

# STONY CREEK SCHOOL RESERVE



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## DIAGRAM 2341

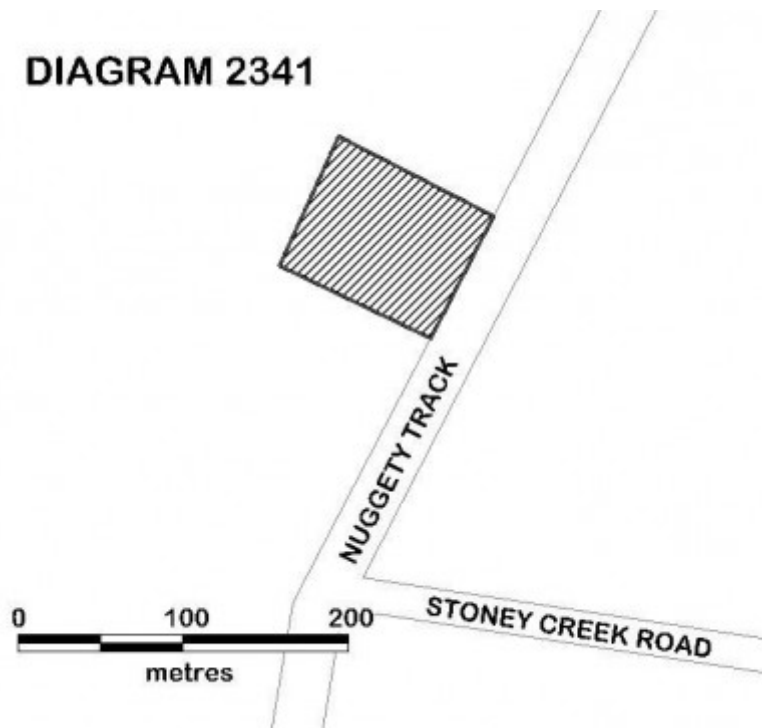


Diagram 2341

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### Location

NUGGETY TRACK STONY CREEK, CENTRAL GOLDFIELDS SHIRE

### Municipality

CENTRAL GOLDFIELDS SHIRE

### Level of significance

Registered

### Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2341

### Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO181

### VHR Registration

February 12, 2015

### Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

What is significant?

The Stony Creek School Reserve, located in the Talbot State Forest approximately 7 kms southwest of Talbot. It contains the archaeological remains of the 1869 Stony Creek School House and rare examples of school garden beds and educational rockeries dating from the first decade of the twentieth century. There are also some native and exotic trees planted while the school was in use.

History Summary

The first Stony Creek School House, a timber structure, was built on the reserve in 1865. By 1867 it accommodated thirty-seven students. In 1869, it was replaced by a single-storey brick building. A local gold rush in 1876 saw a great increase in the number of children attending the school. By 1893, the gold had run out and by 1902 student enrolments had fallen to 10. As a result the District Inspector recommended the school should operate on a part-time basis with the Red Lion School, situated near Majorca. In 1905, Miss Elizabeth James, a keen gardener, was appointed head teacher at Stony Creek and remained there until 1913. With her students she created stone rockeries whose various shapes helped educate her students in the geography of Australia, and geometry. They also created stone garden beds, built a flower house and planted trees on Arbor Day. To create this cultivated garden landscape, Miss James and her students cleared the area of stumps and obtained water from a nearby dam for the garden. The establishment of a garden was part of the international school garden movement, evident in Victoria and Australia in the early 1900s, which promoted gardens as a means to learn first-hand about nature, science, mathematics, horticulture and botany. Maps depicting the Federated States of Australia became common in school grounds as an aid to learning about geography. School gardens also reflected the key underlying principle of the State's new education system from 1902: learning through experience. The school closed in 1916 and the brick school building was demolished.

Description Summary

This place contains the remains of the 1869 Stony Creek School house including a building platform, traces of foundations and scatters of brick rubble. In the south-east corner of the school grounds, sandstone and quartz rocks have been used to define pathways and small triangular, square and circular garden beds.

