
ROWE'S BLACKSMITH AND WHEELWRIGHT

Location

137 DUKE STREET CASTLEMAINE 3450

Municipality

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7723-1267

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - April 4, 2023

What is significant?

Rowe's Blacksmith and Wheelwright, is the site of a former gold rush era blacksmith shop at 134 Duke St Wesley Hill (Castlemaine)

How is it significant?

Rowe's Blacksmith and Wheelwright is of historical and scientific (archaeological) significance at the local level.

Why is it significant?

Rowe's Blacksmith and Wheelwright is of historical significance as the site of a typical mid nineteenth century blacksmith, which served the goldfields to maintain and manufacture tools and equipment for the miners, shoe horses, manufacture and repair wagon wheels, and undertake a range of other tasks. It is of archaeological significance for its potential to reveal information on the form and function of blacksmiths forges and the activities of the blacksmith during this critical period in Australia's history. There is very little information available on blacksmithing from this period, and the archaeological evidence can shed light on how the premises was arranged, what types of works were undertaken, what form the forge and other structures may have taken, and the material culture of the occupants in the mid to late nineteenth century.

Interpretation
of Site

The site comprises a gravel carparking area at the north east corner of Duke St and Wallace Street. The area has a slight slope and is spread with crushed rock of various types including blue metal and quartz gravel. A table drain runs along the road edge with pipe culverts for the car park entrance and a gravelled footpath along the south boundary. Modern house lots adjoin to the north and east. Roughly in the centre of the car park is an area of exposed bricks forming about a quarter of a circular structure. The bricks are soft hand made and are crumbling due to vehicle impacts. Some of the bricks appear to be tapered to fit the arch of the circle. Some have narrow frogs, without impressed makers names as is common with later bricks. This feature is interpreted as possibly the base of a chimney, or a wheelwright's tyreing table, or tyre bonding plate. The latter is a flat round surface, often with a sheet of steel, used to place the heated steel tire around the rim of timber wagon wheels. Charcoal, coke and/or coal are evident in the area around the bricks, but most of the rest of the ground surface surface is obscured by the modern gravel.

Hermes
Number

209524

Property
Number

History

The corner blocks on the main Forest Creek Road (or Duke St) at Wesley Hill were purchased from the crown by W Rowe on 23.9.1856 (lot 4) and 5.4.1860 (lot 137). Two lots created in the initial Survey for the Castlemaine Parish Plan cover the area of the site. These lots were subsequently identified in 1858 as a reserve. However, it is likely that Rowe's blacksmith shop had been in existence prior to the survey, as had many buildings along the Forest Creek Road. In 1855 William Rowe and Joseph Goodyer were listed as operating a Blacksmiths, Farrier and Veterinary Forge business at Wesley Hill, Forest Creek near the Australian Hotel in 1855, and again in 1859. The Australasian Hotel is shown on a plan of 1861, and since it is the only building in the vicinity of Wesley Hill, and both the Australian hotel and Australasian Hotel are mentioned many times in the 1850s and 1860s, it is likely one and the same. In 1860, W. Rowe, Blacksmith and Wheelwright, Forest Creek, announced that he had opened a branch establishment at Chewton. W Rowe, is much later listed as a blacksmith who had patented a rope oiling device which was in use at the South Belle Vue Mine in the 1890s. Bannear identifies Rowe Brothers, and Rowe & company as undertaking a number on goldmining ventures I the Castlemaine district in the 1860s. William R Rowe was prominent in the area in the later 19th century as a local businessman, president of the Amalgamated Miners' Association and Labor candidate for the Victorian parliament. It is possible that they are the same person, although, if so, he would have been in his 70s in 1896. Reports of a fire in 1869 indicate that George Moore was renting the blacksmith shop from Rowe at the time. A reward of £20 was advertised in the Government Gazette for information leading to the cause of "arson and incendiarism, [at} William Rowe's blacksmith's shop at Wesley Hill, Castlemaine, [which was] set on fire". George Moore is later identified in the newspapers in 1907, when he died in another house fire in Maldon at the age of 85, being described as "...a blacksmith by occupation, and had previously resided at Castlemaine."

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/>