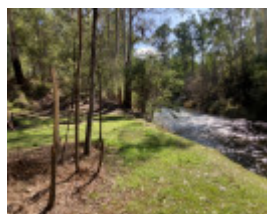# BUCKLAND RIVER CROSSING

The Crossing 2022

Map Extent

View to the east
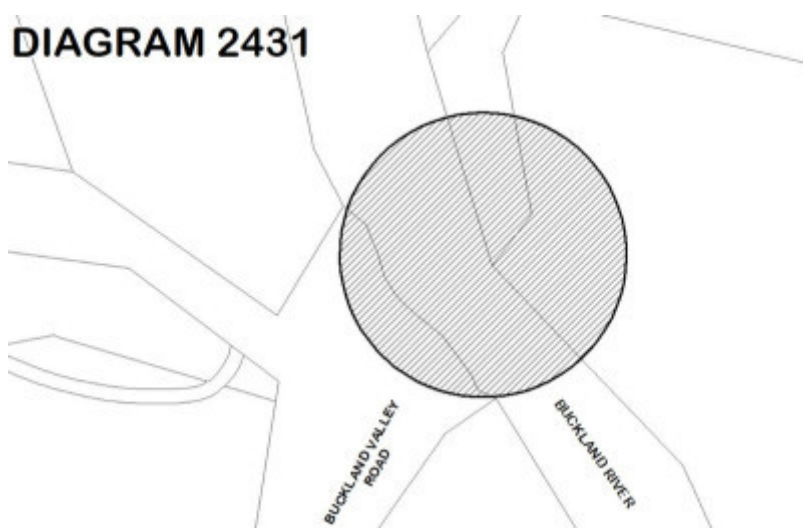

View to NE

View to North

1929 Bridge

Aerial extent

Extent 2022

Location

BUCKLAND VALLEY ROAD BUCKLAND, ALPINE SHIRE

Municipality

ALPINE SHIRE

Level of significance

Registered

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2431

VHR Registration

January 12, 2023

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - January 9, 2023

What is significant?
The Buckland River Crossing being the river and surrounding landscape where the Buckland Valley Riot of 1857 culminated.

How is it significant?
The Buckland River Crossing is of historical and social significance to the State of Victoria. It satisfies the following criterion for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

Criterion A
Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history.

Criterion G
Strong or special association with a particular present-day community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.

Why is it significant?
The Buckland River Crossing is historically significant as the culmination point of one of the worst race riots in Victoria's colonial history: the Buckland Valley Riot. On 4 July 1857 a hostile group of European miners violently chased Chinese miners from their camp down the Buckland Valley. The Joss House Temple was destroyed along with an estimated 750 tents and 30 stores. A bottleneck formed as panic-stricken Chinese people attempted to cross the Buckland River to safety over a narrow log crossing, and some Europeans assisted their passage to safety. A number of Chinese miners died as a result of the riot. [Criterion A]

The Buckland River Crossing is socially significant for the Chinese community across Victoria as a place of remembrance of the Buckland Valley Riot. [Criterion G]

Permit Exemptions

General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

Places of worship: In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must notify the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

Subdivision/consolidation: Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions here.

Specific Exemptions:

The following permit exemptions are for works and activities not considered to cause harm to the cultural heritage significance of the Buckland River Crossing.

General
·   Minor repairs and maintenance which replaces like with like. Repairs and maintenance must maximise protection and retention of fabric and include the conservation of existing details or elements. Any repairs and maintenance must not exacerbate the decay of fabric due to chemical incompatibility of new materials, obscure fabric or limit access to such fabric for future maintenance.
·   Works or activities, including emergency stabilisation, necessary to secure safety in an emergency where a structure or part of a structure has been irreparably damaged or destabilised and poses a safety risk to its users or the public. The Executive Director must be notified within seven days of the commencement of these works or activities.

2021 Bridge
·   All works to maintain and repair the 2021 Bridge including road surfacing, road line marking, speed humps and the installation of traffic signs.