There are also several larger ornamental beds located near the school house. Two of these are rare and evocative relics of the Federation era. One bed has been designed in the shape of a map of Australia (measuring 9.45m x 6.71m) including within it the Federated state boundaries (five mainland states and northern territory but no discernable Tasmania). The other stone arrangement represents a five-point star contained within a 6.1m diameter circle. Another prominent circular arrangement, located near the star, is locally known as a sundial. The school ground has some native and several exotic trees including sugar gum and pine most likely planted after 1905.

This site is part of the traditional land of the Dja Dja Wurrung.

### How is it significant?

The Stony Creek School Reserve is of historical and archaeological significance to the State of Victoria. It satisfies the following criterion for inclusion on the Victorian Heritage Register:

Criterion A Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history

Criterion B Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history

Criterion C Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Victoria's cultural history

Why is it significant?

The Stony Creek School Reserve is significant at the State level for the following reasons:

The Stony Creek School is historically significant as a remnant school garden containing educational stone rockeries. The garden and rockeries were a product of the new Victorian State School education system 1900-1910. Based on progressive trends developed in Europe and England, the system's central philosophy was 'learning through experience' rather than rote learning. [Criterion A]

The Stony Creek School Reserve is rare for its possession of a rockery depicting the mainland Federated states of Australia. This is a rare and evocative symbol of Australia's early years as a nation . [Criterion B]

The Stony Creek School Reserve is of significance for its potential to contain archaeological artefacts and deposits which may be able to provide additional significant information about the history of early twentieth century school education. [Criterion C]

The Stony Creek School Reserve is also significant for the following reasons, but not at the State level.

It is associated with Miss Elizabeth James, the school teacher who was responsible for creating the school garden to help educate her students in geometry, the geography of Federation Australia and the aims of Arbor Day, and to protect and care for trees.

## Permit Exemptions

### General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

Places of worship: In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must [notify](#) the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

Subdivision/consolidation: Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

### Specific Exemptions:

PERMIT EXEMPTIONS (under section 42 of the Heritage Act)

It should be noted that Permit Exemptions can be granted at the time of registration (under s.42(4) of the Heritage Act). Permit Exemptions can also be applied for and granted after registration (under s.66 of the Heritage Act)

#### General Condition: 1.

All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object.

**General Condition: 2.**

Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of works that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such works shall cease and Heritage Victoria shall be notified as soon as possible.

**General Condition: 3.**

All works should be informed by the land manager's (Department of Primary Industry and Environment or DEPI) management strategy for historic places in State Forests. The Executive Director is not bound by any DEPI management strategies, and permits still must be obtained for works that may be carried out on the former school reserve.

**General Conditions: 4.**

Nothing in this determination prevents the Heritage Council from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions.

**General Condition: 5.**

Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the relevant responsible authority, where applicable.

**Specific Permit Exemptions****Landscape**

The following landscape maintenance works are permit exempt:

- a) Landscape maintenance works provided the activities do not involve the removal or destruction of any significant above-ground features or sub-surface archaeological artefacts or deposits.
- b) Removal of dead or dangerous trees and emergency tree works to maintain public safety and to protect buildings and structures providing the Executive Director is notified within 21 days of the removal or works occurring.
- c) Management of trees in accordance with Australian Standard; Pruning of Amenity Trees AS 4373.
- d) Management of trees in accordance with Australian Standard; Protection of Trees on Development Sites AS 4970.
- e) All works to maintain the existing roadway (tracks).

**Fire Suppression Duties**

The following fire suppression duties are permit exempt:

- a) Fire suppression and fire fighting duties provided the works do not involve the removal or destruction of any significant above-ground features or sub-surface archaeological artefacts or deposits;
- b) Fire suppression activities such as fuel reduction burns, and fire control line construction, provided all significant historical and archaeological features are appropriately recognised and protected

Note: Fire management authorities should be aware of the location, extent and significance of historical and archaeological places when developing fire suppression and fire fighting strategies. The importance of places listed in the Heritage Register must be considered when strategies for fire suppression and management are being developed.

