
SPRING CREEK SAWMILL AND SEASONING WORKS, MOUNT SAMARIA

Location

MOUNT SAMARIA STATE PARK BRIDGE CREEK AND MOUNT SAMARIA STATE PARK BRIDGE CREEK,
BENALLA RURAL CITY, MANSFIELD SHIRE

Municipality

MANSFIELD SHIRE

BENALLA RURAL CITY

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H8124-0001

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO75

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - August 23, 2005

What is significant?

The Spring Creek sawmill and seasoning works consists of substantial mill foundations, concrete seasoning kilns, outlet tramway and lowering gear foundations. The site was worked by D J McClelland from 1923-1926, to exploit the messmate and peppermint forests of Mount Samaria. The sawmill itself is represented by substantial timber uprights, foundation logs, sawdust trench and a low sawdust heap. An outlet tramway extends from the mill to the edge of the plateau, where a substantial three-railed incline controlled the lowering of log trucks down to Spring Creek. The braking machinery at the top of the incline was set in massive reinforced concrete foundations. Both the timber tramline and machinery foundations are exceptionally well preserved, with the tramline represented by remnants of wooden rails, packing, culverts, bridges, and loading ramps. The discovery

of the eucalypt hardwood seasoning process at Warburton in 1919 prompted the installation of a reconditioning kiln and two drying kilns at the mill site in 1924, to meet the demand for kiln dried flooring timber in metropolitan Melbourne. Although lacking doors and the rail system for positioning timber, the kilns are in excellent condition.

How is it significant?

The Spring Creek sawmill and seasoning works are of historical and scientific significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The Spring Creek sawmill and seasoning works are scientifically significant as a remarkably intact example of an integrated timber production operation. The seasoning kilns demonstrate the timber reconditioning process in its most readily understood form. The tramway systems are very well constructed, and the lowering gear foundations at the top of the incline are probably the best engineered of their type ever constructed in Victoria.

The Spring Creek sawmill and seasoning works are historically significant as the oldest extant demonstration of the kiln drying and reconditioning process in Victoria, a process which transformed the production of seasoned eucalypt hardwoods, and one which remains the first and most essential value-adding process in the Australian timber industry.

[Source: Victorian Heritage Register]

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| Interpretation of Site | Heritage Inventory Interpretation: The site demonstrates an important aspect of the timber production process, including sawmilling, seasoning & transport. Timber cut at the mill was air dried, then steam reconditioned for 8-12 hours, before being placed in the drying kilns for around 2 weeks. The timber was then transported along the outlet tramway to the edge of the plateau, lowered down the three-railed incline, and then transferred by road to the railway station at Tatong. |
| Hermes Number | 10819 |
| Property Number | |

History

Heritage Inventory History of Site: The mill was transferred from its original position on Spring Creek up to the Mount Samaria plateau in 1923. Seasoning kilns were constructed in 1924 to meet the growing demand for kiln-dried flooring timber. Around thirty men worked at the mill, which featured a seven-room boarding house, six houses for married workers and the school teacher, and 18 huts for the single men. Overcapitalisation and poor quality forest forced the closure of the mill in 1926.

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/>