
BREAKNECK GORGE PUDDLER

Location

BREAKNECK GORGE, JUNCTION OF SPRING AND JIM CROW CREEKS ELEVATED PLAINS, HEPBURN SHIRE

Municipality

HEPBURN SHIRE

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7723-0495

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO627

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - July 11, 2005

What is significant?

The Breakneck Gorge Gold Puddling Site is located on the steep northern bank of Spring Creek, immediately below the base of a basalt escarpment. The site consists of the remnants of one puddling machine complete with stone retaining walls. The site is a good characteristic example of the puddling technology developed in Victoria from 1854 in response to the need to process enormous amounts of clayey soil which needed to be broken up to get at the gold. Horses were used to drag harrows around a circular ditch in which the soil and water were mixed.

How is it significant?

The Breakneck Gorge Gold Puddling Site is of historical, archaeological and scientific importance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The Breakneck Gorge Gold Puddling Site is historically and scientifically important as a characteristic and well preserved example of a site associated with the earliest forms of gold mining which, from 1851, played a pivotal role in the development of Victoria. Puddling machine technology is particularly important in the history of Victorian gold mining as the only technology or method developed entirely on Victorian goldfields. The Breakneck Gorge Gold Puddling Site is particularly important because it was part of a deep lead mining operation. The gold seekers at this site were tunnelling under the basalt to get to the gold bearing sediments of an ancient river system. Remains of these small-scale deep lead mines are now very rare in Victoria.

The Breakneck Gorge Gold Puddling Site is archaeologically important for its potential to yield artefacts which will be able to provide significant information about the cultural history of gold mining and the gold seekers themselves.

[Source: Victorian Heritage Register.]

Hermes Number 8151

Property Number

History

Heritage Inventory History of Site: Alluvial mining along Spring Creek commenced in 1853 when a rich and extensive alluvial deposit (known as the elevated plains lead) was discovered underlying the thick basaltic or volcanic lava deposit through which the creek had cut its course. The miners tunnelled under the basalt cap and obtained gold from ancient river gravels. These gravels had been deposited in the Tertiary period, up to forty million years ago. The auriferous wash retrieved was treated in puddlers or sluice boxes, and the tailings (river pebbles) being deposited in heaps at the base of the escarpment. The water for treating the wash was conveyed by water races. One such race, which travelled along the east bank of Spring Creek was in existence prior to 1859. This race appears to have been constructed by Phass & Company. The mining of the sub-basaltic wash was still going strong in 1861 when it was reported that the greater portion of the elevated plains and other basaltic hills on the Spring and Sailors Creeks, and from thence downwards along Jim Crow Creek through Frankford towards Yandooit were occupied, and that fresh tunnels were going in at short intervals. By the late 1860s the intensity of the mining along Spring Creek would have waned and, with European miners increasingly being attracted towards the quartz mining industry, the workings would have become the realm of persevering Chinese miners.

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/>