
ST ALBANS STUD HORSE BURIAL SITE 2

Location

7-8 OAKWOOD RIDGE ST ALBANS PARK, GREATER GEELONG CITY

Municipality

GREATER GEELONG CITY

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7721-0545

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - June 20, 2022

What is significant?

The Oakwood Ridge burial site may contain the remains of significant thoroughbred burials in addition to that of Mischief, Musidora and Briseis (details of horse burials were not officially recorded).

Although the general area of the tree and burial has been subject to suburban development, the area within the direct vicinity of the tree has not experienced significant below-ground disturbance, and it is likely that any horse burials will be substantially intact. The burials may contain tack (such as bridals) associated with the horses.

The site is significant to the broader community for its association with the horse racing history and with notable, individual horses. The site has the potential to contain archaeological evidence about the burial practices of racehorses and may contain DNA evidence relating to individual horses, and their bloodlines.

How is it significant?

Why is it significant?

Hermes Number 208898

History

The St Albans Stud burial tree is one of two likely burial locations related to the St Albans Homestead (H0741), which was built for notable racehorse breeder and trainer James Wilson in 1873. The homestead was the central residence of St Albans stud, one of the leading horse racing studs and breeding complexes in Australia in the late 19th century. St Albans homestead and stud originally included the homestead, several paddocks with horse shelters and other farming related buildings. The soil quality was poor in the area, so “tree planting was reduced to a system” to assist improve soil quality and reduce water consumption, indicating that the trees were not commonly planted within the complex. Nine Melbourne Cup winners were bred at St Albans Stud, and some of the most significant stallions in Australia’s bloodstock history stood here. There were two known burial sites on the property for horses with notable bloodlines.

The large tree, known commonly as the “Phar Lap Tree” was formerly located in one of the paddocks at St Albans Stud, and it is likely to mark the location of at least three significant thoroughbred burials. The tree and the direct surrounds were left undisturbed even after the sale and subdivision of St Albans Stud. There are no formal records of horse burials beneath the tree, however the surrounding community have a belief that the burials are present, including by property owners. It has also been suggested that the tree was retained during site subdivision and clearance because of the presence of the historical burials.

The burials most likely to be located beneath the tree are former St Albans Stud owner James Wilson’s foundation mares Mischief and Musidora, and the 1876 Melbourne Cup winner Briseis (a member of the Australian Racing Hall of Fame).

“At the side of the track for all conveniences well-cared for, before which all racing men stop and think back, Here lies Musidora sleeps the sleep that knows no waking. Near her too, is the last resting place of Briseis, James Wilson’s famous mare, who carried the black jacket and white cap to victory in the Derby and Cup of 1876. First King lies under the turf a little further away and others whose doings are writ on the racing scroll of fame (the Turf Register) are all near at the hand in this “haven under the hill”
The Week: St Albans Estate and Stud 1895

There are a number of other horses recorded as being buried within the former St Albans Stud grounds, including Malua, Sheet Anchor, First King, Musidora, Briseis and possibly more. It is possible that more than one horse was buried in this place.

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/>