**Weed and Vermin Control**

The following weed and vermin control activities are permit exempt:

- a) Weed and vermin control activities provided the works do not involve the removal or destruction of any significant above-ground features or sub-surface archaeological artefacts or deposits.
- b) Removal of plants listed as noxious weeds in the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*.

Note: Particular care must be taken with weed and vermin control works where such activities may have a detrimental affect on the significant fabric of a place. Such works may include the removal of ivy, moss or lichen

from an historic structure or feature, or the removal of burrows from a site that has archaeological values.

### **Public Safety and Security**

The following public safety and security activities are permit exempt:

- a) public safety and security activities provided the works do not involve the removal or destruction of any significant above-ground structures or sub-surface archaeological artefacts or deposits;
- b) the erection of temporary security fencing, scaffolding, hoardings or surveillance systems to prevent unauthorised access or secure public safety which will not adversely affect significant fabric of the place including archaeological features;
- c) development including emergency stabilisation necessary to secure safety where a site feature has been irreparably damaged or destabilised and represents a safety risk to its users or the public.

Note: Urgent or emergency site works are to be undertaken by an appropriately qualified specialist such as a structural engineer, or other heritage professional

### **Signage and Site Interpretation**

The following Signage and Site Interpretation activities are permit exempt:

- a) signage and site interpretation activities provided the works do not involve the removal or destruction of any significant above-ground structures or sub-surface archaeological artefacts or deposits;
- b) the erection of non-illuminated signage for the purpose of ensuring public safety or to assist in the interpretation of the heritage significance of the place or object and which will not adversely affect significant fabric including landscape or archaeological features of the place or obstruct significant views of and from heritage values or items;
- c) signage and site interpretation products must be located and be of a suitable size so as not to obscure or damage significant fabric of the place;
- d) signage and site interpretation products must be able to be later removed without causing damage to the significant fabric of the place.

Note: The development of signage and site interpretation products must be consistent in the use of format, text, logos, themes and other display materials.

Note: Where possible, the signage and interpretation material should be consistent with other schemes developed on similar or associated sites. It may be necessary to consult with land managers and other stakeholders concerning existing schemes and strategies for signage and site interpretation.

### **Theme**

2. Peopling Victoria's places and landscapes 4. Transforming and managing the land 6. Building towns cities and the garden state 7. Governing Victorians 8. Building community life

Construction dates	1865,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place, Registered archaeological place,
Other Names	STONEY CREEK SCHOOL, STONY CREEK SCHOOL,
Hermes Number	13024
Property Number	

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### **History**

## Stony Creek School No. 886

In 1865 local residents erected a timber school building 7.3m x 4.3m by public subscription, for £35, and appointed an itinerant teacher. In 1866, W.W.Walker, on behalf of the School Committee, applied for aid by way of salary, and for a grant of £70 to extend the building, with a view to vesting it with the Board of Education. The grant did not materialise as the building was not suitable to be classed as a school house, but a salary was granted from 15 July 1867. The appointed teacher was James Knight. In 1867 the timber building was enlarged to 10.9m x 4.3m x 3.4m the number of attendees was recorded as 37.

In 1869, a new, single-storey brick school was built at a cost £243 on a site already gazetted as a school reserve. The school was vested with the Minister of Public Instructions. In 1876 a 'gold rush' in the vicinity of the school gave it new life, resulting in the reserve being fenced. By 1893, however, consideration was given to closing the school. By 1902 the number of students had fallen to 10 and the District Inspector recommended the school should operate part-time.

The stone arrangements (garden beds and educational stone rockeries) were the work of Miss James who was the teacher in charge from 1905 to 1913. Her pupils helped clear the area of stumps beforehand and water was carried from a nearby dam. Her pupils were the sons and daughters of miners, sleeper cutters, domestic workers and farmers. Unfazed by the isolation and harsh conditions, she worked with her students to create a number of garden plots, plant trees on Arbor Day, and build a flower house. Her efforts were praised and remarked upon in several school reports, and the garden was awarded a second class certificate on two occasions. The task of cultivating a garden within school grounds became a visible example of the underlying principle of the Victorian State Government's new education system 1900-10: 'learning through experience'. The school closed in 1916 and the brick school building was demolished.

