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# Mt Martha Summit and Ridge

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## Location

MOUNT MARTHA VIC 3934 - Property No L10066

## Municipality

MORNINGTON PENINSULA SHIRE

## Level of significance

Local

## Heritage Listing

National Trust

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - September 19, 2005

Mt Martha Park, consisting of the summit, public park and arboretum, is of Regional Significance to the Mornington Peninsula, containing areas of historical significance in planting and features.

(1) Political interest.

The park was a hotly contested site of interest, controversy and debate in the nineteenth century over issues such as land selection, planting policy, public interest and use, and garden design. The reserve's historical development, as documented in reserve files and other material, offers an insight into the political workings of the district.

At this time the park was the battleground between the would-be civic minded landed gentry of the area and the interests of ordinary residents who eventually found that those entrusted to the keeping of the park as a public resort for shade and recreation during the summer (such as the local land speculator, Byrne) had in fact sanctioned the stripping of the reserve of its indigenous wattles. They had bartered the proceeds, apparently with the grand scheme in mind that it would be planted with ornamental trees (pines, oaks, and blue gums donated by Harris), like the lands owned by Joseph Harris which adjoined.

(2) Changes in planting policy, and the growing awareness and early social recognition of the benefit and value of indigenous plants over exotic.

Another feature of the reserve was the battle between native and exotic plantings. The Save the Forests League (later Natural Resources Conservation League) planted a Monterey pine plantation there in 1949-50, as part of the Isaac grand 'repair' plan for the mountain reserve after the damage caused during the Second World War occupation of nearby Balcombe Camp. The plan included areas of preserved 'native bush', wattles and Australian

flowering shrubs along the government road, Australian forest trees along Churchill Road, ornamental trees and shrubs, a pine plantation at the corner of Bradford and Tower Road, a recreation ground, lookout and kiosk. These first pine plantings were removed in recent years (1982) to remove their perceived threat to native vegetation and replanted with *Eucalyptus viminalis* (Manna gum) and *Eucalyptus pauciflora* (Snow gum).

(3) Extractive Industry - evidence of tanning.

The site was wattle stripped to supply the tanning trade.

(4) Historical and scientific importance of the site.

The site is associated with prominent people, namely Joseph Harris and Robert Watson.

The park was one of the key sites in Victoria's trigonometric survey of 1853. The tower was subsequently burnt. However the potential still remains for further investigation of the site.

(5) Aesthetic and cultural value.

The site has been recorded and painted by the famous Australian artist, Louis Buvelot, in 1868 and 1877.

(6) Important specimen trees.

The site contains excellent mature specimen trees from the nineteenth century, including two rare specimens, *Afracarpus falcatus* and *Cassine crocea*. Other mature trees include two *Araucaria heterophylla* (Norfolk Island pine), an *Araucaria cunninghamii* (Hoop pine, near manager's house), two palms, *Washingtonia* sp., a *Waterhousea ventenattii*, *Cupressus macrocarpa* (Monterey Cypress), and numerous large and mature *Pinus canariensis* (Canary Island pine), *Araucaria bidwillii* (Bunya Bunya pine), *Pinus radiata* (Monterey pine) and *Pinus halepensis* (Aleppo pine), all reputedly dating from the Harris era of ownership from the 1860s.

The survival of an unusual amount of nineteenth century plant material is of considerable significance for this reserve, especially as it is associated with the prominent parliamentarian, nurseryman and journalist, Joseph Harris. It demonstrates the planting style of the period, and Harris' role as public benefactor.

(7) Tourist Elements.

Retention of tourist elements, including the tourist road and the site of the former scenic lookout.

#### LOCATION:

Located approximately nine kilometres north of the Mornington township and bounded by Hearn Road, Forest Drive, Bradford Road, Churchill Road and Park Road.

Hermes Number 70331

Property Number

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## Extent of Registration

The whole of the Reserve, as defined by title boundaries with the five adjacent streets.

*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/>*