

JUNCTION TOWNSHIP, ARMSTRONG

Location

823 WESTERN HIGHWAY ARMSTRONG, ARARAT RURAL CITY

Municipality

ARARAT RURAL CITY

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7423-0080

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Interpretation of Site	Encompassing an area of 51559.93 metres square the site is quite extensive and represents the functions and activities of a gold mining community. Features of the site include the industrial remains (probable battery) and diggings, building foundations (see Place history) and domestic artefact scatters.
Archaeological Significance	The site has a high potential to yield intact sub surface deposits and features
Historical Significance	The site holds historical significance at a local level as an example of the gold mining communities that arose from the diggings in the region. The site demonstrates a gold mining landscape created as a result of the mining activities and its associated settlement structure. Features of the site include the industrial remains (probable battery) and diggings, building foundations (see Place history) and artefact scatters. The site has a high potential to yield a intact sub surface deposits and features . The area of the site is 51559.93 metres square.

History

Junction Hotel, Armstrong

Situated some 7.5 kilometres north of Ararat and two kilometres south of Armstrong, at the intersection of Old Brewery Road and the Western Highway, was the Junction hotel. The area of Armstrong takes its name from one of the most renowned pioneering sheep farmers in Victorian history. John Armstrong was a member of a very old Scottish Border family of that name, and came out from Scotland arriving in Port Phillip in 1839. He had married in Scotland on 27th February, 1829, Vair Scott, a connection of Sir Walter Scott, the great Scottish novelist. He was accompanied by his wife and four sons - William, Robert Grieve, Thomas and John; also one daughter, Jemima Scott. Another son was born during the voyage out. On arrival at Port Phillip, John Armstrong, who had brought some stock out with him, took up Bush Station, also known as River Station, which included the site of the present city of Geelong, and it is said that the homestead was situated where Geelong College now stands. The original station extended as far as Barwon Heads and Torquay.

John Armstrong had come from a family that had been engaged in sheep farming in Scotland for generations, and possessed all the knowledge necessary about stock, particularly sheep. This knowledge no doubt accounted for his success as a pioneer pastoralist in Victoria. He was for many years recognized as the most perfect sheep master in Victoria, and was the first to adopt the well known remedy for dipping sheep to cure scab and all insect pests. When the town of Geelong took shape, portion of the rights of Bush run were cancelled, but John Armstrong later obtained further grazing rights at Black Forest, formerly Werribee Plains, in 1850. He also held Allanvale or Sinclair's Station, 80,000 acres, near Great Western, from 1854-57, and when gold was discovered in the latter year, he had about 30,000 sheep being shepherded in the vicinity of the diggings. Several Highland families which John Armstrong had brought out from Scotland were working for him on Allanvale, and despite the lure of the goldfields, remained loyal to their employer and did their utmost to prevent the dispersal of his flocks by the diggers, but it was a hopeless task, the flocks having to be moved further out (*The Pastoral Times*, Deniliquin, June 23, 1939). Residential settlement at Armstrong was largely a result of gold discovery in the district (Noble, Kiddell and Clarke 2008). One of the earliest was in 1855 by a group of miners, who made discoveries at Garden Gully and Eaglehawk Leads 'on Armstrong's Run' (Banfield 1986). By 1857 Armstrong's had two other diggings in operation; Dutton's Gully and Long Gully 'about five miles north of Ararat' (Banfield 1986). After the initial finds of 1855, Armstrong's was alternately 'rushed and deserted' (Banfield 1986). In 1861 there was estimated to be about 200 Europeans and 150 Chinese working the area (Banfield 1986). Such large numbers of people passing through the town would have caused considerable damage to the roads, and in 1862 a toll bar was erected to finance road maintenance and improvements (Noble, Kiddell and Clarke 2008).

