
UNEMPLOYED WORKERS' RELIEF CAMP



23412 Unemployed Workers
Camp Woohlpooer dam 1165

Location

Henty Highway WOOHLPOOER, Southern Grampians Shire

Municipality

SOUTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE

Level of significance

Stage 2 study complete

Heritage Listing

Southern Grampians Shire

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - January 27, 2004

What is significant?

The Forests Commission established Woohlpooer Unemployed Workers' Relief Camp about 1930 against a background of increasing economic and social distress caused by the Great Depression. It is located off the Henty Highway, about 2.5kms north of the settlement of Woohlpooer and about 50.0kms north-north-east of Hamilton. The Woohlpooer Reserved Forest and Section 21 of the Parish of Woohlpooer, including the present site, had been gazetted as State Forest in 1913. The land had previously been grazed as part of the vast Glenisla squatting run until about 1890. Consequently, by 1930, there was forty years of regrowth, which was available for harvesting and required management. Many camps were established across the state including special camps for unemployed youths. As well as timber getting, there were other minor but traditional forest industries such as charcoal burning, wattlebark stripping and even eucalyptus distillation. Charcoal was to become critical as a substitute fuel during the Second World War. Some unemployed workers' camps became internment and prisoner of war camps during the war. At its height, the camp appears to have consisted of a large square area

defined by a fence with a row of at least five small timber cabins against the western boundary, an ablution block, two other larger timber buildings possibly used as a mess hall or for other communal purposes and a reservoir. The huts had chimneys built of field stone rubble. A road swept in a curve from the south-west corner to the north-east corner. The structures were removed after the Second World War. Other archaeological remains survive. There is also an earth dam, which appears to be modern. The camp appears to have been superseded by commercial operations and abandoned by the early 1950s.

How is it significant?

The Woolpooer Unemployed Workers' Relief Camp is of historical and archaeological significance to the Southern Grampians Shire as a Heritage Inventory Site.

Why is it significant?

The Woolpooer Unemployed Workers' Relief Camp is of historical significance as a representation of the state government's response to the various and sometimes conflicting political forces current during the Great Depression and afterwards. It is of archaeological significance for its potential to illustrate and explain that response.

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| Heritage Study/Consultant | Southern Grampians - Southern Grampians Shire Heritage Study, Timothy Hubbard P/L, Annabel Neylon, 2002; |
| Construction dates | 1930, |
| Heritage Act Categories | Registered archaeological place, |
| Hermes Number | 23412 |
| Property Number | |

Physical Conditions

The remains of the camp site are in very good condition, and the archaeological potential of the site is high.

Physical Description 1

The archaeological site is located approximately 250 metres east of the Henty Highway, in the Woolpooer State Forest, about 2.5kms north of the intersection of the Woolpooer Road and the Henty Highway and about 50.0kms north-north-east of Hamilton. The camp site is situated on the north side of a well defined dirt track, within a fenced enclosure of about half a hectare.

Along the western fence line, the remains of a series of small huts can be distinguished. These remains consist of timber stumps and chimney bases of field stone rubble. There were at least 5 of these huts in a row along the western boundary. Close by are the timber stumps of other buildings, including an L shaped structure, and a concrete foundation. At the northern edge of the enclosure, the remains of a rubbish dump are visible, as well as a large underground cistern, with surviving roofing iron and timbers. The outline of a road sweeping in a broad curve through the camp site is clearly visible. To the east of the camp is a dam or reservoir, which appears to be of a later date. Scraps of metal, leather and glass can be seen among the rubble and timber stumps.

"Woolpooer State Forest is predominantly an even aged open woodland comprised almost exclusively of River Red Gum with a grassy understorey. The majority of trees in the forest are 100-year-old regrowth that originated following the removal of the grazing in 1890." (DNRE, 2002)

"All buildings from this FCV camp within a large fenced enclosure have been removed leaving a 30m long double row of wooden stumps with some small heaps of building material, a square concrete slab measuring 3.2 x 3.2m, two or three rectangular arrangements of wooden stumps and an interesting reservoir with ditches. There was

also quite an extensive rubbish dump covering about 30sqm comprising bottles and cans on the N side of the fence near the reservoir." (Story, 1995)

Historical Australian Themes

5.2.1 Timber getting (sawmills, tramway, camps etc.)

Usage/Former Usage

Forestry camp

Integrity

low degree of integrity for above ground remains.

Physical Description 2

Unemployed workers during the Great Depression
[possibly] Internees and prisoners of war during WW2

Physical Description 3

Woolpooer State Forest reserve

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/>