

---

# POTENTIAL RESIDENCE HUNTS REEF

---

## Location

HUNTLY-FOSTERVILLE ROAD FOSTERVILLE 3557

## Municipality

## Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

## Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7824-0108

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

---

## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - April 6, 2023

### What is significant?

The site consists of the crumbled remains of a large, brick foundation which is associated with 19th century occupation. This is significant because it is unique to Fosterville archaeological record.

### How is it significant?

The Brick feature site is of local historical significance.

### Why is it significant?

The Brick feature is of historical significance for its association with 19th century occupation of gold miners in regional Victoria. Whilst mid to late 19th century dwellings are not unique to the overall Victorian goldfields archaeological record, brick dwellings are rare within the historical fabric of Fosterville. Archaeological deposits and artefacts within the site may yield information that relates to the lifestyle, activities and management of the place.

Interpretation of Site	<p>Early to mid-19th century the area was primarily pastoral. In the 1850s, after the discovery of gold, the land use shifted to small scale mining. Potential association of the site with 19th century pastoral occupation or small-scale mining cannot be discounted. In the late 19th century, from the 1850s the influx of mining led to larger industrial scale mining. In 1894 reefs were opened in this area, by December 1896 there were 600 men employed at Fosterville. By 1897 Fosterville supported at least eleven batteries. During this time cyaniding activity occurred in this area, with several large-scale cyanide works operating at Fosterville from the 1890s, in Epsom from 1911 and at Huntly. Early 20th century, mines began to decline and cease operations. Cyanide processing continued throughout Fosterville until 1939. In the late 20th century gold mining was re-established in Fosterville; however, this caused little disturbance to the brick foundation's location. Modern agricultural and mining activities continue near the site; however, these activities have had little impact on the brick foundation. As the site is in a dense pocket of trees with the mining north of the site and a road to its east. Site 35, Brick Foundation consists of the remains of a large brick foundation and associated artefact scatter. Based on the quality and diagnostic features of the bricks present at this site, the original building was constructed in the mid to late 19th century. The two concentrations of bricks within the overall foundation, likely represent the remains of a chimney or wall division. Additionally, the artefacts scattered throughout the site were dated in the field and are age bracketed as mid to late 19th century. This indicates that the site was occupied during the beginning and height of the gold rush in Fosterville. The use of the site is unclear; however, the domestic nature of the artefacts present at the site potentially signifies that the foundation may be related to a large dwelling. Dwellings at Fosterville have been previously recorded; although, the examples recorded thus far have been made from mudbrick (Wright 1989). The site was likely demolished during the collapse of the gold mining industry, and it is possible that elements of the structure were repurposed elsewhere.</p>
Other Names	Brick Feature– Site 35,
Hermes Number	209534
Property Number	

## History

The majority of the place history information is drawn from Technical report A2: Historical Heritage Fosterville Gold Mine Sustained Operations Project (Geiberras & Hocking, 2022) European settlement within the study area began in the late 1830s, the area attracted squatters who later settled due to the potential for farming. Sheep were bred for their wool during the 1830s-1840s, then in the 1850s sheep and cattle contributed more to the meat market to sustain the gold rush population increase (Ballinger 2020, p.14). The squatters who acquired large amounts of land during the 1840s relied upon native grasslands for the grazing of animals, this declined when broadacre wheat farming was established from the 1870s (Ballinger 2020, p. 34). During the 1850s, one group's success from the Bendigo goldfields led to a large rush that extended the Bendigo Creek diggings to Epsom Flat and north Huntly, changing small alluvial mining operations to larger industrial scale mining (Ballinger 2020, p. 42). This area also had a gold boom from 1895 to 1906. This boom is recorded in both the social and historical events during this period (Marshall 1996, p. 3). Such as Fosterville football and cricket team parties and registered gold mining companies (Snoek 1988, p. 7). The site is located within the township of Fosterville and is depicted on the 1876 Ellesmere and Axedale Allotments map (Figure 8). The site is within close proximity to VHI sites Hunts Reef Cyanide Works (H7724-0100) and Thomas Mine Workings (H7724-0099) (Figure 9). Hunts reef site consists of the remains of a tank stand, with a collapsed tank, five galvanised iron cyanide tanks, and a small inground covered vat. To the south of the tank stand is a small, in-ground concrete vat (Geiberras 2023, p. 4). Thomas's mine site consists of the remains of 19th century mining infrastructure (first established in 1895) and a cyanide works that was used in the early 20th century. The site consists of seven cyanide vats, three south of Huntly Fosterville Road and four north of Huntly Fosterville Road; however, only one cyanide vat north of Huntly Fosterville Road could be identified via brick remnants exposed in the road cutting. Two vats were believed to be buried below a recent spoil deposit and the fourth was anticipated to have been destroyed by roadworks. Other

remnants of timber and brick were observed on the ground surface north of the road cutting suggesting it is likely that archaeological features remain below the fill (Geiberras & Hocking 2022, p. 55). In 1894 reefs were opened in this area, by December 1896 there were 600 men employed at Fosterville, where the ore was mined using open cuts (Ballinger 2020, p. 44). The Fosterville gold field was known as a poor man's goldfield; however, the 1894's reef prospectors believed they had found a second Bendigo at Ellesmere (Snoek, p. 11). The two parties that were given credit for finding the first gold in 1894 were the Hunt brothers on Hunt's reef, and C Thomas O'Donnell and his son on O'Donnell's reef (Snoek, p. 11). The 1896 Portion of Ellesmere Gold field plan depicts a series of claims along Hunt's reef (Figure 10). The site is located east of the Hunt's reef claims; however, it is not clearly associated with any specific claims or leased allotments. The need for ore crushing lead to battery companies such as Thomas United, Stewarts Extended, Fosterville, Daley and Watsons, and Central Ellesmere being constructed (Ballinger 2020, p. 44). A water race was constructed by the mines department to provide sufficient water for the crushing because the Fosterville area was so dry. By 1897 Fosterville supported at least eleven batteries (Ballinger 2020, p. 44). Cyaniding was introduced to Victoria in 1896, this included several large-scale cyanide works operating at Fosterville from the 1890s (Ballinger 2020, p. 45 ). Mining began to decline in the early 20th century due to the large-scale operations required to access deeper quartz reefs and the onset of World War 1 (Ballinger 2020, p. 45). Despite the decline of mining in the area, cyanide works, and ore treatment plants continued to operate until 1939 (Bannear n.d., p.197). A large number of men were employed in cyaniding the residue from the old batteries on the Epsom to Huntly alluvial deep lead just before World War I (Ballinger 2020, p. 45). From the early years of the twentieth century mining declined, from 1910 pumping water from the deepest mines became a challenge and from 1914 with the emergence of World War I mining declined even further. After the decline in mining the land near this site returned to agricultural activities, with the return of mining being associated with the areas modern land use. The brick feature was first identified during the survey for a 1989 Supplementary Heritage Report (Wright), associated with the Environmental Effects Statement for the Fosterville Gold Mine (at the time Bendigo Gold Limited). The site was not thoroughly discussed and was simply described as an "isolated deteriorated feature" in the original report. When writing the report, the author made no recommendations as the site was not endangered at this time.

*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/>*