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# STONY CREEK SCHOOL

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## Location

NUGGETTY TRACK STONY CREEK, CENTRAL GOLDFIELDS SHIRE

## Municipality

CENTRAL GOLDFIELDS SHIRE

## Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

## Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7623-0277

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

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Hermes Number 12159

Property Number

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## History

Contextual History:History of Place:

Heritage Inventory History of Site:

1886 Stony Creek: formerly Kangaroo Gully

This school was about 6 miles south of Talbot. In 1865 local residents erected a school 24ft x 14ft by public subscription, for £35, and appointed an itinerant teacher. In 1866 W.W.Walker, on behalf of the Committee, applied for aid by way of salary, and for a grant of £70 to extend the building, with a view to vesting it with the Board of Education. The grant did not materialise as the building could not be considered suitable to be vested, but salary was granted as from 15 July 1867, the HT then being James Knight. In 1867 the building was enlarged to 36ft x 14ft x 11ft the NE then being 37. A new brick school, erected in 1869, cost £243, and being on a site already gazetted as a school reserve it became automatically vested with the Minister of Public Instructions. The old school made a useful three-room residence. In 1876 a 'rush' in the vicinity of the school gave it new life

resulting in the reserve being fenced much sooner than might normally be expected, but by 1893 consideration was given to closing the school. BY 1902 the NE had fallen to 10 and the DI recommended the school should be worked part-time with 850 Red Lion. The school closed in 1916.

A monument in the bush survives fires.

Tucked away in the heart of the forest in Talbot are the remains of the Stony Creek School. Although the fires of January 21 burned to within a couple of kilometres the remains of the once lovely rock gardens a large map of Australia created out of rocks by a painstaking teacher to instruct her classes in geography are still intact. It is with surprise that one comes across remains of the gardens built in the shape of Australia with rock and quartz; a circular garden with star inside, and many other rock gardens of varying shapes and sizes. These relics are all that remain of Stony Creek School No. 886.

In 1909 School Inspector Saxton made the following report: Hidden away in the heart of the forest, used only for mining timber purposes, this nice bush school presents, by reason of its tastefully improved grounds, quite a pleasing spectacle ... A three-railed fence, wire netting to the top, surrounds the grounds. They have been absolutely cleared while garden plots in excellent order, the property of individual children, all enclosed by a high wire netting , give an atmosphere of home to the place ... Neat rockeries with climbing plants, an excellent summer house, with pot plants, a wire netting approach to the porch, hung with creepers and assisted by a fine array of plants in pots assist in increasing the excellent effect ... In this respect it is the best school I have met. Between 1904 and 1916 the pupil's register show that the occupation of parents of guardians of the children enrolled were sleeper cutters, miners, surveyors, farmers and domestic duties.

In 1905, Mr A dean, Inspector, complimented the then head teacher, Miss Elizabeth James, on the manner in which she had redecorated the interior of the school buildings.

Miss James was again complimented in 1906, but this time for the gardens. Mr Dean noted that a flower house has been erected.

On July 26 1907 the Inspector wrote 'Grounds. In excellent order. The boys have cleared the ground of some old stumps; they have also carried a good deal of soil and gravel to the garden. On Arbor Day 15 trees were planted; many, many of the parents attending.

Records show that Miss James was head teacher in 1905 until 1913 when Miss Ann Weir became head teacher. The late Mr R G Hull, of Dunach, remembered attending a farewell concert to Miss James at the Stony Creek School. Miss James left Stony Creek and went to teach and live at Clunes. Many of her old pupils are still alive and remember her with great affection. Her interest in horticulture continued and her Clunes garden became as well-known as the Stony Creek rockeries. Ever entry in the Inspector's Report Book compliment her. Her work with the community was praised; her teaching methods; her school grounds and in particular the gardens and 'flower house'; the school buildings and their interior decor. Even after she left the little school in the forest her work was praised by an Inspector when he said the foundations she had lain were very good. The memory of the Stony Creek School lives on today because of the love and care lavished upon it by one woman. But the only monument to her memory are the lonely remnants of rock gardens deep in the Australian bush.

*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/>*