

Identification and location

Name of Place: **Canning Street Ford, (Solomon's Ford)**

Other Name 'Solomon's Ford', Clancy's Ford, Braybrook Ford

Address Canning St. Avondale Heights to Burke Rd.
Braybrook

Place Identifier 8746

Heritage Significance *metropolitan*

Creation date(s): 1835 c. **Map (Melway)** 27 B8

Boundary description An area of land extending 20 metres either side of the ford and 50 metres upstream and downstream. Also including the road approach of the unmade part of Burke St.

Local Government Area: Cities of Maribyrnong, Brimbank and Moonee Valley

Ownership Type Public - crown land administered by Parks Victoria

Description

Site Type: ford

Physical Description

A stone reef outcrops in the bed of the Maribyrnong River banking up the waters in a wide bend and providing a shallow crossing of the river. Gravels and sand have accumulated here, and flood deposits of silt have accumulated on the banks. Ramped approaches on both banks may be partially natural, but have been modified by use (originally livestock and vehicle erosion) and grading. The approaches were once across open flats, but by the latter 19th century were at least partially formalised to the road reservations, an extension of Canning Street on the east, and Burke Street on the south west. The MMBW reconstructed the river banks and added stepping stones formed from large weathered basalt boulders. Dry stone walls and the secluded river reach gives a sense of the historical environment of the area. Remnant vegetation in the area includes at least one pre settlement Red Gum tree (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) to the north in the City of Brimbank.

Condition

Reconstruction has stabilised the river banks and gravel bed.

Integrity

Integrity is low due to the artificial crossing created by the MMBW. However, the immediate banks and river channel are not so extensively modified.

Context

Located in the undeveloped valley with evidence of former road approaches and dry stone walls marking former farm allotments clearly visible. At least one pre settlement red gum tree survives near the site.

Threats

A current proposal for housing development immediately to the west of the ford would impact negatively on the environmental context and historical significance of the place.

History

The ford at the tidal reach of the the Saltwater River was noted as early as 1803, by Deputy Surveyor-General Charles Grimes during the expedition of the *Cumberland* sent by Governor King to survey Port Phillip. The party rowed up the river as far as some rocks which barred their way. They continued on foot, finding fresh water “a little higher up”, probably near the present Medway Golf Course. On his Map of Port Phillip, 1903 Grimes indicated the ford with the words “rocks across” (Jones 1983:1-3).

The next record of the ford at Grimes’ Rocks appears in Joseph Tice Gellibrand’s *Memorandum of a Trip to Port Phillip*, which describes his journey from the “Settlement”, (the embryo township of Melbourne) to Geelong in 1836. The ford Gellibrand described was the first crossing place of the Saltwater River on the route to Geelong and to Williamstown. The detour several miles upstream was necessary because the way across the Yarra River was barred by the West Melbourne Swamp. The ford became an important part of the route between Melbourne and Footscray, and places further west. In 1839 the route was shortened by 10 miles when Port Phillip Superintendent Captain Lonsdale provided a punt to cross the Saltwater River just above the junction with the Yarra. The ford continued to be used by carts and cattle until the Saltwater River Bridge was built at Footscray in 1863 (Jones 1983:8-9, 14, 15; Billis & Kenyon:142).

The ford was named after a squatter from the Solomon family of Launceston. The exact identity of the squatter is not clear. According to Billis and Kenyon, Michael Solomon held Solomon’s Ford, Keilor from 1835 to 1841, and this view is supported by Jones’ extensive research. Lack, however, suggests that the run was held by absentee landlords, Judah and Joseph Solomon, whom Jones has found to be Michael’s father and uncle (Jones 1983:49; Lack 1991:11).

Michael Clancy occupied land in the township of Braybrook on the north side of the river in the 1870s. He testified to a Royal Commission in 1879 that he had lived near the ford for twenty three years, gaining something of a living from the river by loading stones from the river for ballasting boats at Footscray. Clancy’s Ford is another name by which the crossing has been known (Ford and Parsons 1989).

