
NEW AUSTRALASIAN 2 MINE



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Location

15 DEEP LEAD LANE CRESWICK, HEPBURN SHIRE

Municipality

HEPBURN SHIRE

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7623-0059

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - July 8, 2005

What is significant?

The New Australasian No. 2 Deep Lead Gold Mine was the scene of the most tragic accident in the history of Victorian gold mining. At 4:45am, Tuesday 12 December 1882, 29 miners were trapped underground by flood waters and only five of the 27 imprisoned miners were brought safely to the surface. The 22 men who perished left 17 widows and 75 dependent children. The New Australasian No. 2 Deep Lead Gold Mining Memorial was

unveiled in 1982 by John Cain, the Premier of Victoria. Nearby is a small interpretation shelter providing information on the mine disaster.

How is it significant?

The New Australasian No. 2 Deep Lead Gold Mining Site and Memorial are historically, socially and scientifically important to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The New Australasian No. 2 Deep Lead Gold Mining Site and Memorial are historically and socially important for their associations with Victoria's most tragic underground mining accident. This event has had a long reaching effect, particularly on the Creswick district, and relics of the disaster, particularly the touchingly inscribed billy cans, are revered mementos

The New Australasian No. 2 Deep Lead Gold Mining Site is historically and scientifically important as a characteristic example of an important form of gold mining. Gold mining sites are of crucial importance for the pivotal role they have played since 1851 in the development of Victoria.

[Source: Victorian Heritage Register]

Hermes Number 7110

Property Number

History

Heritage Inventory History of Site: The following history was extracted from The Berry Deep Leads: an historical assessment, CF&L, October 1986, Charles Fahey. The Australasian Company began prospecting in 1867 and the first return of gold was reported in the September quarter of 1868. From 1868 to 1875 the company obtained at least 19,000 ounces of gold. By 1876, the mine was in financial difficulties and its creditors - including Peter Lalor - secured a high court judgement against the company, and sold off its plant claim. The Australasian claim was purchased from the Bank of Australia by two Ballarat speculators - Edward Morey and George Hawthorn - for £3,200. Morey and Hawthorn floated the New Australasian as a public company. To get at the gold a second shaft was sunk and extensive plant erected. The company erected a 65ft high brick stack (set on bluestone foundations) and a 72ft high poppet head. Aerial tramways run from the poppet head to the mullock heap and to the puddling machines. A contemporary observer wrote that the huge props required to support the various platforms and machines presents the 'appearance of small forest of timber'. In the early 1880s the New Australian mine was a substantial producer of gold and paid out handsome dividends. The mine closed in 1888 producing around 88,000 ounces of gold, paid out £98,250 in dividends on £11,250 in calls. The company expended in this time £373,267. At the turn of the century, the Victorian Railways removed much of the pebbles from the Australasian site. The New Australasian mine was the scene of the most tragic accident in the history of Victorian gold mining. At 4.45am, Tuesday 12 December 1882, H. Reeves and W. Mason struck water overhead in the southern drive. They rushed along the drive and at the shaft they warned the plateman, before escaping up the incline. In the ensuing flood 29 miners were trapped and when all available engine power had been employed in reducing the water level (at 50,000 gallons per minute) only five of the 27 imprisoned miners were brought safely to the surface. The 22 men who perished left 17 widows and 75 dependent children. An accident on the scale of 1882 did not occur again on the Berry Deep Leads, but mining continued to be an essentially dangerous occupation. Indeed the incident rate rose as the yields declined and miners worked as tributers. In 1884 one quarter of the Creswick miners applied for accident relief from the union; in 1891 almost 40% of miners sought relief. In the 1890s, as the mines were concentrated on the northern water saturated leads, foul air became the major health problem. This problem reached a head when Alex Cowie was overcome with foul air and suffocated in 1897. Machinery By 1878 plant at the new shaft included: a 16 inch cylinder 30hp engine for pumping and puddling, and a 22 inch cylinder engine (4 ft stroke) for winding; two boilers, 30 ft x 6½ft, one of which was fitted with galloway tubes. Significance The New Australasian mine was the scene of the most tragic accident in the

history of Victorian gold mining. As a gold producer the mine is also of local importance, being the richest gold producer in the Creswick district.

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/>