
HOMeward BOUND MINE SITE

Location

NINE MILE CREEK STANLEY, INDIGO SHIRE

Municipality

INDIGO SHIRE

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H8225-0031

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Historical Significance

The site has scientific significance because of its intact mullock heap and network values, as part of the Nine Mile Historic Reserve. The Nine Mile Creek Historic Area is significant for its outstanding diversity of gold-mining sites which represent nineteenth-century methods of both alluvial mining and reef mining (including open cut reef mining), the two main types of gold-mining carried out on Australian fields. (Criteria A3, B2) 'The area is associated with an important era in the history of north-eastern Victoria and it reflects the industry which supported Beechworth, Yackandandah and other towns in the region for a substantial part of the second half of the last century. (Criterion A 4) 'The way in which the mining sites blend in with a rugged creek valley heavily clad with native timber gives the place aesthetically important landscape qualities. (Criterion F 1)' (Australian Heritage Commission, file no. 004656 2/08/245/0001/02)

Hermes Number

10945

Property Number

History

Heritage Inventory History of Site:

The Homeward Bound was the first reef discovered in the (then) Nine-Mile Mining Division, in August 1861. Numerous claims were registered and the first crushing took place in June 1862. A steam-powered battery was erected, which, in 1864, was converted to water-power by means of an overshot waterwheel. The mine had hitherto been worked by shaft, but a tunnel was completed in 1864, striking the reef at a depth of 300 ft. A tramway conveyed ore from mine to mill. The 'economical' waterwheel turned out to be impractical in the notoriously dry Nine-mile Creek catchment, and in 1865 a new, more powerful steam engine was installed. In 1866, the mine was being worked at a depth of 370 ft, by means of a tunnel 750 ft long. Shareholders were congratulated on possessing 'one of the best plants, and certainly one of the finest reefs in the district', and quartz reefers on other mines at the Upper Nine-Mile were 'waiting their turn at the mill'. Up to the beginning of 1866, the Homeward Bound mine had yielded 8485 oz, valued at over £33,600. By June 1868, though, the reef had diminished, and the Homeward Bound battery ('the only mill in district') was advertised for sale.

In 1869, the Homeward Bound Crushing Co. Amalgamated took over the reef. The company's nine shareholders included John A. Wallace. A new machinery site, 500 yards from the reef, was registered, as was a tramway connecting the two. Apparently, no progress was made, and the reef was abandoned as unpayable when Bigelow & Co. took it up in 1873. Shortly after commencing work they discovered a payable reef running parallel to the old one, and a water-powered battery was erected, giving 'very handsome' returns for several years.

Diminishing yields resulted in the mine being let on tribute in the late seventies. By 1884, the Homeward Bound tunnel had been extended from the 400 ft of ten years earlier to 1200 ft. The company was reorganised in 1886 and received government assistance to proceed with working the reef to a greater depth than its existing 700 ft. The mining surveyor called the Homeward Bound 'the longest and best defined reef in the district', having been worked for more than 25 years and generally yielding 'splendidly'. A steam engine for pumping and winding was erected in the tunnel, and the water-powered battery was still operating. Within months, the company was discouraged by poor yields and operations wound down. 'It is a pity,' wrote the mining surveyors, 'that a strong company cannot be got to take the working of this reef in hand, as all experienced miners are of opinion that it is the best reef in the locality'.

The mine and machinery changed hands numerous times during the 1890s, but little actual work appears to have been done. In 1903, a tailings dam was constructed 400 yards from the Homeward Bound battery, with a tailrace connecting the two. Operations were confined to opening up and working the No. 3 shoot of ore, between No. 3 level and the surface.

In 1910, the 'practically abandoned' Homeward Bound mine was floated on the English market and re-styled as the Lake Kerferd gold mine. The Beechworth mining registrar estimated that to that date the mine had yielded gold to a total value of £250,000. The mine had been idle for some time before a bushfire in 1914 claimed the battery house, engine house, assay office, cyanide office, poppet legs, and stables, 'the iron roofs of the buildings and the ponderous machinery from which the supporting timber was burnt came crashing down at intervals'. (Ovens & Murray Advertiser, 11 February 1914) Ashes falling down the shaft ignited the mine timbers, and the draught through the tunnel (now 1800 ft long) which joined the shaft at 150 ft depth fanned the flames so that flames erupted from the shaft 'like a volcano'. Forty years' accumulation of tools was twisted and ruined, as was the assay equipment and the 'splendid' mill.

In 1978, the National Trust proposed that its existing Wallaby Mine Historic Area be expanded to include the Homeward Bound mullock heap, which was earmarked by the Forestry Commission for road metal. The site was subsequently classified as part of the Nine Mile Historic Area by the LCC and registered on the National Estate.

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/>