

# SAWPIT GULLY NURSERY AND PLANTATION



1 sawpit gully landscape  
H1951 march2000



image010.jpg



image012.jpg



image014.jpg



image016.jpg



image018.jpg



image020.jpg



image022.jpg



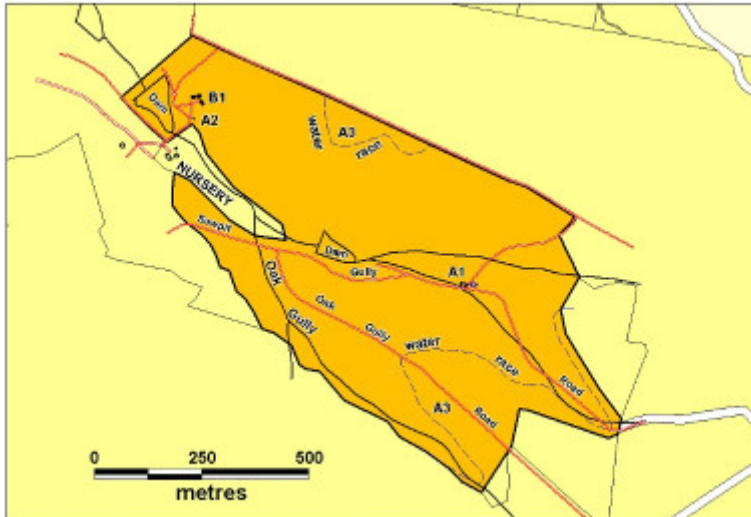
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sawpit gully plan

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## Location

SAWPIT GULLY ROAD CRESWICK, HEPBURN SHIRE

## Municipality

HEPBURN SHIRE

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H1951

## VHR Registration

February 12, 2015

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

What is significant?

The Sawpit Gully Plantation contains the site of the first State Nursery established at Creswick in 1888 and a collection of exotic and native trees. The trees were planted under the supervision of the founding forester, John

La Gerche. In 1882 La Gerche was appointed a Crown Land Bailiff and his chief tasks were to regulate timber cutting and cattle grazing in the Ballarat and Creswick State Forest. His appointment came at a time when the government raised concerns about the loss of tree cover in Victoria. The Creswick soils had proven gold bearing and most of the trees had been cut down, in the pursuit of alluvial and quartz gold. The land had been upturned and was covered in diggers' holes and was a mass of weeds and eroded gullies. The Plantation retains a mine shaft, pits and water race.

La Gerche experimented with ways to rehabilitate mining land and planted a small patch of Blue Gums in Black Snake Gully in 1886. In 1888 La Gerche established Creswick's first nursery in Sawpit Gully and an area of 30 acres was enclosed. The plantation commenced between May to September 1888 and the first planting of around 8,500 seedlings was a mixture of native eucalypts, (*Eucalyptus corynocalyx*, *E. siderophloia*, *E. sideroxylon*, *E. virgata*, *E. rostrata*, *E. globulus*, *E. leucoxylon*) pines (*Pinus halepensis*, *P. austriaca*, *P. insignis*, *P. pinaster*, *P. laricio*, *P. pinea*) and deciduous trees (Plane, English Oak, English Ash, Maple, Lime, Elm, Sycamore, Poplar, Willow) obtained from the Macedon Nursery, Ballarat Water Commission and Havelock State Forest. By the end of 1892 about 115,000 trees had been planted and included several small enclosures of experimental planting.

In 1892 a gully, now known as Oak Gully was planted with oaks, mainly English Oaks, with various exotic conifers along the perimeter. Surviving conifers include Monterey Pine, Himalayan Cedar, Douglas Fir, Aleppo Pine and one Big-cone Pine. The Plantation appears to have reached its final size by 1899, covering 300 acres and contained a total of 246,000 trees.

At the first nursery site are the foundations of Albert Wade's house, the nursery's first caretaker, a dam and ornamental planting of Douglas Fir, West Himalayan Spruce, Norway Spruce, *Picea* sp., Bhutan Cypress, Turkey Oak, English Oak, Monterey Pine ("Mother Tree") and a Himalayan Cedar. South of the first nursery site is a eucalypt trial planting.

Since the early 1900s, the old plantation has survived without major changes and is primarily used to assist in the training of foresters and land managers from the adjoining Creswick School of Forestry. The plantation adjoining the Creswick School of Forestry is arguably the home of forestry in Victoria. It has been managed by foresters for over 100 years, and used for scientific research and recreation. In 1999 an interpreted La Gerche walk was developed through the Plantation.

The site contains three buildings, the Stables complex which were relocated from the North Creswick Nursery. Erected in 1918 using recycled timber, some of which is reputed to have come from the house of Peter Lalor a leader of the Eureka rebellion and one time share holder in the Australasian company.

How is it significant?

