
BARHAM RIVER SAWMILL (ACCOMMODATION) SITE

Location

120 BARHAM RIVER ROAD APOLLO BAY, COLAC OTWAY SHIRE

Municipality

COLAC OTWAY SHIRE

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7620-0017

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Interpretation of Site

The compact historic artefact layer may indicate the place where the Apollo Bay Company housed its employees in the mid-19th century ('huts to accommodate 20 men'). The basis for this conjecture is the sheer volume of domestic artefacts (which were uncovered in a single square metre of excavated topsoil) and its proximity to the former sawmill. At the time the clifftop site was first used, it probably had open access to the sea, which would have facilitated the delivery of consumables and materials. Attached is a map that presents an overlay of historic maps (Smythe [1846] and Lands and Survey [1866]) on the modern landscape. Most notable is that Smythe identified four navigable arms of the Barham River extending inland from behind the Mounts Bay beach barrier. The Apollo Bay Company's sawmill was at the head of one of these arms, according to the 1866 map, presumably for open water access. The proposed Barham River sawmill (accommodation) site is located on a clifftop overlooking the former sawmill and open channel, within easy walking distance of the mill.

Archaeological Significance	Potentially significant. No formal assessment undertaken for this recording.
Hermes Number	185966
Property Number	

History

The place is associated with one of the earliest sawmills in the Apollo Bay area and also overlooks a former historic tramway and hydraulic race constructed on the floodplain of the Barham River in the mid-19th century. The sawmill and tramway were first recorded by the Victorian Department of Lands and Survey in 1866 (County of Polworth map).

Timber-cutting began in the region in 1849. By 1853, the Apollo Bay Company had set up large-scale milling operations based at Point Bunbury. The company built a dam on the Barham River, a reservoir, a three mile race, sawpits, huts to accommodate 20 men and eight miles of roads with six bridges (Loney and Morris, 1979). It also erected a 300 foot long wooden jetty at Point Bunbury and a three mile long wooden tramway from the jetty up through the Barham River valley.

By 1858, the company had built another jetty and offices near the Barham River mouth. The years 1861-1862 saw a great influx of people into Apollo Bay to split sleepers for the Melbourne to Bendigo railway (Loney and Morris 1979). The population swelled to 1,000 but by the mid 1860s less than 200 remained. The rapid decline of the timber industry was the result of exhausting the accessible resource and reliance on sea-borne trade and transport, which was inherently risky.

The compact layer of historic artefacts was uncovered in August, 2011 during the course of a complex assessment CHMP (Aboriginal) being undertaken for Barwon Water's proposed Apollo Bay Bulk Water Storage. The potential historical significance of the finds was not realized until black mud was removed from the artefacts in a laundry tub later in the day they were discovered.

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/>