

HERITAGE PLACE

NAME OF PLACE: WANNON FALLS GATES & RESERVE

ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE: Glenelg Highway Morgiana Road WANNON

STUDY NUMBER: 129

HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:

PRECINCT: outside

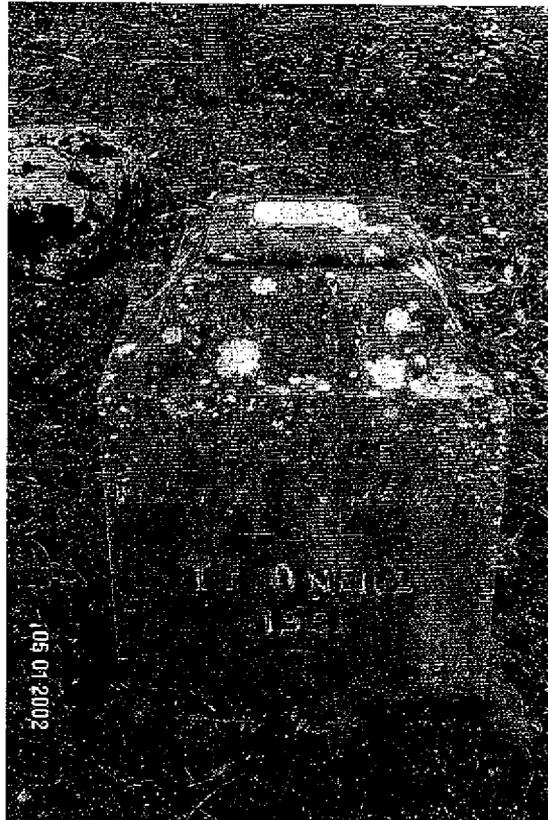
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA: Southern Grampians Shire

ALLOTMENT: none **SECTION:** none **PARISH:** PARISH OF BOCHARA

ACCESS DESCRIPTION:

CFA 431 J; VicRoads72 F4; located on the Glenelg Highway at the junction of Morgiana Road, about 7.0kms north-west of Hamilton and 0.5kms east of the township of Wannon. Access to the alternative viewing area is from Morgiana Road, about 0.5kms south of the Glenelg Highway.

SIGNIFICANCE RATING: Local



Wannon Falls Reserve

Image Date: 13/07/01

EXTENT OF LISTING:

To the extent of: 1. The HO should cover - all of the gates and an area of 20m radius from the centre of the gateway. The SLO should cover - all of the Wannon Falls Reserve.

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PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

The Wannon Falls Reserve is located south-east corner of the Township of Wannon. The Reserve straddles the Wannon River, and falls into the Parish of Bochara on the eastern side, being the major portion, and the Parish of Redruth on the western side.

The reserve includes several built structures and hard landscaping elements. These are predominately associated with the development of the Wannon Falls Reserve as a popular tourist attraction and picnic area from the late 1950s onwards. Some of the built elements, such as the pathways to the falls and viewing areas date from the late nineteenth century, but the fenced viewing platform, picnic area and more recent timber and stone rotunda and entrance gates featuring large sheet metal boomerangs have been added in the 1960s and more recently.

A secondary viewing area has been established off the Morgiana Road, to provide access to the point where Thomas Clark painted his famous picture of the Wannon Falls in flood.

HISTORY:

The Wannon Falls Reserve straddles the Wannon River in the south-east corner of the Township of Wannon and falls into the Parish of Bochara on the eastern side, being the major portion, and the Parish of Redruth on the western side. The total area reserved was about 174 acres or 71 hectares. Some of the land was allocated to the Education Department as a plantation area for a school in Gray Street Hamilton.

The original reserve consisted of 26 acres and 39 perches set aside for public recreation for the township of Redruth. A further 13 acres were reserved and together these areas were known as the Wannon Falls Reserve.

