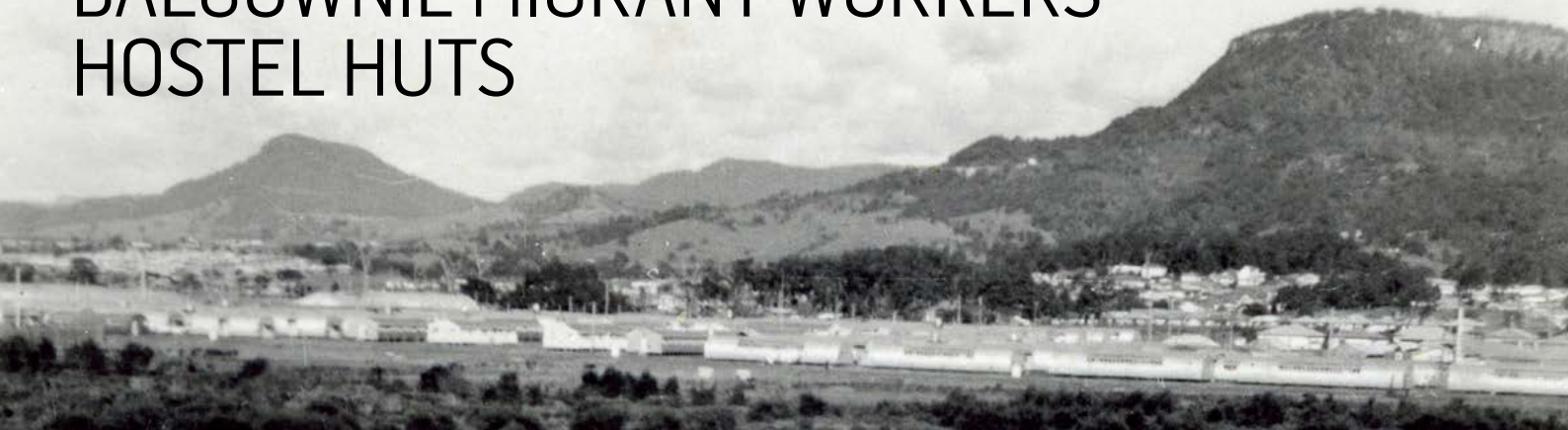


BALGOWNIE MIGRANT WORKERS' HOSTEL HUTS



What was the Balgownie Migrant Workers' Hostel?

In the early 1950s, the Commonwealth Government built a number of Migrant Hostels to house migrant workers who had emigrated to Australia under their increased migration policies, with 37 being located in NSW alone.

Three such hostels were built in the Illawarra at Unanderra, Berkley and the Balgownie Migrant Workers' Hostel at Fairy Meadow, now the site of the University of Wollongong's Campus East.

The site had up to 182 Nissen and Quonset huts which were divided into six blocks. Each pair of blocks had a shared communal Kitchen/Dining Hall and Laundry facilities.

What is a Nissen Hut?

Nissen Huts were invented during World War I by Major Peter Norman Nissen of the 29th Company of Royal Engineers as a portable shelter using few building materials. The huts were made of sheet metal pulled into a half cylinder.

A number of variations of the hut were produced including the Quonset Hut, an American variation on the Nissen Hut, developed in 1941 and used extensively during World War II.

Why Preserve Them?

The remaining Nissen and Quonset Huts have been listed on the NSW State Heritage Register. They are the remaining physical evidence of the Migrant Workers' Hostel and the associated immigration program which had a significant impact on Wollongong's growth and development.

Many individuals within the community of migrant workers who lived in the huts went on to become influential in the cultural and economic community of Wollongong. Many of the migrants and their descendants maintain strong emotional ties with the site and have been influential in the process of preserving the remaining huts.

More information on the heritage listing of the huts can be found here: www.heritage.nsw.gov.au/07_subnav_01_2.cfm?itemid=5055121

Restoration and Adaptive Re-Use

In 2004-05, the University restored one Nissen Hut and two Quonset huts on the site. Two of the huts were relocated from a flood-prone location to their present location beside the large Kitchen/ Dining Hall. They were restored and refurbished to ensure they could be re-used and preserved.



Historical Photos are from the collections of the Wollongong City Library and the Illawarra Historical Society. We encourage you to find out more about the history of the Illawarra.

To search the Library's historical Illawarra Images collection visit:
<http://mylibrary.wollongong.nsw.gov.au/cgi-bin/spybus.exe/MSGTRN/PIC/BSEARCH>

More information on the Wollongong Local Studies Library can be found here:
www.wollongong.nsw.gov.au/library/collections/Pages/localstudies.aspx

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