One newspaper article from the era described the place thus:

Tucked away in the heart of the forest in Talbot are the remains of the Stony Creek School. Although the fires of January 21 burned to within a couple of kilometres the remains of the once lovely rock gardens a large map of Australia created out of rocks by a painstaking teacher to instruct her classes in geography are still intact. It is with surprise that one comes across remains of the gardens built in the shape of Australia with rock and quartz; a circular garden with star inside, and many other rock gardens of varying shapes and sizes. These relics are all that remain of Stony Creek School No. 886.

In 1905, Mr A Dean, Inspector, complimented the then head teacher, Miss Elizabeth James, on the manner in which she had redecorated the interior of the school buildings. Miss James was again complimented in 1906, but this time for the gardens. Mr Dean noted that a flower house has been erected. On July 26 1907 the Inspector wrote 'Grounds. In excellent order. The boys have cleared the ground of some old stumps; they have also carried a good deal of soil and gravel to the garden. On Arbor Day 15 trees were planted; many, many of the parents attending'.

Records show that Miss James was head teacher in 1905 until 1913 when Miss Ann Weir became head teacher. In 1909 School Inspector Saxton made the following report:

Hidden away in the heart of the forest, used only for mining timber purposes, this nice bush school presents, by reason of its tastefully improved grounds, quite a pleasing spectacle ... A three-railed fence, wire netting to the top, surrounds the grounds. They have been absolutely cleared while garden plots in excellent order, the property of individual children, all enclosed by a high wire netting, give an atmosphere of home to the place ... Neat rockeries with climbing plants, an excellent summer house, with pot plants, a wire netting approach to the porch, hung with creepers and assisted by a fine array of plants in pots assist in increasing the excellent effect ... In this respect it is the best school I have met.

Between 1904 and 1916 the Pupils Register shows that the occupation of parents and guardians of the children enrolled were sleeper cutters, miners, surveyors, farmers and domestic staff.

The late Mr R G Hull, of Dunach, remembered attending a farewell concert to Miss James at the Stony Creek School. Miss James left Stony Creek and went to teach and live at Clunes. Her interest in horticulture continued and her Clunes garden became as well-known as the Stony Creek rockeries. Every entry in the Inspector's Report Book compliments her. Her work with the community was praised; her teaching methods; her school grounds and in particular the gardens and 'flower house'; the school buildings and their interior decor. Even after she left the little school in the forest her work was praised by an Inspector when he said the foundations she had

laid were very good.

### The new Victorian education system - learning through experience

In 1902, after a lengthy debate and the findings of the Royal Commission into Technical Education a 'new' system of education was implemented in Victorian State Schools. The system was based on progressive trends developing in Europe and England, which preached as its first principle the importance of 'learning through experience'. To spearhead this reform a brilliant young man, Frank Tate, was offered the position of Victoria's first Director General of Education. His ideas on education embraced the belief  $\frac{3}{4}$  'when people and human activities are valued they are usually placed in environments that reflect that value'.

The fourth report of the Royal Commission into Technical Education in 1900 specifically recommended that school gardens be established and agricultural science taught as a subject. Tate was enthusiastic about such a scheme. The 'art' of gardening in his opinion was more than the 'beautification' of school grounds: it was a tool whereby students could learn first-hand about nature, science, mathematics, geography, horticulture and botany. He believed that these important lessons would naturally flow into their home lives, giving them an appreciation of Australian flora and pride in the country in which they lived.

In 1902 Tate mounted a concerted campaign to enlist support from key groups within the community. His efforts produced a good response from shire councils and boroughs across the State and the Director of the Melbourne Botanic Gardens. In 1903 support was forthcoming from the Royal Horticultural Society. In 1904 the Australian Natives Association (ANA) introduced an annual prize of £1 'for the best school ground in each of the twenty-four School Inspectorial Districts in Victoria'.

