

## 6. Australian Light Horse Memorial Park



The **Australian Light Horse Memorial Park** combines the history of the Australian Army over two world wars with rich natural features and panoramic views of the Tallarook and Strathbogie Ranges. The Park is on the site of what was once the largest Army training camp in Victoria over two world wars. Memorials, displays and army relics are scattered throughout the Park. When the army left for Puckapunyal, the bushlands and grasslands grew back and now provide a great display of wildflowers in Spring. All this can be viewed along the networks of tracks through the Park. The Park is on the Goulburn Valley Highway east of Seymour.

*This park is on the land of the Taungurung People. We acknowledge their Elders past and present and emerging, and their care of Country over many millennia. We ask that all people respect this ancient heritage and care for the land we now share.*

## Directions

The front gate is on the Goulburn Valley Highway, on the right 750m past Kobyboyn Road, with a carpark 300m from the gate. Pedestrian access is available through gates on Telegraph Road.

The road to Anzac Hill (1700m from carpark) is restricted to vehicles authorised by the [Committee of Management](#). The Committee welcomes any people with special interests and may be able to assist people with reduced mobility.

## Walking Tracks

The Park has many old sealed and gravel roads and walking tracks, a legacy of its army history. Some are in the process of being upgraded and some are overgrown. The walking routes described are just a start to exploring the Park.

**Grassland circuit:** A concrete path from the end of the carpark leads down and across an army “Bailey” bridge over South Creek to the display area and a 400m gravel circuit around the native grasslands.

**Ecological Trail (1.16 km one way):** This Trail also begins at the end of the carpark but follows the dirt track up the creek, branching right for 80 metres then crossing South Creek.






The Trail then runs between the Grey Box forests on the slopes and the Red Gum woodlands on the creek terraces to signpost 1 at 0.37 km. The Trail turns right up the hill. On the left (east) is the ecological restoration area with scattered large old Grey Box. Halfway up the hill (at a red signpost), the dominant trees become Red Box again with a few large old remnant trees. At signpost 2 on the old asphalt road at 0.69 km, the track veers right then left onto another old road running left (east) around the hill.

After another 180m, a rough track runs down to a dam. The main track continues up between the older forests on Four Tanks Hill and the grasslands of the central valley, with a couple of unusually large Red Stringybarks and an equally large Red Box (with seat). The Trail ends at signpost 3 on the Anzac Hill Road at 1.16 km.

*Anzac Hill* is a further 0.38 km of uphill walking to the wonderful views from the summit, with information on military history and a rock cairn with native animals and their Aboriginal names including Bunjil the Wedge-tailed Eagle that might be seen watching overhead. The *Airmen’s Memorial* is in the southern grasslands beneath Anzac Hill.

**Circumference Walk (4.70 km):** The walk starts on the ecological Trail to the first signpost (0.37 km) but continues straight ahead and along the powerline easement. The Ecological Restoration Project site is on the right. The track meets the old sealed road around Four Tanks Hill at 0.83 km and swings left across a gully, past a dam and onto a wide road along the edge of the industrial estate. At the top of the ridge (1.27 km), a steep 430m track runs up to Anzac Hill.

The Circumference Route continues down the hill to an entry gate on Telegraph Road at 2.69 km and along the back of the Park to another entry gate at 2.33 km. From here, the road runs around a wet area that may be under water after rain. It then climbs past a small dam, over a crest and along the western boundary to the start of the Waler Paddock at 3.67 km. A track follows beside the Waler Paddock and then crosses down to Anzac Hill Road at 4.18 km. From here, the carpark is another 500m by road, past the display boards and across the bridge over South Creek, a total distance of 4.70 km (or less with short cuts).

	<b>Warning:</b> Some sections of tracks are clay and are slippery when damp especially over winter.
	Concrete and gravel paths provide access across the bridge to the display and around the grassland circuit. Other roads and tracks are rough and often poorly formed and may be slippery in damp conditions. The newly gravelled Ecological Trail has a better surface but the creek crossings have stepping stones.
	Picnic tables and shelters are near the main carpark and the Waler Paddock dam.
	The Park is not generally accessible to vehicles past the main carpark. Cars may be used to ferry disabled people around the Park – check with the <a href="#">Committee of Management</a> .
	Composting toilet is available past the end of the carpark.

## Landform and Geology

The rock in the Park is siltstone with some sandstone laid down in the sea 440 to 390 million years ago. The layers of rock were uplifted and contorted around 380 million years ago. What we now see are ridges of rock exposed after 380 million years of erosion. These rocks are nicely exposed around the dam in the Waler Paddock.



