
WALLABY AND KINGSTON MINE SITES: BATTERY SITE



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SITE

Location

NINE MILE HISTORIC RESERVE BEECHWORTH, INDIGO SHIRE

Municipality

INDIGO SHIRE

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H8225-0029

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO75

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - July 6, 2005

What is significant?

The Wallaby Mine Gold Battery Site consists of the remains of a 12-head stamping battery, horizontal steam engine, stone boiler setting, and various buried and partly buried piece of machinery. Nearby are some relics of a water-powered battery (waterwheel pit and machinery components). The mine is located above the battery and consists of a large glory hole (open stope) and mullock heap. Ore for crushing was brought to the battery through a tunnel.

How is it significant?

The Wallaby Mine Gold Battery Site is of historical, and scientific importance to the State of Victoria and has already been placed on the Register of the National Estate.

Why is it significant?

The Wallaby Mine Gold Battery Site is historically and scientifically important as a characteristic and well preserved example of an important form of gold mining. Although being very close to Beechworth, the abandoned machinery has not been significantly scavenged. The 12-head battery was installed in 1912 to replace an old battery which has been damaged by a bushfire. Gold mining sites are of crucial importance for the pivotal role they have played since 1851 in the development of Victoria. As well as being a significant producer of Victoria's nineteenth century wealth, with its intensive use of machinery, played an important role in the development of Victorian manufacturing industry. The abandoned mining machinery at the Wallaby Mine site is historically important for its evocation of the adventurousness, hardship, and isolation that was part of mining life in the high country areas of the State.

The Wallaby Mine Gold Battery Site is archaeologically important for its potential to yield artefacts and evidence which will be able to provide significant information about the technological history of gold mining.

[Source: Victorian Heritage Register]

Hermes Number 10943

Property Number

History

Heritage Inventory History of Site:

The first recorded claim on Wallaby Reef was registered in February 1869. At the same time, four Irishmen registered a quartz claim named the Cead Mille Failtha on Hurdle Flat, one mile above Rocky Point. Before the year was out, good stone was struck in the Cead Mille Failtha shaft, and O'Dwyer and Co. erected a battery near their reef early in 1870. By that time, the Wallaby Co. had a good reef exposed at a depth of 70 ft, and a trial crushing at O'Dwyer's mill yielded 16 oz per ton. The operations of these two companies were credited with the growth of reef mining at Hurdle Flat, 'this hitherto neglected locality'.

By 1873, the Cead Mille Failtha mine was known as the Kingston, and both it and the Wallaby were flourishing. The new owners of the Wallaby adopted a more systematic plan of working, 'taking out the stone in a face, and not picking it here and there where it may look well'. In 1875 the Wallaby Co. came upon an immense reef, 24 ft wide, and to facilitate its working purchased a pumping wheel from the Rechabite mine, installing it at the mouth of the tunnel. At the same time, the company bought the Kingston battery.

The Kingston mine was, at that time, on a rich patch its 120-ft level, but was abandoned as 'too poor' in the mid-seventies. From 1879, when it was taken up by Alexander Newton, the Kingston Reef was known as the Marco Polo. Crushing at the Wallaby battery, he got good returns from the mine for a few years, until an excess of water caused work to be suspended.

The Wallaby Co. commenced driving a long tunnel in 1880, in order to work the reef more cheaply. The ground proved very hard, and progress was made at the rate of just 20 ft a month, with the tunnel measuring 8 ft x 4 ft. In 1882, rich stone was struck at last, when, at 554 ft, the tunnel broke through into the old workings. The company

repaired its battery the next year, but the payable stone was soon exhausted and the mine struggled for the remainder of the eighties. An amalgamation of the Wallaby, Rechabite, and Marco Polo companies was mooted in 1889, for the purpose of jointly installing pumping plant to drain the three mines. That amalgamation appears not to have taken place. The Wallaby mine seems to have been only desultorily worked, if at all, during the 1890s, while the Marco Polo remained disabled by excess water.

At the turn of the century, a swag of new plant, including a large boiler, was installed at the 'Old Wallaby' mine, and dead work was carried out ahead of the recommencement of mining. Locals were 'looking forward to the time when a lot of Wallaby money will be circulated in Stanley'. A survey of the Hurdle Flat quartz mines in 1908 described the workings on the 'Wallaby side of the creek' as two tunnels driven into the hill just above creek level. The one into the Kingston, Marco Polo workings opened out into a large quarry, in which a whim had operated and a shaft been sunk. The Wallaby tunnel, three chains lower down the creek, was 600 ft long and ran into large open workings. Below the tunnel were the remains of the old battery, which had been damaged by bushfire. By the following year, the mine was in the hands of G.B. Fletcher, who was 'gallantly' persevering with its development. He erected a 12-head battery at the mouth of the shaft, and turned out his first trial crushing early in 1910. Two years later, the battery closed and mining all but ceased at the Wallaby mine.

In 1977, the Wallaby mine and battery were classified 'C' by the National Trust. Following vandalism on the site, some movable items were removed and placed in storage by the Shire of Yackandandah. The local Lions Club was encouraged by the National Trust to relocate the Wallaby battery in a park in Yackandandah, as a temporary measure until such time as vandalism at Hurdle Flat could be 'controlled'. The army agreed to undertake the relocation. The Buildings Committee of the National Trust opposed the removal of the battery from its original site, as did the Shire of Beechworth on the grounds that Hurdle Flat was within its Shire boundary, not in Yackandandah: if the battery were to be relocated, it should be to the grounds of the Burke Museum in Beechworth. As it turned out, the battery was left on its original site, where it remains today.

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/>