
PORT PHILLIP COMPANY

Location

STATION FLAT ROAD CLUNES, HEPBURN SHIRE

Municipality

HEPBURN SHIRE

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7623-0240

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Hermes Number 7290

Property Number

History

Heritage Inventory History of Site: A single auriferous reef, discovered in 1850, that outcropped on a hill in the midst of a great lava bed (basalt) plain became one of the most extensively wrought and most permanently productive in the state. The Port Phillip and Clunes companies (English concerns) became synonymous with the working of this reef. Between 1857 and the early 1890s, the two companies extracted and processed 514,886 ounces of gold which made the mine the third largest gold-producer in Victoria. The gold produced by the mine was valued at £2,123,905 and paid out £481,455 in dividends. In February 1857, two different ventures - The Port Phillip Company and Clunes Quartz Mining companies - became interested in the Clunes reef. Due to the fact that the reef was situated on private property, the Port Phillip Company negotiated a 21-year lease for 160 acres of ground (subject to a royalty of 10% on gross yield of gold) on the hill; and then proceeded to sub-let the ground, upon the same terms, to the Clunes Company with a proviso that they (the Port Phillip Company) were to crush all the quartz raised from the mine at a fixed charge per ton. Together the two companies rose to

prominence in terms of gold production, but also through their progressive and scientific approach to quartz mining. The latter was often cited in scientific journals as being not only most beneficial to themselves but to the general advancement of quartz mining in Victoria. The Port Phillips Company was renowned for the size of its battery, which had commenced crushing in July 1857, had been enlarged to 40-head by 1859, and by 1864 had grown to a monster of 80-heads. The Port Phillip Company also led the way in experimenting with new ways to extract the gold from the quartz, using a variety of appliances such as Chilian grinding mills (also known as Arastras); blankets and silvered metal plates; amalgamating barrels; stone-breaking machines; and quartz roasting kilns. The success or failure of the company's experiments were closely watched. For example, the Port Phillip Company found that the roasting of quartz prior to crushing increased its gold yield: in September 1860 the company had completed the erection of two kilns, capable of roasting 2,000 tons per week. The Port Phillip Company also experimented with ways to recover gold from the difficult pyritic ore: by 1864 the company were crushing the pyritic ore, concentrating the pyritic tailings in buddles and blankets, then roasting the concentrates in furnaces and regrinding them in Chilian mills. From 1872 the Port Phillip Company, despite crushing large volumes of ore were getting very poor average yields. Although continuing to crush large volumes of ore throughout the decade the company had ceased mine profitably by 1880-1881. By the early 1890s the company had exhausted all its capital and operations were suspended.

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/>