When miners heard of a lucky strike at Armstrong's in 1864, three or four hundred converged on the dormant town, once again bringing it back to life. Bailliere's Gazetteer described Armstrong's in 1865 as a 'postal mining village' situated on the 'E. Black' range. At that time this 'alluvial mining' town contained two breweries, a railway station and a population of 120. The closest hotel was stated to be at Great Western. Armstrong lay within a significant gold mining district, between the best known diggings of Ararat and Stawell. By 1884, Armstrong had a population of twenty-three, which included which included two publicans, Mary Kershaw and William Brine, a brewer Frederick Round and a teacher Stephen George. In 1888, its population was seven, with William Brine running the Armstrong hotel, Edward Whitten the Junction Hotel, and Alexander Belperround the only named brewer. The 1899 *Wise's Victorian Post Office Directory* section on Armstrong noted eight residents. Today, Armstrong is noted more for its agricultural produce than its gold discoveries (Blake 1977, Noble, Kiddell and Clarke 2008). Previous research into the area (Clarke *et al* 2002) has uncovered a wealth of information on which the following section is predominantly based. James Flett noted that 'grog houses and hotels were crowded' at Armstrong's during the rush (1970:75). This suggests that there was more than one hotel at Armstrong's during the 1850s, with available evidence naming the Junction Hotel and Armstrong's Hotel. The Junction Hotel is the most well documented of hotels at Armstrong's. The earliest mention of it appears in the Ararat Advertiser of 16 February 1858, which reported a 'rush' near the Junction Hotel 'on the Pleasant Creek road', Armstrong's. Its

position is marked on Smith's Goldfields map, also from 1858, and labelled as 'Store'. In 1862, it was marked on a plan showing the Ararat United Borough and Goldfield Common as being on the northern border of the common and the southern border of the Armstrong's Goldfield Common extension at the western side of the road to Pleasant Creek.'

The first owner was Neill Bruce. 8 He was entered in the 1863 rate books as having a hotel and store, with a combined rateable value of £105. The Advertiser of 12 April 1864 reported of gold being found in good quantity behind Bruce's Store, and Banfield (1955) writes of a lucky strike at Armstrong's in that year, which brought three or four hundred miners to the dormant town, once again bringing it back to life. While acknowledging the presence of hotels at Armstrong's during the 1850s rush, Flett notes that not one hotel had survived in 1864 (1970:75). However, on 21 June 1864, the *Ararat Advertiser* reported that Neill Bruce had applied for license of the Junction Hotel, then consisting of three sitting rooms and five bedrooms. Similarly, the *Ararat Advertiser* of 12 June 1867 contains an announcement placed by John Kofoed for a 'grand evening of entertainment' to be held at Bruce's Hotel, in aid of the local school. 9 The Bruces' operated their business at the Junction Hotel site until 1870.

Kershaw's Hotel is thought to be a renamed version of the Junction Hotel, the *Ararat Advertiser* reported nuggets of gold discovered behind the Kershaw's Hotel on Stawell road on 2 April 1864. According to the stawell rate books, the Kershaws took over the hotel from Bruce in 1870. However, a news article reporting of gold found behind Bruce's store in April 1864 implies that Bruce owned the store and that someone else owned the hotel- a Kershaw, perhaps? Rate records have Bruce's name connected successively with both the hotel and store from 1861 to 1867. In 1866 a butcher's shop was added to the rateable property making the total value for that year, including the garden, reach £150. 10 The Kershaw's Hotel went up for sale in 1876 as quite a substantial premise, with a double-storey stone building and wooden addition, along with a fruit and flower garden, stable and outbuildings. After a number of changes in ownership, the last known owner was A. Bryon in 1900. During field reconnaissance of the Junction Hotel site on 14th September 2011, a local identified only as Phillip offered the following information. The site comprised a cluster of buildings, including the Junction Hotel, Post Office, and Old Mason's Hut Bakery - so named after an elderly gentleman called Mr Mason who resided there up to the 1930's. Phillip proposed that the Hotel was already derelict by this time, and that the remaining building had subsequently burnt down. The image below of the Junction Hotel was provided by Phillip.

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.

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