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# MT ALEXANDER SILK FARM

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## Location

DOG ROCKS SADDLE ROAD HARCOURT, MOUNT ALEXANDER SHIRE

## Municipality

MOUNT ALEXANDER SHIRE

## Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

## Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7723-0090

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO807

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - July 13, 2005

What is significant?

In 1872 Mrs Bladen Neill and the Victorian Ladies Sericultural Company established a silk worm farm on land at Mount Alexander, obtained through a grant from the Minister of Lands. The farm comprised plantings of mulberry trees with a number of associated structures, including a magnannerie (for breeding worms), a leaf room, a cottage, additional residential quarters, and a building used for educational purposes. The business failed in 1878. The site today consists of a series of ruined structural and archaeological features including the remains of at least two structures, exotic plantings and drainage/water supply elements.

How is it significant?

The Former Mount Alexander Silk Worm Farm is of historical, archaeological and social importance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The Former Mount Alexander Silk Worm Farm is historically important for its association with a relatively obscure nineteenth century industry and with the role of women in nineteenth century industry. The farm was one of the first sericulture ventures established by a co-operative group rather than a single individual and it is one of only a small number of archaeologically documented businesses run by women in the nineteenth century. The site has a strong association with the development of the science of sericulture in Australia, particularly through its association with Mrs Bladen Neill and her efforts in researching methodologies and promoting education programs in sericulture

The Former Mount Alexander Silk Worm Farm is important as an archaeological site as it is the only documented site with substantial material evidence relating to the practice of sericulture in Victoria, and one of only two documented sites in Australia. The site includes a diverse range of feature types and has considerable potential to reveal further information relating to specific activities at the site, both industrial and domestic. Archaeological excavation could reveal artefact and further structural remains which would also assist in identifying the functions of the existing structural remains.

The Former Mount Alexander Silk Worm Farm is important for its general association with the role of women in industry, business, and philanthropy in the second half of the nineteenth century and for its specific association with Mrs Bladen Neill and the women's co-operative - the Victorian Ladies Sericultural Association - set up to promote sericulture and to educate poorer women in rural areas, indicating an awareness and understanding of the contribution they could be made by women and children to the economic and social spheres of nineteenth century Australia.

[Source: Victorian Heritage Register]

Hermes Number 7763

Property Number

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*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/>*