

# RED ROBIN GOLD MINE AND BATTERY



Battery House



Tailings



Battery House



Battery House - Interior



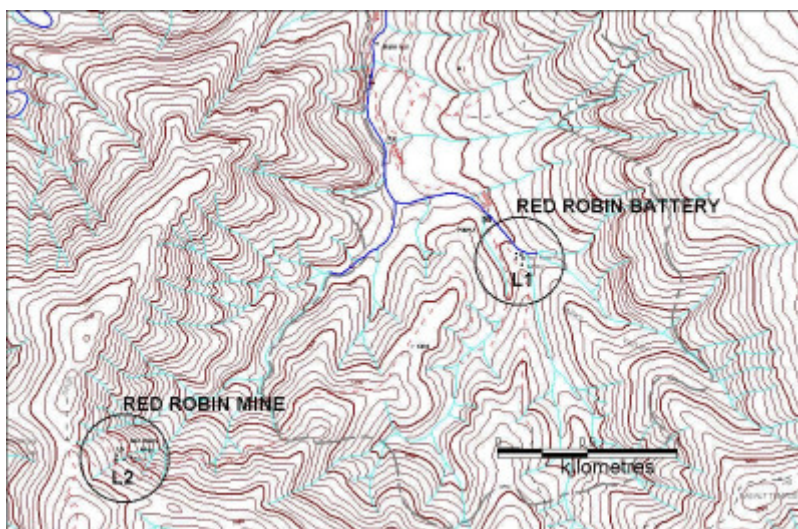
Battery House



Tailings



Battery House



red robin mine plan

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## Location

WEST KIEWA LOGGING TRACK AND MACHINERY SPUR TRACK HOTHAM HEIGHTS, ALPINE SHIRE

## Municipality

ALPINE SHIRE

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H1881

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO1

## VHR Registration

July 20, 2000

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - March 23, 2000

What is significant?

Throughout the 1930s, in the most elevated part of the Australian Alps the country lying between Mt Hotham and Mt Feathertop known as the Kiewa fall a lone miner named William Spargo searched for gold. Against the prevailing geological opinion of the times, Spargo discovered what is currently Victoria's last goldfield. Spargo's discovery in 1940 was met with a blaze of publicity, his mine being touted as the highest (in altitude) and richest (112 ounces per ton in the first trial crushing) in Victoria. His success captured public imagination, sparked the State's last gold rush, and added another chapter to the romance of the Australian Alps.

Since its discovery the Red Robin mine has been worked virtually continuously. Spargo sold his mine in 1952, but evidence of his activities still remains on site. Subsequent miners, including the present operator, Ken Harris, have continued to work the mine in traditional or 'old-style' ways, relying on their own brands of inventiveness to counter the difficulties posed by extreme Alpine conditions. Each of the owners, therefore, has in turn, added their own ingenuity to the site and now the mine contains a fascinating blend of old and new elements including huts, adits, mullock heaps, tracks, roads, sand dams, and mining equipment.

How is it significant?

The Red Robin Mine at Mount Hotham is of historic, scientific (technological), and social significance to the State of Victoria.

Why it is significant?

The Red Robin Gold Mine is historically important due to its association with what is still Victoria's last

discovered goldfield and subsequent rush. William Spargo has gained folklore status due to his association with this event. The Red Robin Gold Mine is also important as a rare and functional example of a once plentiful type. With its working battery, the mine is a unique representative of the traditional type of mining operation that dominated the Victorian Alps from the 1860s to 1950s.

The Red Robin Gold Mine is of scientific (technological) significance as a palimpsest of mine workings, operational and redundant mining equipment and huts. The significance of the Red Robin Gold Mine is increased by its continued use since 1940 essentially with 'traditional-type' mining technology and techniques. The retention of all the existing elements at the mine from original to current (and future) use is crucial to the significance of the place. These elements combine to document the evolution of mining operations on the site and underscore the engineering ingenuity and human spirit that enables successful gold mining in one of the most remote and hostile environments in Australia. Of particular importance are the remains of the vertical boiler next to the battery house. The boiler, used to heat water to facilitate plate amalgamation of gold in sub-zero conditions, evinces the first (and so far only) attempt to operate the battery over winter.

The Red Robin Gold Mine is culturally significant due to its potential to educate in a truly authentic environment and to illustrate the special difficulties of working in Victoria's harsh alpine environment.

## 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:

General Conditions:

1. All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object.
2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of alterations that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such alteration shall cease and the Executive Director shall be notified as soon as possible.
3. If there is a conservation policy and plan approved by the Executive Director, all works shall be in accordance with it.
4. Nothing in this declaration prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions.

5. Nothing in this declaration exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authority where applicable.

\* Emergency and general maintenance repairs to all structures and equipment which do not involve demolition or removal.

\* Installation of new equipment required for operational purposes where no substantial removal of significant fabric is required.

\* Repairs to buildings which replace like with like.

