CROOKED RIVER MINING SETTLEMENT: BULLTOWN

Location

CROOKED RIVER TRACK WONGUNGARRA, WELLINGTON SHIRE

Municipality

WELLINGTON SHIRE

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H8323-0017

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Hermes Number	10998
Property Number	

History

Heritage Inventory History of Site: With the alluvial gold rush at Crooked River in 1861, settlements sprang up all along the river's course. The most populous of them was Bulltown (the first place on the river that beef was killed), with Hog(g)town (named after Mr Hogg, a pioneer resident) one mile downstream, and Thiel Town (named by storekeeper Phillip Thiel) about three miles up-river. Bulltown had the field's only licensed hotel, a post office, and public hall, while the other settlements had their share of stores and unlicensed grog shanties. Seven hundred diggers were on Crooked River early in 1861, and their number probably increased later that year before falling away in favour of rushes elsewhere. The field continued to support a population of 200–300 through 1863. When quartz reefs were discovered in 1864, the early reef workings were centred some six miles from Bulltown, so a settlement was formed on Crooked River, south of the Pioneer Reef. Originally named Ram Town, it soon

changed to Talbotville. Opposite the Pioneer, on the northern side of the Wongungarra River, was the township of Howitville. Like the alluvial deposits, the reefs were worked in pockets along the river and its tributaries, and other new settlements sprang up. Winchester (also known as Little London and Rathmines) was three miles downstream from Talbotville, on the Wongungarra. Stonewall (after Confederate hero, General Stonewall Jackson) was at the junction of Good Luck Creek and Crooked River. Away from the river, on Mt Pleasant, a town grew up which would become the main centre for the goldfield—it was later named Grant.In 1865, Talbotville boasted a butcher's shop, bakery, blacksmith's, three stores, doctor, chemist, newsagency and circulating library, brewery, post office, racecourse, and three licensed hotels. Winchester had three stores, and wine and spirit merchant, two hotels, a blacksmith, two butchers, photographer's studio, post office, and bakery.The reefing rush on Crooked River was shortlived. By 1866-7, mining activity and population were greatly reduced. Hogtown, Stonewall and Winchester disappeared in 1867, and Howitville in 1868 when the Pioneer Co. abandoned its reef. Bulltown ceased to exist in the 1880s (its school closed in 1881), although the last inhabitant remained until 1905. Of the river towns, only Talbotville survived into the twentieth century. Unlike the others, it was not wholly dependent on mining. Situated on a large river flat, Talbotville was suitable for crop-growing, enabling its residents to rely on the land, rather than gold, for a living. At the turn of the century, the settlement still had its own pub and store, as well as numerous houses. Talbotville outlived even Grant, in the end. In 1946 there were still three houses, and the last family left in 1950.

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/