

HISTORICAL SUMMARY OF THE HAPPY VALLEY - MOONLIGHT FLAT STUDY AREA

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by

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Introduction

This report consists of three main parts.

1. the explanatory text below,
2. the compilation map (Figure 1), and
3. appendices (with index) attached to the end of the report.

The map summarizes most of the main historical points of interest in the Happy Valley and Moonlight Flat area. Two areas considered to be of special cultural landscape significance are highlighted on the map (in red broken line) and the reasons for their inclusion are detailed in the text of this report. Supporting historical documents are attached as appendices. Some of the most important supporting documents are listed under the heading *Key Historical and Interpretative Sources* and can be found in Appendices 1–9.

Executive Summary

The discovery of gold and the influx of thousands of people to the Mount Alexander goldfields was an event of National Significance. This, more than any other event, was responsible for the close settlement of the Castlemaine district in the early 1850s. The obvious legacy of the riches of the goldrush can be seen in the fine heritage buildings of Castlemaine, but these buildings don't tell the whole story. The wealth came from the land: accordingly it is important to preserve some key areas of the landscape that reminds us of the 1850s.

Happy Valley/Moonlight Flat is one of these areas because:

- it contains the culturally important Pennyweight Flat Cemetery overlooking an 1851 goldrush site,
- the rural aspect surrounding the Cemetery has remained sympathetic to the significance of the site,
- the wide and open valley allows a clear view of one of the main alluvial valleys that was targeted by the miners in the earliest years of the goldrush, and
- the Lady Gully/Moonlight Village area contains numerous significant archaeological sites and extant gold period buildings
- for 150 years, the valley's physical and social character has been defined by its isolation, rural aspect and the sense of community amongst the inhabitants.

Historical Context

The discovery of gold in 1851 on Dr Barker's Mount Alexander Run led to the Forest Creek gold rush. Over the course of the 1850s more than 3.5 million ounces of gold was extracted from the alluvial valleys surrounding Castlemaine¹. The wealth generated from this goldfield contributed greatly towards changing Victoria from a small agricultural colony to a centre of financial and industrial power.

The Pennyweight Flat - Moonlight Flat Valley reflects the early exploratory and later goldrush phases in the history of the Castlemaine area. The earliest European presence in the valley was in September 1836 when Major Mitchell camped near Dog Leg Gully. In November 1851 the valley was rushed by miners² (**Box 1**) and a government camp was established on Pennyweight Flat. The first known burial at the Pennyweight Flat Cemetery was Henry Baxter on the 29th May 1852. In the same year the Bryce Ross Diggings Directory

Box 1: Pioneer Reminiscences²

At the time I write of (late 1852) there must have been over 5000 diggers on Moonlight and the shouting and yelling after nightfall, together with the firing of revolvers and guns made some noise.

Thomas Carter, 1883

Arriving on a Sabbath morning (late 1852) at Forest Creek, we threaded our way through the diggings, and when coming over Wesley Hill the church bell was ringing. ... The hill and flat were then covered with large trees, and I assure you in looking up the valley of Moonlight a fairer scene could scarcely be imagined.

Walter Wilson, 1886

records a number of businesses on Pennyweight Flat, Moonlight Flat and Moonlight Hill (**Box 2**).

The influx of people from all around the world led to the Mount Alexander goldfield becoming a centre of political agitation³, which had its culmination at the Eureka Stockade. This is one of the crucial periods in Australia's political and social history (**Box 3**). The Happy Valley/Moonlight Flat area was a stage for some of these events, for example, a protest meeting at Lever Point in 1852 (**Box 4**) and a political rally at Pennyweight Flat in 1854. A petition was raised from the Moonlight diggers and sent to the Governor in 1855 (Appendix 18).

