
DARBY RIVER HISTORIC AREA

Location

WILSONS PROMONTORY ENTRANCE ROAD WILSONS PROMONTORY, SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE

Municipality

SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H8120-0028

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Interpretation of Site

The Darby River Historic Area is a significant historic site which relates to periods of occupation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In particular the period between the wars, when public appreciation of conservation and the role of national parks was developing, and during World War Two when it became a major military training area. The subsequent history demonstrates the change in values in managing national parks, with most of the built features having been removed and the area reverting to a more natural state, through the encroachment of both native and exotic vegetation. Chalet and ranger's house identified from concrete structures, uneven ground, surface artefacts -glass and ceramics and introduced plants -Arum Lily, Russian Artichoke and Red Hot Poker, etc. Concrete slabs visible from army buildings, with septic tanks, retaining walls, building footings and pipes visible in a number of locations, principally north of the river and east of the road; on the east side of the road where the present carpark and picnic area is situated, and either side of the road about 100m south of the river.

The Darby River Historic Area is of high archaeological significance because it contains archaeological remains of buildings and other historic features. It also has the potential to contain archaeological features, deposits and relics which relate to the development and use of the site. Given that the site was isolated for most of its history, with only limited road access until after the second world war, it is of special archaeological interest because whatever was brought to the site, would have been carefully curated in the first instance, and it would have been unlikely to have been subsequently removed. Small disposable items, worn-out, broken or otherwise discarded objects and refuse would therefore have remained on the site.

Archaeological
Significance

The Darby River Historic Area is of archaeological significance for the remains of the earliest buildings in the National Park, including the Committee Rooms, ranger's cottage and Chalet, as well as the telegraph hut and remains of the former telegraph line and park boundary fence which may give insight to the history and activities of the first naturalists, park rangers and visitors to the park. The place is of high significance for its unique history related to early environmental tourism and conservation, and as the original National Park headquarters. The place is of high scientific/archaeological significance for its potential to reveal information on the conditions and way of life of early park rangers, visitors and World War Two soldiers in training. It has high archaeological potential for evidence of early 20th century occupation in an isolated context, and therefore likely to retain a high level of integrity.

Historical
Significance

Darby River Historic Area is significant historically as the site of the original Wilsons Promontory National Park entrance, rangers station and visitors facilities, for the formative period of establishment of the park. Wilsons Promontory was the equal second national park to be created in Victoria along with Mount Buffalo, the third national park in Australia and was one of a very small group of national parks in the world to be created in the 19th century. The park entrances formed the centre of activity for the first 40 years and hosted many of the luminaries of the natural sciences, who were also the principle campaigners for the conservation of Victoria's natural environment.

It is also of historical significance for associations with the construction of the telegraph line to the lighthouse in the 1870s, as the site of the testing hut and part of the telegraph route.

The site is also of significance for its association with the WWII commando training centre, as part of the larger commonwealth military training operations.

Hermes
Number

194679

Property
Number

History

Darby River is located within the Wilsons Promontory National Park on the west side of Wilsons Promontory, and was the main park entrance and accommodation area from about 1908 to the start of the Second World War. The area was the site of Aboriginal occupation, early pastoral activity, the ranger's residence, the National Park guest house and chalet, visitor camping, and then a military encampment in World War Two, and Country Roads Board (CRB) construction camp.

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military training area.

The subsequent history demonstrates the change in values in managing national parks, with most of the built features having been removed and the area reverting to a more natural state, through the encroachment of both native and exotic vegetation. Much of Wilsons Promontory National Park, has been affected by severe bushfire, flood and storm damage in recent years, with the most recent being the March 2011 storm which saw the Darby River bridge damaged and the river banks collapse. Other landslides in the area closed access roads and tracks. The most recent bushfires in 8 February 2009 burnt through the hills around Darby Saddle/Sparks Lookout immediately south of Darby River, but did not impact on the sites of the former park accommodation or army camp. As a consequence of the 2011 flood, some features along the bank were exposed, including timbers from the second and third Darby River bridges.

While there has been some historical research into the early history and development of Wilsons Promontory (including Ros Garnet's extensive history), there has not been a thorough assessment of the Darby River area.

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/>