6 Non-indigenous cultural heritage

Non-indigenous cultural heritage has resulted from the last 165 years of land use in Victoria. It is a rich resource of buildings and structures, gardens and landscapes, industrial sites, archaeological places, shipwrecks and irreplaceable collections of objects. Heritage is valued by the community as a tangible link to the past. Places and objects are the historical embodiment of our culture with the power to invoke, illustrate, define and give meaning to our diverse and multicultural society. Chapter 5 discusses indigenous cultural heritage issues.

From the 1830s the Box-Ironbark forests and woodlands have mainly been associated with agriculture, gold mining and forestry. During the gold rush period miners, market gardeners and timber workers made their homes in the forests. Major underground ore bodies helped establish and maintain permanent towns. Many of central Victoria’s most important reefs and mines are within existing townships, including Bendigo, Stawell, Maldon, and St Arnaud.

Today, west of the Goulburn River in the study area, people mostly live in cities and towns on the edges of Box-Ironbark forests. Gold mining and forestry operations continue in the forests but their occurrences and intensity are now determined by a combination of factors, including park and reserve status, prospectivity, native title, and commodity prices.

6.1 Historical overview

The take-up of pastoral land in Victoria began when growing stock numbers put pressure on the capacity of pasture in New South Wales and Van Diemens Land (Tasmania). Major Mitchell and other early European visitors also drew attention to the open plains and grassy woodlands of central Victoria. Squatting was legalised in 1836, and pastoral occupation spread across much of the Box-Ironbark study area.

On 1 July 1851, the Port Phillip District of New South Wales became a separate colony with the name of Victoria. Six days later the discovery of gold was announced. The following decades saw over 200 goldfields discovered, many of them within the study area.

The discovery of gold resulted in a momentous influx of immigrants and an explosion of wealth that propelled Victoria onto the world stage. Many of Victoria’s most significant regional cities and towns were established, as a result of the gold discoveries, along with some of the state’s most revered public and private institutions. The influence of gold continues to resonate down to the present through the growing interest in genealogy, cultural tourism and the appreciation of cultural heritage.

The Box-Ironbark forests and woodlands study area contains some of the most significant historic gold mining landscapes and features on public land in Victoria, including areas of national cultural heritage significance. These landscapes and individual sites are associated with many former gold towns and settlements which, in their totality, form a region of strong historical character and interest. The historic gold mining landscapes are significant components of tourism in the region today.

6.2 Non-indigenous heritage and archaeological places

Today, cities and towns such as Bendigo, Castlemaine, Maldon, St Arnaud, Beechworth and Chiltern tell part of the story of the great gold rush—their streets lined with buildings grand and humble. But the surrounding Box-Ironbark forests harbour their own tales of a golden past: crumbling stone walls of huts and pubs, and the gold mines, reefs and gullies that in some cases yielded fortunes. Some of these forests are today cultural landscapes containing remarkable concentrations of heritage and archaeological places. The Mount Alexander (Castlemaine) Diggings in particular has been recognised as an organically-
evolved cultural landscape possessing values of national significance (also see NHP1 in Chapter 15).

Various heritage studies have been carried out, several focusing their attention on the forests themselves. The most comprehensive was a statewide inventory of historic mining sites. This study identified some 5,000 historic mining sites in the Box-Ironbark forests, taking in most public land categories from parks through reserves to uncommitted land. Some 2,500 of these have been recorded. These surveys also revealed thousands of relics of settlement sites which were not recorded because they were outside the terms of the brief. A recent archaeological survey in a historic reserve at Castlemaine resulted in 300 habitation sites being recorded in a three-week period.

Several heritage studies were undertaken on a thematic basis as part of the West Regional Forest Agreement process. After an initial data audit, numerous relics related to forestry activities were identified, including sawmilling, charcoal production, eucalyptus oil distillation, wattle barking, silviculture, fire protection, timber tramways, and collection of domestic firewood. Dating from the mid-20th century are many relics associated with State-organised activities of internees, prisoners of war, migrants, youth and the unemployed, focusing on silviculture, forest management work and firewood harvesting. Another study assessed historical water supply, exploration, settlement, recreation, defence and other sites. In addition, a series of workshops was held across the study area as part of the West RFA process, to identify community heritage places.

