
MT MURPHY WOLFRAM TREATMENT WORKS - LOWER WORKS



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Location

TOM GROGGIN, EAST GIPPSLAND SHIRE

Municipality

EAST GIPPSLAND SHIRE

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H8424-0005

Heritage Listing

Hermes Number 11063

Property Number

History

Heritage Inventory History of Site: Wolfram was discovered on the north-west slope of Mt Murphy, 50 km from Benambra, in about 1890. Access was limited to horseback, and the resource was not much exploited until early in the 20th century when wolfram was in demand for alloying steel. Renewed prospecting revealed several parallel lodes and in a flurry of speculation several leases were taken up. According to the Omeo Standard, assays showed the Mt Murphy wolfram ore to be the most valuable in the world. Wolfram concentrates could fetch close to £200 per ton, but in 1906 its market value was under £50, which did not justify the heavy expense of transport to and from the mines. In 1907, the price rose to £175 per ton and the Benambra Wolfram Syndicate erected a crushing plant on its Buonbar lease—steam-driven rockbreaker, rollers, and jigs (wolfram is easily separated from quartz, so that coarse crushing was sufficient). The wolfram price kept rising, but by 1911 the company had spent £5,500 without reaping a dividend. It was refloated as the Mt Murphy Wolfram Mining Co. in 1913, with extra capital of £4,000. A second adit was driven, 30 m below the first, an 800-ft tramway was built between adit and crushing plant, and a large storage dam was constructed. In 1916, the capital was exhausted and, in view of the booming war-time wolfram market, the company was again re-floated, this time raising £30,000 in capital. The crushing plant was remodelled; it was driven by a single-cylinder steam engine, with steam supplied by six miniature portable under-fired boilers connected together. Up to 1919, the company had spent £15,000 for negligible returns (its yield for 1918 was 1 ton 2 cwt of concentrates, worth just £193). In 1920, an air compressing plant and rock drills were installed, but the wolfram price fell dramatically post-war and the company stopped work. Much of the plant was removed to Benambra in 1922 and sold, but the high cost of cartage meant that some items were left on site at Mt Murphy. Among the plant left behind were the six small boilers, ore dressing and concentrating plant (including Wilfley tables), about 2,000 ft of 2-inch wrought iron piping, galvanised iron buildings, a rock-drilling machine, tram rails, and mine trucks. During World War Two, the Mt Murphy mine was re-opened by the Controller of Mineral Production, owing to the wartime demand for tungsten. Plant was erected and prospecting carried on, but with disappointing results: just one ton of concentrates was produced. At 1943, after only a year's operation, the mine closed and the new plant was removed and sold. An amount of exploration work has taken place subsequently, but the mine has not been further developed.

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/>