
WONTHAGGI STATE COAL MINE SOUTH TUNNEL & VENTILATION SHAFT

Location

84 CHISHOLM ROAD WONTHAGGI, BASS COAST SHIRE

Municipality

BASS COAST SHIRE

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H8020-0025

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - August 22, 2024

What is significant?

The submerged South Tunnel, tunnel approach, Ventilation Shaft and associated concrete footings were constructed in 1915 to mine the southern portion of the Wonthaggi State Coal Mine's land, where boreholes had indicated a large coal deposit. The operations were shut down after flooding and collapse of the workings and only 160 tons of low-grade coal had been produced.

How is it significant?

The submerged South Tunnel, tunnel approach, Ventilation Shaft and associated concrete footings are of local historical significance.

Why is it significant?

The submerged South Tunnel, tunnel approach, Ventilation Shaft and associated concrete footings are historically significant firstly for their association with the operations of the former Wonthaggi State Coal Mine, and secondly because they provide a tangible link to the failure of the Southern Area, a failure that was used by critics of the mine as a prime example of waste and mismanagement.

Interpretation of Site	The features that are visible are in accord with the historical record, and given the very short-lived use of the place as part of the operations of the former State Coal Mine and lack of operational changes to the place over time, all historical fabric is accounted for (assuming continued existence of submerged tunnel fabric). Later land use (cattle grazing) has had no visible impact on the robust fabric but may have contributed to gradual erosion of the former haulage way.
Hermes Number	212388
Property Number	

History

SiteCard data copied on 22/08/2024: The State Coal Mine at Wonthaggi was started in 1910 to reduce reliance on NSW coal following industrial disputes on those coalfields. The State Coal Mine was operated by the Victorian Railways which had a virtual monopoly on coal production. Boring had identified an anticipated 200,000 ton coal reserve in the Southern Area and tenders were called for a tunnel, tunnel approach and an air shaft in late 1914 – early 1915. Works were very short-lived. Only 160 tons of low-grade coal were produced before flooding and a collapse saw operations immediately suspended and all machinery removed. The failure of the Southern Area did not go unnoticed by critics of the Railway's management of the mine. It was brought up at a Special Meeting of the Wonthaggi Borough Council, which wanted coal to be available to the public and mine operations to be taken over by a Coal Board. The Mining Employees Association also pointed to the costly failure as an example of waste, in an attempt to deflect criticism of the work conditions gained by the workers. The property was later used for cattle grazing and has since been allowed to regenerate as coastal heathland.

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/>