The miners formed a culturally diverse group including a community of Germans at Lady Gully and Chinese at Moonlight and Pennyweight flats. Chinese diggers arrived in 1854 and a report on the 5th February 1856 states that *"The principal (Chinese) camp, at present is.... on Moonlight Flat, Forest Creek."* Other reports show that Chinese diggers worked at Pennyweight Flat, Dirty Dick's Gully, Lever Point, Dog Leg Gully and Nicholson's Gully⁴. It is notable that the Chinese and European miners worked in the valley together and both were interned in the Pennyweight Flat cemetery. Later some Chinese acquired land and turned their hand to market gardening as can be seen in Figure 1 (see also appendix 1). One extensive Chinese market garden was operated from at least 1871 to the late 1940s on land between Colles Road and McKay Street (**Photo 1**). Another was worked to the late 1960s near the site of the old Robert Burns Hotel on Colles Road. Rate records for 1881 show 14 Chinese gardeners and 2 Chinese miners from a total of 49 ratepayers in the valley⁵.

Once the initial rush was over, mining activity became more organised into small quartz mining companies centred on Lady Gully. With this economic base, tents were converted to more permanent structures. Substantial houses, stores and hotels were built as the community consolidated. The building of a school, a church and a post office reflected the establishment of this more permanent community.

By 1881 horticultural pursuits had started to flourish in the valley, however mining was revived about 1900 when the Scott brothers sluiced gravels at Moonlight Flat, until about 1914¹. As mining waned during World War 1, agriculture and horticulture became the dominant land use. This change led to a decline in population, a symptom of which was the closure of the Moonlight Flat school in 1925. The cessation of mining heralded a long period of inactivity, apart from a few small farming holdings. This continued to the late 1970s and early 80s when a few houses started to reappear in the valley. This quiet 50 years effectively preserved the rural aspect of the valley.

Box 2: Bryce Ross Directory 1852

19 Stores
19 Butchers
9 Doctors
7 Lemonade Sellers
2 Bakers
1 Chemist & Druggist
9 Smiths
2 Gold buyers
1 Tobacconist
1 Barber & Hairdresser
1 Soda Water manufactory

Box 3: 1850s - the decisive decade

"The 1850s were a decisive decade in Victoria's history. It was in these years that Victoria came into existence, separating from New South Wales. It was also in 1851 that the existence of extensive gold deposits became known. This news, which followed directly on the Californian rushes of 1849, made Victoria's name an international byword, encouraging a flood of gold-seeking immigrants, who, in turn, set about transforming what had been a small colonial society based on pastoralism into something altogether more complex. The gold rush years saw the infant society literally bursting at the seams with growing pains..... The gold rush experience of the 1850s were not just an important chapter in the history of Victoria but constitute a major event in Australia's national story as well."

Dr David Dunstan (1988), Senior Historian
Heritage Branch, Ministry for Planning and
Environment

Box 4: Politics at Moonlight Flat

"Oct. 23rd (1852) 4000 diggers led by a band, marched to Lever Point near Moonlight Flat on the afternoon of this day. The meeting considers the formation of a Protection Society to deal with the hundreds of scoundrels infesting the goldfields. At the meeting the diggers as usual also protest against the license fee and oppose any export duty on their gold."

'Castlemaine, from Camp to City'
G. Hocking, 1994, Five Mile Press



Photo 1 Chinese market garden beds between Colles Rd and McKay St. Aerial photographic view 1946.

Significant Cultural Landscapes in the study area

Two significant Cultural Landscapes have been identified in this report. The term is generally used by heritage authorities in the following context.

Cultural landscapes are illustrative of the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment and of successive social, economic and cultural forces, both external and internal. ... The term “cultural landscape” embraces a diversity of manifestations of the interaction between humankind and its natural environment.⁶

The Environment Conservation Council in its *Final Report* (June 2001) stated:

the importance of the Castlemaine diggings is not just the considerable significance of the individual relics and sites themselves but in the cultural landscapes formed where large numbers of sites and relics persist in their original settings and demonstrate a range of cultural themes over several phases of human occupation.

The cultural landscapes recognized in the Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park Heritage Action Plan are Forest Creek between Pennyweight Flat and Wattle Gully; Lady Gully and Pennyweight Flat Cemetery.

