iron
People/associations	United States Military (Builder)
Criterion for listing	(A) Historical; (B) Rarity; (F) Technical

The Bulimba Army Base is an important remnant of the United States Military presence in Brisbane during the Second World War. Initially established in 1943 for the assemblage of military barges, the Apollo Barge Assembly Depot, as it was first known, was one of a number of war-time industrial sites along this stretch of the Brisbane River. At the end of the war and the departure of the American forces the base was occupied by the Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers unit of the Australian Army. The Bulimba Army Base plays a very important role in Brisbane's military history.

History

The first inhabitants of the Bulimba area were members of the Aboriginal community, mainly from the Coorparoo and Chepara clans whose lands ranged south of the river. Because the land had an ample water supply, fauna and flora were plentiful making the area an excellent food gathering ground for Aboriginal people and later for

Europeans.

After the Moreton Bay region was opened for free settlement in 1842, David McConnel, having established a station at Cressbrook, bought much of the first land offered for sale in Bulimba and soon after built a home for himself and new wife Mary McLeod. The McConnel's home, Bulimba House, was built by Andrew Petrie in 1850 becoming one of the first substantial residences in the colony. The home was built from grey freestone obtained from a quarry lower down the river and the land was cleared for agriculture.

The river was the main avenue of transport for the early European occupants. The overland route passed through Galloways Hill and on to the track linking Cleveland to Brisbane following it through Woolloongabba and South Brisbane. Rowing across the river to Newstead and travelling through Fortitude Valley to the city was an easier journey than the land route which skirted Norman Creek. Sam Buckley may have run an unofficial ferry across the river from about 1850. Bulimba residents and farmers applied for the construction of a bridge across Norman Creek to improve overland access and in about 1856 the first bridge over Norman Creek was opened.

While farming was the main activity in the district, a large tin smelting works was also established near the ferry giving employment to a considerable number of people. During the latter part of 1866, Messrs Smith, Price and Harvey were reported as having discovered nuggets and particles of gold along the banks of the Brisbane River opposite the Breakfast Creek. While some alluvial deposits were found and a shaft sunk into the main quartz reef, the mine did not become a major industry in the area.

The 1880s saw the beginnings of more urban and industrial development in the area. Many of the large land holdings were subdivided and sold as housing estates and with the concomitant rise in the population, commercial services were established. The proximity to the river and adjoining creeks also provided ideal conditions for industry to develop.

The Apollo candle factory was built in 1880 near the present Apollo Road. The yard covered about 25 acres and the factory produced candles, soap and oil. It amalgamated with J. Kitchen & Sons of South Brisbane in 1885 and continued production well into the twentieth century, despite being inundated by floods and suffering a fire in 1909. On the northern side of the river at Newstead, industrial developments in the form of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company and the gas works as well as the wharves provided employment opportunities for residents of the Bulimba area as transport across the river by ferry was an established service.

In 1925 the tramlines were extended into the district along Hawthorne Road as far as Barton Road increasing the accessibility of the south eastern parts of the district. Services were extended to Oxford Street in 1935. The cross river ferries, both passenger and vehicular, continued to be a major form of transport with their importance to the district being emphasised by the construction of a shop and dwelling at Hawthorne ferry in 1921 and the Addison-designed Bulimba ferry house in 1922. Buses also serviced the district often connecting with the ferries.

Although Australia had been at war with Germany since 1939, the impact of war increased dramatically after the Japanese entered it in 1941. The Japanese forces swept south through Malaya, the Netherlands East Indies and had reached New Guinea by January, 1942. Northern Australia became a major staging point. General Headquarters South West Pacific Area, under the command of US General Douglas MacArthur, was also moved to Brisbane in July 1942. An unprecedented military build-up followed. The concentration of US troops alone was heaviest in south-east Queensland, reaching a peak of 75 500 in December 1943. Camps, airfields, construction and recreational facilities specifically for the US Army were erected in Brisbane during the war.

As with the rest of Brisbane, the coming of the Second World War brought enormous changes to the Bulimba district. The river became an important defence site and industries associated with the war effort were located

nearby. As numerous local men and women enlisted in the war effort the area became the base of a variety of Australian and overseas war activities. Australian soldiers were stationed in bunkers and gun emplacements on Bulimba Point protecting the American submarine base at New Farm, the wharves and the city of Brisbane. Anti-aircraft batteries were also located at the rear of Balmoral Cemetery and staffed by WAAAF personnel.

