

UNLISTED BRITANNIA MINE WORKINGS

Location

BRITANNIA SPUR TRACK WALHALLA, BAW BAW SHIRE

Municipality

BAW BAW SHIRE

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H8122-0147

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - September 3, 2022

What is significant?

The site has archaeological value for the rich assemblage of sites relating to early quartz mining, timber getting and squatting in the Walhalla area.

How is it significant?**Why is it significant?**

Interpretation of Site The site shows a number of developmental phases, from early reef workings resulting from a rush to the area in the wake of substantial gold-bearing reef discoveries at Walhalla, to the timber tramways that fed the Walhalla mines' need for timber for the boilers, underground propping and construction, to the later farmlets on sections of the river by Walhalla residents.

Hermes Number 195269

History

"On the back of rich reef discoveries at Walhalla, prospectors moved out looking for similar finds. A small reef, the Britannia, was discovered on the bank of Stringers Creek West Branch in 1865 and in the general excitement of the times a well-capitalised company was formed to purchase the property and work the reef. This find immediately attracted other prospecting parties who took up ground on the line and around the company's ground. The Britannia Reef QMC set about opening the reef and erected expensive plant but due to poor management and a lack of gold the operation was short-lived, and was finished by 1867. Nothing came of these early speculative shows, but a succession of small, ill-fated mining ventures kept a thin mining presence within the Study Area into the 1890s at least. It is interesting to note that no records of any gold production at all have been located for any of the numerous mining operations within the Study Area. Discoveries to the north such as the Fear Not Reef in 1875, itself ill-fated, and revivals at the British Queen saw miners regularly trudging through the area.

The voracious appetite of the large Walhalla mines for timber saw the Long Tunnel Company extend their timber tramway through the Study Area in the late 1870s, and contract timber cutters swarmed over the area, denuding the hillsides as they worked further north into the 1890s. The split timber was sent back to Walhalla on horse-drawn skips along the tramway. The timber cutters, mostly of Italian or Swiss-Italian origin, lived out in the bush in rough temporary camps, only coming into town for provisions. One of these timber cutters was Giovanni Guatta, and in the early 1900s, after the axes had ceased ringing and the mines in the Study Area were abandoned, he leased a small area of land at the junction of Fear Not Creek and Stringers Creek West Branch. There he had a comfortable three-roomed hut and grew vegetables in terraced gardens, trekking from Walhalla to the farm on weekends to tend his crops. He held the lease into the 1930s, but with the passing of Giovanni, the bush cloaked the sites and it is only following wildfire such as that of January 2009 that the visual evidence of all this activity is briefly revealed to the casual eye."

Quoted from *Heritage Action Plan for Fear Not Creek Sites Walhalla Historic Area*, LRGM – Services for Parks Victoria, August 2010. A more comprehensive history is also included in that document.

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/>