Significant Cultural Landscape No.1 – Pennyweight Flat

This landscape contains a section of the bed of Forest Creek, Pennyweight Flat and the Pennyweight Flat Cemetery. The Flat and the Cemetery are both listed on the Australian Heritage Commission Register of the National Estate⁷ and the Cemetery is listed on the Victorian Heritage Register⁸ and by the National Trust⁹. This is a high level of recognition. It is also protected under Heritage Overlay 601 and Schedule 2 of the Significant Landscape Overlay of the Mount Alexander Planning Scheme.

Part of the value of the site is derived from its setting on a small rocky hill surrounded by open farm land, which was also the site of the 1851 gold-rush (**Box 5**). There are evocative and wide views from the Cemetery looking across the valley. The views towards the Cemetery are important as they place the

Box 5: Pennyweight Flat Cemetery

What enables the cemetery to retain its evocative and moving qualities is the absence of intrusions in the setting. If development is to take place in the valley or on the adjacent hills, it should only be carried out in a way which does not destroy the significance of the place. Prime consideration must be the preservation of an appropriate visual setting and the physical safety of the fabric of the cemetery.

James Semple Kerr, 1987
Supporting letter in Dunstan (1988)

site in its goldfields landscape context. It is one of the most appreciated cultural landscapes in the Shire.

The Castlemaine community has consistently sought the preservation of the Cemetery as shown by articles published in the Mount Alexander Mail in 1862¹⁰ and 1864¹¹ and 1917¹². The Pioneers and Old Residents Association became trustees of the Pennyweight Flat Cemetery in 1918 and protected it with a fence about 1930. It was added to Heritage Register in the 1980s and in 2002 the Public Land surrounding the valley was declared a National Heritage Park.

Significant Cultural Landscape No.2 – Lady Gully area

This area surrounds the site of a small German and British community who conducted mining operations along the Sebastopol Reef near Lady Gully. The area defined as significant extends southeast past Lever Point and includes the northern part of Moonlight Flat. It contains numerous archaeological habitation sites and several important buildings that are still in good repair. These include the old Church of England and the Lewis house.

Key Historical and Interpretative Sources

Amongst the many documents appended to this report, the following are critical interpretative documents or are the most important historical sources.

