

HERITAGE PLACE

NAME OF PLACE: STRATHKELLAR FLAX MILL

ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE: Strachan's Road STRATHKELLAR

STUDY NUMBER: 290

HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:

PRECINCT: outside

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA: Southern Grampians Shire

ALLOTMENT: 13 **SECTION:** D **PARISH:** PARISH OF HAMILTON NORTH

ACCESS DESCRIPTION:

CFA 432E 48; VicRoads 73D5; located on the south side of Strahan's Road immediately east of the intersection with Strathkellar Road about 10kms north-east of Hamilton.

SIGNIFICANCE RATING: Local

Strathkellar Flax Mill, Strachan's Road, Strathkellar.

Image Date: 11/03/2003

EXTENT OF LISTING:

To the extent of: 1. All the surviving main building, and an area of land within 15m of any edge of the building. The remainder of the site is to be viewed as a Heritage Inventory site.

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PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

The Strathkellar Flax Mill was once a large and thriving mill, employing a number of local people. At its height, it was a series of sheds, pondage, roads, and outbuildings. The surviving fabric of the original complex includes roads, building foundations, the pondage and one ruinous large building which appears to have been used in the production process. Another smaller building is little more than a shed. Discarded plant litters the site.

HISTORY:

As a result of the Second World War and the national effort at self-sufficiency, the Australian federal government established an extensive flax growing and processing industry. In the 1920s, the Flax Corporation of Australia had first raised interest in flax production in the Strathkellar and Tarrington areas as they were thought to be the most suitable in Australia. Under encouragement from the Corporation several farmers planted experimental crops and the concept of establishing a mill at Strathkellar was proposed. The scheme did not proceed but flax growing continued in the district and the crop was processed at the Colac flax mill. In 1937, there was a strong push for experimental cropping and soon after the outbreak of the Second World War, Flax Fibres Pty Ltd. proposed to establish a flax mill at Strathkellar if the number of acres under cropping was increased to 1,200. The Hamilton district became the most important and largest flax growing area in Australia, allocating 5,000 acres to flax production and having the largest mill employing 180 people. Flax mills existed throughout the Western District including Strathkellar, Peshurst, Lake Bolac, Lismore, Terang, Colac and Winchelsea as well as in other parts of the state and also in Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia.. The production was supported by research undertaken by the CSIRO and the Department of Agriculture. 'Flax production under war conditions' was a 10 page pamphlet produced in Melbourne in 1942 by the Australian Flax Production Committee.

The land on which the Strathkellar Flax Mill stands was originally a part of The Grange run, first selected by the Wedge Brothers, and later Captain William Lonsdale, John Moffat and William McKellar. Subdivisions in the early twentieth century saw Leo Allen purchase allotment 13 of Section D on 21st September, 1936.

In 1939 Kinnears Pty. & Ltd. purchased land from Mr. Leo Allen, at Strathkellar, where they erected a small mill consisting of an office and two sheds. Water was provided by a natural spring nearby which was dammed and piped to the mill. This was supplemented, if required from the Hamilton Water Trust supply. Water was important not just for processing, but also for fire prevention. Electricity was supplied by the Hamilton Electricity Supply Company. The Mill was sited close to the Hensley Park Road as well as the Strathkellar Railway Station. It was opened officially on 29th September 1940.

At its peak the mill consisted of an extensive complex of buildings which included a boiler house, retting tanks, and scutching chaffsheds. There was also a dam fed by a natural spring and substantial services.

The Peshurst mill continued until 1951 when the local flax was processed at Strathkellar. The Strathkellar mill closed in 1959.

THEMATIC CONTEXT:

Theme 3: Developing local, regional and national economies

3.5 Developing primary production

3.5.3 Developing agricultural industries

3.8 Moving goods and people

3.13 Developing an Australian manufacturing capacity

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Theme 5: Working

5.8 Working on the land

Theme 8: Developing Australia's cultural life

8.10 Pursuing excellence in the arts and science

8.10.5 Advancing knowledge in science and technology

CONDITION:

High archaeological potential.

INTEGRITY:

low degree of integrity as a complex

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

What is significant?

The site of the former Strathkellar Flax Mill is located on the south side of Strahan's Road about 10kms north-east of Hamilton. The above ground fabric which survives include the roads, building foundations and the dam, as well as one ruinous large building which appears to have been used in the production process, and discarded plant litters the site. The Flax Mill was the first Flax Mill established in the area in the 1940s and represents the local communities efforts at self sufficiency.

How is it significant?

The Strathkellar Flax Mill is of historical and scientific significance to the Southern Grampians Shire.

Why is it significant?

The Strathkellar Flax Mill is of historical significance as the focus for the most extensive flax growing area in Victoria and for its importance as part of the war effort in the 1940s. It is of scientific significance for its agricultural research by the CSIRO and state Department of Agriculture.

COMPARISON:

289 Penshurst Flax Mill, Penshurst-Dunkeld Road, Penshurst

ASSESSED BY: aen

ASSESSMENT DATE:

21/05/2002

EXISTING LISTINGS:

HERITAGE STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Include in VHR Include in RNE Include in Local Planning Scheme

No Recommendations for Inclusions

REFERENCES:

Author	Title	Year	Page
Don Garden	Hamilton, A Western District History	1984	217, 218, 237
E F Mogford,	Flax Growing in the Hamilton District	1986	5