The Nigretta and Wannon Falls are amongst the most important cultural landscapes in Victoria. In 1857 James Bonwick notes his visit to the waterfall and, with some qualification about its size and beauty, he praises its picturesque qualities (Bonwick, 162-3). He also describes its geological structure. The waterfall has attracted many famous professional artists. Perhaps the first was Captain Charles James Tyers (1806-70), a sketcher, surveyor and public servant who became Commissioner of Crown Lands for Portland Bay District in 1842. He painted 'Lower Falls on the Wannon' in the same year, and probably at the same time 'Upper Fall River Wannon'. The goldfields water-colourist, S. T Gill (1818-80) painted 'Falls on the Wannon'. The best known to paint the falls was artist Eugen von Guérard (1812-1901), who painted both the Nigretta and the Wannon Falls in 1857. His colleague, Nicholas Chevalier (1828-1902) painted 'The Wannon Falls' in 1866. Louis Buvelot (1814-88) painted the falls at least six times in 1867-8. The local artist Thomas Clark (1814-83) also painted the waterfalls at least six times. The work of these artists ranged from the merely topographical to a deeply metaphorical understanding of the landscape.

At a different level, the waterfalls were represented in popular culture. Thomas Washbourne took a series of stereographic photographs between 1860 and 1888. In the twentieth century, the Rose Stereographic Company and others published postcards over many decades. These were usually colour-tinted. The important heritage photographer, John T Collins photographed the falls at least once in 1981. In 1888, Victoria and Its Metropolis stated 'On the Wannon River, at a few miles distant, are two very picturesque waterfalls which are favourite places of resort for excursionists and picnic parties' (Sutherland, Vol. 2, 57) It used an etching of the Wannon Falls to introduce the chapter dedicated to the Western District. The Cyclopaedia of Victoria, in 1903, notes the Wannon Falls as 'the only attractive place of resort' near the Hamilton and provides an elaborate, if not Romantic description (ibid., Vol 2, 527). Even after World War Two, the Victorian Railways took professional photographs of the waterfalls which were installed in the Tait

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class 'red-rattler' train carriages.

The Wannon and Nigretta waterfalls have always been linked. The Dundas Shire Centenary history states that the Nigretta Falls Reserve was proclaimed on 23rd of January, 1912. At that time the Nigretta Falls Reserve consisted of 20 acres and 15 perches. It was placed under the control of a committee of management on 20th June 1919. This committee was known as the Wannon and Lake Linlithgow Committee of Management whose aim was to work towards various improvements in each reserve. The founding members were all members of the Hamilton Progress Association and included Mr. Edward White, MLC, Mr James Young, JP and Thomas Francis O'Neill. In 1924, the name of the committee was changed to drop the Lake Linlithgow part of its title, to become the Wannon and Nigretta Committee of Management.

To raise funds and to help pay for improvements at the reserves, each year a gymkana was held at the Nigretta Falls reserve which was attended by people from the whole district, some arriving by train at Redruth. Photographs survive of large picnics organised by churches, commercial organisations or sporting clubs in areas of natural beauty which had been set aside for conservation purposes and which were often utilised as popular places for picnicking or painting, such as the Wannon and Nigretta falls reserves.

The Wannon and Nigretta Committee of Management enlisted volunteers to construct an oval at the Wannon Reserve to provide for the cricket and football parties which frequently visited for social matches and picnics. They also built paths, steps and lookouts. 'When the first motor car made its appearance in the District, the committee immediately developed a motor track around the oval and held motor and cycling races there' (Shire of Dundas, 109). At this time trees were also planted to provide shade in the reserve. In the 1930s, permission was given to the Hamilton State School to plant Pine trees for commercial purposes. In 1936 a tree was planted at the Wannon Reserve in memory of Thomas Francis O'Neill, the foundation secretary of the committee and an inscribed stone installed in 1951. In the 1960s a 18 acres wild flower reserve was added and a new pavilion and fireplace were constructed. New entrance gates featuring sheetmetal boomerangs were built in the 1960s.

