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HERITAGE SERVICES INFORMATION SHEET NO 16 PALUMA AND THE MT SPEC AREA

The township of Paluma made a significant contribution to World War II. The RAAF operated radar stations and a medical rehabilitation unit in the village while the Army used the surrounding rainforest for military training. Members of the United States Army 565th Signal Battalion also established a base in the township. Following are some of the main sites.

McClellands Lookout was the site of the Anti-Aircraft Battery & American Radar Station. Here US service personnel operated their portable radar unit. The radar unit was mounted on three trucks, two with closed bodies and one acting as a power van. A second generator and transmitter was located on a concrete slab on the ground. The antenna was erected on the third truck located in what is now the picnic area at McClelland's Lookout. With almost 180 degrees of efficient radar operation, four men on each four-hour shift scanned the Coral Sea.

Witts Lookout was the site of the American emergency radio telegraph station which was set up as a backup to the telephone line that ran through the rainforest.

Misthaven units were constructed by the Main Roads Commission in 1937 as a "motor camp" for tourists. During the period of the war the huts were used to accommodate members of the radar units. After the war the Main Roads Commission continued to manage the units until the late 1960s.





6 Lennox Crescent was the site of the Australian radio office. The two small concrete igloos that remain in the area are believed to have been munitions storage for the Anti-Aircraft battery.



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The *Catholic Church* was the WAAAF women's accommodation huts for the No 58 Radar Station. By the end of April 1944, the unit had 21 female radar operators living in the village.

The "igloo" was one of the Radar Stations. The building became the Catholic Church and later a private residence.

8 Lennox Crescent Sisters Of Mercy Retreat was formerly the Cavilcade Guesthouse.

Bert and Grace Cavill built the guesthouse in the late 1930s and named it *Cavilcade*. It was a bus and fuel stop as well as a guesthouse providing meals and accommodation. Many servicemen and women stayed at the guesthouse during the war.



Environmental Education Centre's Sensory

Trail Near this entrance was the site of the "Winged Gates" (RAAF wings) that marked the entrance to the No. 6 Medical Convalescent Unit.



The **Tennis Court And Dam** were some of the amenities built during the war for the units stationed at Paluma. If you are lucky you may see a platypus in the weir.



52 Mt Spec-Ewan Road The house with a stone wall across the front was the Medical Office where patients reported for regular check-ups.







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The *Ivy Cottage* was known as *Hotel Australia*. It was used as a mess for the Rehabilitation Unit. Many houses between *Ivy Cottage* and the western end of the village were seconded for the Rehabilitation Unit.



Out at the Paluma Dam. The road to the dam was first enlarged from a pack-track during the war to access timber for the war effort. The road to Hidden Valley runs past the turnoff to Taravale Station. Along the Taravale Road was the Civil Construction Corps timber camp. The workers from this camp provided timber for the war effort.



Acknowledgements:

- World War II tours brochure City of Thuringowa
- Linda Venn, *Paluma the First Eighty Years 1870s-1950s*, Thuringowa City Council, 2002