The Park is on a line of hills running from the Goulburn River at the southern end of Hume and Hovell Road and Telegraph Road north to Anzac Hill then northwest across Four Tanks Hill and other knolls south of the Park before ending at the railway cutting in Seymour.

Ridges running north-east from Anzac Hill and Four Tanks Hill enclose a sheltered grassy valley with two dams running down to South Creek. North of Four Tanks Hill, the slopes in the Park are longer and gentler, running north and west



down to the creekline terraces and floodplains of South Creek. South Creek runs from Seymour Bushland Park and through the north-eastern side of the Australian Memorial Light Horse Park and back across the Highway to the back of Chittick Park before joining Whiteheads Creek north of Wimble Street.

South of Anzac Hill, the land drops steeply to another sheltered valley with a small creekline running south-west adjacent to Telegraph Road down to the Goulburn River.

Military use of the area caused a lot of soil disturbance with many tracks, drains and other structures with significant loss of topsoils particularly on the north slopes. Increased runoff has deeply incised South Creek through the floodplain. It has undercut the roots of some trees still hanging onto the bank. Rock barriers have been placed to reduce further erosion along the creek.

## Vegetation



Early maps describe “hilly ground, sandstone rock, poor gravelly soil” “thickly timbered with stringybark and box and scrub”. These plant communities were extensively cleared and the soils disturbed over the past 190 years.

Most of the Park is classed as [Box Ironbark Forest](#), and [Heathy Dry Forest](#) with swales and small floodplains of [Plains Grassy Woodland](#) (status Endangered). Plant communities can be divided into distinct zones:

**Red Box/Red Stringybark forests** occur around Four Tanks Hill and South Knoll with Red Box and Red Stringybark trees and a good diversity of shrub and ground layers. This area has some grand old trees visible along the Ecological Trail. The large living Red Stringybarks are a now rarity in the district. This forest has a rich diversity of shrubs and wildflowers more typical of [Heathy Dry Forest](#) and [Grassy Dry Forest](#).

The same ecological conditions apply to the shrublands and mowed grasslands along the ridges to Anzac Hill. In places, the regeneration of shrubs and trees is continuing, dominated by Sifton Bush and expanding amounts of Burgan in some places but also including Gorse Bitter-pea and Hedge Wattle. Sifton Bush is a successful colonizer but will die back as other species take over. Burgan is a slower but more permanent colonizer of disturbed country. It is dominant in patches within the Light Horse Park and over large areas in the Trawool Valley (visible south from Anzac Hill). It is good habitat for many small animals including masses of Common Brown Butterflies. However, it does outcompete and suppress the regeneration of other species. In the Park, it is on the edge of its ranges and dies back in hot dry years. Slashing has been keeping a balance between these colonizing species and the more open grasslands.



**Grey Box regrowth forests** are on most of the drier lower north and west slopes in the Park. This was probably [Grassy Woodland](#) (and Endangered vegetation class). It still has a few large old parent trees but with a dense monoculture of younger trees possibly around 60 years old. Competition between trees and loss of topsoils has restricted the growth of the trees and created a dense dry litter layer that is inhibiting understorey and ground cover species. There is little on the ground to slow water runoff and absorption into the soil.

The 2021 Ecological Restoration Area is 4 ha of regrowth forest where the slope was ripped along contours and most of the young Grey Box were cut and painted with herbicide with trunks laid across the slope. The aim was to reduce the runoff and encourage the growth of a diversity of understorey and ground cover species. This trial has been successful as can already be seen in the growth of plants across the site.

**Red Box regrowth forest** along the south-east boundary adjacent to Telegraph Road. This is an unusually dense monoculture of Red Box with sparse understorey in a site more typically Grassy Woodland with Grey Box.

**Floodplains:** The two floodplains are classed as [Plains Grassy Woodland](#) with heavier soils and mostly River Red Gums, a sparse understorey and grassy ground layer. Kangaroo Grass is common particularly in the mown area near the carpark, but this area also has a diversity of lilies and other herbs.

**Grasslands:** In the floodplain near the entrance, the central valley and the south slopes to Telegraph Road, grasslands are being maintained by annual mowing and slashing of the scrub regrowth. This has encouraged the growth of a rich diversity of native shrubs such as Hedge Wattle and Guinea Flowers, grasses including Weeping, Kangaroo, Wallaby, Spear and Red-leg Grasses, and many different herbs. Ecological gradients from dry hills to wet swales are reflected in the diversity of ground cover species.

