

# HERITAGE PLACE

**NAME OF PLACE:** WOOLPRESS TREE

**ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE:** Sierra Park Victoria Valley Road VICTORIA VALLEY

**STUDY NUMBER:** 184

**HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:**

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**OTHER NAME/S OF PLACE:** SIERRA PARK SHEEPSTUD

**PRECINCT:** outside

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:** Southern Grampians Shire

**PARISH:** PARISH OF PANYYABYR

**ACCESS DESCRIPTION:**

CFA 433 A17; VicRoads 73 G2; located in Sierra Park Sheep Stud, 12.5kms north-north-west of the township of Dunkeld close to the junction of Crawford's Road.

**SIGNIFICANCE RATING:** State

**EXTENT OF LISTING:**

To the extent of: 1. All the tree and all of the land within a 10m radius of the trunk of the tree.

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## **PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:**

A deceased mature Red Gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) with a large square excision through the centre of the trunk starting at a height of approximately 1.5m and rising to 3.5m above ground level. The width is approximately .8m. The tree is located in a paddock with other living trees of the same species around it.

No equipment or plant appears to survive at the place.

## **HISTORY:**

The Woolpress tree is located on the Sierra Park property, which was originally part of the Victoria Valley run. It was Portland Bay squatting lease No. 93, and is described by Billis and Kenyon as comprising 25,000 acres and carrying 10,000 sheep, on Dwyer's Creek, 18 miles north [actually east] of Cavendish. James Robinson Unett took up the run in 1839, selling the lease to Henry Dwyer in January 1841. In September 1855 Dwyer sold to Thomas Robertson and Sons. The license was cancelled in February 1874. Hiscock's 1874 map of the County of Dundas describes the property as being owned by the Messrs Robertson, comprising 67,000 acres and carrying 57,200 sheep. Thomas Robertson owned other runs with his sons James, John and Thomas Junior including Moora Moora immediately to the north of Victoria Valley.

Although very little is known about the tree or the date of its modification, it does seem clear that pastoralists used the tree to assist them in pressing their wool before 1900 and possibly as early as the 1840s. It represents a remarkable example of bush ingenuity and craftsmanship. A wheel was mounted in the excision and a pulley system with horsepower was used to compress the wool pack against the tree.

Holes cut into other trees were used as deposits for mail, such as Rev. Cusack Russell's tree south-west of Coleraine and outside the study area, which survives, and the 'post office tree' at Glenhompson in the 1860s, now gone. The Woolpress tree is apparently unique in Victoria.

## **THEMATIC CONTEXT:**

Theme 3: Developing local, regional and national economies

3.5 Developing primary production

3.5.1 Grazing stock

3.17 Inventing devices

Theme 5: Working

5.8 Working on the land

## **CONDITION:**

Limited

## **INTEGRITY:**

Only the tree survives. The location of the pulley system is not known.

## **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:**

What is significant?

The Woolpress Tree is located on the modern property, Sierra Park Sheep Stud which was originally part of the very early squatting lease, Victoria Valley. The age of the tree, which is dead, is not known nor the exact date of the work done to convert it into a woolpress. However, the later sophistication and wealth of the run would suggest that the Woolpress Tree dates from the earliest times, probably the mid-1840s after it was taken over by Henry Dwyer in 1841. While holes in trees were used for other purposes, such as to deposit mail for collection or distribution, none has been discovered with such extensive modifications nor for use as

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a woolpress. Commercial woolpresses were easily available and used after the depression of the early 1840s. The equipment associated with the modification of the tree has been lost.

How is it significant?

The Woolpress Tree is of historical significance to the southern Grampians shire and the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The Woolpress Tree is of historical significance to the Southern Grampians Shire and the State of Victoria as a remarkable surviving link with the earliest phase of pastoralism in the Western District and as an extraordinary example of bush ingenuity.

**COMPARISON:**

none within the study area

**ASSESSED BY:** mgt

**ASSESSMENT DATE:** 28/01/2002

**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
Geoff Edwards	'Expedition Spies Woolpress Tree and a Town That Never Was', The Hamilton Spectator, January 25, 1986	1986
R V Billis and A S Kenyon	Pastoral Pioneers of Port Phillip	1974 var,