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# FARM COMPLEX

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## Location

260 CRAIGIEBURN ROAD WOLLERT, WHITTLESEA CITY

## Municipality

WHITTLESEA CITY

## Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

## Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7922-0484

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

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The function of the site includes the housing of animals, possibly sheep given the presence of the shearers shed. Preliminary interpretation suggests an initial occupation phase commencing early 1840s/1850s with another phase possibly occurring during the early 1950s (archaeological excavation may be required to determine occupational phases, e.g. establish site chronology such as one single continual phase or numerous phases).

### Interpretation of Site

It is not clear when the site was abandoned (as evident by the dilapidated condition of the structures within the farm complex) as a neighbouring property owner indicated it has been many years since anyone has used the site. Cattle were noted grazing nearby which indicates that the property itself is still in use but not the farming complex. In general, the dry stone walls surrounding the farm complex and animal enclosures are in good condition; however, the shearers shed and outbuilding was noted to be in very poor condition (dilapidated) with asbestos present. The interiors of both structures were not inspected due to the occupational, health & safety constraints related to the asbestos and poor condition of the buildings.

Archaeological Significance	The farming complex is of medium archaeological significance. Archaeological excavation is recommended to determine occupational phases of the site. For example, establish site chronology and determine one single continual phase or numerous phases. There may be archaeological features related to the initial development of the site buried beneath the existing structures. The dry stone walls and animal enclosures are well preserved.
Historical Significance	The place is of medium historical significance as it may relate to the early Nineteenth Century settlement of the Wollert region and may be associated with the early squatting runs and stations in the area.
Hermes Number	191280
Property Number	

## History

Following the first permanent European settlement of the port Phillip District in 1835, there was a high demand for land and the Surveyor General, Robert Hoddle, surveyed land to the north of Melbourne in 1837. This area between Merri Creek and the Plenty River was the first land surveyed outside the township of Melbourne. The area surveyed was divided into allotments, generally 640 acres, or one square mile in size (National Trust of Australia). The original allotments were subdivided in 1853. The region has been variously used for grazing, agriculture and dairying.

There are many historic buildings within the Whittlesea Shire, which were variously constructed of mud, stone, timber and brick. Many of the early buildings were constructed by German migrants; there was also a mixture of Scottish, Irish and English people in the area (Nicolson 1999: 18). To the south of Wollert, a village area was surveyed in 1839 and by 1853 a Catholic school and Hotel had been established there. The village was named Epping. The area was initially settled by farmers of Irish origin; however English, Scottish and German soon followed. The Melbourne merchant William Westgarth purchased 640 acres near Thomastown for newly arrived Germans to settle, having been impressed with their skills and behaviour when settling in South Australia (Wutchatsch 1998: 5). The German settlers began to spread out from the area known as Westgarthtown, and Epping and Wollert were the focus of German settlement from the 1850s onwards (Payne 1975). By 1888, the number of German settlers in the Wollert, Epping and Westgarth region was said to be over 1000 and were mainly engaged in dairy farming. In the 1840s and 1850s, agriculture was the principal use of the land in the Plenty Valley area. With the Victorian gold rush (1851-1888) a sharp increase in the population of the area occurred, although the immediate area and Epping was not involved in mining, it became an important food production region servicing the goldfields. Improvements to roads and the construction of the railway were implemented due to the pressure from the continued economic downfall of the region and road tolls could no longer be collected.

The Wollert area was particularly targeted by early settlers and especially by German settlers who established several dairy farms in the region. Much of the early wheat production for the colony of Victoria occurred on smaller farms which were subsequent to the early land sales which saw many of the larger pastoralists leave the region to be replaced by these smaller farms (Hyett 2002: 6). In the mid-1860s, there was a shift in the location of wheat-belt to more suitable land to the north, which meant many farmers turned towards dairying as a source of income. In 1889, the opening of the railway to Whittlesea gave rapid and efficient access to the Melbourne markets for produce from the area (Hyett 2002: 6; Weaver 1991: 10-13).

*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/>*