
SOLOMONS FORD

Location

CANNING STREET AVONDALE HEIGHTS AND DUKE STREET SUNSHINE NORTH AND BRAYBROOK,
MOONEE VALLEY CITY, BRIMBANK CITY, MARIBYRNONG CITY

Municipality

MOONEE VALLEY CITY

BRIMBANK CITY

MARIBYRNONG CITY

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7822-0242

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO109

HO113

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

A stone reef outcrops in the bed of the Maribyrnong River banking up the waters in a wide bend and providing a shallow crossing of the river. Gravels, sand and flood deposits of silt have accumulated here, and this has been augmented by the MMBW who reconstructed the river banks and added stepping stones formed from large weathered basalt boulders.

Interpretation of Site

On the western side of the ford are a number of features which point to activity and perhaps occupation on the west bank of the river.

Two overgrown depressions, approximately 30m to the north of the ford running roughly parallel to the river on its west side, may relate to extractive industry. Further to the west is a terrace cut into the slope on which was observed a surface scatter of 19th century artefacts, and this could relate to a rest camp or perhaps to more permanent settlement. A small possible wall feature was also observed immediately to the west of the ford.

Although the ford itself has been greatly modified, its immediate environs have remained undeveloped and reflect the character of the area during the pioneering phase (Vines 2000). The presence of surface artefacts demonstrates the potential for archaeological deposits and perhaps features on the western side of the river.

Archaeological Significance

"Solomon's Ford is one of the most important historical sites associated firstly with the settlement at Port Phillip and later with the era of pastoral expansion to the unsettled districts. Solomon's Ford was the first safe crossing place of the Saltwater River from Melbourne to Geelong and further west in 1840's, and following the discovery of gold at Ballarat and Bendigo, as a link to these goldfields. The association with Charles Grimes, the forgotten early Victorian explorer is also of importance." (Old, now disused, Statement of Significance from RNE)

Historical Significance

Solomon's Ford is of local historical significance as one of the first crossing places of the Maribyrnong River for European settlers from 1835. It is recorded in the first accounts of exploration (Grimes' 1803 journey) and in subsequent accounts of the difficulties of traversing the western plains.

The ford was later named Solomon's Ford after Michael Solomon, early Keilor district squatter and grazier who came to the area in 1835.

Other Names SOLOMON'S FORD,

Hermes Number 8880

Property Number

History

Solomon's Ford, a natural basalt stone ford crossing of the Maribyrnong River (formerly Saltwater River), was first charted by Charles Grimes, surveyor General to the Colony of New South Wales in 1803 during exploration of Port Phillip Bay.

Amongst the pastoral settlers who quickly followed the first exploration of the plains, the Solomons possessed one of the largest flocks in 1835, numbering around 2,700 sheep. Joseph Solomon's station was initially in Kealba- North Sunshine near the natural crossing which became known as Solomon's Ford, although this name has also been used for another ford upstream (Vines 2000). This was the lowest foot or vehicle crossing of the Maribyrnong River for people travelling to Geelong or westward. Michael Clancy occupied land in the township of

Braybrook on the north side of the river in the 1870s. He testified to a Royal Commission in 1879 that he had lived near the ford for 23 years, gaining something of a living from the river by loading stones from the river for ballasting boats at Footscray.

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/>