Thematic context

Australian Principal Theme

PAHT Subtheme:

Local Theme

Cultural Significance

The Canning Street Ford is of local historical significance as one of the first crossing places of the Maribyrnong River for European settlers from 1835 onwards. It is recorded in the first accounts of exploration (Grimes 1803 journey) and in subsequent accounts of the difficulties of traversing the western plains. Criterion A4 & C2)

Although greatly modified, the immediate environs of the ford remain undeveloped and so reflect the character of the area during the pioneering phase. (Criterion A3) The ford is representative of a former mode of transport and river crossing, now rare or lost. (Criterion B2 & D2)

The ford is closely associated with the first white people to set foot in the district (the exploration party of Charles Grimes, John Flemming & co. in 1803) and subsequent settlers and travellers including the Solomon family, makes the place an historical landmark location. (Criterion H1). Surviving remnant indigenous vegetation (to the north in the City of Brimbank) provides a historical landscape context to the site recalling the environment at the time of early settlement.

Comparative Examples

Few intact fords survive in the metropolitan area due to subsequent development and erosion. A rock surfaced ford at the end of Neale Rd. Deer Park was bulldozed in the early 1980s, and some evidence survives of the ford across the Maribyrnong at Keilor. Other fords which once existed in the vicinity (at North Road upstream and Mullinger's downstream) have no surviving evidence of their existence. Further afield, Cobbledicks Ford on the Werribee River and Bartrams Ford at Arundel indicate the probable original appearance of these fords.

Recommendations

Heritage Victoria Register	<input type="text" value="No"/>
Register of the National Estate	<input type="text" value="Recommended"/>
National Trust Register	<input type="text" value="Recommended"/>
Other Heritage Listings	<input type="text" value="No"/>
Planning Scheme Protection	<input type="text" value="Recommended"/>
External Paint Controls Apply?	<input type="text" value="No"/>
Internal Alteration Controls Apply?	<input type="text" value="No"/>
Tree Controls Apply?	<input type="text" value="Yes - mature gums"/>
Included on the Victorian Heritage Register under the Act	<input type="text" value="No"/>
Are there Outbuildings or Fences not Exempt?	<input type="text" value="No"/>
Prohibited Uses may be Permitted?	<input type="text" value="No"/>

Recommendations

The following objectives relate to the Statement of Significance and the cited fabric or contributory elements.

- To conserve and enhance the significant elements of the place.
- To conserve and enhance the public view of these elements.
- To conserve and enhance the visual relationships between the contributory elements.
- To ensure that new or altered elements within the vicinity of the place are visually recessive and related to the contributory elements.
- To retain the open space use of the place and its vicinity.
- To develop a consultative management approach to conservation of the site involving the Cities of Maribyrnong, Brimbank and Moonee Valley (which share municipal boundaries at the ford) and Parks Victoria.

Australian Heritage Commission Criteria

A3 Importance in exhibiting unusual richness or diversity of flora, fauna, landscape or cultural features.

Although modified from its original form, the ford demonstrates the conditions met by early travellers and the means by which they overcame natural obstacles.

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A4 Importance for their association with events, developments or cultural phases which have had a significant role in the human occupation and evolution of the nation, state, region or community.

The ford is associated with the earliest accounts of overland travel in the Port Phillip District, and was mentioned in the first description of the area by Charles Grimes in 1803

B2 Importance in demonstrating a distinctive way of life, custom, process, land-use, function or design no longer practised, in danger of being lost, or of exceptional interest.

Representative of a former mode of transport and river crossing, now rare or lost.

C2 Importance for information contributing to a wider understanding of the history of human occupation of Australia.

The fords of this area played a significant role in the form and direction of settlement and land use, influencing the routes taken to other settlements and the establishment of roads.

H1 Importance for their close associations with individuals whose activities have been significant within the history of the nation, state or region.

The ford provided the main communication between Melbourne and the west of the district for the pioneering years of white settlement.

The ford is closely associated with the first white people to set foot in the district (the exploration party of Charles Grimes, John Flemming & co. in 1803) and subsequent settlers and travellers including the Solomon family, makes the

Documentation

References

Jones, Valentine, *Solomon's Ford: Which Ford, Which Solomon?* Fitzroy, 1983, .
Billis R.V & Kenyon, A.S., *Pastoral Pioneers of Port Phillip*, Melbourne, 1974.
Lack, John, *A History of Footscray*, North Melbourne, 1991, p.11.
Shillinglaw, Fleming Journal, Reprinted in Historical Records of Victoria.
Popp, E. *Glimpses of Early Sunshine*, Sunshine Historical Society, 1979.
Vines, G. *Western Region Industrial Heritage Study*, Melbourne's Living Museum of the West. 1989.

Data recording

Assessed By

Assessed Date: