MCCORMICK'S ROAD REFUSE DUMP, FOSERVILLE

Location

MCCORMICK'S ROAD, FOSTERVILLE

Municipality

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7724-0645

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - April 5, 2023

What is significant?
The site has the potential to contain archaeological remains associated with the late 19th to early 20th century domestic and industrial occupation of the Fosterville area.
How is it significant?
The site is of local historical significance and archaeological.
Why is it significant?
The site is of historical significance for its association with late 19th to early 20th Century gold miners in regional Victoria. The site has the potential to yield information about the ethnicity, lifestyles and activities of the Fosterville goldminers.

Interpretation of Site	Pre- 19th Century: Traditional lands of the Dja Dja Wurrung people. Early 19th Century: Agricultural lands occupied by European squatters farming sheep, cattle, pigs and rabbits and growing rape. Mid-19th Century: Gold discovered in 1850s and private prospecting and alluvial mining commences on a small scale. Late 19th Century: Industrial deep lead and open-cut mining begins throughout Fosterville. The Fosterville township is formalized in 1894 and large-scale mining begins with at least 11 batteries in operation once the water race was established in 1896. Early 20th Century: Mining begins to rapidly decline, and Fosterville Gold Mining Co. stops work between 1897-1902. By 1903, the township of Fosterville also began to decline, and the mines began to close in 1906. Races and batteries in the area were repurposed for faming industries. Smaller estates are utilised for farming and the solder settlement scheme. Shaft filling scheme begins in 1935 and cyanide works continue to operate until 1939. Rubbish likely began accumulating at the Rubbish Dump Site in the late 19th Century and continued until the early 20th Century when mining in the area began to decline and the goldfields were abandoned. This early 20th century abandonment of mining practices mirrors the dates given to glass artefacts noted during site inspections in 2022. Late 20th -Present: Interest in Fosterville is renewed, and an Environmental Effects Statement (EES) was commissioned in 1996 to assess a gold mining venture utilising open-cut mining methods. Current underground mining operations commenced in 2005. The history of the area demonstrates both industrial and domestic European occupation from the early 19th continuing into the present day. Agricultural estates were present in the early 19th century with private and industrial mining occurring throughout Fosterville in the Late 19th century. The Rubbish Dump site itself has been inspected three times to date, in 1988, 1989 and 2022. In 1988, the site is described as follows: This site is a mixture of both mining and domestic rubbish, including remains of square water tanks, boiler plate, boiler plate channelling, small round galvanised water tank, small ore roasting oven, horse paraphernalia, metal cans (both food and fuel) and cyanide drums. The domestic rubbish consists of bottle glass, ceramics and the remains of a baby's pram. – Snoek 1988, p. 24. The results of the 1989 site inspection describe the site merely as "a good example of both domestic and mining equipment dump" (Wright 1989, p. 10). The 2022 inspection described the site as consisting of a mixture of late 19th and early 20th century rubbish with some accumulated modern rubbish. The historic elements included the remains of a riveted iron alloy shipping container, metal strapping, kerosene tins, braided steel cable, fencing wire and some ceramic and glass fragments dating from the early 20th century. Modern rubbish included a permanent marker, a pepsi can, sunglasses and a plush toy (Geiberras & Hocking 2022, p. 94). The dump appears to have been pushed into a pile near the modern road at some point in its history and has likely been accumulated over several decades through the late 19th and early 20th centuries and has been recently disturbed by modern mining activities. Given the Rubbish Dump's proximity to VHI sites McCormack's Battery and Cyanide Works (H7724-0101) and Hunts Reef Cyanide Works (H7724-0100), the site is likely related to rubbish disposal activities associated with these activites. Farming material was likely added to the accumulation once the dump had already been established. Refuse dumps allow a unique glimpse into the past where knowledge about peoples' habits and activities can be learned from the rubbish that they left behind. It is possible that modern rubbish has accumulated via dumping by locals or items being thrown from cars travelling on the adjacent road.
Other Names	Site 40 – Rubbish Dump,
Hermes Number	209471
Property Number	

History

The below history is derived from Geiberras and Hocking's 2022, Technical Report A2: Historical Heritage Fosterville Gold Mine Sustained Operations Projects, written on behalf of The Fosterville Gold Mine Sustained Operations Project. The site is located on the lands traditionally occupied by the Dja Dja Wurrung people who

were displaced from their lands when European settlers arrived in the late 1830s. The land had great farming potential and attracted squatters who bred sheep for hides, meat and wool (Ballinger 2020, p.14). Squatters and their workers built huts, outstations, yards, hurdles, shearing sheds, fences and sheep dips throughout the area. The largest run in Fosterville, then known as Ellesmere, was owned by Henry Grey Bennett and consisted of 51,200 acres with approximately 16,000 sheep (Webb et al. 1985, p. 40). The location of the run is demonstrated on the 1851, Ham's squatting map of Victoria (Figure 7). This run was later divided into Barnedown East and Barnedown West, both owned by John Harney from 1865 until 1870 (Spreadborough and Anderson, 1983). The Barnedown run was further divided into smaller estates, a portion of which, known as the Adelaide Vale Estate in the late 1890s, was owned by the O'Keefe family that helped construct the Great Southern Railway. The Adelaide Vale Estate consisted of 4,000 acres of agricultural land with the with an area of scrub land in the south-eastern corner of the property state that held a battery for mining works. At this time the estate was planned to be cleared, ploughed and cultivated with the intention of growing rape. During this time, dairy cattle, 4,000 sheep, hundreds of pigs and dozens of rabbits were present on the estate (The Australasian, 1896). By 1921, the estate consisted of 3,100 acres that had been subdivided again into eight smaller farms that were being sold at auction (The Argus 1921, p.22). By 1923, the estate had been allotted as part of the soldier settlement. Gold was was first discovered in Fosterville in the early 1850's; however, Fosterville remained a farming community until the 1890s (Marshall 1996, p. 3). A local school was opened in 1898, and Anglican and Bible Christian church services were held (Falvey and Dolling 2021, p. 21). Between the 1850s and 1890s, mining in Fosterville had become more industrialised and gold was collected by private alluvial gold prospectors. These small mining operations continued until 1896 when the first large company was registered, and the area was colloquially referred to as the "Poor Man's Goldfield" (Snoek 1988). The reefs were opened in 1894, the township of Fosterville had been formalised and large-scale mining operations began across the gold fields (Ballinger 2020, p.44). At least six batteries were known to be operating in the area but due to lack of water, only two were crushing at a time until 1896 (Bannear n.d., p.140). By 1896, in an effort to solve their limited water supply issues, miners were contracted to dig a 26-mile (41.8km) channel by hand from the Wellsford State Forest to the Fosterville goldfield (Ballinger 2020, p.40). In 1896, 600 men were employed at Fosterville, with batteries crushing ore for multiple mines, including Thomas United, Stewarts Extended, Fosterville, and Daley and Watsons. The Thomas United mine is shown on the 1897 township of Fosterville parish plan, with the Thomas' Race running from the dam associated with the mine to a cyanide works south of the S. Prideaux Machinery Site. Miners laid primitive tracks so mine carts could be used to transport large quantities of ore to the batteries and/or cyanide works for processing (Figure 9). By 1897 at least eleven batteries had come into operation and races had been expanded ranging up to 20-head of stamps (Bannear and Watson 1994, p.38). Multiple companies had been established or expanded including Daley and Watson's, F. Thomas, Bloomquist and Party, Brooks and Jones, Worcester Brothers, Thomas Brothers- H. Hunt, and Robbins Hill Mining Co. All of these companies utilised batteries for crushing their mined quartz. Robbins Hill Mine was established in 1898, relatively late compared to the other mining companies. It was noted in the Bendigo Advertiser that the area in which Robbins Hill Mine was established was occupied by small private parties and alluvial prospectors (Bendigo Advertiser 1898, p.4). Private claims were common in the goldfields, with known workings belonging to G. Brooks, Roberts and Collins, and Geirisch and Hinton operating along Hunt's line (Bannear n.d., p.149). It is likely that there were many more small-scale companies operating throughout Fosterville but there is limited accessible documentation describing the history of the area. This is likely due to the short-lived nature of mining in this area, as the mines began to rapidly decline in the early 1900s. The area east of Hunt's line began to decline in 1897 and the O'Donnell and O' Dwyer claims were consolidated, and the company's shares floated on the market (Bannear n.d., p.149). Between 1897 and 1902 work had stopped at the Fosterville Gold Mining Co., with some prospecting recommencing in August of 1902 (The Bendigo Independent 1902, p. 4). Works were confined to a single crosscut, targeting a quartz reef that ran parallel with Hunt's line (The Bendigo Independent 1902, p. 4). Gold mining in general across Victoria declined in the early 1900s due to the price of gold, the large scale of operations required to access deep quartz reefs, and the onset of the World War 1 among other factors (Ballinger 2020, p.45). By 1903, the township of Fosterville began to decline, and the mines began to close in 1906 (Marshall 1996, p. 3). It was during this decline that the races once used for batteries were repurposed for dairying and agriculture for the farming region (Victorian Places, Fosterville, 2015). In 1937, Fosterville was listed as a closed mine that was to be subject of a shaft filling scheme (Bannear n.d., p.196). Commencing in 1935, this scheme involved the filling and securing of dangerous open shafts and was funded by grants to create jobs during the depression (Bannear n.d., p.196). Although mining had ceased in the area, the cyanide works and ore treatment plants continued to operate until 1939 (Bannear n.d., p. 197). An approximate location of the site can be seen on the 1943 Ellesmere County Map just outside the Township of Fosterville (Figure 8). Cyanidation processes were utilised intensively throughout Fosterville. The use of cyanidation on a commercial scale had widened the possibilities for gold miners as it enabled lower quality ore to be more profitable with a 90% gold yield (Richie and Hooker 1997, p.18). The process required ore to be crushed and added to a diluted potassium cyanide solution which was agitated for five days (Richie and Hooker 1997, p. 18). The solution was then drawn off and passed

through wooden boxes where the gold content was precipitated on zinc shavings (Richie and Hooker 1997, p.19). This allowed for extra gold to be recovered and the process was used to re-process old tailings during the early 20th century. Interest in Fosterville was renewed by the late 20th century and in 1996 an Environmental Effects Statement (EES) was commissioned to assess a gold mining venture utilising open-cut mining methods at Fosterville. By 1998, the mine was producing approximately 40,000 ounces of gold a year from oxide mineralization with the prospect of further gold from sulfide mineralization (Victorian Places, Fosterville, 2015). The current underground mining operations commenced in 2005 and focused on near-surface, low grade mineralization. Between 2015 and 2017, high grade visible gold mineralization was intersected at depth leading to underground expansion doubling the underground mineral reserves. The mine is currently the largest gold producer in Victoria.