Heritage Overlay No.: 010

Citation No.: 317

Place: Rockbank Inn

Other Names of Place:	N/A
Location:	Beatty's Road, Rockbank
Critical Dates:	1853
Existing Heritage Listings:	Victorian Heritage Register H1933
Recommended Level of Significance:	STATE

Note: This citation contains only a statement of significance. It was commissioned after the Heritage Study had been exhibited. Rockbank Inn was included in the schedule to the heritage overlay prior to the Heritage Study being written.

Statement of Significance:

The former Rockbank Inn site, Beatty's Road Rockbank, is significant as a ruin and archaeological complex with potential to provide further information of the 1840s pastoral era, of an early 1850s goldrush wayside hotel, and a local rural hotel of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The remains of the Rockbank Inn comprise three ruinous bluestone structures, believed to have been the hotel, a store building and a stable. The former hotel building features pointing and stone lintels. The site also includes a quarry, a roughly cobbled track, an avenue of pepper tree plantings, and stone retaining works on the creek bank. The remains of the hotel are located next to the remains of Beatty's

Bridge on Kororoit Creek, and on Beatty's Road, formerly one of the main roads to Ballarat from Melbourne.

In the 1850s diggers on their way to the gold fields frequented the Rockbank Inn. The earliest section was possibly constructed c.1853 for Melbourne wine and spirit merchants James Stewart and John 'Como' Brown, when they acquired the land from pastoralist William Cross Yuille. Stewart and Brown owned several hotels in Victoria and Brown was a noted builder in Melbourne in the 1840s. However the earliest section of the inn may have been part of Yuille's improvements when he sold his pre-emptive right to Stewart and Brown in 1853. The only definite date of construction is 1855, when architect Charles Laing designed bluestone additions to the hotel for John Gray. Gray owned the inn from c.1855 until sold by his trustees in 1870. There are contemporary accounts of visits to Rockbank Inn in c.1854 by William Kelly, Irish author and barrister and in the same year a stopover by a troop of soldiers marching along the Ballarat Road to face the Eureka rebels. These were members of the 12th and 40th foot and gun parties for HMS Electra and HMS Fantome. The inn later became a residence, and was occupied continuously for about 90 years by the Beatty family before being finally abandoned in c.1960.

The former Rockbank Inn, Beatty's Road Rockbank is historically significant at a State level (AHC A4, B2). The Rockbank Inn site is historically significant for its associations with diggers on their way to the gold fields around Ballarat, and with the soldiers involved in the suppression of the Eureka rebels in December 1854. It constitutes rare evidence of a wayside goldrush-era hotel, in ruinous condition, but of relatively high integrity due to its location on a road which did not prosper. The early, derelict timber 'Beatty's Bridge' opposite contributes to its significance.

The former Rockbank Inn, Beatty's Road Rockbank is scientifically significant at a State level (AHC C2). The Rockbank Inn site is archaeologically significant for its demonstrated ability to provide information about the occupation and usage of the inn during the nineteenth century. The site has a high potential to produce artefacts relating to its mid to late nineteenth century occupation. The archaeological process has a potential to produce more information about the method of construction and materials used during the various building phases of the inn.

The former Rockbank Inn, Beatty's Road Rockbank is architecturally significant at a Local level (AHC D2). Although now in mostly ruinous condition, it was designed at least in part by distinguished architect Charles Laing, in the Georgian style in the Victorian period.

The former Rockbank Inn, Beatty's Road Rockbank is socially significant at a Local level (AHC G1). Local historical memory has it that three graves were situated on the site, one of which is known to have been washed away (and the others are no longer readily identifiable), and that the former stables were used as an early coach staging post. Its part in local community life was demonstrated by the substantial gathering of Melton identities who gathered there in the late 20th century, while it was abandoned but still intact, to toast its memory.

Overall, the former Rockbank Inn, Beatty's Road Rockbank is of State significance.