In the Waler Paddock and some of the western slopes, the grasslands created by clearing but not regularly mowed have not yet been recolonised by trees and shrubs. It has a dense sward of spear grasses and some introduced perennial grasses that makes it difficult for the colonisers. Golden Wattles are now spreading into these areas.

Many plants have survived the disturbances and are benefitting from the current management. Golden Wattles begin flowering in August, followed by many orchids, lilies, sundews, goodenias and daisies as well as shrubby wattles, peas, guinea flowers and heaths. The season ends in

December with the late flowering of more wildflowers and a rich variety of native grasses in the open grasslands. Plant lists are in preparation.

## Wildlife



The Australian Light Horse Memorial Park is a rich place for wildlife. It has a diversity of grassland and forest habitats. Large old trees with hollows are scattered through the Park, including some old survivors of the past clearing. The large size of this Park, along with bushlands on the adjoining Seymour Bushland Park and Golf Course and the 3-chain Telegraph Road corridor, make this area of Seymour a rich place for wildlife. The area has good connections across the landscape for the movement of animals. Even more broadly, the Park lies between the riverine plains to the north and the mountain ranges to the south and east.

Nocturnal mammals such as Sugar Gliders and other possums and the threatened Brush-tailed Phascogale occur. Eastern Grey Kangaroos move between the bush and grasslands and Black Wallabies are often seen in denser areas.

The habitat diversity and the location attract a variety of birds including Black-shouldered Kites and other raptors, ground foraging species such as Speckled Warblers and White-winged Choughs, and species of the shrubs and treetops such as Red-capped Robins.

Dams in the entrance area, central gully and Waler Paddock attract many frogs and probably a few snakes although these are rarely seen.

Fauna lists are in preparation.

## Aboriginal history

The Park is on the land of the Taungurung people. The Park has at least one site of [Aboriginal cultural heritage sensitivity](#) adjacent to Telegraph Road.



## History after colonisation

On 24 and 25 December 1824, Hume and Hovell camped on the banks of the Goulburn River near Camp Hill just south the Australian Light Horse Memorial Park. Pastoralists followed in the late 1830's and Seymour was soon established as the "new" crossing place across the Goulburn. From the 1860's the land was divided into smaller holdings.

Military use of the area began as a training camp for the Victorian Mounted Rifles (VMR) in 1885, and troops were sent from here to the African (Boer) War. The VMR became the Australian Light Horse after Federation and Seymour Camp grew as a training camp during the First World War, with up to 15,000 men and hundreds of tents particularly on the on the lower north-facing slopes. Use of the Seymour Camp continued through the Second World War. Over the two wars, the Australian Light Horse was one of many different units that trained in Seymour and the Park commemorates all who served there. The Camp only ceased to operate in the 1960's as Puckapunyal was developed.

In 1978, the old Seymour Army Camp was sold by the Commonwealth Government to the Seymour Shire Council to be used for community purposes. The Seymour Bushland Park was started in 1979, but the area of the ALHMP remained a neglected area of rubbish strewn wasteland on the fringe of the Seymour township. In 1995, the idea was mooted that the area south of the Goulburn Valley Highway be established as a memorial park that would recognise the contribution made particularly by the Australian Light Horse Regiments, but also the parts played by all those men and women who trained and served in the Seymour Camp. In 1998 the new Mitchell Shire Council established the Australian Light Horse Memorial Park, and the Management Committee began the mammoth task of cleaning up the 140 hectares of land with the welcome and willing co-operation from the Army. Unwanted material left behind by the Army was removed while leaving important relics and ruins in place.

## Management

The Park is owned by Mitchell Shire Council and delegates much of the management of the Park to the [Australian Light Horse Memorial Park Committee of Management](#).