1929 Bridge
·   All works to maintain and repair the 1929 Bridge including road surfacing and the installation of traffic signs. This exemption does not include works to the dredger arms.

Unsealed tracks
·   Track maintenance but not sealing tracks.

Interpretative, directional and official road traffic signage
·   Removal or replacement of existing interpretative, directional and traffic signage provided the size, location and material remains the same.

Picnic and outdoor furniture

· Removal or replacement of existing picnic and outdoor furniture provided the size, location and material remains the same.

Landscape
· Fire suppression and firefighting activities such as fuel reduction burns and fire control line construction, provided all heritage features and values of the place are identified and protected.
· Installation of physical barriers or traps to enable vegetation protection and management of vermin such as rats, mice and possums.

Trees and plants
· The processes of slashing, mowing, removal of dead or diseased plants and trees, replanting, disease and weed control and maintenance to care for plants and trees.
· Pest and disease control.
· Removal of environmental and noxious weeds.
· Emergency tree works to maintain public safety.

Theme

2. Peopling Victoria's places and landscapes 7. Governing Victorians

Construction dates	1857,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Other Names	BUCKLAND RIOTS, BUCKLAND VALLEY RIVER CROSSING,
Hermes Number	208911
Property Number	

History

History

Victoria's gold rush

In 1851 Victoria's gold rush was sparked by gold discovery at Clunes, Bendigo and Ballarat. News of the strike quickly spread, and an influx of migrants came to Victoria from all over the world until the late 1860s. The population of Victoria rose from 75,000 people in 1851 to 500,000 in 1861. Melbourne earned the nickname 'Marvellous Melbourne' due to the huge influx of wealth and migrants, and the subsequent economic and cultural impact of this mass migration shaped Victoria.
In the Ovens Valley region, gold was discovered in Beechworth in 1852, quickly followed by finds at Bright, Wandiligong and along the Ovens River as far as Harrietville. The largest discovery in the area was at the rich Buckland Valley field in 1853, located on the traditional land of the Taungurung People. The Buckland Valley was mainly an alluvial gold mining area (extracting gold from waterways), and settlements were spread over about 30 kilometres. In the mid-1850s, large numbers of Chinese miners came to Buckland. By early 1857, there were an estimated 2,000 to 2,500 Chinese and 500 European miners.

Anti-Chinese Violence on the Goldfields

During the 1850s on Victoria's Goldfields, bullying, harassment and acts of violence towards Chinese migrants were common.[1] From 1855, Chinese people were taxed a £10 fee to arrive in Victoria by ship, and from 1857 additional annual residents' fees of between £4 and £6 were imposed. In the face of discrimination and violence, Chinese communities organised campaigns of resistance sending petitions to those in authority and fighting legal test cases on the constitutional right of the colony to exclude Chinese arrivals, and organised civil disobedience

campaigns. Some Europeans also objected to the unfair way Chinese people were treated on the goldfields. 'The Chinese', wrote one journalist in the *Argus* newspaper in 1862, 'are a valuable addition to our labourers on the gold-fields.' Chinese communities organised mutual aid associations to support their well-being in the colony. The See Yup Society was founded in 1854 and grew to be one of the largest and most powerful.

The Buckland Valley Riot

Origins of the riot

In 1857, the worst episode of anti-Chinese violence on Victoria's goldfields occurred in the Buckland Valley. It predates the oft cited Lambing Flat Riots in New South Wales of 1861. At the time, Chinese miners outnumbered Europeans by four or five to one. Great resentment was felt by sections of the European population as they believed that Chinese miners were 'robbing us of our goldfields' and had 'gross and beastly practices'.[2] There had been much animosity and growing clashes between European and Chinese miners in the first half of 1857, with one of the most notable incidents happening in early May, where a group of Chinese miners were pelted by approximately thirty abusers with blackened faces.

