
FORMER HOUSE SITE, WYNDHOLM PARK, MINERS REST

Location

171 GILLIES ROAD, MINERS REST

Municipality

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7623-0353

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - April 4, 2023

What is significant?

Strong evidence of potential historical archaeological remains (in a ruinous state and mostly subsurface context) of a farming homestead and access track / driveway, located adjacent what is now an unused road reserve on a property whose address is 171 Gillies Road, Miners Rest. Evidence of archaeological remains is present in the raised remnants of a volcanic boulder lined driveway/ access track leading east from what is now a grassed road reserve, to an area of raised, rubble but grassed over ground at the location of a former homestead. It is known that this location once housed a residence, several outbuildings and yards / garden as well as windrow plantings. A c. 1934 aerial photograph shows the location of structures present at that time, although other structures may have been present at the site prior to this photograph being taken. The remains are thought to date to at least c. 1886, and potentially earlier. It is known that the built structures on site had been demolished by not long after the mid-twentieth century, and it is likely that any archaeological features associated with the site are over 75 years old. The only detailed information about the type and extent of structural features once present at this location comes from a c. 1934 aerial – which shows what appears to be a residence, yards, and several outbuildings. Archaeological methods are required to determine the extent, nature and integrity of the site, and to shed light on the type of remains, their potential age beyond what is reasonably supposed, and therefore their associations with the local area and people at different times. The subsurface nature of the bulk of the archaeological site means that there is strong potential for the archaeological record to provide valuable information in the form of preserved artefacts and features associated with the former use of the site.

Please see attached supporting documentation for a detailed statement of significance measured against the thresholds for the entry of archaeological sites on the Victorian Heritage Register.

How is it significant?

The place provides information about rural residential (farming) occupation of the land on the former Wyndholm Preemptive Right from likely at least from the late nineteenth century and possibly earlier. All other evidence of residential occupation on this once large landholding has been demolished, and no known historical archaeological representations of other residential sites remain.

The site potentially provides information about the lives of mid-late nineteenth century tenant farmers who occupied the land when it was under the ownership of the former squatter Thomas Waldie.

The site almost definitely represents the residence of David and Jessie Ferguson, long-term tenants and then owners of land within Wyndholm Estate – both of whose associations also extend to other lots on the property. Jessie Ferguson is also associated with Lot 1 where she lived for some time as part of the Fisher family – the last 6 years of which she listed as the tenant farmer. David Ferguson is likely associated with Lot 2, and undeveloped farming lot which he leased from Thomas Waldie for some 15 years prior to his 1885 marriage to Jessie and 1886 purchase of Lot 3. David remained at the residence until his death in 1897, and Jessie until 1929, when she moved away aged 86. See attached supporting documentation for further information.

Why is it significant?

The site provides material evidence of residential farming life on the outskirts of Ballarat likely from at least the 1880s and possibly from earlier in the 19th century. The site may provide information about the lives of mid-late century tenant farmers who occupied the land when it was under the ownership of the former squatter Thomas Waldie.

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The Fergusons represent a way of life for early farming settlers of the Ballarat region who arrived in the region and called it home. The Fergusons arrived at Wyndholm in the late 1860s (Jessie) and early 1870s (David) as tenant farmers to the original squatter landholder, and remained on the property for the remainder of their working lives – in Jessie’s case for some 60 years. Although their relationship to and responsibility for the land will have changed over time, as they moved between allotments at Wyndholm, and took the opportunity when it arose to become owner-occupiers of a lot, the way of life, farming on the estate, remained the same. See attached supporting documentation for a discussion of the significance of the site in relation to Victoria's framework of historical themes.

Interpretation
of Site

On a balance of probabilities, the potential archaeological remains relate to a farming complex including a residence and outbuildings, that was likely present on the property and occupied from the mid-late nineteenth century to the mid twentieth century or so. It is most likely that the remains relate to occupation of the site from the 1880s onwards, although there is the possibility that there was a residence at this location from as early as the mid 1800s.

Archaeological field investigation would be required to determine the likely age of the property and/or phases of occupation. Depending on when the farm complex was constructed, its history could relate to a number of tenant farmers who lived on Wyndholm Estate when it fell under the ownership of Thomas Waldie. More likely, the house and outbuildings were constructed in the 1880s, possibly by Morrison or if not shortly after by David and Jessie Ferguson, farmers. David Ferguson resided at the property until his death in 1897, while Jessie remained until moving away in 1929 and leasing it out, at the age of 86. Please see attached supporting documentation for a detailed analysis of the site as thus far known.

Hermes
Number

209516

Property
Number

History

The place formed part of Thomas Waldie's Preemptive Right and the land and its surrounds have been put to pastoral/agricultural use since at least the 1850s. Tenant farmers were present on this estate, and possibly resident on this lot, from the mid 1850s until Waldie's death in 1885, when individual lots were sold off. It is considered that the earliest possible date for the potential archaeological remains relates to tenant farming in the 1850s, whereas the latest likely date for construction of a residence on this lot is on or around 1886. It is considered most likely this homestead was built by/for David and Jessie Ferguson around 1886, and occupied by David and Jessie until David's death, and afterwards by Jessie Ferguson, sometimes with a partner, until 1929, when she moved away and leased it out aged 86. Jessie Ferguson (nee Fisher) had an extensive history at Wyndholm, likely occupying other lots as tenant farmers for some years (with a former husband and other family members) prior to purchasing the lot in question c. 1886. Aerial photography confirmed the homestead and outbuildings were extant c. 1934 but had been demolished by c. 1961. Please see attached supporting documentation for a detailed place history.

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/>