
CRANAGES COTTAGES

Location

MACKENZIE FALLS VISITOR PRECINCT, OLD MILL ROAD EMU, NORTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE

Municipality

NORTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7323-0016

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - November 27, 2024

What is significant?

The Cranages Cottages site is the location of a small holiday house resort in the northern side of what is now the Grampians National Park. Some remnant structural remains exist in the area and levelled ground suggests the possible locations of former structures. While the area has been redeveloped as picnic grounds and carparks – the formation of these likely took advantage of existing levelled areas and landscaping. There is no substantial modern building in the area with the exception of a toilet block and some picnic shelters, and it appears likely that significant portions of the area have not been significantly disturbed since the demolition of the houses and associated infrastructure. As with most archaeological sites, the extent of the preservation of subsurface material remains to be tested. The cottage structures themselves are not well documented in the historical record meaning that the archaeological remains, should they survive, would be unique in their ability to provide information about the former structures and the lives of the people who inhabited them.

How is it significant?

Historical records attest to the popularity of the Cranages Cottages or holiday houses site as a holiday destination in the Grampians through the early to mid-twentieth century, particularly with holiday makers from the Horsham area. Archaeological remains in this location are potentially associated with early tourism to the Grampians region prior to the area being declared a national park. In 1992 the Cranages Cottages site, including the then remaining cottage (Cranage's original) was assessed as being of regional historical significance in the Land Conservation Council assessment of historical places in southwestern Victoria (1992: 83).

It should be considered or local to regional significance under sub theme 5.7 (Catering for tourists) of Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes.

Why is it significant?

The Cranages Cottages site is significant at the local to regional level for its potential to contain the remains of an early holiday destination or resort in what is now the Grampians National Park. The main structures of the Cranages Cottages complex were built following the construction of the Mt Victory Tourist Road in the 1920s which opened up the Mackenzie Falls area to visitors. The complex contained a number of structures including holiday cottages, a kiosk/ tea room, tennis court, a stone camp kitchen (still standing), petrol bowser and a hydroelectric generator.

Interpretation of Site	<p>The brick chimney belonging to the original Cranage cottage remains on the site and a levelled area adjacent to it indicates that probable footprint of the cottage and associated outbuildings. In the wider site there is some evidence for the other former holiday cottages, such as levelled areas and non-native vegetation. The structures were subject to relatively recent demolition and also bushfires and post-bushfire cleanup and presumably some landscaping associated with the formation of the current picnic grounds. It is unclear at this stage whether subsurface archaeological remains exist in the location however given the consistent use of the place for holiday accommodation for about 70 years it would seem likely that some subsurface remains, such as postholes and potentially rubbish pits, remain. It seems likely that the levelled ground now visible is a result of landscaping first undertaken for the construction of the cottages.</p> <p>SiteCard data copied on 27/11/2024: The brick chimney belonging to the original Cranage cottage remains on the site and a levelled area adjacent to it indicates that probable footprint of the cottage and associated outbuildings. In the wider site there is some evidence for the other former holiday cottages, such as levelled areas and non-native vegetation. The structures were subject to relatively recent demolition and also bushfires and post-bushfire cleanup and presumably some landscaping associated with the formation of the current picnic grounds. It is unclear at this stage whether subsurface archaeological remains exist in the location however given the consistent use of the place for holiday accommodation for about 70 years it would seem likely that some subsurface remains, such as postholes and potentially rubbish pits, remain. It seems likely that the levelled ground now visible is a result of landscaping first undertaken for the construction of the cottages.</p>
Other Names	Wartook Holiday Homes,
Hermes Number	212397
Property Number	

History

SiteCard data copied on 26/11/2024: The structure known as Cranages Cottage was constructed by James Cranage on or about 1925. Cranage's Cottage, known as "The Shack", was the first residential structure erected at what would become known as Wartook Holiday Homes and, later, Cranages Holiday Homes – a series of nine huts located at what is now the MacKenzie Falls Visitor Precinct in the Grampians National Park. In the first few decades of their use, the huts were rented out as holiday accommodation to the general public. Later, the cottages were subject to long-term lease agreements that were taken up by individuals or families, who used them as holiday homes. The huts were accompanied by facilities in the form of garages, a tennis court, a kiosk, and petrol bowser. The cottages had electricity, initially supplied by a hydroelectric plant constructed by Cranage, and later delivered as part of a formal state supply. A telephone service was also supplied to the accommodation in later years. Cranages holiday accommodation was seen as having value to the wider community in the 1930s, evidenced by the improvement to infrastructure servicing the shacks, as reported in the Horsham Times (14 December 1937: 2), which noted that 'work was commenced by the Country Roads Board on the road leading to Mr J. B. Cranage's holiday shacks'. Other evidence of its value can be seen in the Horsham Tourist Bureau putting out a statement that 'the Bureau has obtained the right for all bookings for J.B. Cranages cottages at