After a number of serious confrontations and police inaction, the Buckland Valley erupted into violence in an event known as the Buckland Valley Riot. On 4 July 1857, a hostile group of eighty to ninety Europeans (including Americans) met at Tanswell's Buckland Hotel.[3] At the conclusion of the meeting, some men attempted to expel the Chinese community without using violence by gesturing for them to take their belongings and leave. Shortly after, approximately forty men armed themselves with axe handles and pieces of wood and headed to the Chinese camp on Louden's Flat. The unsuspecting Chinese were hunted from the camp and violently herded down the Buckland Valley. The number of rioters had increased to nearly a hundred with a large group of European onlookers who followed the mob but did not participate in the violence.

The river crossing
At the time of the riot, a narrow log crossing on the Buckland River was the only means of escape. A bottleneck formed as panic-stricken Chinese people attempted to cross it in a single file. As the rioters continued to beat the fleeing victims, many fell into the icy waters below. Despite the involvement of many people in the riot, only one policeman, Constable Duffy, was sent to quell the event. Although Duffy attempted to remonstrate against the brutal conduct, his lone presence was ineffective in stopping the agitated mob. It was only through the intervention of a group of sympathetic Europeans, who stood before the rioters or offered protection to the Chinese people, that some order was restored. Eventually, the Chinese people gained safe passage across the river and the riot subsided. Between 11 am and 4 pm on 4 July 1857, most of the Chinese miners had been expelled from the Buckland Valley.

After the riot, many Chinese people were left injured, some were unaccounted for, but the exact number of fatalities related to the riot remains unknown. Additional police did not arrive to investigate until two days afterwards, and only found four bodies linked to the event. There are some accounts that indicate more Chinese miners may have died as a result of the incident.[4] Additionally, the newly opened Chinese Temple, as well as an estimated 750 tents and 30 stores were looted and destroyed. Chinese people estimated a loss of approximately £50,000 in gold and possessions.[5] European sympathisers who assisted the Chinese victims were also verbally and physically assaulted.

After the Riot
Shortly after the Buckland Valley Riot, an inquest was held where several instigators of the riot were taken into police custody. A team of twenty police officers led by Superintendent Robert O'Hara Burke investigated the incident and issued warrants to rioters who were yet to be arrested, however many could not be located. The warrants were subsequently retracted by October 1857, approximately four months after the riot. Those who were tried before a jury were mostly found not guilty of any charges. Four of twelve rioters served light sentences while others walked free.[6] Upon their return to the Buckland Valley, the rioters were treated as heroes by some in the community.

The coroner's report stated that the three Chinese men whose bodies were found died of 'natural causes' such as 'exposure to the cold and hunger'. However, these deaths were likely to have occurred as a consequence of the riot.[7] Approximately two months after the Buckland Valley Riot, the body of a fourth Chinese man was discovered floating in the Buckland River. He was claimed to have died of drowning and suffocation, however,

there were no marks of violence appearing on his body.[8] The men were buried in unspecified locations in the Buckland Valley. A large proportion of the Chinese community who fled the Buckland Valley went to Beechworth while some headed for Harrietville, as these locations had well established Chinese camps. Some may have moved to New South Wales. Having been alienated by most of the European community in the Buckland Valley after the riot, some who offered help to the Chinese people also left the area.

By October 1857 over 500 Chinese people were living in the Buckland Valley again. This followed the appointment of a Chinese Protector appointed by the colonial government to the Buckland Valley in August 1857. Until the early twentieth century, Chinese miners and market gardeners were a presence and rows of Chinese hut sites were still visible up to the 1970s.

From 2004, the Chinese Australian Family History Organisation of Victoria (CAFHOV) led by Kevin Wong Hoy embarked on a project to investigate the Buckland Valley Riot and to find a way to memorialise the events. In 2008, two hundred people attended the formal unveiling of a memorial stele erected by the See Yup Society of Victoria at the Buckland Cemetery to commemorate the victims of the riot. In 2021 the Buckland Valley Riot was depicted in the SBS mini-series 'New Gold Mountain' showing miners fleeing the Chinese camp.