Heritage studies have also been carried out in most of the municipalities containing Box-Ironbark forests, including urban areas and private land. Some have been found to possess an extraordinary legacy of heritage and archaeological places.

6.3 Victorian Heritage Strategy


The strategy provides direction for the identification, protection, management and use of cultural heritage in Victoria. Its programs aim to ensure that the future management and use of cultural heritage is sustainable and has consistent direction and focus. The strategy also recognises that heritage is a vital component of the economic activity of regional Victoria, including centres such as Maldon, Beechworth, Castlemaine, Ballarat and Bendigo. To that end, the strategy focuses on the role of local communities in owning and conserving local heritage. This direction of the strategy has particular relevance for the communities and heritage of the Box-Ironbark study area.

6.4 Guidelines for the management of cultural heritage values

As part of the RFA process, the Australian Heritage Commission (AHC) and NRE commissioned various studies of national estate values in forests across most of Victoria. For East Gippsland the outcome included development of a set of principles for the conservation of identified places. These principles have been developed further into draft guidelines for the management of cultural heritage values. They will be revised for statewide application, for use by land managers, planning staff and field staff.

The guidelines include information on:

- the location and distribution of known cultural heritage places
- managing such places
- actions when places are located during operations
- monitoring
- compliance
- current legislation
- policies.

One current issue is the practice of fossicking for historical relics, often with the use of a metal detector. Fossicking for relics may damage the archaeological record, where relics are found in otherwise intact sites, or diminish the historical record where other disturbances have already destroyed archaeological layers and associations. If the features are more than 50 years old, they are by definition protected archaeological relics and it is an offence to disturb them. There is a need for an education program to better explain this situation.

The long history of gold extraction around Bendigo has resulted in numerous old mining sites. They have been assessed for their historical significance, and some are recommended as historic and cultural features reserves (refer to Recommendations E6 to
E14 in Chapter 16). Some of these, and others not subject to recommendations, are extensive and now have management issues including weeds, fire risk, public safety, rubbish dumping, trail-bike damage and vandalism. NRE has commissioned Bendigo Regional College of TAFE to develop a management strategy for such sites, addressing these issues.

6.5 Existing consultation and management

The management of cultural heritage in Victoria is based on the principles of the Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance (Burra Charter). The cultural significance of a place, as defined in the Burra Charter, is related to its aesthetic, historic, scientific or social value for past, present or future generations. Significance is determined by such factors as rarity, age, condition, integrity, research potential, aesthetic qualities, and associations with important people, events, phases or developments in history. Research into history of a place uncovers information which can influence the assessment of significance, as does comparing similar places.

A central plank to this management philosophy and most relevant to the Box-Ironbark forests is the accepted policy of in situ conservation. Whether a site is linked to historic gold mining or forestry or some other activity, the objective is the same, to maintain the site in its existing location by controlling the natural rate of decay and human disturbance. Management of the integrity of a place may also involve the maintenance of its environmental setting.

NRE has responsibility for the management of heritage places in the Box-Ironbark area, with assistance from Parks Victoria who are usually contracted to deliver park management services. Local government, individual committees of management and Heritage Victoria also play roles.

A range of state legislation provides mechanisms for the strategic and practical protection of heritage places and objects, including:

- **Heritage Act 1995**
- **Archaeological and Aboriginal Relics Preservation Act 1972**
- **Planning and Environment Act 1987**
- **National Parks Act 1975**
- **Parks Victoria Act 1998**
- **Forests Act 1958**
- **Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978**.

The principal statute for the protection of cultural heritage in Victoria is the **Heritage Act 1995**, which provides two distinct processes for the protection of non-indigenous cultural heritage values.

- **Heritage register**—All heritage and archaeological places registered are considered to be of special cultural significance to the state (that is, of state significance) in respect to what they demonstrate about the history and development of Victoria. Registration legally protects them and means they cannot be altered in any way without authorisation from the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria.

- **Heritage inventory**—All archaeological relics and objects older than 50 years are protected, whether or not they are recorded by Heritage Victoria. Appropriate permission must be obtained from the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before relics and objects can be knowingly disturbed, damaged or excavated. An archaeological place is that part of the material heritage, such as ruins, objects or abandoned features, that requires archaeological methods to provide primary or significant information about it.

