
THE CAPTAIN'S MILL SITE

Location

CHARLESONS LANE KINGSTON - PROPERTY NUMBER 30, HEPBURN SHIRE

Municipality

HEPBURN SHIRE

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7623-0354

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - October 27, 2023

What is significant?

The Site of John Hepburn's Mill, is located at 30 Charleston Lane Kingston off Werona-Kingston Road. It comprises archaeological remains of the diversion weir on Hepburn's Lagoon, the water race, mill site with adjacent occupation site, including separate stone cottage sites. Scattered small artefacts are spread over a wide area.

How is it significant?

Hepburn's Mill site is of historical and archaeological significance at the State Level

Why is it significant?

Hepburn's Mill site is of historical significance as one of the earliest flour mills in Victoria, associated with one of Victoria's earliest white settlers. The mill was once part of an extensive squatting estate, which included the Smeaton House homestead. The homestead commenced 1847, was designed by prominent colonial architect John Gill, and so the mill was likely also designed by Gill.

The site is of archaeological significance for its potential to reveal information on the development of flour milling in the first decade of Victoria's European settlement and the process of technology transfer from Britain to Australia in the mid nineteenth century.

Interpretation of Site	The site of the mill can be discerned from aerial photographs and features on the ground. The creek from the diversion weir on Hepburn Lagoon, can be traced across the paddock north of Charleston's Lane, with a separate headrace branching off just north of where it crosses the lane. the mill site itself is a leveled area north of the creek, with remnants of masonry foundations exposed in the ground surface. A depression marks the position of the waterwheel on the upstream side of the mill which would have measured about 12 m diameter and two metres wide., with masonry foundations confirming it was enclosed in a building, as seen in the contemporary photograph. This photo also shows the flume carrying the water from the race in the north east. Scattered domestic and industrial artefacts can be seen in areas exposed by erosion and stock trampling nearest the creek.
Other Names	Hepburn's Flour Mill,
Hermes Number	210472
Property Number	

History

Captain Hepburn's Mill history Bullarook Creek, Smeaton 1841 Captain John Stuart Hepburn was born in 1803 in Haddington, East Lothian Scotland and was a member of the prominent Hepburn Family of that district, where they had their ancestral estate at Smeaton.² Haddington was an important centre during the Scottish Agricultural Revolution of the mid-eighteenth century, with numerous mills on the river Tyne, although these were associated with the cloth industry rather than corn milling.³ The Preston Mill was on the estate, immediately opposite Meikle's Houston Mill, and it is believed that Meikle maintained the Preston Mill at times.⁴ Hepburn initially became a sea-farer at the age of 13 and progressed to become Master of the 226 ton brig The Alice, sailing to Hobart, and around Australian waters. In the trip to Hobart in 1835 he met John Gardiner an ex-banker from Ireland, who encouraged him to join him in a pastoral settlement. Hepburn, Gardiner and Englishmen Joseph Hawden, overlanded stock in 1836, and Hepburn subsequently established his squatting run in 1838, naming it Smeaton after his home estate.⁵ Hepburn was the first settler in the Smeaton area, where he built a water powered flour mill in the 1840s, south of his homestead, near Hepburn Lagoon, Kingston. This early structure provoked the building of a larger complex in Smeaton township when a subsequent owner of Hepburn's mill underpaid farmers for grain. Close to the centenary of settlement the mill was recalled as: "One of the best-known features at Smeaton Hill was the water-mill on Birch's Creek, erected by Captain Hepburn about 1841. Hither came drays with grain from neighbouring stations; from Captain Langdon at Bullarook, from Mr. Hunter at Tarringower, from Mr. D. C. Simson at Charlotte Plains. In 1848 there was a dry season, and in July the mill temporarily stopped working?⁶ The mill appears to have had some success, being described in positive terms in the 1850s,, such as: "Within a short distance of Kingston is Capt. Hepburn's Flour Mill, set in motion by the never-failing Bullarook Creek. We are surprised that the mechanical force of the currents of the numerous creeks in this colony is so infrequently turned to account, and we feel much pleasure in directing attention to Captain Hepburn's Watermill, as another example of successful investment, instigated by shrewd commonsense and carried out with the necessary amount of capital and enterprise".⁷ After Hepburn's death in 1860, the mill was operated by tenants who antagonised the local farmers by the low price they offered. The Andersons built their flour mill at Smeaton mainly because the local farmers, themselves included, wanted to take their grain to a mill offering better service than Hepburn's Mill.⁸ In the 180s the mill was operated by Thomas Dungey & John Morrish, but they dissolved their partnership in 1871.⁹ A sale notice of the adjacent property suggests the mill was still standing in 1878, when it was described as "opposite the late Captain Hepburn's Mill".¹⁰

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/>