
UPPER BUCKLAND SCHOOL SITE

Location

BUCKLAND JUNCTION ROAD

Municipality

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H8224-0077

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - October 10, 2023

What is significant?

The school site is significant as it remains relatively undisturbed on the eastern side of the Buckland River. The school site set amongst false Acacia trees is situated near the Junction and formed part of the small community in this area that was known locally as "The Flat". This was on the original (former main) Buckland Road, that passed through The Flat and crossed the river at the Junction.

How is it significant?

The Upper Buckland School site is of historical, social and archaeological significance to the State of Victoria. Criterion C – Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Victoria's regional cultural history.

Criterion D – Importance in demonstrating the principle characteristics of a class of cultural places or objects.

Why is it significant?

The Upper Buckland School site is historically, scientifically and socially significant to the State of Victoria because it provides tangible evidence of the building of community life within the Buckland Valley to service the education needs of families who were living in this remote and difficult Alpine environment. Archaeological features of this site are preserved by regenerating riparian forest, which provides the physical context for understanding this challenging environment.

Historical significance - High

The school site is important as it provides evidence of the history of education in early and remote Alpine communities, and the timeline and duration of community occupation within the Buckland Valley. The time of the school opening, its operation through the gold rush, and then the closing of the school is a clear indicator of the changing and evolving nature of the community as a direct impact of gold production in this landscape.

Scientific/ archaeological significance – High:

The school site is relatively undisturbed and as such has high scientific/ archaeological potential to reveal new information about the school building and the lives of the students and teachers who attended the Upper Buckland school as early as 1868. The significance of this archaeological site is heightened by the lack of published and photographic evidence that could be used to inform the building construction and use of the site. Artefacts and building foundations that remain at the site can provide further information on the activities undertaken as a part of school life as well as the nearby teachers quarters, including;

- Building design and construction of places of education,
- Tools or objects relating to curriculum or play,
- Daily domestic items, food storage vessels, diet, table and cooking ware items, etc.
- Personal items.

Social significance

The school site is significant as it provides evidence of the importance the colonial government and the community placed on education and the development of free education for children early in the development of the Victorian Colony, particularly given the rural and remote nature of communities in the Buckland Valley.

Interpretation/Presentation Values – Medium

The proximity of the school site to the Old Buckland Road provides easy access and opportunity for interpretation of the school site, with its setting amongst the false Acacia trees standing out as a visual reminder of the school footprint, with the area otherwise surrounded by dense bushland.

Interpretation of Site

The site is located on Crown Land on the eastern side of the Buckland River, downstream of the Junction. The school site lies on an elevated flat between the Buckland River and associated sluice workings, and the Old Buckland Road. The site can be delineated by the grove of false Acacia Trees (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) that are the dominant vegetation across the site. A thick blackberry infestation also occurs over the site, which is likely to obscure surface features. The features present are consistent with the early surveyors maps (see Attachment 2) that shows the school building as the most southern of the buildings, and a second building (which corresponds with the historical account of the school teachers house) also being located in the northern section of the site. The school building location can be identified by a large cut, approximately 8m by 8m. There are also the ruins of a chimney at the site, which has a section of insitu brick foundation. The chimney appears to have been a substantial construction with the chimney measuring approximately 2 metres by 1 metre. Along with brick, there is also evidence that the chimney was constructed of quarried stone and some mortar is also remnant, which is consistent with the historical accounts from Henry Morgan's diary of his method of chimney construction. From the location of the chimney in relation to the cut, it is evident that the chimney was located on the western side of the long wall of the building. There was also a nail that has been deliberately shaped into a hook at the chimney location, which may have been used to hang something off the fireplace. A mound of earth and rock to the north of the school site is likely to represent the teacher's house. Both the teachers house and school site have European bulbs (daffodils and snow drops) growing next to the ruins. There is also a sheet of rusted corrugated iron propped against trees, in proximity to the school, and a section of a square riveted tank directly below the school site, in the sluiced section of the bank.

Other Names The Junction – School site School number 1871.,

Hermes Number 210148

Property Number

History

The auriferous alluvial deposits within the Buckland Valley extended along the river for over 30 kilometres, from the Buckland's junction with the Ovens River to approximately 8 kilometres above the junction of the East and

West branches of the Buckland River (where The Junction settlement was located). The Junction was the Buckland's main upper commercial centre, and was a run-off point for workings up the West and East branches of the Buckland River. 'The Flat' where the school site is located was a small community area directly downstream of the Junction. An early 1868 Surveyors Map indicates that the school, initially opened as a common school was present in 1868 (see Attachment 2). This is further confirmed by Henry Morgans's diary as in January 1869, he states he was working there at this time building desks and privies, when he accidentally burnt the school building down. Work on rebuilding of the school commenced in December 1869, with the successful tenderer a Mr Grant, who built the school for 40 Pounds. The fitting out of the building was undertaken by Henry Morgan in March 1870, which included pine lining of the building's internal walls to a height of 4.5 feet. A stone chimney was completed for the schoolhouse in August 1870, with stone quarried and carted to the site for this purpose by Henry Morgan, who had won the contract for the construction. Lime was also used in the construction of the stone chimney. The first head teacher was Sarah Slater. Classes were held in a timber schoolhouse, with a 4 roomed house built for the teacher. An advertisement for tender of the school building was placed in an 1871 newspaper (Ovens and Murray Advertiser, Tuesday 2 May 1871, p. 3). The school became a State School at some stage between 1873 and 1878. The school went through periods of part time operation from 1886 -1903, due to the fluctuation of student numbers in response to mining operations/ population in the Valley. During these periods the teacher would share teaching duties with Miners Right State School (No. 1703), and also the Lower Buckland State School early in the 20th Century. The Upper Buckland School closed in 1918.

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/>