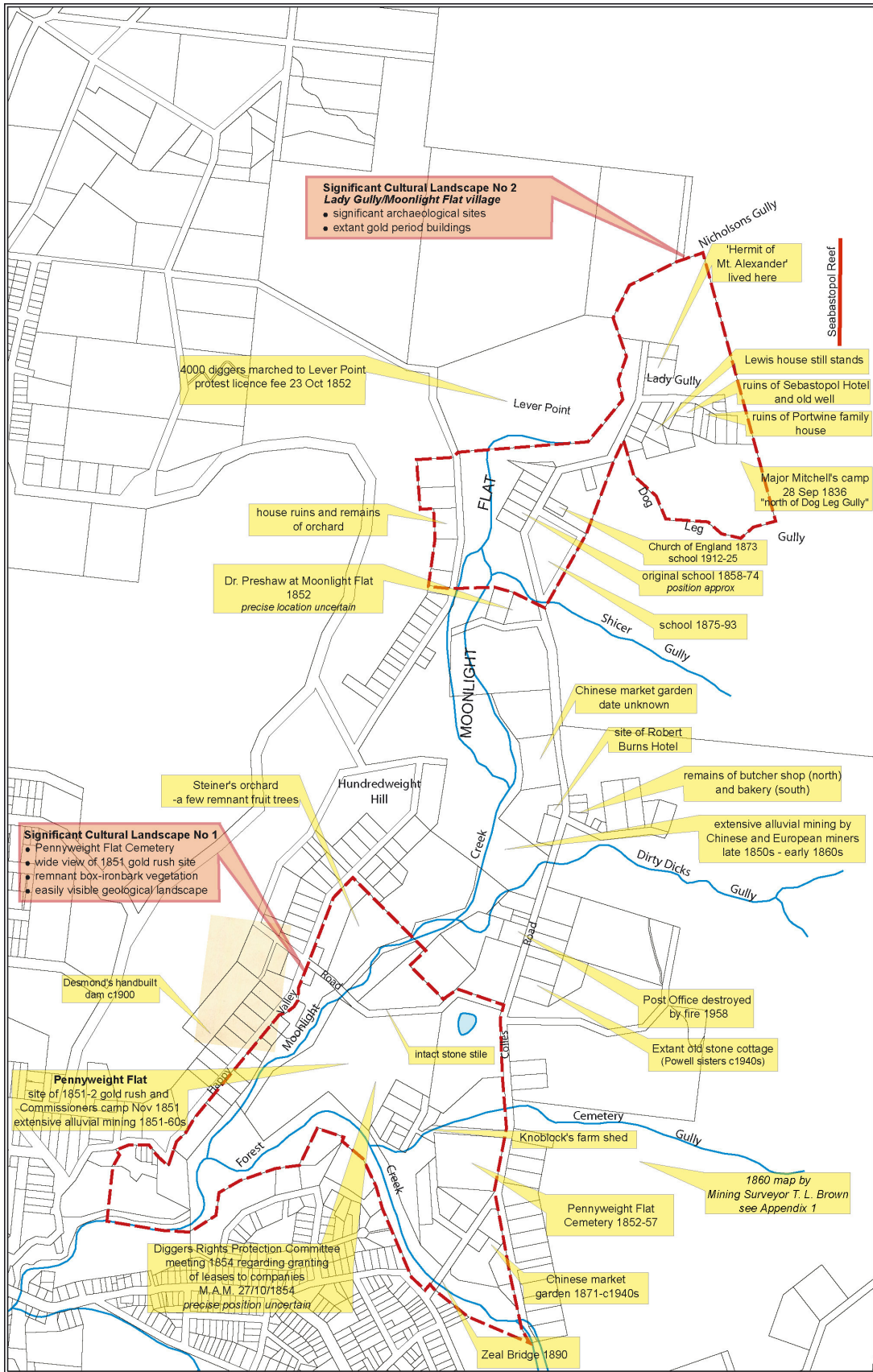
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| Appendix 1 | Brown, T.L., 1860. Plan of Moonlight and Pennyweight Flats, Castlemaine. Geological Survey Victoria unpublished plan 1290/M/1. |
| Appendix 2 | Australian Heritage Commission, 1990. Pennyweight Flat Children's Cemetery. Register of the National Estate. |
| Appendix 3 | Australian Heritage Commission, 1990. Pennyweight Flat. Register of the National Estate. |
| Appendix 4A | Heritage Victoria. Pennyweight Flat Cemetery. Victorian Heritage Register. |
| Appendix 4B | National Trust (Victoria) Register B1973 |
| Appendix 5 | Dunstan David, 1988. A submission to a panel hearing – Pennyweight Flat Cemetery. |
| Appendix 6 | Ballinger, R., Henty, T. and Jacobs, W., 2003. Castlemaine Goldfields Burial Grounds Heritage Action Plan. Parks Victoria. |
| Appendix 7 | Newspaper articles and letters re: Pennyweight Flat Cemetery. Mount Alexander Mail, 1862, 1864 and Castlemaine Mail, 1917 |
| Appendix 8 | Bannear, D., 1993. Historic Mining Sites in the Castlemaine/Fryers Creek Mining Divisions. Department Conservation and Natural Resources. |
| Appendix 9 | McCann, J., 1990. The Cultural Landscape of the Castlemaine-Chewton Goldfields. Landscape Classification Report. The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) |

Acknowledgements

Aileen & Ian Hockley and Hillary Griffith of the Castlemaine Historical Society Incorporated generously researched and provided numerous historical documents.

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- 2 The Castlemaine Association of Pioneers and Old Residents, 1996. Records of the Castlemaine Pioneers. Graffiti Publications Pty. Ltd.
- 3 Hocking, G., 1994. Castlemaine, from Camp to City, 1835–1900. Five Mile Press. Mount Alexander Mail, 27 October 1854.
- 4 Bannear & Annear “Assessment of Historic Mining Sites in the Castlemaine – Chewton Area” May 1990
- 5 Information Supplied by Castlemaine Historical Society Inc.
- 6 Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (1999)
- 7 Register of the National Estate 2/06/092/0045.
- 8 Victorian Heritage Register, No. H1675.
- 9 National Trust (Victoria) Register B1973.
- 10 Mount Alexander Mail, 28 July 1862.
- 11 Mount Alexander Mail, 20 March 1864.
- 12 Castlemaine Mail, 20 October 1917



