



Victorian Heritage Database Report  
**Camp Eureka**

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**Location:**

100 Tarrango Road, Yarra Junction VIC 3797 - Property No 71689

**Heritage Status / Level of Significance:**

Included in Heritage Overlay

**Heritage Inventory (HI) Number:**

**Listing Authority: HI**

**Heritage Overlay Number: HO378**

**Statement of Significance:**

Camp Eureka has State (and perhaps National) significance as a workers' holiday camp built for the Eureka Youth League, a socialist youth group, by voluntary labour during the post-Second World War years. During its heyday, from 1946 to the mid-1950s, the Camp attracted about 1,000 holiday-makers, who enjoyed a cheap holiday in a bush setting in one of the State's most popular holiday places. It was one of a number of Eureka Youth League holiday camps established throughout Australia. Comprising a complex of huts and tents, the Mess Hut, (built in 1946-47) designed by architect, John Walker, and recently repaired and re-roofed, has particular interest for its use of traditional bush building techniques. Campers included a number of young people who later became well-known artists, writers, actors and trade union leaders. Camp Eureka has historical significance as an important part of the heritage of the Australian Labour movement, and is a place of happy memories for many working-class families who holidayed there in the 1940s and 1950s. The Camp Eureka Working Collective, formed in about 1974 by former Camp members, plans to re-open the Camp when the facilities have been upgraded to meet today's requirements. The Camp Eureka Archives, held at Melbourne University Archives, are important heritage items.

**Description**

Camp Eureka is a holiday camp set in a bush landscape not far from Yarra Junction. The site is essentially enclosed within this bush setting, providing a sense of retreat. The land is generally rectangular in shape, with the northern boundary on Tarrango Road, and the southern boundary close to the Little Yarra River.

There is an excellent plan of the site and its features available, and this plan and the associated feature names are used in this description.

The property was farmed prior to its development as a camp, and several features remain in the northern part of the property that are associated with this period in its history, namely the site of an early house (possibly built by Jones, the first owner, or by the Fidler family); a large pine tree and a timber barn (The Barn). The barn is a timber framed building, clad in stained palings (not weatherboards) and with a corrugated iron roof. The single storey section has a gable roof (with scalloped shingles on the gable end), while the two-storey part has a skillion roof, perhaps a later alteration. There are a number of windows in the building and at least two entry doors. Viewed through one of the windows, the interior has been roughly partitioned, lined with newspapers and painted.

Also in this northern end of the camp close to the entry is the area once used as a sports ground. A large pine remains here. Further east of the barn and house site are a group of four Board of Works huts, clad in vertical boards, one with a precast concrete chimney, and lined with tar paper. These have been used for many years as accommodation.

The Recreation Hut and the adjoining kitchen, servery and Mess Hut formed the communal heart of the site, and their close relationships to each other contrasts to the more isolated locations for the accommodation huts.

The Recreation Hut was rebuilt in April 1981. The large brick fireplace was retained, and the bushpole frame was rebuilt as the previous roof trusses were inadequate. The building is clad in palings used vertically. Internally the bush pole roof trusses are an interesting feature, as is the ventilation system (large opening flaps) that has been incorporated into the upper sections of the walls. The windows and doors are a standard type (Stegbar?)

The Kitchen has been built in several stages. It is L shaped in plan, with the timber section and the cool room being the first elements built (c1940s). The timber section has a gabled roof, concrete floor, and is clad in stained vertical boarding. The mud brick section was built c1985, and links the cool room and the original timber section. Much of the kitchen has been refitted recently, however some of its original furniture remains.

The servery is located next to the kitchen. It was one of three similar buildings, but the other two have now gone. It is a small, rectangular building, clad in vertical stained boards and with a corrugated iron roof. It was designed to enable food to be quickly dished out on to a plate handed through a slots in the side wall by the prospective diner. The servery building retains the features that demonstrate its purpose. Nearby is a recently built barbecue shelter and scullery. The concrete fireplace has been reused from a previous building (?).

The Mess Hut is the largest building on site. It is a large structure, open at three sides, built of bush poles and with a corrugated iron roof. It has been recently reconstructed, a section at a time, using existing materials and framing where possible, with some additional structural elements added to strength the roof truss system. Any new timbers were cut from the same area of bush that provided the original timbers. The stage at one end of the building had collapsed and has not yet been replaced.

To the south and west of this central area are a number of clusters of huts. The closest is Rawlinsons (many of the huts are named after those who built them. A simple rectangular hut with stained vertical boarding, corrugated iron roof and an internal fireplace (replacing the earlier external chimney). The corrugated iron roof dated from the late 1970s and replaced the original malthoid roof.

Between Rawlinsons and Northcote huts is an area where there were once many sleeping huts, however these have disappeared. Northcote is a large hut, in very poor condition. One wall is open to the weather and the hut has been used to store donated building materials. The hut is constructed on a sawn timber frame, with a bush-pole roof structure. The roofing material is Lysaght Flat Head sheet, with a rolled edge.

Further to the east is an area of the site used for ablutions. There is an old shower block (the "old men's

shower block") that is no longer used, a metal-framed building clad in corrugated iron. There are also pit toilets nearby.

Further south, on the edge of the property and onto the reserve along the Little Yarra River, is an area where the cooperative has undertaken bush regeneration work over many years. On the bank of the river stands the pump motor once used to get water to the camp. It is a Rosebery petrol engine, and was once inside a small hut (since gone). The water pipe from the river to the pump is still visible.

Returning towards the centre of the site, there are another group of huts that include the Medical Hut and the Model Huts. The Medical Hut is built entirely on a bush pole frame. It is lined internally with malthoid over palings. The hut has a concrete floor. Internally, it has a number of items of furniture associated with its original use as a medical hut, and has been largely preserved in its original state.

The Model Huts Nos. 1 and 2, named because they were intended to be models for future huts are constructed on hardwood frames with softwood wall panels as infill. They are said to be made from Czechoslovakian materials.

A little further north-west is another group of huts: Jim Smith's Hut is a timber and cement sheet structure; Porter's hut has a bush pole frame with a corrugated iron roof covering the earlier malthoid; Ivy Hut is clad in vertical boards and has a chimney at one end; another hut, now derelict, retains window shutters (once a common feature).

As well as this detailed listing of features, there are a number of other features, and a detailed site recording as part of a Conservation Management Plan is strongly advised.

Good

Evidence of stages

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| Heritage Study / Consultant | Yarra Ranges - Shire of Yarra Ranges Heritage Study, Context Pty Ltd, 2000 |
| Construction Date Range     |  |
| Architect / Designer        |  |
| Municipality                | YARRA RANGES SHIRE   |
| Other names                 |  |
| Hermes number               | 115191   |
| Property number             | 71689  |

*This place/object may also be State heritage listed. Check the Victorian Heritage Database. For further details, contact the local Council or go to Planning Schemes Online*