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# BOWERS FARM



Bowers Farm October 2014



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## Location

440 HORSEHILL ROAD GRENVILLE, MOORABOOL SHIRE

## Municipality

MOORABOOL SHIRE

## Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

## Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7622-0456

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

Surface features, artefact scatters, visible ruins and earthworks suggest that Bowers Farm contains archaeological deposits of domestic and agricultural buildings, outbuildings and other structures, paths, roadways, field and property boundaries and plough marks. While the site is clearly ruinous lack of observable disturbance suggests that sub surface deposits have integrity. These deposits evidence the changing approaches to land management and agricultural practices during the latter half of the 19th Century and through the WWI. The farm is linked to the late 19th Century land acts and the effects of the Ballarat gold rush. As such archaeological deposits are provisionally assessed as being of significance to the understanding of the history of

Victoria and the local region.

**Interpretation of Site**

Narmbool Estate is a pastoral estate established as a squatters lease in the late 1830s. The extant bluestone homestead dates to the early 1850s. A grave dated to 1855 (to William Munday) lies near the homestead. Narmbool has remained a pastoral property. In 2000 the then owners Andrew and Robin Ferry presented the estate, including the homestead and colonial furniture to the Sovereign Hill Museums Association. Since the estate has developed a significant education program as well as sustainable farming practices.

The archaeological landscape of the Bowers Farm evidences changes in pastoral land management during the second half of the 19th Century through to the early/ middle of the 20th Century. It includes archaeological evidence of land clearance, establishment of selection settlement and return to broader estate management.

**Archaeological Significance**

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**Hermes Number** 197819

**Property Number**

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## History

Narmbool was taken up and established as a squatters estate in 1838-9 by Glasgow Merchant Hugh Niven. The estate remained a going concern for grazing of cattle and sheep until portions were offered up for selection in 1866. The Narmbool homestead includes elements dating to the early 1850s with the main, extant, homestead dating to the 1880s built by the Austin Family (of Barwon Park). Land adjacent and to the west of Williamson Creek was portioned into selections after the Grant and Selection Act in 1870s and taken up over the next 20 years. Progressively this land was cleared and settled by a number families (most from Scotland) including the Scotts and Bowers families. Some of the land selections returned to the Narmbool estate during the 20th Century. The historic landscape along Williamson Creek has returned to pastoral usage. In 2000 Narmbool became the custodial property to Sovereign Hill Museum and is currently run by the Museum Trust as a working farm and educational centre.

The historic landscape of the Williamson Creek valley represents approximately 140 years of agricultural land use that highlights the various changes in management, tenure and ownership of Victorian land since settlement. While the landscape has always been used to graze animals or raise crops the archaeological sites show activities including, land clearance, construction of domestic and agricultural buildings, boundaries, roads and pathways. Physical evidence of squatting, Closer Settlement policies (including land selection and soldier settlement movements) are present.

Surface inspection of Bowers Farm suggests that there are significant and well preserved, ruinous and subsurface archaeological deposits. There is also visual indicators of boundaries, ploughing, domestic gardening, and construction and usage of tracks, roads and paths. It is likely that there are extensive deposits of building foundations, chimney bases and collapse. Isolated artefacts are present on the surface including pottery and glass. Exotic tree, shrub and bulb species are present and growing within historic garden settings. It is likely that the Bowers Farm site includes a rare survival of a collection of archaeological sites and deposits (with apparently good integrity) that represent important changes in agricultural practice and land tenure in Victoria in the latter quarter of the 19th Century and first quarter of the 20th Century.

The settlement of the Victorian countryside including squatting, pre emptive selection and the protracted and damaging attempt of the Crown to wrest ownership through various land acts is a paramount contributor to the pattern of land use and ownership and agrarian economy seen today. The foundations of rural communities, land laws and attitude to the countryside are provided by this history. The forced Closer Settlement model evidenced at the Bowers Farm site shows the broader influence of the Ballarat gold rush that not only changed land tenure but influenced settlement patterns of migrants from the other side of the world (in this case Scotland). The challenges faced by farmers on small selections such as Bowers, caused privations that contributed to the pioneer legend and in some cases promoted innovation in agricultural practices. The eventual failure of selection and soldier settlement is an important component of 20th Century Victorian history.

The archaeological and historical landscape at Bowers farm has the ability to yield physical evidence important under the headings of historical, scientific and social significance.

Today the landscape has considerable aesthetic significance as a rare, intact historical landscape with picturesque vistas to Mount Buninyong, and ruins and remnant gardens contributing to an understanding of a rural life not seen for almost a century.

History taken from Akers 2010, *Hold Fast the Heritage* The Sovereign Hill Museum Association

*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/>*