Wartook, and Christmas and New Year weeks are fully booked now' (Horsham Times 18 November 1938). Another improvement to Cranages undertaken in the 1930s was the construction of a stone camp kitchen, which remains extant today. According to the Halls Gap and Grampians Historical Society (HGGHS: 2006: 136) the stone camp kitchen, one of 'very few stone buildings erected in the Grampians' was built after WWII, as 'part of a scheme for the thousands of unemployed' during the Great Depression. At the time of James Cranage's death in March 1942, there were at least four weekend cottages, possibly with separate garages and bathrooms present at the Cranages Cottages site, in addition to the larger iron house, (possibly also with separate bathroom, laundry and garage), as well as a shop or kiosk. The buildings were relatively substantial, although all were unlined, and all had both water and electricity connected. An article in the Horsham Times (15 March 1949: 1) describes improvements being made to the approach to Cranages by the Tourist Committee and Country Roads Board installing 'a new track in front of Mr Cranage's shack' – indicating the ongoing value of the accommodation to the region more broadly. In 1951, it was reported that 'Holiday resorts in the Grampians south of Horsham were most popular with Horsham people and other holiday-makers during the Christmas and New Year break. Record crowds were reported from Cranages at Wartook' (Horsham Times 5 January 1951: 1). In 1984, as the Grampians began the transition to a national park, concerns were raised by licence holders for the various holiday homes in the range about what would happen to their huts when this occurred. The Wimmera Mail-Times reported that 'the State Government will remove holiday houses in the Grampians after the area becomes a national park. Houses under threat include two holiday houses owned by the RSL at Zumsteins and 18 other sites at Zumsteins and Cranages near Lake Wartook' (Wimmera Mail-Times 21 March 1984 quoted in Jenkinson 2015: 92). It appears that legal occupancies for private residential use within the new park were permitted to continue until 1994. A report in the Wimmera Mail-Times in 1994 notes the plan to remove eight cottages and the kiosk at Cranages, with the remaining house to be subject to unspecified restoration (Wimmera Mail-Times 5 September 1994 quoted in Jenkinson 2015: 134). Although the original Cranage cottage was retained at that time, it was destroyed by bushfire in 2006 leaving only the chimney remaining. SiteCard data copied on 27/11/2024: The structure known as Cranages Cottage was constructed by James Cranage on or about 1925. Cranage's Cottage, known as "The Shack", was the first residential structure erected at what would become known as Wartook Holiday Homes and, later, Cranages Holiday Homes – a series of nine huts located at what is now the MacKenzie Falls Visitor Precinct in the Grampians National Park. In the first few decades of their use, the huts were rented out as holiday accommodation to the general public. Later, the cottages were subject to long-term lease agreements that were taken up by individuals or families, who used them as holiday homes. The huts were accompanied by facilities in the form of garages, a tennis court, a kiosk, and petrol bowser. The cottages had electricity, initially supplied by a hydroelectric plant constructed by Cranage, and later delivered as part of a formal state supply. A telephone service was also supplied to the accommodation in later years. Cranages holiday accommodation was seen as having value to the wider community in the 1930s, evidenced by the improvement to infrastructure servicing the shacks, as reported in the Horsham Times (14 December 1937: 2), which noted that 'work was commenced by the Country Roads Board on the road leading to Mr J. B. Cranage's holiday shacks'. Other evidence of its value can be seen in the Horsham Tourist Bureau putting out a statement that 'the Bureau has obtained the right for all bookings for J.B. Cranages cottages at Wartook, and Christmas and New Year weeks are fully booked now' (Horsham Times 18 November 1938). Another improvement to Cranages undertaken in the 1930s was the construction of a stone camp kitchen, which remains extant today. According to the Halls Gap and Grampians Historical Society (HGGHS: 2006: 136) the stone camp kitchen, one of 'very few stone buildings erected in the Grampians' was built after WWII, as 'part of a scheme for the thousands of unemployed' during the Great Depression. At the time of James Cranage's death in March 1942, there were at least four weekend cottages, possibly with separate garages and bathrooms present at the Cranages Cottages site, in addition to the larger iron house, (possibly also with separate bathroom, laundry and garage), as well as a shop or kiosk. The buildings were relatively substantial, although all were unlined, and all had both water and electricity connected. An article in the Horsham Times (15 March 1949: 1) describes improvements being made to the approach to Cranages by the Tourist Committee and Country Roads Board installing 'a new track in front of Mr Cranage's shack' – indicating the ongoing value of the accommodation to the region more broadly. In 1951, it was reported that 'Holiday resorts in the Grampians south of Horsham were most popular with Horsham people and other holiday-makers during the Christmas and New Year break. Record crowds were reported from Cranages at Wartook' (Horsham Times 5 January 1951: 1). In 1984, as the Grampians began the transition to a national park, concerns were raised by licence holders for the various holiday homes in the range about what would happen to their huts when this occurred. The Wimmera Mail-Times reported that 'the State Government will remove holiday houses in the Grampians after the area becomes a national park. Houses under threat include two holiday houses owned by the RSL at Zumsteins and 18 other sites at Zumsteins and Cranages near Lake Wartook' (Wimmera Mail-Times 21 March 1984 quoted in Jenkinson 2015: 92). It appears that legal occupancies for private residential use within the new park were permitted to continue until 1994. A report in the Wimmera Mail-Times in 1994 notes the plan to remove eight cottages and the kiosk at Cranages, with the remaining house to be subject to unspecified

restoration (Wimmera Mail-Times 5 September 1994 quoted in Jenkinson 2015: 134). Although the original Cranage cottage was retained at that time, it was destroyed by bushfire in 2006 leaving only the chimney remaining.

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/>