
TRARALGON SOUTH

Location

TRARALGON CREEK ROAD LOY YANG, LATROBE CITY

Municipality

LATROBE CITY

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H8221-0004

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - March 26, 2024

What is significant?

The site of Traralgon South (H8221-0004) represents the original location of the late 19th century township of Traralgon South, prior to its relocation to a new location in the early 1980s. There remains a moderate to high potential for undisturbed archaeological deposits to remain within the site, particularly the former locations of the town's state school, church and mechanics institute.

How is it significant?

The site of Traralgon South (H8221-0004) is of local historical, social, spiritual and archaeological significance for its association with the former Traralgon South township.

Why is it significant?

The site of Traralgon South (H8221-0004) is of historical significance for representing the location of an early township in the Gippsland region.

The site is of social significance due to the presence of the Traralgon South school and mechanics institute.

The site is of spiritual significance due to the presence of the Traralgon South church. This church is known to have housed a multid denominational congregation, attesting to a level of tolerance between followers of different branches of Christianity in a small town setting.

The site is of archaeological significance for the moderate to high likelihood of undisturbed archaeological deposits remaining at the former locations of notable buildings within the township. While no freestanding structures remain at the site, the presence of historically significant surface artefacts and a bitumen surface at the location of the 1879/1923 school buildings indicates a minimal level of ground disturbance following the relocation of the township. Likewise, the undulating ground surface at the former location of the Traralgon South mechanics institute points to the presence of subsurface features. There is also a moderate potential for archaeological deposits remain in any other undisturbed areas of the site, in association with activities undertaken by the community or individual residents in public land within the heart of the township. Any archaeological deposits are likely to shed light on everyday life in a small Gippsland town in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Interpretation of Site

Mid 19th century land-use of the area was primarily pastoral. Between 1844 and 1876, the site was located on either the Traralgon pastoral run, established by Edward Hobson, or the Loy Yang pastoral run, established by James Rintoul. As such, the land was likely specifically used as grazing land for cattle or sheep. Late 19th to late 20th century land use of the site was characterised by development and occupation of the township of Traralgon South. The town began to be developed following the 1876 pastoral land sales, with a school, church and mechanics institute being constructed in rapid succession between 1880-1890. The township was relocated in the early 1980s due to the acquisition of the site by the State Electricity Commission (SEC). The site likely served a combination of civic, educational, religious and residential functions during the lifespan of Traralgon South at the location. Late 20th to early 21st century land use of the site has been characterised by its occupation by the SEC. The site has been left vacant during this time, with minimal development having taken place since the relocation of Traralgon South.

Hermes Number 10842

Property Number

History

The earliest European occupation of the area was represented by large pastoral squatter runs. These properties included the Traralgon Run, established by Edward Hobson in 1844, as well as the Loy Yang run, which was established around a similar time by James Rintoul (Cuthill 1970). The land surrounding Traralgon South was subsequently opened for selection in 1876, leading prompting the development of the township (McCormack 1975: 1).

John Barton's homestead, located near Traralgon South, was established as Traralgon South's first school in January 1879 (McCormack 1975: 3). This served as a temporary measure, with a dedicated school building being opened within the town in October 1880. This school building was a portable wooden building comprising the school room and a two room teachers' residence, constructed at a total cost of £178 16s 6d (McCormack 1975: 3). The 1880 school building and adjoining teacher's residence are depicted in a 1920 photograph (Figure 10), revealing them to be modest, single-storey, weatherboard structures.

John G. Byrne and Euphemia H. Leslie were the first teachers at Traralgon South State School, teaching for two and six years respectively. In 1889, John E. Woodruff began his 18-year tenure as the schoolmaster (McCormack 1975: 5; Beaton 1975: 16). Woodruff also ran the Post Office from the school from 1889, with individual mail

boxes being established at the school and pupils taking their family's mail home at the end of each school day. The Post Office appears to have continued to operate from the school until around 1917, when it was moved to the McCormack home (McCormack 1975: 21).

