

Diamond Creek Cricket Reserve

TYPE: Tree Rows; Reserve

SITE NUMBE 30

ADDRESS: off Chute Street Diamond Creek

MELWAY MAP: 12 A5



DATE: 1899- **HERITAGE VALUE:** significant to the Shire

PARISH: Nillumbik, County of Evelyn **ALLOTMENT:** 2/-

AHC CRITERIA: A4, E1, G1

THEMES: 5 6

Haven and refuge- rural attractions for various groups

Community growth- local government

ASSOCIATIONS:

Syd and Gordon Coventry; Diamond Creek Shire

HISTORY:

This land was first alienated from the Crown on 14 July 1852 when Humphrey Peers purchased it as part of a 254-acre allotment. {Nillumbik Parish plan N69 (7)} Peers later sold the land to Dr. John Blakemore Phipps, a medical surgeon, who had reputedly commissioned Peers to purchase the land for him in the 1850s. {Ryan (1972), p. 43; Edwards (1979), pgs. 36 and 49} Phipps moved to Lancefield in 1857, but when his land at Diamond Creek yielded gold in the early 1860s, he established a mine on the property and built the Diamond Reef Hotel (1863) to provide accommodation for his miners. {Sutherland (1888), vol II, p. 433; Edwards (1979), pp. 49-50} A photograph of c.1882 held by NHS shows sheep grazing on Phipp's land and little by way of planting.

The Diamond Creek town survey of 1867 provided no reserves for public recreation purposes. A public meeting on 6 June 1890 consolidated local feeling that the Shire should purchase a suitable site for such a purpose. The present site, part of the western end of Phipps' block, was proposed in 1896. Sited on low-lying ground at the base of Mine Hill, this land adjoined the creek on the west. After a long-running argument in the 'Evelyn Observer' regarding the choice of this site, mainly because it was subject to flooding, the Shire finally purchased it in 1899 for use as a recreation reserve. It was initially managed through a local trust but was later transferred to the Shire. {Ryan (1972), p. 41; 'The Bridge', undated t.s. (NHS)} The Shire filled in the swamps and lagoons and built up the land considerably, and planted various exotics, including elms and bunya bunyas ('Araucaria bidwillii') along the creek bank, and a row of elms along the Main Street boundary. {Jock Ryan, pers. com., May 1997; photograph c.1910 (NHS)} Part of the reserve was levelled for use as a playing field for the local cricket and football clubs, and sports pavilions were constructed in c.1902. Collingwood football stars, Syd and Gordon Coventry, played some of their early games on this ground {Edwards (1979), p. 160; photo caption, NHS}

A tourist brochure of 1925 claimed that the Diamond Creek reserve was 'one of the finest grounds in the Metropolitan area, with a natural grandstand at back of ground'; an accompanying photograph showed relatively established trees along the creek bank. The picturesque quality of the reserve, overlooked by Mine Hill and adjacent to the creek bank, was integral to its promotion as a pleasure resort. After the Diamond Creek railway station opened in 1912, the reserve became a popular destination for Sunday picnickers, and the creek bank attracted anglers and campers. {'Diamond Creek: Profusely pictured' (1925), np.} Larger-scale gatherings, including the Annual Butchers' Picnic and the Wharfies' Picnic, were also held here.

The reserve was also the venue for the annual horticultural show. In the early twentieth century, when fruit-growing was a key local industry, this was a major local event; one account claims it was the biggest show of this kind in the metropolitan area. {Edwards 1979, p. 182 (includes photograph); Tom Harrington reminiscences} In 1896 a horticultural hall was erected on the hill overlooking the cricket ground; here, positioned substantially higher than the flood-prone sports ground, it was marginally safer from flood waters. A second horticultural hall was built later, but both have since been demolished. A second reserve on the north side of Main Street was developed for sporting purposes in the 1960s. {Jock Ryan, pers. com., May 1997}

DESCRIPTON:

Trees include elms on the south side of the street leading to the memorial (some badly lopped opposite Elizabeth Street, poor health); west and south side of reserve are plane and pepper trees ('Schinus molle' var. 'areira'), a large elm, Canary Island pines ('Pinus canariensis' - 3 needle 100mm, pink bark ?), Bunya Bunyas (3 'Araucaria bidwillii'), old gums at creek.

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On the other side of the creek, near the toilets, is a remnant Hawthorn hedge row which may indicate a former track.

Reserve purchased from Dr Phipps by the Heidelberg Shire c1899.

SIGNIFICANCE:

The Diamond Creek cricket reserve is of regional significance

- for its long use by the local community as a place of sport and recreation and its relatively well preserved state as a reflection of that period;
- for the range and maturity of its specimens of conifers and elms on the creek bank that date to the early 1900s
- for its association with the development of local horticulture
- as the subject of promotional literature, used to epitomise the natural wonders of the Diamond Creek district

REFERENCES:

J Ryan, comments 30.8.96 -Shire purchase from Dr Phipps in 1899, see NHS photos

Edward Bage, plan of the township of Diamond Creek, 25 September 1867.

Nillumbik Parish plan N69 (7) (CPO).

J.L. Ryan, 'Before You Came: Mines, Myths and Memories of Diamond Creek' (Surrey Hills, 1972).

View of Phipps's land, Diamond Creek, photograph, c.1882 (NHS).

View of Diamond Creek showing cricket reserve, photograph, 1920 (NHS).

Richard Brown, Diamond Valley Conservation Strategy (1995).

'Diamond Creek: Profusely pictured' (Barker & Co., Melbourne, 1925).

'The Bridge', undated t.s. (NHS).

Alexander Sutherland (ed.), 'Victoria and Its Metropolis' (McCarron Bird & Co., Melbourne, 1888).

Jock Ryan, pers. com., May 1997.

Tom Harrington, reminiscences.

Dianne H. Edwards, 'The Diamond Valley Story' (Shire of Diamond Valley, Greensborough, 1979).