The Apollo Barge Assembly Depot was swiftly built by the United States Forces on land that had been acquired by the Commonwealth of Australia in March 1943. The American military built six large warehouses, one of which was the workshop. Several peripheral buildings, such as accommodation and latrines, were also built on the site but were not retained after the war. As is suggested by the name, the U.S barges were assembled at the Bulimba base. The steel components were shipped in via the Brisbane River and delivered by barge to the assembly depot. In a Memo dated 11 August 1943 from the U.S Army the requirements needed for the establishment of the Assembly Depot were outlined. The cost of the facility, which was termed a priority, was to be \$481 400. Facilities to be included were:

- (i) Ship and gun crew training station in conjunction with approved camp site for 1,800 men.
- (ii) Installation and outfitting of 100 refrigeration barges, oil barges and ships repair facilities.
- (iii) Construction of four or more, floating dry docks, 250' to 350' long by 50' to 60' wide, and 12 or more floating work-shops 150' x 30' x 3'
- (iv) Construction of 400 wooden barges, 80x32x8'

The position of the Apollo Barge Assembly Depot was tantamount to its importance as a military vessel supply base. During the Second World War a wide wharf was constructed for the Assembly Depot that allowed an efficient means of distribution. Once assembled, the barges were shipped out as deck cargo to the conflict in the Pacific. Each barge, measuring approximately eighteen metres by eight metres and with two refrigeration units, was designed as a supply vessel that would be deployed into secured territory in the Pacific region of the war.

The workers within the assembly depot were mainly Chinese. Approximately one thousand Chinese workers were housed in the barracks.

With the end of the Second World War in 1945 and the departure of the American Military Forces from Brisbane the Apollo Barge Assembly Depot became the base for the Royal Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. The RAEME, was a division of the Australian Regular Army that were responsible for the maintenance of all land electrical and mechanical equipment. In April 1945 the Quarter-Master General of the Australian Army outlined the agreement with the United States Military relating to the hand over of the Bulimba site. It stated:

At Conference today with Commanding General Base Section USASOS and Brig-Gen Johnson, GPA, an undertaking was given that the US Authorities would release the Bulimba site to the Australian Army as soon as practicable and possibly not later than the beginning of May. The US Authorities will proceed forthwith to clear stores and equipment now held on the site to the open storage area adjacent or in the vicinity of the Chinese Camp.

As well as re-using the already existing military workshops and warehouses on the site, the RAEME moved several buildings from their previous Kangaroo Point site. In October 1946 a training school was established in the army buildings. Later workshops and administration buildings were added as the site grew to be a major base for carpentry, metal fabrication and machining, and electronics manufacturing and repairs for Telecom and some outside businesses.

The most historically significant buildings on the site are those built by the United States Forces on the base

during the Second World War.

Statement of significance

Relevant assessment criteria

This is a place of local heritage significance and meets one or more of the local heritage criteria under the Heritage planning scheme policy of the *Brisbane City Plan 2014*. It is significant because:

Historical

CRITERION A

The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of the city's or local area's history

as a surviving Second World War industrial base established by the United States Military in 1943 and reflecting the unprecedented military activity along the Brisbane River in this period.

Rarity

CRITERION B

The place demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of the city's or local area's cultural heritage

as a rare example of a Second World War barge building facility built for the United States Military built at a time of intensive military activity in Brisbane by the United States Military.

Technical

CRITERION F

The place is important in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technological achievement at a particular period

as an important surviving United States Military industrial facility for the intensive manufacture of barges.

References

1. E. Daniel Potts and Annette Potts, *Yanks Downunder 1941-1945: The American Impact on Australia*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1985
2. OZ@War, "Bulimba- Apollo Barge Assembly Depot", P. Dunn
3. Map, "Army Installations Apollo Road, Bulimba 1945", National Archives
4. Bulimba Army Barracks, Archival Material, National Archives, Brisbane

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Note: This citation has been prepared on the basis of evidence available at the time including an external examination of the building. The statement of significance is a summary of the most culturally important aspects of the property based on the available evidence, and may be re-assessed if further information becomes available. The purpose of this citation is to provide an informed evaluation for heritage registration and information. This does not negate the necessity for a thorough conservation study by a qualified practitioner, before any action is taken which may affect its heritage significance.

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