Map by C. Wilman, 2003

**HAPPY VALLEY/MOONLIGHT FLAT STRATEGIC PLAN
PLAN 6: HISTORICAL SUMMARY OF STUDY AREA**

0 0.5 1 km
Scale: 1:10,000

INDEX TO APPENDICES

No	Reference
1	Brown, T.L. (1860). <i>Plan of Moonlight and Pennyweight Flats, Castlemaine. Geological Survey Victoria unpublished plan 1290/M/1.</i>
2	Australian Heritage Commission (1990) Pennyweight Flat Children's Cemetery. Register of the National Estate.
3	Australian Heritage Commission (1990). Pennyweight Flat. Register of the National Estate.
4A	Heritage Victoria. Pennyweight Flat Cemetery. Victorian Heritage Register. http://ndoiext01.doi.vic.gov.au/doi/hvolr.nsf
4B	National Trust (Victoria) Register B1973
5	Dunstan David (1988). A submission to a panel hearing – Pennyweight Flat Cemetery.
6	Ballinger, R., Henty, T. and Jacobs, W., (2003) Castlemaine Goldfields Burial Grounds Heritage Action Plan. Parks Victoria.
7	Newspaper articles and letters re: Pennyweight Flat Cemetery. Mount Alexander Mail, 1862, 1864 and Castlemaine Mail, 1917
8	Bannear, D. (1993) Historic Mining Sites in the Castlemaine/Fryers Creek Mining Divisions. Department Conservation and Natural Resources.
9	McCann, J. (1990) The Cultural Landscape of the Castlemaine-Chewton Goldfields. Landscape Classification Report. The National Trust of Australia (Victoria).
10	Lawrence, S. (Ed) (2000) archaeological survey of Lady's Gully, Mount Alexander Goldfield. Heritage Victoria.
11	Pearson, M. Lennon, J. and Marshall, D., 2002. Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park Heritage Action Plan. Appendix B Identifying and categorising cultural landscapes. Parks Victoria.
12	Speedie, T.W., Department Conservation Forests and Lands. Letter to City of Castlemaine regarding Pennyweight Flat Cemetery. 1987
13	Australian ICOMOS (1999). Burra Charter. Appendix 2. Guiding principles of the Burra Charter.
14	Environment Conservation Council. (2001) Box Ironbark Forests and Woodlands Investigation. Final Report.
15	List of information supplied by Castlemaine Historical Society Inc.
16	Temple, M. Goers and Shicers, Early days of Moonlight Flat. (extracts)
17	1881 rate paying electors role
18	Transcript of text and index of names: 1855 petition from Moonlight Flat miners regarding claim granted to Vivian and party.
19	Records of the Castlemaine Pioneers. Excerpts.
20	Myers, P. Some brief comments on the history and genealogy of the Pennyweight Flat Cemetery, Forest Creek. 1852 – 1857
21	State school Moonlight Flat No. 1486 pupil register 1912–1925 includes Education Department, Victoria (1973). Vision and realisation V2. 1486 Moonlight Flat
22	Copies of photos of Moonlight Flat school and Church of England. CHSI collection.
23	Hotel licences 1856–58, Moonlight Flat as listed in Mount Alexander Mail
24	Article regarding destruction of Moonlight Flat Post Office by fire in 1958
25	Notes on the Memorial church at Moonlight Flat c1940s by James Martin. Includes article on Dr Preshaw, Castlemaine Mail 19/6/1975 and statistics of Church of England baptisms.
26	Hocking G. Castlemaine from Camp to City. 1835 –1900. Extract from page 81.
27	1869 Castlemaine rate assessments, Moonlight and Pennyweight flats-with maps
28	Bradfield (1972) Castlemaine "A golden harvest" and tour notes of Wesley Hill area by Ray Bradfield.
29	Australian Encyclopedia Vol 9. Information on Sir William Zeal.
30	Bryce Ross' Diggings Directory (1852) Page 6 & 7
31	Milford, George. The hermit of Mt Alexander