The Sawpit Gully Plantation is of historical, aesthetic, archaeological, and scientific significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The Sawpit Gully Plantation site is historically significant because it is an integral part of the Creswick School of Forestry, the first place in Australia to formally train foresters. The Plantation and trial plantings in Sawpit and Oak gullies represents a very early example of land rehabilitation and landcare practice in Victoria using exotic and native trees. The Sawpit Plantation forms an important reference point to the origins of State-organised forestry practice in Victoria and the work John La Gerche, one of the State's first forester's. The Plantation is a very important education resource on early forestry and land reclamation practice in Victoria.

The Plantation is of aesthetic value for the deliberate selection of species and planting locations to maximize the trees form and plantation aesthetic qualities. The conifer and oak plantings displaying contrasting form and foliage, uniform trunks displaying different bark colour and patterns, and autumn leaf colour in the oaks produce a striking landscape feature which is widely valued by the community. The tree maturity and density of the forest that has evolved in Sawpit and Oak gullies has formed an attractive conifer and oak forest landscape reminiscent of the northern hemisphere and offers a valuable recreational and educational experience. The Nursery Dam is an attractive feature and has been planted with an array of ornamental trees, including *Sequoia sempervirens*, *Cupressus macrocarpa* 'Horizontalis Aurea', *Cedrus deodara*, *Cedrus atlantica* f. *glauca*, *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*, *Picea smithiana*, *Quercus robur*, *Q. canariensis*, *Q. ilex* and a rare *Quercus* 'Macedon'.

The Sawpit Gully Plantation is of archaeological significance and contains a large number of gold workings, alluvial sites, remnant mining pits, water race, and a well crafted haulage mine shaft. The site of the nursery's

first caretaker, Albert Wade home and nursery has archaeological and scientific significance due to the potential existence of buried features and artefacts which may provide information about its past occupants and nineteenth century forestry and nursery operations. The site also includes a collection of ornamental conifers, a large English Oak, dam and drainage features.

The Plantation is of scientific significance and includes stands of pines planted from 1888 to 1895 and from 1923 to 1944, a range of conifers, and in Oak Gully a grove of 1892 English Oaks, Algerian Oaks and hybrids. A trial planting of eucalypts south of the first nursery site includes; *Eucalyptus globulus* subsp. *globulus*, *E. microcorys*, *E. tricarpa*, *E. longifolia* and *Corymbia calophylla*. Amongst the Plantation are outstanding specimens of *Pinus radiata*, *P. canariensis*, *P. nigra* var. *corsicana*, *P. pinaster*, *P. poderosa*, *P. muricata* and several rare pines, including *Pinus sylvestris*, and *P. echinata*, both single trees, and two stands (x4 and x8) of *P. contorta* subsp. *contorta*, including a very large tree. This species is only known in Victoria from two trees at Victoria Park, Ballarat, and one tree at the School of Forestry, Creswick, and "Pirianda", Olinda.

The Plantation is also of scientific significance for its important role in the development of the Monterey Pine softwood timber industry in Australia. In 1959 the Forestry Commission of Victoria commenced the Radiata Pine Breeding Program to breed a superior forestry tree. Three trees in the Sawpit Gully Plantation were selected. Only one tree, No. 43 along Sawpit Gully Road near the middle dam, remains from the original selection. This tree was later given an average rating and removed from the breeding program.

## Permit Exemptions

### General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

Places of worship: In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must [notify](#) the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

Subdivision/consolidation: Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

### Specific Exemptions:

PERMIT EXEMPTIONS (under section 42 of the Heritage Act)

It should be noted that Permit Exemptions can be granted at the time of registration (under s.42 (4) of the Heritage Act). Permit Exemptions can also be applied for and granted after registration (under s.66 of the Heritage Act)

#### General Condition: 1.

All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of

the registered place or object.

**General Condition: 2.**

Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of works that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such works shall cease and Heritage Victoria shall be notified as soon as possible.

**General Condition: 3.**

All works should be informed by the land manager's (Department of Primary Industry and Environment or DEPI) management strategy for historic places in State Forests. The Executive Director is not bound by any DEPI management strategies, and permits still must be obtained for works that may be carried out on the former school reserve.

**General Conditions: 4.**

Nothing in this determination prevents the Heritage Council from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions.

**General Condition: 5.**

Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the relevant responsible authority, where applicable.

Specific Permit Exemptions

Stables complex

The following maintenance works are permit exempt:

- a) Minor repairs and maintenance which replace like with like.
- b) Painting of previously painted walls, posts, and roofing in the same colour.

