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# BEER FARM COMPLEX SITE

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## Location

170 LANCEFIELD ROAD SUNBURY, HUME CITY

## Municipality

HUME CITY

## Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

## Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7822-0371

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - April 1, 2010

Data has been updated as a result of the Outer Western Metro Project, Context, March 2010.

The site comprises a farm complex that includes a series of dry stone walls which divide an area of flat land by the creek into two contained areas. Additional walls run alongside the creek and up the hill to the west, then along the top of the hill, running northwest.

Within the southern partitioned area are a stone horse works circle, the remains of a wooden frame adjacent to the circle, a cobbled rectangular floor area and a cobbled road/driveway which runs into it from the north. The horse works circle is currently overgrown with grass. It measures six metres diameter between the outer walls, and has a central inner circle that measures 1.5 metres diameter. The circle has been constructed from rocks that have been packed together to form a platform. When it was functional, it would probably have been packed with earth or gravel, and a horse would have walked on the platform in a circle, pulling a crusher (Tulloch 2003). A wooden frame adjacent to the circle is evidently part of this structure. Approximately 25 metres to the north west of the horse works circle, a rectangular cobbled floor, probably relating to a timber barn, measures approximately 25 x 15 metres and is constructed from locally obtained rocks that are regularly, but not densely, packed together. A cobbled road/driveway runs between two dry stone walls leading into the enclosed compound.

Within the northern enclosure, the concrete trough measures approximately 2 metres in length, and drops one metre sloping from south to north. It was most likely used as a sheep dip.

A ford crosses the creek between the site and the dairy complex on the east bank of the creek (H7822-0372). This was used to move cattle across the creek for milking (Mr. Beer pers. comm.) and looks to have been replaced by a bridge at some point, one support for which can be seen on the eastern bank. A pile of bluestone blocks to the north west of the ford represents the site of a single room hut with a large bluestone chimney which was demolished by the present occupiers who apparently rebuilt the chimney in their tea-room off Lancefield Road (Maloney 2003).

Another, likely more recent, ford lies downstream to the south east of the site.

Interpretation  
of Site

Archaeological  
Significance

The ruins and artefactual material within the site may provide a great deal of information about farming practices in the Sunbury district, and possibly their changing nature moving from the 19th into the 20th century.

Historical  
Significance

The remains of extensive stretches of dry stone walls, and the farmyard and sheep dip, which likely dates to about 1911, are of historical significance for their association with the continued pastoral use of the land into the twentieth century. The remains demonstrate a distinctive way of life and farming activities that date from the mid-nineteenth century.

Other Names

BEER H1 - FARM COMPLEX,

Hermes  
Number

12757

Property  
Number

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## History

The first owner of the land on which these remains are located was Michael Coolahan who by the mid-1850s had an interest in some 790 acres of land to either side of Emu Creek. By 1888 Coolahan was considered one of the pioneer settlers in the district and he is said to have carried out mainly hay growing and some dairy farming on his land.

Coolahan's land to either side of the creek was rated separately in the Shire of Bulla Rate Books because they were situated in different Shire ridings. It would appear that the land on the western side was probably used mainly for growing hay, and the only dwelling on this side was apparently a hut with a large hearth (Moloney 2003). A steep slope divides the land to the east of the creek quite distinctly into a main upper flat and a creek flat with only a small acreage. A dwelling is recorded as having been erected on each of these divisions, a bluestone house on the former and a weatherboard house on the creek flat (Moloney 2003). When Coolahan died in April 1895 his property included a 'bluestone cottage with WB skillions, tank, etc.' and a 'WB dwelling with stabling and outbuildings'. While the bluestone homestead probably dates back to the early to mid-1850s when Coolahan first settled on his property, the construction dates of the structures on the creek flats are more difficult to establish. The drystone fences and the stone outbuildings probably date back to the same era, perhaps a little later, but nothing appears to remain of the weatherboard house.

From about 1896 to about 1901 the Coolahan family leased out the land on both sides of the creek to the Heath family and then to the O'Brien family. These tenants resided in the weatherboard house. From 1907 or 1908, the Coolahans resumed farming the property, but for unknown reasons they sold their land in late 1911. The new owner was a Michael Joseph Caffrey, a well-known Newmarket horse buyer and importer of English and New Zealand horses, although it is likely that he mainly used the Bulla land for grazing sheep. When he died in 1914 the Executors Realisation Sale registered 2000 cross-bred ewes for sale, as well as 60 horses and 20 dairy cattle. It is probable that the remains in the site, on the west side of the creek, date back to Caffrey's ownership of the property, during which time the property was known as Stone Stream Farm.

The new owner of the land, a Robert Shilliday, took up possession of it in February 1915. Shilliday worked the property until he died in January 1930 when the farm was willed to his sons. It has not been established how long they owned the property, but some or all of it was later acquired by a William A. Stoney who apparently did not own the land long before selling it towards the end of 1953 to the Beer family. The Beers currently run cattle and a Clydesdale stud on the property. They recall that, apart from a small hut (see below), the buildings and structures down by the creek were ruinous when they bought the property (Maloney 2003).

*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/>*