6.6 Community views

There was general support in submissions for the protection of significant historic and cultural heritage features, representative of post-1830s settlement of the study area. In particular, there were calls for greater recognition of such sites, their need for protection and their role in contributing to the distinctive character of the Box-Ironbark region.

Many submissions proposed incorporating significant historic and cultural heritage sites into national or state parks to provide adequate protection. In particular, these submissions suggested more emphasis be placed on such values as important contributors to national park status. Some supported the establishment of a new park category that signifies and addresses the need to protect historic and cultural heritage values, as will be achieved by the recommended Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park (see NHP1 in Chapter 15).

Greater recognition and protection for historic and cultural heritage values in specific areas, including Maryborough, Bendigo and Castlemaine, was called for in submissions. There was specific support for recognition of particular features as significant
heritage sites, and for alternative names for recommended historic and cultural features reserves.

Some submissions referred to the management of significant historic and cultural heritage sites and archaeological relics, their sensitivity to disturbance and their legislative protection. Importantly, it was stressed that all archaeological relics are protected under legislation, and that this should be brought to the attention of the general community.

6.7 Achieving a balance

The ECC recognises growing community appreciation and concern for the protection and conservation of important historic gold mining landscapes and features in the study area. While all archaeological relics and objects are protected under the Heritage Act 1995, the recommendations in this report will contribute significantly towards establishing a system of parks and reserves that will protect these landscapes and features. Cultural features and historic sites contribute to the outstanding features of national and state parks and accordingly attract the highest level of protection.

The Castlemaine area, particularly the Mt Alexander goldfields, has been strongly supported as a key cultural landscape of national significance. The ECC has recommended the establishment of Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park to provide adequate protection and awareness of this area. The ECC has also recommended the establishment of 15 new historic and cultural features reserves in addition to 32 existing historic areas and reserves recommended by LCC; 11–15 all to be designated as historic and cultural features reserves.

These include substantial reserves at Whroo, Maldon, Moliagul and Percydale. Along with Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park, these reserves will provide opportunities to extend public knowledge and increase tourism potential. Notes have also been included throughout the recommendations in regard to the management of specific heritage features occurring in particular land use categories.

The features listed for particular parks and reserves, later in this report, reflect highly significant places in the relevant park or reserve. Numerous other identified, but less significant, historic features are located in existing and recommended parks and historic and cultural features reserves, and these will generally be protected through detailed management planning. Together, they form networks and in some cases cultural landscapes, offering opportunities for interpretation and public education. Similarly, in state forest, many other sites have been identified which will be protected appropriately through the forest management planning process.

The Coliban Water Supply System continues to supply domestic and irrigation water, and the Melbourne–Bendigo Railway still operates. Both are significant historically, however their primary public land uses continue. Some features in both are listed on the Victorian Heritage Register. Elements of the Coliban system are no longer required for water supply, and some have been incorporated in the recommended Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park, Greater Bendigo National Park, and the Bendigo Regional Park.

Numerous significant sites from the studies carried out by Bannear1,2,3 (mining), Bannear5 (forest activities), Butler7 (other themes), Evans6 (sawmills and tramways), and Context8 (community heritage places), are listed for protection in various land use categories where relevant.

Note that many of the identified historical places are either:

- within existing parks and reserves (not all such sites are listed in this report);
- sited in areas committed to another primary use (e.g. bridges and tunnels on the Melbourne–Bendigo Railway);
- located outside the Box-Ironbark study area (the RFA studies covered a larger area); or
- located on freehold land, beyond the ECC’s jurisdiction.
RECOMMENDATIONS

R21 When heritage sites are located on public land, they be assessed, and significant features be protected by public land managers, consistent with relevant state legislation, the *Victorian Heritage Strategy 2000–2005*, and NRE’s cultural heritage guidelines.

R22 The guidelines for the management of cultural heritage values, developed by NRE and the Commonwealth for East Gippsland, be revised and applied statewide by land managers.

R23 The historic site management strategy being developed for NRE, by Bendigo Regional College of TAFE, addressing the issues of weeds, fire risk, public safety, rubbish dumping, trail bike damage and vandalism, be completed and applied around Bendigo and to other locations where similar problems exist.

R24 Fossicking for historical objects and relics be discouraged by NRE, other public land managers, and Heritage Victoria.

Information Sources

1. Bannear (1993a-g).
15. LCC (1997).