Sawpit Gully Plantation

**Landscape**

The following landscape maintenance works are permit exempt:

- a) Protection measures for archaeological sites and relics.
- b) Minor repairs and maintenance which replaces like with like for the following features: landscape elements, dams, roads and paths, water race, gutters and drainage systems.
- c) Management of trees in accordance with Australian Standard; Pruning of Amenity Trees AS 4373
- d) Removal of dead or dangerous trees and emergency tree works to maintain public safety and to protect buildings, structures and archaeological sites provided the Executive Director is notified within 21 days of the removal or works occurring.
- e) Management of trees in accordance with Australian Standard; Protection of Trees on Development Sites AS 4970.
- f) All works to maintain the existing roadway and road safety including road maintenance, table drain and shoulder repairs, road marking, reflector posts and traffic signs.

**Fire Suppression Duties**

The following fire suppression duties are permit exempt:

- a) The removal of dead plants and weeds and emergency and safety works.
- b) Fire suppression and fire fighting duties provided the works do not involve the removal or destruction of any significant above-ground archaeological features or sub-surface deposits.

Note: The importance of places listed in the Heritage Register must be considered when strategies for fire suppression and management are being developed.

## **Weed and Vermin Control**

The following weed and vermin control activities are permit exempt:

- a) Removal of plants listed as noxious weeds in the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*, and the following environmental weeds - *Arbutus unedo* and pine seedlings.
- b) Weed and vermin control activities provided the works do not involve the removal or destruction of any significant above-ground features or sub-surface archaeological artefacts or deposits.

## **Public Safety and Security**

The following public safety and security activities are permit exempt:

- a) Public safety and security activities provided the works do not involve the removal or destruction of any significant above-ground structures or sub-surface archaeological artefacts or deposits;
- b) Development including emergency stabilisation necessary to secure safety where a site feature has been irreparably damaged or destabilised and represents a safety risk to its users or the public.

## **Signage and Site Interpretation**

The following Signage and Site Interpretation activities are permit exempt:

- a) Maintenance and development of the La Gerche walking trail.
- b) Signage and site interpretation activities provided the works do not involve the removal or destruction of any plantation vegetation or significant above-ground archaeological or sub-surface deposits

Note: Where possible, the signage and interpretation material should be consistent with other schemes developed on similar or associated sites.

## **Theme**

1. Shaping Victoria's environment 4. Transforming and managing the land 6. Building towns cities and the garden state

Construction dates	1888,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Hermes Number	6069
Property Number	

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## **History**

In 1882 John La Gerche was appointed a Crown Land Bailiff. Initially his chief tasks were to regulate timber cutting and cattle grazing in the Ballarat and Creswick State Forest. He soon was involved in tree planting. His appointment had come at a time when the government was responding to concerns raised about the loss of forest cover, weed infestation and soil erosion in central Victoria.

The forest around Creswick was indicative of the problem facing the Victorian Government: its soil was gold-bearing and most of the trees had been cut down in the pursuit of alluvial and quartz gold. The land itself also needed repair: the flats had been upturned on numerous occasions and were a mass of weeds and polluted diggers' holes; and the gullies deeply excavated and choked by debris from hydraulic sluicing operations.

In 1888, La Gerche established his nursery in Sawpit Gully. The gully already contained a six-roomed house, small orchard, garden, and water dam. The owner of the house, Albert Wade, was employed to prepare the land for tree planting and to act as caretaker.

Work on the nursery commenced by enclosing 30 acres (12ha) with a four strand wire fence and sapling posts. The site was then thinned (the scrub and crooked timber cut out) with the straight trees being left. Nursery beds were prepared which were mainly dedicated to raising exotic species for commercial timber production. The first planting of around 8,500 seedlings was a mixture of natives (*Eucalyptus corynocalyx*, *siderophloia*, *sideroxylon*, *virgata*, *rostrata*, *globulus*, and *leucoxylon*), pines (*Pinus halepensis*, *austriaca*, *insignis*, *pinaster*, *laricio*, and *pinea*), and deciduous (planes, English oaks, English ash, maple, lime, elms, sycamores, poplars and willows). La Gerche had obtained most the seedlings from three places: the Mt Macedon Nursery, Ballarat Water Commission Reserve, and the Havelock State Forest.

Climatic conditions proved unfavourable for the first plantings, with little rain falling and some severe frosts. A number of the seedlings died, though there were notably fewer fatalities for the some of the deciduous species. In response to this, La Gerche increased his efforts, clearing and planting both sides of the gullies, mainly with pine and deciduous species. La Gerche's deep interest in his duties saw him scrounging new trees and seedlings from whatever sources he could find, for example obtaining some trees from the botanical gardens at Ballarat.

In 1889, about 100,000 seedlings (including oak, elm, gum, and plane) raised at the Sawpit Gully nursery were transplanted to a new nursery, established to the west of Creswick. The new nursery (officially known as the North Creswick Nursery) was utilised by the Department for its own planting work (mainly pine) and also for the growth of deciduous trees for street planting.