Most recently, the facilities have been modernised with new interpretative material, emphasising the Reserve's artistic associations and reflecting environmental concerns. A secondary viewing area has been established off the Morgiana Road, to provide access to the point where Thomas Clark painted his famous picture.

THEMATIC CONTEXT:

Theme 3: Developing local, regional and national economies

3.23 Catering for tourists

Theme 8: Developing Australia's cultural life

8.1.1 Playing and watching organised sports

8.1.3 Developing public parks and gardens

8.1.4 Enjoying the natural environment

8.3 Going on holiday

8.5.4 Pursuing common leisure interests

8.10 Pursuing excellence in the arts and sciences

8.10.2 Creating visual arts

CONDITION:

The reserve remains relatively intact to its 1960s stage of development.

INTEGRITY:

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relatively intact

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

What is significant?

The Wannon Falls Reserve is located on the south side of the Henty Highway, about 18kms north-west of Hamilton where the highway crosses the Wannon river. The total area reserved is about 174 acres or 71 hectares and comprises bushland, some exotics and recreational facilities. Nearby is the township of Wannon, formerly called Redruth, which was established at a ford as a coaching stop. The Wannon Inn, now demolished, provided accommodation for visitors to the Falls from the 1840s. The Wannon Falls have been the consistent subject of significant art including works by some of Australia's most celebrated colonial artists, such as Nicholas Chevalier, Eugen von Guerard, Louis Buvelot, S. T. Gill and Thomas Clark. The township of Redruth and the Wannon Falls Reserve were gazetted in the mid 1860s. Much of the reserve was originally owned by local publican John Quigley. It has been managed jointly with the Nigretta Falls Reserve under a committee of management. The Reserve has been extended and developed over the years, with changes reflecting different values and fashions, including a Pine plantation for the local State School and football and cricket pitches. In the twentieth century there has been an emphasis on native plantings. The Reserve has a significant post-World War Two entrance incorporating large boomerangs on crazy-stone piers. Most recently, the facilities have been modernised with a contemporary concern for environmental values. The Reserve is substantially intact and in good condition.

How is it significant?

The Gates of the Wannon Falls Reserve are of historical, social and aesthetic significance to the Southern Grampians Shire. The Wannon Falls Reserve is a Significant Landscape, and should be included in the Southern Grampians Planning Scheme as a Significant Landscape Overlay.

Why is it significant?

The Wannon Falls Reserve is of historical significance as one of the earliest beauty spots and tourist destinations established in the Western District. It is of social significance as a recreation reserve. It is of aesthetic significance for its long association with Picturesque sensibility, the dominant aesthetic in colonial Victoria, which continued well into the twentieth century. It is the subject of much important and popular art. The Wannon Falls Reserve is of significance as a comparative pair with the nearby Nigretta Falls Reserve. The gates of the reserve are particularly significant, as an important and dramatic entrance to a suitably dramatic reserve.

COMPARISON:

128 Nigretta Falls Reserve, Nigretta Falls Road, Wannon

ASSESSED BY: tfh

ASSESSMENT DATE:

2/12/2001

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
Alexander Sutherland	Victoria & Its Metropolis Vol 2	1888	57
Captain Charles James Tyers	'Lower Falls on the Wannon'	1842	
Department of Lands and Survey	Parish of Toolka, County of Dudas	1880	

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Don Garden	Hamilton, A Western District History	1984 var.
Hamilton Spectator 16/02/1861		1861
James Bonwick, and C E Sayers, ed.	Western Victoria, Its Geography geology and Social Condition	1857 138 & 1970
James Smith, ed	The Cyclopaedia of Victoria	1905 527
James Smith, ed	The Cyclopaedia of Victoria	1905
Nicholas Chevalier	'The Wannon Falls'	1866
Shire of Dundas	Dundas Shire Centenary, 1863-1963	1963 108-9
Shire of Dundas	Dundas Shire Centenary, 1863-1963	1963 108- 110