
Mount Leura Complex



L10155 Mt Leura Complex



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L10155 Mt Sugarloaf



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Location

CAMPERDOWN VIC 3260 - Property No L10155

Municipality

CORANGAMITE SHIRE

Level of significance

National

Heritage Overlay Numbers

Heritage Listing

National Trust

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - May 1, 2008

What is significant?

Mount Leura is the highest hill in a complex volcanic feature comprising several distinct cones and craters within the outer wall of a maar, or broad explosion crater. The whole feature is hereafter referred to as the Mount Leura complex

How is it significant?

The Mount Leura complex is of National Significance as a geological feature, and of State Significance for its landscape value.

Why is it significant?

The Mount Leura complex is significant as a geological site. It comprises an outstanding example of a group of scoria cones within a broad volcanic crater, or maar. Because it is a relatively young landform the features visible within it are very fresh and unaltered by erosion, so they show clearly the processes by which they were formed. The value of the geological feature is enhanced by the fact that much of it lies within a public reserve provided with a network of footpaths, so that the site can be readily accessed by student groups and the community.

The value of the Mount Leura complex for educational purposes and for general tourist interest is enhanced by the provision of easy access by road to the top, from which there are outstanding views across the surrounding area. This enables Mount Leura to be seen in context as one of the most prominent of a series of cones, representing the end stage of a phase of volcanic activity which began with the formation of the basalt plain on which they are superimposed.

Additional biological significance will develop in future as the recent replanting work by the local Friends Group restores a vegetation cover similar to that present prior to European settlement. This in turn will provide a habitat for natural recolonisation or re-introduction of an appropriate range of fauna.

The Mount Leura complex has landscape significance for the striking appearance of steep sided cones rising out of the flat surrounding plain, and the intricate pattern of smaller cones and craters within the outer maar rim. The Schedule to the Corangamite Shire's Significant Landscape Overlay SLO1 states that it is part of one of the State's most significant volcanic landscapes and features. These areas provide visual interest with variation in topography and vegetation and should be protected from inappropriate development.

The proximity of Mount Leura to the historic town of Camperdown makes it a local icon, and the complete view of the historic township available from the summit shows how early towns were designed around road and rail links.

Classified 18/05/2004.

Other Names Mount Sugarloaf,

Hermes Number 67684

Property Number

Physical Description 1

Geology and Geomorphology

"Mount Leura is a scoria cone approximately 170 metres high with a crater 100 metres deep. The structure is complicated by smaller cones to the south of Mount Leura..... The scoria cones are nested in a tuff ring about 1.6 km in diameter which is open to the west. The scoria cones are at the northern end of the wide, shallow maar crater associated with the tuff ring" Quoted from Joyce and King (1980) p. 113. Gill 1971 suggest an age of around 22,000BP for Mount Leura, based on dating of volcanic ash depots at nearby Lake Colungulac.

Mt Sugarloaf, the most prominent of the nested cones, is described in the existing National Trust citation, prepared when the site was purchased for the Trust in 1970, as "the best example of a scoria cone in the western district, remarkable for its symmetry of form, its position close to the existing Mount Leura Reserve and its scenic importance to the town of Camperdown and the people of Victoria".

Flora and Fauna

This section is largely based on information contained in Thomson Hay and Associates, 1994, Landscape Master Plan and Management Plan for Mount Leura and Mount Sugarloaf.

The original natural vegetation on the Mount Leura complex was probably open woodland, dominated by Manna Gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis*), Blackwood (*Acacia melanoxylon*) and Drooping She-oak (*Allocasuarina verticillata*). Most of the natural vegetation has been cleared and replaced by introduced pasture grasses. Cypress trees were planted around the Mt Leura summit in the 1920s, and grew to obscure some of the fine views from the complex. The Friends of Mt Leura have since removed most of these and replaced them with an open woodland planting, designed to recover some of the vegetation which is thought to have been there originally.

Land use

Much of the land within the Mt Leura maar is farmed, principally for beef cattle. The whole of the area was originally owned by the Manifold family, but in 1896 J.C. Manifold, then President of the Shire of Hampden Council, donated the Mount Leura section to the public. Mt Leura, its crater and Mt Sugarloaf are now public reserves, the former owned by the Shire of Corangamite (f. Hampden), the latter by the National Trust, which bought it in 1970 to save it from further damage by quarrying. A road up Mt Leura, completed in 1935, gives easy public access to a car park on the summit, from which there are extensive views of intact pastoral landscapes on the volcanic plains to the north, east and west, and through to the Otways in the south. The Leura Recreation Reserve, off Adeney Street, located in the north western part of this classified landscape was set aside for public use in March 1875, and has remained associated with sporting activities in the town and region ever since. It adjoins the Camperdown Showgrounds, also located within the classified area, and still used each year.

The summit of Mount Leura also offers an almost complete view of the historic town of Camperdown, the layout of which partly overlaps the maar ring in the north. Camperdown was laid out as a planned township in the 1850s, and its original rectangular layout around the cross roads, and subsequent extension across the railway line, is a classic example of early Victorian urban design (Powell, 1970, p.42).

When quarrying was first carried out at the site it was by scraping away at the foot of Mt Sugarloaf. This created a prominent scar, and although work was subsequently halted by the Department of Mines the scar is still highly visible decades afterwards. Later quarries were required to locate on flatter land around the mount so that they would be less visible from a distance. Land around the western and northern footslope of Mt Leura has been extensively quarried for scoria. The quarry north of the Princes Highway has been abandoned, while that on the eastern side is active and an application to extend has recently (2003) been approved, subject to provision for site reclamation.

Extensive educational use is made of the Mount Leura complex, which is visited by field excursions from school and tertiary institutions looking at geology, geomorphology and biology. It also receives an estimated 50,000 tourist visits per year.

Intactness

The southwest side of Mount Sugarloaf has been damaged by quarrying, creating a prominent scar visible from a long distance around. The north and northeast footslope of Mount Leura has also been quarried. Although less visible from a distance the quarries are prominent in the view from the summit. The abandoned quarry north of the Princes Highway is now partly grass covered, but little has been done to mitigate the topographic impact, and a deep, steep sided hollow is still visible from the Princes Highway.

The natural vegetation on the Mount Leura complex has been almost entirely removed, but revegetation work by the local community has now begun to restore the former appearance of the hill slopes.

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/>