During the 1890s, La Gerche expanded the Sawpit Gully Plantation. By the end of 1892 a further 20 acres of State Forest had been thinned and cleared, with several small enclosures made for experimental planting. During this time the bed of a small tributary gully (now known as Oak Gully) was planted with oak trees (mainly *Quercus robur*), with various stands of exotic conifers established at its headwaters.

The plantation reached its final size by 1899, covering some 300 acres (121ha) and containing a total of 246,000 trees. In 1908, La Gerche's nursery and plantation was abandoned (left to nature) and a new nursery (still operating today) established further down the gully in association with the establishment of the Creswick School of Forestry.

The plantings associated with the original nursery continue to be used for teaching purposes by the University of Melbourne Schools of Agriculture and Forestry (former Creswick School of Forestry). An eco-tourism walk has been developed through the Sawpit Gully Nursery and Plantation by Parks Victoria. The 'John La Gerche Walking Track' includes in the original 1888 Nursery Site and first experimental plantings.

## KEY REFERENCES USED TO PREPARE ASSESSMENT

La Gerche Letter Books

Angela Taylor, 1998, *A Forester's Log: The Story of John La Gerche and the Ballarat-Creswick State Forest 1882-1897*, Melbourne University Press

## Assessment Against Criteria

The Sawpit Gully Nursery and Plantation is historically significant for its association with the development of State-organised forestry practice and the establishment of the Creswick School of Forestry. This plantation is part of a precinct which became the first place in Australia to formally train foresters, and is regarded as the home of Forestry in Victoria. The place is a very early example of land rehabilitation (landcare) practice in Victoria, and represents the first concerted attempt by the Victorian Government in central Victoria to revegetate its forests. This transformative work lies behind the shape and nature of the State's present system of parks and reserves. The Plantation is also of significance for its important role in the development of the Monterey Pine softwood timber industry in Australia. [Criterion A]

The Sawpit Gully Nursery and Plantation is significant because it includes stands of pines planted from 1888 to 1895 and from 1923 to 1944, a range of conifers, and in Oak Gully a grove of 1892 English Oaks, Algerian Oaks and hybrids. A trial planting of eucalypts south of the first nursery site includes: *Eucalyptus globulus subsp. globulus*, *E. microcorys*, *E. tricarpa*, *E. longifolia* and *Corymbia calophylla*. Amongst the Plantation are outstanding specimens of *Pinus radiata*, *P. canariensis*, *P. nigra var. corsicana*, *P. pinaster*, *P. poderosa*, *P. muricata* and several rare pines, including *Pinus sylvestris*, and *P. echinata*, both single trees, and two stands (x4

and x8) of *P. contorta subsp. contorta*, including a very large tree. This species is only known in elsewhere Victoria from two trees at Victoria Park, Ballarat, and one tree at the School of Forestry, Creswick, and 'Pirianda', *Olinda*. [Criteria B & D]

## Plaque Citation

The Sawpit Gully Nursery and Plantation is part of a precinct in which the first foresters in Australia were trained in the early 1900s. The Plantation represents the first concerted attempt by the Victorian Government in central Victoria to revegetate its forests. This transformative work lies behind the shape and nature of the State's present system of parks and reserves.

## Extent of Registration

### NOTICE OF REGISTRATION

As Executive Director for the purpose of the **Heritage Act 1995**, I give notice under section 46 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended by including Heritage Register Number H1951 in the category described as Heritage Place.

Sawpit Gully Nursery and Plantation  
Sawpit Gully Road  
Creswick  
Hepburn Shire

All of the place shown hatched on Diagram 1951 encompassing part of Crown Allotment 2058 Parish of Creswick, beginning at a point with the coordinates 143.910417° east and 37.417804° south along the boundary of Crown Allotment 2058 to 143.920733° 37.422953°, to 143.920113° 37.423618°, along the boundary of Crown Allotment 2058 to 143.921722° 37.426180°, to 143.919113° 37.425679°, to 143.918908° 37.426454°, along the boundary of Crown Allotment 2058 to 143.918800° 37.426684°, to 143.918106° 37.427434°, along the boundary of Crown Allotment 2058 to 143.912331° 37.424001°, to 143.912105° 37.423635°, to 143.911654° 37.423207°, to 143.911460° 37.422768°, to 143.911145° 37.422620°, to 143.910970° 37.422235°, to 143.909856° 37.421448°, to 143.909869° 37.420954°, to 143.910177° 37.420676°, to 143.912139° 37.422039°, to 143.912694° 37.421979°, to 143.910854° 37.420309°, to 143.910482° 37.419673°, to 143.909738° 37.419967°, to 143.908581° 37.419126° and then to the beginning point.

Dated 12 February 2015

TIM SMITH  
Executive Director

*Victoria Government Gazette* G 6 12 February 2015 p.349

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*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/>*