\* Installation of any safety equipment or earthworks required for the safe operation of the mine or to leave abandoned sections of the mine in a safe condition.

\* Undertaking of safety and access works to restrict vehicular access to the site and minimise foot traffic near foundations.

\* Installation of information signage for interpretation and public risk purposes.

\* On-site works confined to protect and stabilise buildings and structures.

\* Preliminary mineral exploration involving geological, geophysical, and geochemical surveys.

Construction dates 1860,

Heritage Act Categories Registered place, Registered archaeological place,

Other Names RED ROBIN MINE,

Hermes Number 5970

Property Number

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## History

Contextual History:History of Place:

In 1941, after several years of prospecting the country between Mts Hotham and Feathertop, Bill Spargo opened up the Hotham Heights field, which comprised two reefs: the Red Robin and One Alone. The Red Robin was fabulously rich where it outcropped: a sample crushing yielded an average 112 oz per ton. Small, rich crushings continued through the 1940s. In 1949, a road into the Red Robin mine was completed and a 3-head battery brought in. Three years later the mine was purchased by the owners of the Sambas mine at Harrietville. They cut an improved track down to the mine and reconditioned the battery, also adding a hopper and self-feeder. At that time, the Red Robin was one of the richest in Victoria in terms of its yield per ton, not total production and was the highest mine in the State. Being well above the snow-line, the mine could only be worked seasonally, and its crushings remained small. In 1954, the mine crushed 49 tons for a gold return of 48 oz. From 1956 stone from the Red Robin was sent to the government battery at Bright for crushing. A 10-head battery (formerly the Bairnsdale government battery) was erected at the Red Robin mine in 1966, lower down the valley than the earlier plant had been. The mine and battery are still in operation.

Associated People: Late 1940 - Red Robin mine discovered and worked by William Spargo until his retirement in 1952

1952 - mine acquired by N.C & C.L, Staff. Operation of mine given to Charlie Keating.

1958 An agreement was made between Norman Staff and K.v & C.e Harris to work the mine.

1958 to 1963 - mine worked by Harris

1964 - mine purchased by K.V. & C.E. Harris and latter in the year ownership passed to John and Frank Livingstone

1965 - management of mine given to Neville Wolff

1977 - K.V, C.E and K.V.J. Harris purchased the mine from the Livingstone Estate

## Assessment Against Criteria

Criterion A

The Red Robin Gold Mine is historically important due to its association with what is still Victoria's last discovered

goldfield and subsequent rush. William Spargo has gained folklore status due to his association with this event.

#### Criterion B

The Red Robin Gold Mine is also important as a rare and functional example of a once plentiful type. With its working battery, the mine is a unique representative of the traditional type of mining operation that dominated the Victorian Alps from the 1860s to 1950s.

#### Criterion C

The Red Robin Gold Mine is of scientific (technological) significant as a palimpsest of mine workings, operational and redundant mining equipment and huts. The significance of the Red Robin Gold Mine is increased by its continued use since 1940 essentially with 'traditional-type' mining technology and techniques. The retention of all the existing elements at the mine - from original to current (and future) use - is crucial to the significance of the place. These elements combine to document the evolution of mining operations on the site and underscore the engineering ingenuity and human spirit that enables successful gold mining in one of the most remote and hostile environments in Australia.

#### Criterion D

The importance of a place or object in exhibiting the principal characteristics or the representative nature of a place or object as part of a class or type of places or objects.

#### Criterion E

The importance of the place or object in exhibiting good design or aesthetic characteristics and/or in exhibiting a richness, diversity or unusual integration of features.

#### Criterion F

The importance of the place or object in demonstrating or being associated with scientific or technical innovations or achievements.

Of particular importance are the remains of the vertical boiler next to the battery house. The boiler, used to heat water to facilitate plate amalgamation of gold in sub-zero conditions, evinces the first (and so far only) attempt to operate the battery over winter.

#### Criterion G

William Spargo has gained folklore status due to his association with the discovery of the Red Robin Mine. The Red Robin Gold Mine is also culturally significant due to its potential to educate in a truly authentic environment and to illustrate the special difficulties of working in Victoria's harsh alpine environment.

#### Criterion H

Any other matter which the Council considers relevant to the determination of cultural heritage significance

## Extent of Registration

### NOTICE OF REGISTRATION

As Executive Director for the purpose of the Heritage Act, I give notice under section 46 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended by including the Heritage Register Number 1881 in the category described as a Heritage place and Archaeological place:

Red Robin Gold Mine and Battery, Bogong Unit, Alpine National Park, Alpine Shire Council.

#### EXTENT:

1. All the Crown Land marked L1 on Diagram 1881 held by the Executive Director and including all mining related structures, machinery and artefacts within a 250 metre radius of the battery shed.
2. All the Crown Land marked L2 on Diagram 1881 held by the Executive Director and including all mining related structures, machinery and artefacts within a 250 metre radius the mine.

RAY TONKIN

Executive Director

[*Victoria Government Gazette* G 29 20 July 2000 1785]

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*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/>*