
FORMER MIDDLE CREEK SCHOOL SITE

Location

5964 WESTERN HIGHWAY MIDDLE CREEK, PYRENEES SHIRE

Municipality

PYRENEES SHIRE

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7523-0093

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Interpretation of Site

The physical remains of Middle Creek School were identified during consultation with local resident Edward Dunn (13/02/2012) who remembered attending school there in the 1930's. Edward described the school as "triple brick"; remains identified during the Feb. 2012 survey are consistent with this. The school is part of a larger complex of structures comprising the former township of Middle Creek, including the school house, a blacksmiths workshop, two former churches and Woodnaggerrak homestead, all within a 200m radius of the school on the northern side of the Western Highway. Of these structures, only the homestead, school and schoolhouse were able to be identified in the field with both churches having been moved in the mid 20th century.

Archaeological Significance

The Middle Creek School is of low archaeological significance. Re vegetation works by the current residence have resulted in disturbance to, or possible removal of some footings with only a very small area of visible footings remaining in situ. There is a low to moderate potential for further archaeological or features to exist in the area around the footing where regrowth has not been deliberately planted.

Historical Significance Middle Creek school is of local historical significance as part of the former Middle Creek township which is closely associated with Woodnaggerak pastoral run and homestead. The school is a documented historical place whose location, function and features are still recalled by living , local residents (E Dunn pers comm 13/02/2012).

Hermes Number 191848

Property Number

History

Located some 5.5 kilometres south east of Buangor, Middle Creek is a seasonal waterway in an upland valley flat. It is situated in the Pa rishes of Buangor and Woodnaggerak, and the Local Government Areas of Ararat and Pyrenees. It was centred on the main road linking the towns of Ballarat and Stawell that was first constructed during the gold rushes of the 1850s which attracted a huge influx of miners into western Victoria. This main road eventually became known as the Western Highway. A comparison of present day maps and parish maps dating from the 19th century demonstrates that the road followed much the same route as it does today. Early descriptions of the agricultural potential of the area are not flattering, depicting it as parched in the summer and blasted by chill winds in the winter (*The Argus*, 24 September 1866). Consequently, pastoral activities predominated in the area well past the Ararat gold-rush of 1857 and into the mid 1860 - 1870's. Elsewhere in Victoria, permanent settlement of land had largely taken place by this time. In Ararat and other goldmining regions, often by failed or retired miners. In the Middle Creek area however, the last pastoralist of the Buangor Run, Mr Henry Miller, took licence in 1877. Nevertheless, early land sales for selection and residence were eagerly attended, and predominantly from 1865 local land was divided into relatively small holdings amidst rowdy, at times violently competitive bidding (*The Argus*, 6 July 1865, 24 September 1866). Grazing of cattle and sheep, with some grain production were the primary local agricultural industries.

The Middle Creek Common School (number 1045) was opened in 1870, before the Education Act was passed, with Mr Alexander Gory as *head* teacher. It was originally known as Donald Common School, from 1873 as Shirley 1045, and from 1876 as Middle Creek. The school ran for some years in a one-room timber structure structure which apparently still stands and has most recently been used as a blacksmiths shop. By 1882 the premises were considered unfit for use. Temporary repairs were undertaken, and in the longer term H. Brumley successfully tendered in 1885 for the construction of a new brick building which commenced use from 1886 with an enrolment of 49 (Allender & Brennan 1996. 168-170, *The Argus* 17 July 1885, *The Ararat Advertiser* 5 May 1914). Interestingly the building was still receiving government funding towards structural maintenance in 1955 (Victorian Government Gazette, 160. April 1955. P6), but is recorded as having closed two years earlier in April 1853. Few students progressed through secondary school, leaving school at an average age of 13 or 14, for home or farm duties (Allender & Brennan 1996. 168-170).

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/>