From 1857, the Buckland Valley Riot became a point of reference within wider discussions about the racial treatment of Chinese people in Australia. Since the nineteenth century the Buckland Valley Riot and Lambing Flats Riots of 1861 have come to symbolise anti-Chinese violence during the Australian goldrushes.

A Historic Landscape

The Buckland River Crossing is an associative historic landscape. This means it is important to people because of its connections to historical events, people or social activities in the past.[9] Associative landscapes may or may not exhibit discernible evidence of human influence on the environment such as built structures, but they often contain a dominant landform feature, such as a mountain, river of forest which is important to people for its associations.[10] Examples of associative historic landscapes in the VHR include the Eureka Historic Precinct (VHR H1874), Stringybark Creek Site (VHR H2205) and the Convincing Ground. Due to the 'lack' of fabric, interpretation is often placed at historic landscapes, such as didactic panels, to help visitors understand the cultural significance of the area. Associative historic landscapes may also be of archaeological or social significance, depending on the nature and impact of the past event, as well as any potential remains at the place.

Evidence of a Historic Landscape

The Buckland River Crossing is an associative historic landscape which contains no extant built fabric dating from the Buckland Valley Riot. The log crossing recorded in contemporary accounts no longer exists. Its exact location cannot be pinpointed, other than it was located in this area where the river narrows, and an escape was possible. The river crossing is widely recognised within the local community for its association with the Buckland Valley Riot. Much work by historians and archaeologists has been undertaken to confirm this, including analyses by Diann Talbot and Andrew Swift (see reference and interview list). From the 1860s successive bridges have been planned and/or built at this point along the river (1860s, 1928, 1970s, 2021) which indicates that the topography has historically lent itself to being a place of crossing. To acknowledge this historical significance of this place, the Department of Land, Environment, Water and Planning (DELWP) has erected interpretative panels by the river which tell the story of the 1857 Riot.

[1] For an analysis of this and comparison with the Californian goldfields see Andrew Markus, *Fear and hatred*, pp.23-22.
[2] *The Golden Age*, pp. 325.
[3] *The Buckland Valley Goldfield*, pp. 91.
[4] *The Buckland Valley Riot*, pp. 30-31. The court records relating to the Buckland Riot have disappeared from the legal archive (p.31).
[5] *Colonial Casualties*, pp. 55.
[6] *The Buckland Valley Goldfield*, pp. 102.
[7] *Deeper Leads*, pp. 146-149.
[8] *The Buckland Valley Riot*, pp. 34-35.
[9] See Heritage Council of Victoria, *Landscapes of Cultural Heritage Significance Assessment Guidelines,* 2015.

[10] *Landscapes of Cultural Heritage Significance Assessment Guidelines*, p.10.

Assessment Against Criteria

Criterion
The Buckland River Crossing is of historical and social significance to the State of Victoria. It satisfies the following criterion for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

Criterion A
Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history.

Criterion G
Strong or special association with a particular present-day community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.

Extent of Registration

NOTICE OF REGISTRATION

As Executive Director for the purpose of the **Heritage Act 2017**, I give notice under section 53 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended by including a place in the Heritage Register:

Number: H2431
Category: Registered Place
Place: Buckland River Crossing
Location: Buckland Valley Road, Buckland
Municipality: Alpine Shire

All of the land shown hatched in Diagram 2431 being a circle of 100 metres radius around a point with latitude 35.79449 degrees south, and longitude 146.8426 degrees east and comprising parts of Crown Allotment 13A Section C Parish of Buckland, Crown Allotment 9D Section C Parish of Buckland, Crown Allotment 20A Section 4 Parish of Buckland and part of the road reserve of Buckland Valley Road.

12 January 2023
STEVEN AVERY
Executive Director

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/