The prize generated an overwhelming response from teachers and pupils as they strove each year to produce gardens worthy of being judged the 'Best in the State'. As the concept spread, the school gardens created in Victoria between 1901 and 1914 expanded beyond mere flowerbeds. Teachers and the school community were encouraged to plant trees on Arbor Day as part of a reforestation program promoted by the State Government, and special schools and experimental crop sites were established to inculcate an understanding of agricultural pursuits. Arbor Day was first mooted in the 1890s, but was not officially sanctioned by the Education Department until 1901 as part of the schools beautification program.

The school garden movement, part of an international school garden movement, was a sociological reform that produced startling results. Not only did these gardens improve schools aesthetically, they also reflected changes in perceptions about landscape principles and the function of school grounds, and promoted an awareness of place. Annual prizes of £5 and £2 for the 'most effectively planted and best kept school ground in each Inspectorate' were offered by the Department in 1901. The results of the small number of schools that participated were later published in the Gazette, and the gardens were illustrated by a series of articles that ran throughout 1902.

There is little written documentation relating to the Stony Creek School garden. The efforts of similar schools, however, provide some insight into what occurred at Stony Creek. Created in 1899, the original Hawkesdale School garden area of only 16.46 metres square was set out with flower beds around a pepper tree. The resourceful head teacher Mr Williamson obtained fertilisers from the Department of Agriculture to plant out experimental plots of wheat, oats, barley, flax, turnips, cabbages and other vegetables. Hawkesdale shared first and second prize with Mailer's Flat, and Mr Williamson, meticulously recorded the undertaking of such a task. The system he employed was typical of many of the gardens eventually established. At the Bacchus Marsh School in 1904, after the planting out on Arbor Day had been completed, the Head teacher reported that a 'Map of Australia' garden had been created. Maps depicting the Federated States of Australia became common in school grounds as a geography aid.

### KEY REFERENCES USED TO PREPARE ASSESSMENT

Stony Creek School File, Talbot Historical Museum

Suzanne Hunt, 'Planting the Nation' in Georgina Whitehead (ed) *Where the Sweet Australian Peas Bloomed: State School Gardens in Victoria 1901-1914*, Australian Garden History Society, Melbourne, 2001.

### Plaque Citation



This place contains the archaeological remains of the 1869 Stony Creek School House and rare examples of garden beds and educational rockeries dating from 1905 to 1916. Inspired by the School Garden Movement, the most notable of these is a map of Australia used to teach geography in the early years of Federation.

## Assessment Against Criteria

### Criterion

The Stony Creek School is historically significant as a remnant school garden containing educational stone rockeries. The garden and rockeries were a product of the new Victorian State School education system 1900-1910. Based on progressive trends developed in Europe and England, the system's central philosophy was 'learning through experience' rather than rote learning. [

### Criterion A]

The Stony Creek School Reserve is rare for its possession of a rockery depicting the mainland Federated states of Australia. This is a rare and evocative symbol of Australia's early years as a nation . [

### Criterion B]

The Stony Creek School Reserve is of significance for its potential to contain archaeological artefacts and deposits which may be able to provide additional significant information about the history of early twentieth century school education. [

### Criterion C]

## Extent of Registration

### NOTICE OF REGISTRATION

As Executive Director for the purpose of the **Heritage Act 1995**, I give notice under section 46 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended by including Heritage Register Number H2341 in the categories described as Heritage Place and Archaeological Place.

Stony Creek School Reserve  
Nuggetty Track  
Stony Creek  
Central Goldfields Shire

All of the place shown hatched on Diagram 2341 encompassing all of Crown Allotment 30E, Section 11, Parish of Amherst.

Dated 12 February 2015

TIM SMITH  
Executive Director

*Victoria Government Gazette* G 6 12 February 2015 pp.348-349

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*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/>*