



Victorian Heritage Database Report

## Fernshaw Township Site, Plantings & Cemetery

---

**Location:**

Maroondah Highway, Fernshaw VIC 3799

**Heritage Status / Level of Significance:**

Included in Heritage Overlay

**Heritage Inventory (HI) Number:**

**Listing Authority:** HI

**Heritage Overlay Number:** HO141

**Statement of Significance:**

Fernshaw Reserve, the site of the township which developed as a stopping point on the Yarra Track in the 1860s, is of regional significance. It has had a remarkable connection with travellers and tourism for more than 130 years, with this association continuing to the present. The place retains evidence from both periods - the 1860s-80s township and stopping place, and the present use as a popular picnic place which developed from the late 1920s - its setting evoking a sense of the romantic landscape so admired during the nineteenth century and today. (Context 1994)

Fernshaw Reserve is associated with the original Fernshaw township, a strategically important settlement on the Watts River at the base of the notoriously difficult Blacks' Spur. The remaining elements, including a metalled section of road, a bottle-dump, garden beds, cellar and exotic tree plantings, demonstrate the original layout of the old township.

The surrounding mountain ash bears testimony to the intensive replanting program undertaken by the MMBW following the devastation caused in the Maroondah Catchment in 1939. (McCann 1993: 99)

**Description**

Now a picnic area amongst exotic trees planted by Melbourne Water early this century, Fernshaw was originally a township established in the 1860s catering to tourists and forming the centre of flourishing raspberry growing area. The site was taken over for water catchment in the 1880s and buildings were

demolished or moved to Healesville and elsewhere. (RFA Community Workshops 1993)

Development of the site as a picnic area apparently occurred in the late 1920s during the development of tourist facilities following the construction of the Maroondah Reservoir. After the 1939 fires, the area was replanted with Mountain Ash. (McCann 1993: 98)

Fernshaw Reserve occupies the site of the old Fernshaw township, on the banks of the Watts River and strategically located at the base of the Black Spur. Remnant features include: a metalled section of the old Black Spur Road on the south side of the Watts River; a bottle dump, revealed after recent work with heavy machinery to remove a fallen tree; river rocks used for defining garden beds, now located in one section of lawn and visible after mowing; a hollow section in the lawn, indicating an old cellar; exotic tree plantings, including hazelnut trees along the Watts River. The Reserve also features an oak tree with a plaque commemorating the visit by the Duchess of York (the future Queen Mary) who visited in 1901. The tree was cultivated from acorns taken from William the Conqueror's oak trees at Windsor Castle.

Several of the houses were relocated to Healesville, and one can still be found featuring handmade bricks, at 21 St Leonards Road, Healesville.

In 1940-43, 93 acres were planted with mountain ash trees to rehabilitate the area around Fernshaw following the devastation of the 1939 fires. (McCann 1993: 99)

There are three graves on the hill near the reserve within the closed catchment. (Yarra Community Workshop)

Fair

Altered

Heritage Study / Consultant	Yarra Ranges - Shire of Yarra Ranges Heritage Study, Context Pty Ltd, 2000
Construction Date Range	
Architect / Designer	
Municipality	YARRA RANGES SHIRE
Other names	
Hermes number	115305
Property number	

*This place/object may also be State heritage listed. Check the Victorian Heritage Database. For further details, contact the local Council or go to Planning Schemes Online*