
JIRNKEE WATER RACE

Location

163 FLANNAGANS ROAD OMEO, EAST GIPPSLAND SHIRE

Municipality

EAST GIPPSLAND SHIRE

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H8423-0005

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Hermes Number 11050

Property Number

History

Heritage Inventory History of Site: Chinese miners opened up alluvial ground in Long Gully and its tributaries during the 1860s. By the mid-1880s, quartz reefing was on the ascendant and few alluvial miners remained in the locality. Prospecting activity in 1890-91 showed promise and led to new interest in the Long Gully alluvial. Between 1892-6, the Working Miners Co. (a group of six men) drove an adit some 1,000 ft in length and produced about 800 oz of gold. In 1896, the Working Miners put forward a proposal to sluice the whole length of the Long Gully alluvial ground, with water supplied by a water race from the Wentworth River. A race of 26 miles (42 km) extent and costing £2,000 was originally envisaged. Two years later, the Jirnkee Hydraulic Sluicing GMC was formed in London, with a capital of £40,000. By the end of 1898, the company had mining leases totalling 185 acres, extending about 6 km from the Warden battery at Cassilis, downstream to Chinaman's Crossing, about 1½ miles below Tongio West. The water race was constructed in 1899-1900, with an eventual length of 48 miles (77 km), costing approximately £14,000. It commenced at the head of Wentworth River, picked up water

from New Rush Creek, crossed the dividing range twice, then came down Waterfall Gully just below Cassilis Gap to terminate just above Tongio West, on the western side of Gray's Creek. Trial sluicing operations commenced at Tongio West in 1900, initially using a gravel pump, then a jet elevator. Both types of plant had trouble dealing with the presence of large obstacles (boulders and timbers). To make matters worse, the water supply was insufficient due to collapses in the banks of the water race. Repairs were made, and production began in September 1901. Soon after, the manager of the Jirnkee Co., Jonathan Lang, died after being struck by a jet of water from the hydraulic nozzle. In 1902, the Jirnkee water race was extended to over 56 miles (90 km) in length, when a branch was cut to pick up additional water from the heads of the Wentworth. But the race continued to supply insufficient water to operate the plant at more than half its capacity. After the company's enormous initial outlay, running costs continued to far outstrip gold production. When operations ceased at the end of 1905, after four years' operation, the total yield stood at just over 750 oz of gold. The leases, race, and plant were purchased for a small price by the Jirnkee Hydraulic Syndicate in 1907. Trials were carried out with and without the jet elevator used by the previous company, and it was found that conventional hydraulic sluicing yielded more than twice the gold won with the jet elevator. Even so, the gold obtained failed to pay running costs, and operations ceased for good at the end of 1909.

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/>