A multid denominational church was constructed at Traralgon South in 1889, with the cost of construction covered by local residents and a parcel of land located to the south of the school donated by one Mr. Pentland (McCormack 1975: 5-6). Photographs of the church demonstrate that it was a modest weatherboard building with a corrugated iron roof (Figures 11-12).

The Traralgon South Mechanics Institute was opened on 3 July 1890, with a concert and ball being held to celebrate the occasion (McCormack 1975: 7). A verandah was added to the rear of the Mechanics Institute in 1894 (McCormack 1975: 7). Significant renovations to the building were subsequently completed in April 1914, with the hall being extended by 12 feet (3.7 m) to make room for a stage, two back rooms being enlarged and a fireplace installed in the committee room (McCormack 1975: 7). It is unclear whether the rear verandah was demolished or filled in as part of these renovations or possibly relocated. Photographs of the Mechanics Institute (Figure 13-14) demonstrate a weatherboard building with a corrugated iron roof.

By 1911, it was reported that the school building had fallen into disrepair, with the studding and weatherboards having been eaten away by termites, the blocks worn out and the ventilation in a poor state (McCormack 1975: 4, Fulton 2004: 10). The teacher's residences were also later described by Winnifred Lade, the daughter of headmaster Herbert Cook (1917), as being cramped and infested with rats (Fulton 2004: 9). The dilapidated 1879 school building was subsequently replaced by a second school building, which opened on 20 February 1923 (McCormack 1975:4; Figure 15). A photograph taken on this day (Figure 15) reveals that the new school building was also a weatherboard structure, with a smaller outbuilding (possibly a water closet) visible in the background.

The mechanics institute also underwent significant expansions in 1927, with the building being widened to a width of 25 feet (7.6m) and a new Jarrah floor being installed. In 1933, another tender to the value of £296 for unspecified alterations and additions to the mechanics institute was accepted (McCormack 1975: 8).

The earliest aerial photography of the site dates to 1935 (Figure 16). In this image, the 1889 church, 1890 mechanics institute and 1923 school building are all visible. Two smaller outbuildings are visible immediately to the south and south-east of the school building, with the south-western building likely to be the same one as depicted in the 1923 photograph (Figure 15). The remainder of the site is covered in dense vegetation, with no other structures visible.

The site is next depicted in a 1955 aerial photograph (Figure 17). Notably, the outbuilding located immediately south of the school is absent from this photo, although the other outbuilding remains visible. Other modifications to the site include the clearing of significant sections of trees and the addition of a large tree plantation to the south-east of the school buildings.

Traralgon South is depicted in a 1958 Loy Yang parish plan (Figure 18), as well as within a detailed layout featured on the same plan (Figure 19). This plan confirms the school, mechanics institute and church as existing within the same locations of the site as identified in the 1935 and 1955 aerial photographs.

The site is next depicted in aerial photographs from 1964 (Figure 20) and 1974 (Figure 21). The layout of the site appears largely unchanged in these captures, although the school building has been notably expanded in the 1974 image. This modification corresponds with the addition of an extra classroom in 1968, in order to accommodate the growing number of pupils (McCormack 1975: 4).

With the development of coal power infrastructure in the post-war period, the State Electricity Commission (SEC) acquired the town in anticipation of the construction of the Loy Yang Power Station (Context 2010: 49). The new Traralgon South township was subsequently established 5 km to the south of its original location. Several buildings were relocated to new location as part of this process, including the 1889 church and 1923 school, with the 1980 school centenary celebrations ultimately coinciding with this relocation (Fulton 2004: 11).

A 1984 aerial image (Figure 22) depicts the site following the relocation of the town, with no buildings remaining within the site extent. The site is also depicted in aerial photographs taken in 2006 (Figure 23) and 2021 (Figure 24), revealing little development within the site since the relocation of the township.

This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.

For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>