## Further information

Australian Light Horse Memorial Park Committee of Management website:

<http://www.lighthorsepark.org.au>

Mitchell Shire Website: <https://www.mitchellshire.vic.gov.au/points-of-interest/australian-light-horse-memorial-park>

Taungurung Land and Water Council at <https://taungurung.com.au>

Article with interviews of CoM members: <https://rslvic.com.au/news/lighthorse-memorial-park-story>

Goulburn Broken CMA Revegetation Guide: information on different ecological vegetation communities, plant communities and plants in the Sugarloaf zone at <https://www.gbcma.vic.gov.au/revegetation/zones/sugarloaf>

## Acknowledgements

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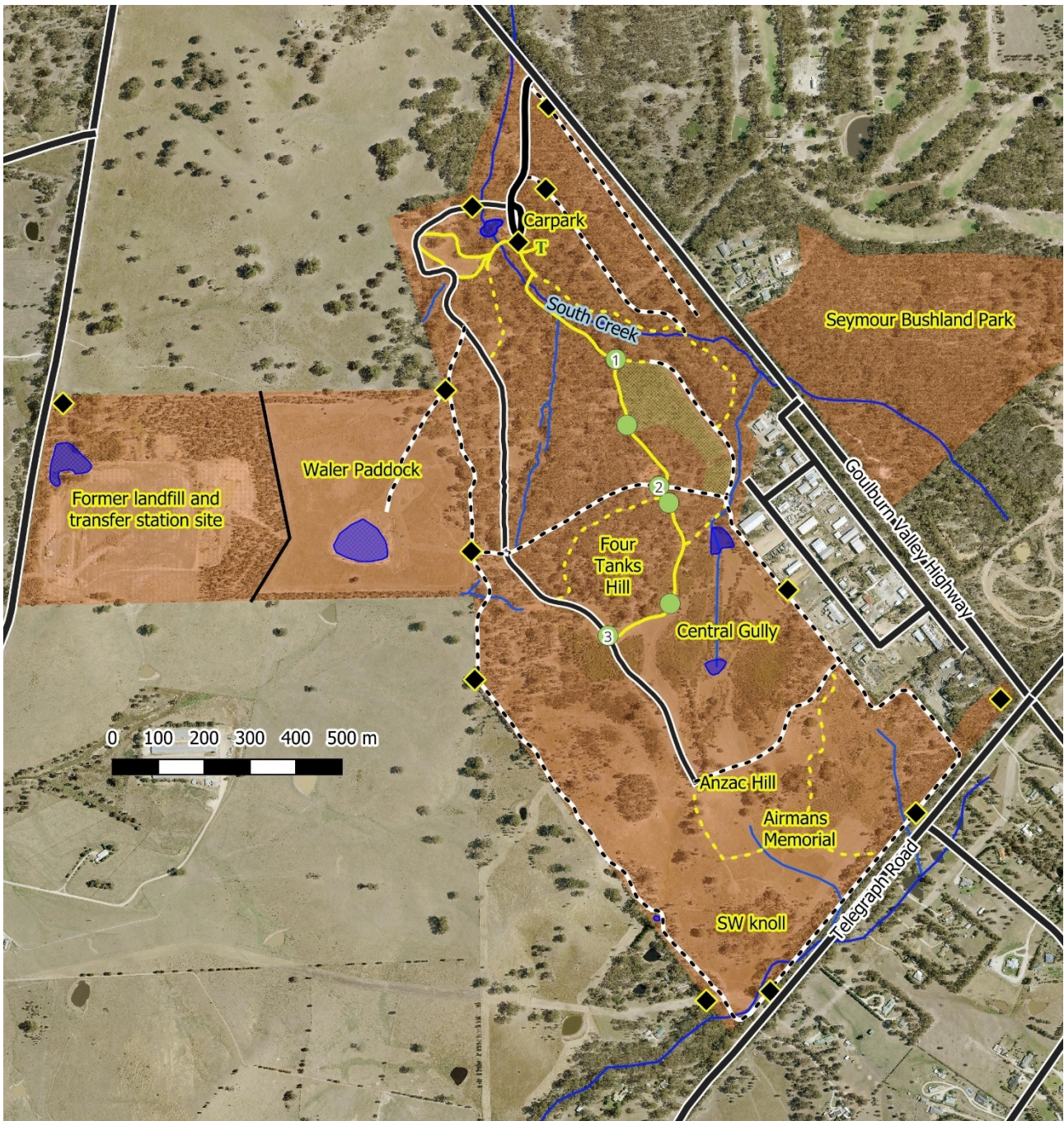
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These notes are a work in progress. If you have any comments or additional information on the nature and ecological history of the Australian Light Horse Memorial Park in Seymour, please contact us at <https://www.beam.org.au/contact>





# Australian Light Horse Memorial Park



	Australian Light Horse Memorial Park and Seymour Bushland Park		Roads		Ecological, Grassland Walks
	Ecological restoration area		Anzac Hill Road		Other walking tracks
	Creeklines and gullies		Other vehicle tracks		Gates
					Toilet