
ARMISTEAD'S SAWMILL

Location

KENNETT RIVER ROAD, KENNETT RIVER VIC 3234

Municipality

COLAC OTWAY SHIRE

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7620-0020

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - November 10, 2020

Armistead's Sawmill was set up by Syd Armistead between Kennett River and Hitchcock Gully in 1941. The settlement originally included a sawmill and eight houses for mill workers but grew in size to be one of the largest processors of timber in the region by 1950 (Sheehan 2003). The sawmill site was built between Cassidy Drive and Kennett Road, to the west of the Great Ocean Road and initial used equipment sourced from the 1930's ACA sawmill in Lorne (Houghton 2001). Timber was initially logged from along Hitchcock Gully and winched up to the mill site using an 700m horse drawn narrow gauge tramway on the south western side of Hitchcock Gully until 1945. Gravel logging roads were constructed further north in Hitchcock Gully and along Grey River Road, and trucks were used to transport logs to the mill from 1945 onwards.

The Armistead's Sawmill site contains no extant standing structures, however it is considered that the place has 'moderate potential' to contain archaeological remains that are, or are likely to be, in a condition that will allow information to be obtained that will contribute to the understanding of the site. Any potential structural elements and landform modification at Armistead's Sawmill would likely date from the establishment of the sawmill in 1941, which utilised earlier 1930s technology transported from other timber processing sites in the Otways. Aerial imagery from 1952 onwards indicate that the site extent has not been developed since the sawmill ceased operation in the 1950s.

The place has historical significance at a local level, as it is associated with development of the Kennett River township after the Great Ocean Road was opened and provided access to previously inaccessible parts of the

Otway Coast. It is historically associated with the timber industry of the Otways, which was one of the major industries in the region during the 19th and early-20th centuries. The sawmill site and tramway at Armistead's Sawmill have scientific significance as representative example of the late stage timber industry in the Otway region.

N.B. Additional details including the results of the site inspection (pp. 19-21) and consideration of archaeological potential (p.24); are included in the 'Wye River to Kennett River Walking Track, Historic Heritage - Preliminary Assessment' (Heritage Insight P/L, 2020) submitted as supporting documentation with this site card. Analysis of site (interpretation) As a result of the 'Wye River to Kennett River Walking Track, Historic Heritage - Preliminary Assessment' (report provided as supporting documentation; Heritage Insight P/L 2020) the nominated site has been assessed as having more than a 'low level of archaeological significance'. It is also considered that the nominated site (Armistead's Sawmill) meets the definition of an archaeological site – as defined by the Heritage Act 2017; as any structural elements and landform modification preserved at the site likely date from the establishment of the sawmill in 1941, and as such are more than 75 years old. Consideration of thresholds for listing on the Heritage Inventory are detailed below: Threshold A (archaeology) Background research and the site inspection indicate that: • There is 'moderate potential' for archaeological features, specifically structural features associated with industrial features including the sawmill and tramway constructed in 1941 to be preserved within the proposed site extent; • There is also a low likelihood for archaeological deposits associated with houses and sawmill; and • Any preserved archaeological features and/or deposits will be associated with the 1941 to early 1950s use of the site as a sawmill and residential settlement, and are likely to be in a condition that could contribute to an understanding of the sites historic occupation. Threshold B (place history) Background research indicates that: • The site is clearly associated with mid twentieth century timber processing industry in the Otway Ranges; • The log tram was one of the last to be constructed in the Otways and represents the fading remnant of a once popular mode of log transport; and • Part of the site was occupied for residential purposes from at least 1948. All portions of the Armistead's Sawmill site and associated housing shown in the 1948 survey map as well as the tramway alignment within Hitchcock Gully have been recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Inventory (Attachments 2-3).

Hermes
Number 206954

Property
Number

History

N.B. Additional details including historic maps and photographs are included in the Land Use History section of the 'Wye River to Kennett River Walking Track, Historic Heritage - Preliminary Assessment' (Heritage Insight P/L, 2020) submitted as supporting documentation with this site card. Sources included in the below text are referenced in this report. Place History 1941-c.1950: Armistead's Sawmill A sawmill was established by Syd Armistead between Kennett River and Hitchcock Gully in 1941. The settlement originally included the sawmill and eight houses for mill workers but grew in size to be one of the largest processors of timber in the region by 1950 (Sheehan 2003). The sawmill site was built between Cassidy Drive and Kennett Road, to the west of the Great Ocean Road and initial used equipment sourced from the 1930's ACA sawmill in Lorne (Houghton 2001). Timber was initially sourced from along Hitchcock Gully and winched up to the mill site using an 700m horse drawn narrow gauge tramway on the south western side of Hitchcock Gully until 1945. Gravel logging roads were constructed further north in Hitchcock Gully and along Grey River Road, and trucks were used to transport logs to the mill thereafter. Job advertisements for benchmen, puller-outs and levermen appear for Armistead's Sawmill from 1948 and 1950 (Argus, 08 March 1948, p. 11; Argus, 11 February 1950, p. 40). The 1948 advertisement states that housing is provided free and the positions are suitable for married men as there is a school located in

the town (Argus, 08 March 1948, p. 11). A 1948 survey map of Kennett River shows the location of Armistead's Sawmill, with a number of small weatherboard houses, one of which is marked as being used as the school, and the timber mill itself (Attachment 5). A road runs north/south between the sawmill and the weatherboard houses. A number of small roadways are also marked on the survey map along most of the proposed site extent south of Hitchcock Gully. To the north of Hitchcock Gully there is a weatherboard house and undeveloped allotments visible, as well as another track running north. Kennett Road is recorded as a gravelled road in good condition and the old tram line alignment is marked as being used as a road. A review of historic newspapers suggests that operations at Armistead's Sawmill likely ceased in c.1950. An aerial image dating to 1952 (See supporting documentation; 'Wye River to Kennett River Walking Track, Historic Heritage - Preliminary Assessment'), supports this assumption as the area of land marked 'sawmill' on the 1948 survey map (See supporting documentation; 'Wye River to Kennett River Walking Track, Historic Heritage - Preliminary Assessment'), appears as vacant land, though cleared of vegetation in the 1952 image. A line of small houses, possibly terraced into the slope to the west of road running north/south, are visible in this image; however, the houses may have been vacant at this date and/or occupied by non-mill workers. Kennett Road appears as an established gravel road and a separate track along the old tram line route is visible running north west of Kennett Road towards Hitchcock Gully. Some vegetation clearance has also taken place south of Cassidy Drive and north of Kennett Road, however only a handful of distinct structures are visible.

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/>