
EIGHNANE WINERY RUINS

Location

EIGHNANE VALLEY WAY SUNBURY, HUME CITY

Municipality

HUME CITY

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7822-0859

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - March 30, 2010

Data has been updated as a result of the Outer Western Metro Project, Context, March 2010.

The most prominent feature on the site is a ruined stone building which is likely to be part of the original winery cellar, but it may have been used as a house by John Charles Johnston. It is partly overgrown with blackberries and this has not been definitely established.

Interpretation of Site

The footings of a small separate block immediately to the north of the ruin may relate to a toilet or perhaps an external stair. There are a number of peppercorn trees around the ruin and some willows on the creek, all of which appear to be very old. There are also the remains of a road or track leading from Watson Road to the site.

Approximately 30 metres to the south east of the ruin lies a pile of fieldstones in what appears to be a slight terrace into the slope. This may be the excavation into the hill and small stone building which constituted the cellar for a time (see above).

Approximately 80 metres to the south east of the stone ruin, one remaining orange tree was observed on the flats beside Jacksons Creek. This may be extremely old and constitute exceptional evidence of original 1860s 'novel industry' plantings. Alternatively, this may relate to later plantings by Johnston.

Archaeological Significance

The ruin is divided into four rooms, but these do not seem to connect, adding weight to the belief that the building was at least originally constructed as a cellar rather than a house. It is well-built in a mixture of bluestone rubble and squared bluestone, with some silcrete blocks, and the central dividing wall is well preserved to almost two metres. The ruin has no obvious brick component but a scatter of brick extends to the south, and this may therefore relate to another structure. It comprises three types of bricks; some are handmade with no markings, some are pink-cream in colour and marked 'Allison's Patent' and the remainder are also marked 'Allison's Patent' but are red-brown in colour with cross burn markings.

The archaeological material on the site gives Eighnane high research potential and interpretive value.

The Eighnane Winery site is integral to an understanding of the history and development of the Sunbury wine-making industry.

Historical Significance

The ruins are significant as they are associated with the effects of the 1862 Duffy Act.

The site is also significant for its production of quality wines, which culminated in the Eighnane Hermitage winning a gold medal at a Bordeaux Exhibition, as one of the last wineries in the district to have remained in operation and as the only property in the Sunbury district to have established an extensive commercial orange orchard under the novel industry provisions of the 1862 Land Act.

Other Names

HOLDEN FLORA AND FAUNA RESERVE, EIGHNANE RUINS,

Hermes Number

14400

Property Number

History

Originally a 30 acre property located on Government Reserve Land in the Parish of Holden, the site was first leased to a Travers Adamson under the Novel Industries Act, Section 47 of the Land Act of 1862 ('The Duffy Act'). In his application for the lease, which was dated 9 May 1863, Adamson, a prominent lawyer, politician and

public servant in the State of Victoria, noted that he intended to plant vines and oranges. A 30 year lease was granted from 1 July 1863 with the conditions being that 3 acres of vines 'for the manufacturing of wine' and 2 acres of oranges were to be planted annually during the first five years of the lease. Eighnane was one of a number of Sunbury wineries, including Goonawarra, Craiglee and Springvale, that were established along Jackson's Creek in the 1860s under the novel industries clause as country estates and hobby wineries of successful city-based men, but this appears to be the only instance where orange trees were also planted.

The first descriptive account to be found of the small Eighnane vineyard appeared in a newspaper article in 1882. It describes the cellar as being designed upon the same extensive scale as several others in the district, but states that only a portion of the design had been carried out at that time, noting that an excavation in the side of the hill and a small stone building constituted the current cellar. It was intended to further excavate the hill and erect a two storey building above ground, but operations had stopped at that time pending improved prospects in the industry. A later account from 1884 noted that 'Mr. Adamson's cellar contains underground accommodation'.

Eighnane was still functioning as a vineyard in the late 1890s. The property was sold in late 1896 or early 1897 to John Charles Johnston who in the first few years of his ownership of the property is described in the Rate Books as a 'Vigneron', but from 1902/03 is described as a 'Farmer' with 30 acres of land in Holden. The recollection of a local resident was that he mainly grew oranges (Maloney & Johnson 1998). Johnston died in October 1921, at which time there was a house with four rooms (two of stone and two of wood), a detached kitchen, a small dairy and a buggy shed on the property. It has not been established which one of these buildings is the present ruinous structure, or whether it is the remains of the Eighnane cellar which may never have been completed as intended.

After Johnston's death it appears that the buildings fell into disuse. An army ordnance map surveyed in 1914 indicates a structure in the area of the ruins with an unformed road leading to it. A later map of 1936 shows only some of the road.

(Derived from Maloney & Johnson 1998)

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/>