
THOMAS FIRST MILL SITE

Location

PLENTY GORGE PARK, OFF BRIDGE INN ROAD MERNDA, WHITTLESEA CITY

Municipality

WHITTLESEA CITY

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7922-0537

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - August 1, 2024

What is significant?

The archaeological remains of the first unfinished Moses Thomas Flour mill, comprising remains of the foundations, water race and artefact deposit.

How is it significant?

The first Thomas mill site is of historical and archaeological significance

Why is it significant?

The first Thomas mill site is of historical significance as evidence of the initial construction and then abandonment of the site in consequence of the construction of the Yan Yean Pipe Track and for its association with Moses Thomas, who built and operated several flour mill sites on the Plenty River. It is of and archaeological significance for the potential to reveal information on the construction methods and techniques of early flour mill design, and the technology of milling in the mid nineteenth century.

Interpretation of Site

Some of the blocks of stone appear to have been dislodged either by flooding, or more likely disturbance by hand digging when a nearby drain was excavated. Most appear to be in a disturbed condition, but some are in situ. It is unlikely that these blocks would have come to the site by any other means as the only construction in the vicinity is the Yan Yean pipe track. There was work being undertaken in the 1870s to convert the pipe to a masonry aqueduct, but the stones from this work are much larger and finished in a quite different manner with quite rough axe cut faces, instead of the chisel and hammer faces of the blocks at the mill site. Archaeological features identified at the site include levelled ground, cut stone (some in situ) and foundations trenches.

Hermes Number 210132

Property Number

History

SiteCard data copied on 01/08/2024: Moses Thomas emigrated to Victoria in 1842 on the 'Robert Benn' from Greenock Scotland. He built the Mayfield Mill in 1855 as part of his larger farming and contracting activities. It was a little later than the other mills in the area and may have benefitted from a more developed technological and manufacturing base available at the time. Thomas's mill was located on the Plenty River upstream of the existing Carome Mill at 'Marsh Farm'. He had earlier in 1854, started building the mill at another site just downstream of the final site, but this was made inconvenient because of the pipeline to the Yan Yean reservoir crossing the line of the water race. He abandoned this work after sinking foundations. It is this earlier site which reveals evidence in the form of levelled ground, cut stone and foundations trenches, as well as possible contemporary small artefacts such as glass, ceramics and metal, which is identified in this site record. Moses Thomas had previously been in partnership with his brother John, as building contractors in 1850, and so had the skills to build the mill himself. A Petition for compensation for the loss of water has the following statement: ...Mr. Thomas became possessed of land having a frontage to the Plenty River, with a view to erect a flour-mill, to be driven by water power. In 1852 levels were taken, and in 1854 he sank foundations for the mill. After expending about £100 these operations were abandoned, on account of the line of pipe track coming between the site for the proposed mill and the main road. He afterwards commenced to work on the other side of the pipe track, where the present mill now stands. (PARLIAMENT. LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL. WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5, 1868. The Argus Wednesday 5 August 1868, page 4.)

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/>