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# FORMER MORWELL TO MIRBOO NORTH RAILWAY ARTEFACT SCATTER

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## Location

ZONE 55E: 443958; N: 5762766

## Municipality

## Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

## Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H8121-0059

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - February 12, 2023

### What is significant?

Surface features identified within this area, including timber and concrete railway sleepers, metal railway infrastructure such as fencing attached to former timber railway sleepers and infrastructure consistent with water columns used along Victorian railways are significant aspects of this site, in addition to the small railway bridge to the southern extent of the site.

### How is it significant?

This site provides a good example of the nature and characteristics of rail infrastructure used in country Victoria in the late 1800s and early-mid 1900s, and has potential to provide more information on the type and nature of buildings present, and the type and nature of buildings materials, timber resources and other rail infrastructure used along the alignment of the former Morwell to Mirboo North Railway between 1885 and the mid 1900s.

### Why is it significant?

This site contains archaeological features, artefacts and deposits, the visible site fabric indicates that the site contains archaeological remains, and the archaeological remains are likely to be in a condition that will allow information to be obtained that will contribute to an understanding of the site. Additionally, under Threshold B of the Policy for Determining Low Archaeological Value the site evidences an association with an historical phase, period, function, and way of life, that being rail travel in country Victoria in the late 1800s and early to mid 1900s; and the site history is relevant within a local and regional framework.

This site is significant for its association with Theme 3 of Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes, 'Connecting Victorians by Transport and Communications', specifically, sub-theme 3.3, 'Linking Victorians by rail'. This site has the potential to provide an understanding of the expansion of the railway network with the 'light lines' of the 1870s and 1880s, the equipment, infrastructure and technology used in country Victoria and how this infrastructure and technology was used and adapted. It is documented in the literature that the Morwell to Mirboo North Railway was constructed with the landscape in mind and rather than avoiding or adapting to the contours of the landscape, many significant cuttings, embankments and bridges were constructed to reduce the gradient of the landscape to workable levels (Grand Ridge Rail Trail, 2008). One such bridge is present within the site and as such, this site also exhibits potential to provide an understanding of how environmental factors influenced chosen routes of rail travel.

The former Morwell to Mirboo North Railway Line Area of Potential extends for approximately 2.5km through the project area. Although a series of isolated features were identified along the alignment of this former railway line, these features were not considered to exhibit any archaeological value. These surface features include several historical galvanised metal buckets featuring bullet holes, disused timber and concrete railway sleepers, metal infrastructure, some of which is attached to rectangular shaped timber pillars, concrete piping fragments and associated features, concrete features, disused railway track materials and a rail bridge/culverts in the form of a water crossing, and corrugated iron sheeting, some of which is attached to rectangular shaped timber pillars. A number of historical galvanised metal buckets are scattered across the area. These buckets appear to be disused, damaged household buckets that have since been used as firearm targets. These buckets do not appear to be consistent with the design of many other common historical household buckets, and may be homemade. Consequently, these features are difficult to obtain a relative or absolute date, but it is unlikely that these galvanised buckets are associated with the rail line, but have instead been placed here by the present, or past occupant of the land. As a forementioned, this area contains several deposits of railway infrastructure. The first component of the Morwell to Mirboo North railway line opened on April 10, 1885, initially running between Morwell and Boolarra prior to the remainder of the line to Mirboo North opening the following year (Victorian Railways, 2022). Numerous timber and concrete railway sleepers are present across this area, many of which are stacked together in a series of piles. A metal feature is also present, which is attached to a large timber feature resembling a railway sleeper. Several large, broken piping features and associated features are also present, in addition to disused steel railway tracks and corrugated iron sheeting, some of which is attached to large timber posts, some of which resemble railway sleepers. It cannot be assumed that all of the features within the area of interest originate from the immediate vicinity of the rail alignment, or the closest former station/siding. The nature of deposition of all of the aforementioned features indicates that this area may have functioned as a 'drop off' or 'dumping' area for rail infrastructure during the removal of the railway, as dismantling plants were used to dismantle the railway and transport the removed infrastructure along the rail line. Consequently, it is possible that some of this infrastructure may have been deposited at this location during the dismantling process. A local historical source suggests that the first part of the railway line to be dismantled was the section in proximity to Applegates Road in Hazelwood, which was carried out almost immediately after the final train service in June of 1974 to allow for the immediate expansion of the Morwell Open Cut. It is also noted that tenders remained open for the purchase and removal of the railway infrastructure until May of 1975. It is possible that the small portion of the alignment that was dismantled in 1974 to allow for the open cut expansion may have been discarded rather than sold, as the tender for the purchase and dismantle of the remainder of the rail alignment remained open for approximately one year following this. Consequently, it is possible that the features identified within this area may be discarded infrastructure from the northern section the railway that may not have been subject to tender (Grand Ridge Rail Trail, 2008). It is also possible that some, or all of these features were introduced to the area by a third party at a later stage. Nonetheless, it is highly likely that the features within this area do not originate from one discrete area of the railway line but may have instead been collected from different locations along the alignment between Morwell and Mirboo North, even if those separate locations are confined to one section of the railway, such as the section in proximity to Applegates Road. Both timber and concrete railway sleepers are present within this area. These features exhibit potential to provide information on relative dates of the construction and maintenance of the Morwell to Mirboo North Railway. The literature suggests that in Victoria, timber railway sleepers were used exclusively until at least 1930 (EHSANZ, 2019) and as such, the original infrastructure of the Morwell to Mirboo North railway would have included timber sleepers. The presence of concrete sleepers suggests that in some sections of the railway, timber sleepers may have been replaced with concrete sleepers. Given that the Morwell to Mirboo North railway line was decommissioned in 1974, these concrete sleepers would have been laid at some stage between 1930 and 1974. A training booklet issued by the Victorian Railways Institute in 1947 also outlines details of concrete railway sleepers, but notes that only 'a small number of concrete sleepers are under test in track' (Victorian Railways Institute, 1947). Given that concrete sleepers were not used on a large-scale until the late 1960s – early 1970s, it is likely that these sleepers are the product of maintenance carried out on the Morwell to Mirboo Railway line between the 1950s and the early 1970s. A metal feature is also present within this area. This metal feature is attached to a large timber feature resembling a railway sleeper. Victorian Railway Plans of the standard drawing of railway gates dated October 1957 indicate some consistencies with this metal feature, including a collar welded around the top, a 'zig zag' configuration of the framing piping used as the outer framing of the feature, and a post of

Hermes  
Number 209370

Property  
Number

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## History

The Morwell to Mirboo North Railway line opened in 1885, initially terminating at Darlimurla, and extending to Mirboo North in 1886. A siding was established approximately 500m north of the area of interest, that being the Hazelwood Station (siding), however; this was closed in 1953 following destruction of many of its facilities in the 1944 fires. The Morwell to Mirboo North Railway ceased operation in 1974. A detailed history of the area of interest described above is unknown.

*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/>*