
EPSOM HOTEL

Location

1 BUCKLAND STREET, EPSOM VIC 3551

Municipality

GREATER BENDIGO CITY

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7724-0637

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - May 11, 2021

Epsom Hotel served an important role on the Bendigo goldfield. When it was constructed it was positioned at the outskirts of the rush. However, by the late-1850s it was suddenly at the centre of the Epsom goldrush. Historical records suggest the hotel was the site of numerous balls, galas, wrestling matches, dancing classes and other forms of community entertainment. It was the place where those injured or killed through accidents on the goldfields were brought where they could be treated in the former case by physicians, or visited by the community in the case of the latter. The building appears to have been fairly substantial hosting upwards of 160 people for one ball. When advertised for sale in January 1856 it was described as being comprised of a 'large concert room, sitting rooms, bedrooms, bar, kitchen, stables etc.' It was noted as having a garden and a brickfield adjacent to the property. These numerous facets, and the numerous historical activities that took place on the premise, give any archaeological fabric relating to Epsom Hotel cultural heritage significance. That significance can be expressed both in terms of its historical importance, but also from a scientific/research standpoint.

The hotel is known to have been submerged by gold mining sludge in 1859—effectively capping and protecting it from subsequent impacts. The depth of sludge is likely between one and two metres, which increases the potential for well-preserved archaeological fabric to remain in the area. As the hotel ceased to function in 1859 and it does not appear other businesses were built on the ground after, the hotel's archaeological materials are capable of providing tightly dated information from an important period of the Bendigo goldfield (1854 to 1859).

The submersion of the hotel is used as an example of the destructive nature of sludge in evidence given to a

select committee in 1861, making it a part of the sludge story.

Interpretation
of Site

Various community-wide events were hosted at Epsom Hotel between 1855 and 1859 including luncheons, 'grand balls', wrestling matches, dances and dance lessons, concerts, foot races, a 'highland fling' (a day of Scottish sports that included 'putting the stone' and 'throwing the hammer') (Bendigo Advertiser, 29th January 1856; 11th June 1856; 27th December 1856). It was advertised for sale 12th January 1856 and was described as being comprised of a 'large concert room, sitting rooms, bedrooms, bar, kitchen, stables etc' (Bendigo Advertiser, 12th January 1856). One ball hosted there was noted as having had 160 ladies and gentlemen in attendance (Bendigo Advertiser, 29th January 1856). It was also noted as having a garden and a brickfield adjacent to the property and is likely surrounded by evidence of the gold rush including mineshafts dug to a depth of '40 to 50 feet' (Bendigo Advertiser, 13th June 1856; 27th February 1857). When accidents occurred on the goldfield the injured were sometimes brought to the premises, where they could be seen by physicians, there was at least one wake held there (Bendigo Advertiser, 1st May 1856). It is currently a grassed paddock—awaiting subdivision. Epsom Hotel's probable location is inferred through a combination of historical maps and historical descriptions. It was almost certainly on the west side of Bendigo Creek, as it is described as being 'at the yards of Mr. Brocklebank' who owned property on that side (Bendigo Advertiser, 1st September 1855) (see attached maps). Other historical mentions also seem to support that notion (Sludge Select Committee 1861 (1887):2,8,11,14). The hotel was also described as being 'directly opposite the race-course, and within 300 yards of it' (see attached map; Bendigo Advertiser, 17th December 1857). An advertisement for a local quartz crushing mill is noted as being situated on Bendigo Creek 'about 200 yards from Epsom Hotel' (Bendigo Advertiser, 21st March 1857)—a map from 1860 shows a crushing mill just beyond 200 yards from the area (see attached). A newspaper article describing its inundation by sludge refers to a nearby bridge as being 'the crossing place at the Epsom Hotel', which suggests the bridge was at least somewhat near to the hotel—the attached map shows a bridge along the creek along the property's eastern boundary.

Hermes
Number 207099

Property
Number

History

Epsom Hotel operated from at least 1854 to 1859, when it was submerged by gold mining sludge. It is not currently clear when the hotel was first built, but it, along with ten acres of property surrounding it, were purchased for £1,000 by a Mr. Grant in 1854 (*Bendigo Advertiser*, 25th November 1858). By September 1855, the property appears to be owned and operated by a Mr. Brocklebank (*Bendigo Advertiser*, 1st September 1855). In April 1856, the hotel was bought by a W. Fisher (*Bendigo Advertiser*, 18th April 1856), then by George Smith in September 1856, and then a Mr. Ingham by 1858. In October 1859, the hotel is reported to have been 'utterly ruined' and 'completely covered' by sludge (waterborne mining sediment) inundation—a consequence of upstream mining (*Bendigo Advertiser*, 26th October 1859; Sludge Select Committee 1861 (1887)). That sludge is later described as having gone 'completely through the house' and 'rose up to the window sills'. It does not appear that any buildings were constructed on the property after this incident.

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/>