
SUNDAY CREEK CHINESE CAMPS AND MARKET GARDENS SITE

Location

WEST OF DISTILLERY ROAD WAHGUNYAH AND RUTHERGLEN, INDIGO SHIRE

Municipality

INDIGO SHIRE

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H8125-0027

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Only a public portion of this land (Foord to Blanche Street) was inspected, as both private and crown allotments south of Blanche Street could not be accessed. Based on the inspection and aerials, all land in the area appears to remain undeveloped, but no evidence of the camps or gardens was identified leading to this area being listed as a potential site only.

Interpretation of Site The lagoon is relatively undeveloped and while no structural features were visible during the inspection. It is therefore likely at least some traces of the generally ephemeral, and modest structures associated with the Chinese remain. These include traces of gardens, structures and artefacts commonly associated with Chinese groups of the 19th century.

Pfeiffer Wines on Distillery Road is located on Sunday Creek. Staff were asked if they had ever heard of any Chinese occupation on Sunday Creek, but no information was known. This may indicate that there is little surface evidence or subsurface remains and therefore only a detailed survey may enhance knowledge of this potential site.

Archaeological Significance Sunday Creek at Wahgunyah, is of medium importance as the former location of 19th century Chinese settlements and market gardens, just some of the few documented for Indigo and along the Murray River.. However, the land here is sufficiently undeveloped and further survey may identify areas of archaeological potential and/or surface remains. This should allow for comparative information regarding function, chronology and use of the Murray River complementary to settlements known from nearby All Saints Winery for example (north of Wahgunyah).

Historical Significance Important due to its association with non-European settlement of Victoria, as well as its links to the early market gardening industry.

Hermes Number 162334

Property Number

History

As McGivern notes, the land in the vicinity of Sunday Creek - and in particular land between the Creek and the Murray River - is rich and fertile; as is apparent by the abundance of vineyards in the area. As the Victorian Goldrush ended, and such land became available for the first time, Chinese men settled and/or were often encouraged to settle in such area in order to embark on seasonal work in the wineries or set up the more important market gardening enterprises.

According to McGivern 1983:75:

On the outskirts of town, also Chinese camps were set up, along Sunday Creek for instance, once a billabong of the Murray, even its old course. Silt built up from past aeons, has enriched the soil, market garden produce flourished in it.

Additional search of Parish and geological plans for Wahgunyah did not reveal the exact locations of these settlements and gardens. However, Sunday Creek is located close to the nearby Carlyle Cemetery (separate site ~ 500 m to the east) which continues to be used to the present day. This cemetery houses a pair of Chinese funeral burning towers, attesting to the importance of the area to the Chinese community of the latter 19th century.

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/>