
FORMER MICKLEHAM METHODIST CEMETERY, CHURCH AND SCHOOL SITE

Location

440 MT RIDLEY ROAD MICKLEHAM, HUME CITY

Municipality

HUME CITY

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7822-2313

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO265

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Methodist Cemetery, also site of former Methodist Church with secondary use as school.

1853-55: Land purchased and Bluestone Church built.

April 1853 : Church commenced use as Schoolroom (Wesleyan School No. 423)

Interpretation of Site 1858-1878: Minimum date range for use of Cemetery based on surviving headstones

1871 : School relocated as State School No. 1051

1876: New Weatherboard Church constructed on Mickleham Road

1983: Land transferred to Uniting Church

Early 1990s: Road Reserve widened under Planning Scheme Amendment

Archaeological Significance

The archaeological significance of this place is not clear at present. The site has been assessed as having high archaeological significance due to the presence of known burials and the potential for sub-surface deposits associated with a former bluestone church and its additional use as a school.

Documentary research indicates that up to 200 burials may have taken place. The condition or survival of human skeletal material has not been confirmed.

Historical Significance

Surviving gravestones record the names and details of early pastoralists in the Mickleham area - Williams, Langford-Sidebottom and Pamell. The site has local historical significance through its association with some of the first pastoralists in the Craigieburn/Mickleham region . The church falls under the following historic theme: 8.1 maintaining spiritual life As the location of a Methodist Church during the initial phase non-indigenous settlement it has the potential contain evidence of a place of worship that illustrates a key phase in the development of the Craigieburn/Mickleham community. The use of the church as a school (Wesleyan School No. 423) falls under the following historic theme: 8.2 educating people As the location of a Methodist School it an example of an early denominational school

Other Names Williams Family Cemetery,

Hermes Number 192979

Property Number

History

The activity area at 440 Mt Ridley Road, Mickleham, is situated within Crown Portion II C of the Parish of Mickleham. In the 1830s and 40s, the area was mostly the run of James Malcolm (Spreadborough and Anderson 1983: 261, Settled District Maps), who arrived in Victoria in 1836, and soon established himself as one of the wealthiest men and the largest individual sheep owner in the colony (Craigieburn Historical Interest Group website- Notable men). The government land sale in 1852 divided up Malcolm's sheep run, and Crown Portion IIC, which consisted of 158 acres (c64 hectares), was granted to farmer Thomas Langford in July. Originally from Cheshire, England, Langford settled in Mickleham in the early 1850s with his brother Robert. Robert, who changed his surname from Langford to Langford-Sidebottom upon his arrival in Melbourne, purchased Crown Portion 2A of the Mickleham Parish in the same government land sale. He established a dairy farm 'Hyde Park' in

Crown Portion 2A, which is situated to the south of the activity area (CHIG website). A parish plan dated c1856 shows that Seventeen Mile Lane, which was to become Mt Ridley Road, was already one of the main country roads in the area, and provided transportation from Kalkallo up to Deep Creek, the upstream of Maribyrnong River (Parish Plan c1856).

Most of the residents in the Mickleham area were Methodists, and it was soon felt that a place for prayer and worship was needed. Initially a site was selected within the property of the Cole family for the construction of a church. However, for some unknown reasons, the plan never went ahead. Then in 1853, a one-acre block within Thomas Langford's Crown Portion II C was purchased as the site of a church by the local Methodist committee, of which Langford himself was also a member. Other committee members included Samuel Barker, Edward Wright, John Hawk, Joseph Pollard, William Bennett, Sampson Hooper, Alfred Pether, William Saxon, Henry Cooke, Thomas Wilkinson and Robert Langford-Sidebottom (Land Application File no 16347). Reverend John Eggleston, an early Methodist preacher in Australia and New Zealand, then based in the Collins Street Chapel (Australian Dictionary of Biography), was also listed as one of the committee members in the land purchase (Land Application File no 16437). Memorial Book 27 No 497, which records the land transfer, specifying that the purchasers' right extended to any houses built on the land, which reaffirmed the committee's intention of erecting a church on the site (Memorial Book 27, No 497).

In 1853-55, a bluestone church was built in the activity area, and since April 1853, the building was also used as the schoolroom for the Wesleyan School no 423 (Back to Mickleham Committee, 1988, pi). About 22 boys and 26 girls attended the school at that time, and the church committee also took the role as the school committee (Back to Mickleham, 1988, pi). From around 1858 onwards, part of the activity area was also used as a local cemetery. Most of the buried were early white settlers in Mickleham, which would later include both Thomas Langford and Robert Langford-Sidebottom (CHIG website- Mickleham Methodist church Cemetery). The Craigieburn Historical Interest Group suggests that the cemetery may have had up to 200 burials, as many of the graves were without a headstone (CHIG Website Mickleham Methodist Cemetery).

By the late 1860s the bluestone building was already in a poor condition, and a new classroom was needed. Robert Langford-Sidebottom, who then acted as the correspondent of the school committee, requested for the financial assistance from the Board of Education, the predecessor of the Victorian Education Department, for the construction of a new schoolroom (VPRS 7951 POI 524). In 1870, an allotment on the corner of Old Sydney Road (now Mickleham Road) and Seventeen Mile Lane was selected as the new site of the school, and a bluestone school building was constructed in the following year. The Wesleyan School No 423, which was renamed State School No 1051, was relocated in 1871 (Back to Mickleham Committee, p2). The bluestone building in Mt Ridley Road continued to be used as a church after the relocation of the school. However, it was soon discovered that the building was in urgent need of repair. The committee decided that the restoration of the building would be too expensive, and chose to build a weatherboard house on a site in Mickleham Road as a replacement (CHIG). The weatherboard church was completed in 1876, and it is possible that some of its stone foundations belonged to the original church in Mt Ridley Road (CHIG-Uniting Church in Mickleham). In 1983, the activity area was transferred to the Uniting Church (The Uniting church in Australia Property Trust, Certificate under Section 23, 1983). In the early 1990s, Mt Ridley Road was widened under the Bulla Planning Scheme Amendment L23 (Shire of Bulla, letter to the Uniting Church, 18/12/1989).

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/>