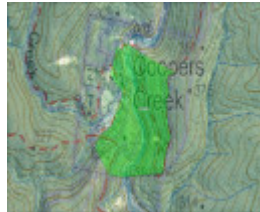

FORMER COOPER'S CREEK TOWNSHIP AND COPPER MINE



COOPER'S CREEK
COPPER MINE



COOPER'S CREEK
COPPER MINE



coopers creek air photo and
map.jpg

Location

COOPERS CREEK TRACK WALHALLA, BAW BAW SHIRE

Municipality

BAW BAW SHIRE

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H8122-0094

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Other Names

SITE NAME CHANGED FROM COOPER'S CREEK COPPER MINE DECEMBER 2012,
COOPERS CREEK,

History

Heritage Inventory History of Site: A vein of copper was discovered near the gold diggings at Cooper's Creek in 1864. The Thomson River Copper Mining Co. was formed in 1865, with leases on both sides of the river and ambitious plans for smelting works. In 1867 tributaries erected two furnaces (the works managed by 'Captain' Osborne, late of Kapunda, SA) which failed to effectively smelt the ore. Other copper companies operating during this period included the Advance Copper Co. and Vulcan Copper Co. Following modifications to the smelters, the Thomson River copper mine tributaries in 1871 began re-smelting the regulus produced by their earlier operations. Tramways were constructed to ensure a steady supply of firewood. Still the furnaces proved ineffective. In 1874, the Walhalla Copper Mining Co. was floated with 30,000 shares of £1 each to work the 'splendid mass of ore' on show in the Thomson River mine. The company set about remodelling the smelting works, 'using a large quantity of firebricks made from good-quality fireclay found a short distance from the works'. After spalling (breaking up) the ore, it was calcined (roasted) in large heaps in the open. The broken, burnt ore was then smelted in reverberatory furnaces (the main hearth measuring 14 ft in length), together with a flux of poor carbonates. The smelting process reduced the ore first to coarse metal, then to blue metal, and lastly, by roasting, to coarse copper. Pack horses and mules carried the copper out, for transit to 'Swansea, &c.' for further refinement. A 'substantial and well constructed bridge' was built across the river to improve access to timber and to connect the smelting works by tramway with the copper mine and spalling and calcining floors (these were situated on a 'spacious plat' excavated in 1875). Cooper's Creek township took shape around the smelting works and opposite the mine, presenting 'a lively appearance' and promising to become 'a flourishing little place'. Initial smeltings were unprofitable, because of high firewood consumption and depressed copper prices. In 1878, a new shoot of copper was opened up, and 'Captain' Saunders (ex Burra) took over as superintendent of works, instigating a major overhaul of the plant. A stone-breaker and Pioneer crushing mill were installed, kilns were built for calcining, and the smelting furnaces were rebuilt on a larger scale the hearth of the main furnace measuring 16½ ft x 9 ft. In 1879, the mine was in full work, with 70 men employed. There were hopes that a tramway might link Cooper's Creek with the railway line at Erica, giving access to La Trobe Valley lignite for smelting fluxes. But by the time the third of the new furnaces was lit in 1880, the shoot of copper was practically exhausted and a tributer was being sought. For almost twenty years, things went pretty quiet at Cooper's Creek. Periodic attempts were made to work the copper deposits at Cooper's Creek from the late 1890s (at which time diamond drilling struck new lodes), but no real development took place until about 1910, when the Gippsland Copper, Platinum & Gold Mining and Smelting Co. took up leases with a view to opening up and proving the lode at existing and deeper levels. Smelting plant was built and long tramways linked the mine to the railway line, which now extended to Walhalla. The settlement of Platina developed around the mine and works. Despite the company's intention of proving the copper lode at depth, work was confined to smelting of remnants of ore from the old stopes, mullock heaps, and smelter bottoms. A gold mine operated on the Happy-Go-Lucky Reef, an adjacent lease, during the same period, and the last ore mined there, in 1915, was sold to the copper smelting works for fluxing purposes. The copper mine and works apparently ceased work soon after. In 1962, a small party (the Cooper's Creek Syndicate) cleared out the old copper mine and restored the tramways. Five years later, Cooper's Creek Pty Ltd commenced mining. A smelter was built in 1969, and ore was conveyed thence by tramway and flying fox. Operations ceased in 1971, when the price of copper fell. Some years later, the machinery, gear and sheds connected with the mine were shifted to the Long Tunnel Extended mine at Walhalla, when it was re-opened as a tourism venture. References: Adams, J., *Mountain Gold: a history of the Baw Baw and Walhalla country of the Narracan Shire*, Victoria, Narracan Shire Council, 1980 Aitken, R., *Areas of Historical Significance in Central and South Gippsland*, report prepared for the Latrobe Valley Ministerial Council, 1981 Baragwanath, W., 'Some Victorian Goldfields: No. 1 Walhalla', in *Mining & Geological Journal*, March 1948, pp. 4-8 Department of Mines, *Mining Surveyors' Reports (Stringer's Creek Subdivision)* Rosales, H., 'Copper Mines, Cooper's Creek, Gippsland', in *Progress Report VI*, Geological Survey of Victoria, 1880, pp. 60-64 Supple, R., Perham, G., & Griffiths, T., *Historic Sites in the Melbourne East Study Area*, report to the Land Conservation Council, Historic Places Section, Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands, n.d. 1989. (Report #194)

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/>