
ST JOHN'S HILL FARMSTEAD RUIN

Location

1005 CRAIGIEBURN ROAD WEST OAKLANDS JUNCTION, HUME CITY

Municipality

HUME CITY

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7822-2290

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO266

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

The remains of the former Branigan homestead are located on a flat topped hill overlooking the Deep Creek valley.

Interpretation of Site The 1998 Hume City Heritage Study (Maloney & Johnson 1998) records the homestead site as including the remains of a stone building and a well, scatterings of various building materials probably related to the homestead. The building remains consisted of a line of stones, probably the base of the outer walls, tracing a rectangular footprint of about 10m by 5m. They further state that the hill was edged on its south side with a row of eight Monterey pine trees, and that there were various other plants in the north of the site, including a variety of cacti, a peppercorn tree and a cypress tree.

To the east of the hill, remnants of a cobbled road survive which cuts into and curves up the hillside and is depicted in a map of 1914 as an unfenced fourth class road leading to a house (Maloney & Johnson 1998). The road runs approximately parallel to a drystone wall which climbs to meet the walling of animal yards directly above the homestead site.

Archaeological Significance It is apparent that the hill has been partially cleared by bulldozing, removing the majority of the foundation and all but one of the Monterey pines. A small length of crumbling wall remains which is constructed mostly of rubble and was probably the outer wall of an outbuilding. Otherwise the top of the hill is scattered with brick including bluestones and bricks, some of which are hand-made, and some are stamped 'Alston' or 'Hoffman'. The well was not observed by the recent survey.

The surface scatter of construction materials and artefacts at the top of the hill, in the footprint of the homestead, would appear to have been drawn across it by the action of the bulldozer. However, some potential for deposits may remain at the top of the hill. As demonstrated by the sections of standing wall, there remains a high potential for material to survive around the peripheries and across the wider farmstead.

Historical Significance The remains of the former St John's Hill farm complex, which was established in the late 1850s or early 1860s, is of high significance for its association with the early phase of farming in the study area.

Other Names BRANIGAN HOMESTEAD,

Hermes Number 124587

Property Number

History

The property was originally purchased in June 1850 by a J.Oswald and J.Sloan who then divided the property equally, with John Sloan taking possession of the site. In 1857 it passed to Thomas Branigan (or Branagan), a farmer. Branigan called his property St.John's Hill, and this is commemorated by St.John's Road to the south.

Branigan had arrived in Australia in 1842 as one of the dozen or so servants brought to Australia by William Pomeroy Greene who established the Woodlands estate at Bulla, at which Branigan was the head groom. When he settled at St.John's Hill he and his descendents continued to work with horses. Branigan was on the Road Board Committee in 1864 and 1865 and was subsequently elected to this first Council. Following his death in 1868, his wife and sons continued to live at St. John's Hill where one son, Denis, became a prominent member of the local community, attending the first committee of the local Oaklands Hunt Club, established in July 1888, becoming the first Deputy Master of the Foxhounds and also becoming a member of the Bulla Shire Council.

In 1888 the brothers entered into a contract to sell the property to Joseph Reed, and Francis Joseph Smart, 'architects and surveyors' and principals of what is still one of Melbourne's most prominent architectural practices, now known as Bates Smart. It is likely that Reed and Smart purchased the property as a speculative venture, as there was much talk of a railway to Bulla at the time. With the collapse of the land-boom they defaulted on their payments, and never took possession of the property. Denis Branigan remained in possession of the property until 1910 when he was reported as having built a new house at Oaklands Junction. By 1936, the early homestead was described as a ruin on an Ordinance map.

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/>