
PRATT ROAD ARTEFACT SCATTER

Location

PRATT ROAD REEDY LAKE, GANNAWARRA SHIRE

Municipality

GANNAWARRA SHIRE

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7626-0008

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

The Pratt Road Artefact Scatter is of local archaeological significance as the artefact scatter appears to be in an undisturbed context and there is potential for more artefacts to be located subsurface. There is potential for the artefact scatter to reveal information about Victoria's cultural history. The Pratt Road Artefact Scatter is representative as the artefacts characterise the typical artefacts found in domestic artefact scatters.

Hermes Number 196479

Property Number

History

In 1836 Governor Sir Richard Bourke instructed Surveyor - General of New South Wales Major Thomas Mitchell to follow the Murray along the south bank from the Murrumbidgee to the settled parts of the colony (Ballinger 2008:6). Mitchell reached the current area of Gannawarra in June 1836 after a three month journey. Mitchell (2013 viewed online) described the area as being:

".open, grassy plains, beautifully variegated with serpentine lines of wood. The country which I has seen this day beyond Mount Hope, was too inviting to be left behind us unexplored; and I, therefore, determined to turn into it without further delay."

This description was enough to entice drovers and squatters to the area. Following Mitchell's 1836 track along the Murray, drovers from South Australia or from the Murrumbidgee-Darling Rivers watered their cattle at Lake Boga. In February 1845, George Curlewis and Robert Campbell became the first squatters in the Swan Hill area, the activity area formed part of their 'Reedy Lake' run (Spreadborough and Anderson 1983:239-240). In 1849, William Francis Splatt bought Reedy Lake and the livestock on it. By this time, the station had been reduced to 170,000 acres, which reportedly had a carrying capacity of 22,000 sheep (Shire of Swan Hill 1989:33). Initially sheep were the preferred stock in Central Murray region, however, pastoralists turned to cattle during the 1850s and 1860s. By the late 1870s, selectors had settled throughout the area as the high level of rainfall in the area had made the area seem more profitable (Shire of Swan Hill 1989:68). The areas inland which were initially considered less desirable than those properties directly on the rivers became known as the best and most profitable area for winter fattening of lambs (Ballinger 2008:10).

The combined effects of drought, sudden flooding, vegetation clearance, salinity, sheep grazing pressure and rabbit plagues during the 1870s resulted in desolation of the landscape. Those who were close to permanent water survived, but many runs were abandoned during this time. During the 1880s, there was much discussion regarding the potential of the region for irrigation and cultivation. The 1890s through to the early 1900s also saw the encouragement of closer settlement, with the former large runs broken up into much smaller blocks for the purpose of irrigated cultivation, particularly for orchards and lucerne. Lucerne was popular with settlers when they could not afford stock (Shire of Swan Hill 1989:126). Drought and rabbits still proved formidable opposition for settlers, with many of the smaller blocks unable to produce a living. Irrigation was also causing its own problems, through increased salinity of soils. The construction of the railway to Swan Hill in the 1880s encouraged more people to settle in the area. Specific to this project, Lake Charm station, previously known as Reedy Lakes Station facilitated the settlement as the area became accessible. The opening of the Torrumbarry Weir in 1923 supplied a permanent water source to the area for irrigation. In the 1920s there were two schools, a post office, a store, and a newly established Church of England provided for the people of the Kerang Lakes region (Ballinger 2008:50).

Throughout the historic period through to the present, the Kerang area has remained subject to pastoral, cropping and agricultural land practises. The long history of agricultural activities, rural/urban development and recreational activities surrounding the activity area would indicate low preservation values for archaeological sites, objects and remains located there.

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/>