Appendix 2.
Harcourt Mountain Bike Park – Hancocks Pine Plantation Heritage Impact Statement 2014

HERITAGE IMPACT STATEMENT –DESKTOP STUDY

HARCOURT MOUNTAIN BIKE PARK – HANCOCKS PINE PLANTATION

David Bannear
DRAFT 1: 27 February 2014

INTRODUCTION

Mount Alexander is located in the Harcourt Valley, 150 km north of Melbourne. It is 15 km from Castlemaine and 25 km from Bendigo. It falls totally within the Mount Alexander Shire, but the northern end of the mountain is close to the commencement of the adjoining Shire, the City of Greater Bendigo.

The creation of the Harcourt Mountain Bike Park on a former pine plantation, western flank of Mount Alexander (See Map 1) aims to enhance environmental values, while at the same time, provide economic stimulus to the township of Harcourt and surrounds. This site has attractive topography and terrain for mountain bike riding and good transport connections, e.g., close to the Calder Freeway and Melbourne-Bendigo railway.

The proposed mountain bike park will help fulfil a need for Harcourt to develop new economic directions in response to the town being bypassed by the Calder Freeway. Mount Alexander Shire Council has worked with the residents and business of the town and valley to produce a community plan - a Harcourt: After the Bypass (Calder Freeway) Strategy May 2009 - to map a new future through a number of initiatives, including Mount Alexander to be improved for recreational opportunities and to pursue and increase economic and tourism leverage off the Goldfields Track (formerly known as Great Dividing Trail).

Goldfields Track

Starting in Ballarat and ending in Bendigo (or vice versa), the 210km Goldfields Track has great mountain biking and hiking country in Victoria, passing through forests, pastoral countryside, key Gold Rush cities, and striking lookouts. Its real significance, however, lies in its blend of nature and culture. It is as much a cultural trail as a challenging one, taking in the rich history of the Goldfields. As a link between the major townships and small villages, it also offers riders (and bushwalkers) creature comforts; a good cafe, restaurant, bike shop, good spa and comfortable accommodation are easily accessible.

The Goldfields Track currently traverses Mount Alexander (for bush walking only); with a mountain bike route going around the western base of the mountain. The mountain bike route is along Danns Road which passes by the entrance to the pine plantation – an ideal connection (See Map 2)

Goldfields Tourism Inc

Goldfields Tourism Inc (GTI) has overseen the redevelopment (via a Federal Government tourism grant in 2010/11) of the Goldfields Track to accommodate both bush walkers and mountain bikers. The GTI is a skills-based association with a history of developing tourism projects. Committee membership is currently from two Local Government areas (Mount Alexander and Hepburn), bushwalking and mountain bike clubs, Heritage Victoria, Parks Victoria and DEPI.

GTI has formed a steering committee to investigate the feasibility of constructing a mountain bike park. It has done so as part of a strategy (called Rides Goldfields, See Map 2) involving linking the Goldfields Track to other cycling routes to create an extensive regional network for both road and mountain bike cycling.

Harcourt Mountain Bike Park Steering Committee

Membership of the Harcourt Mountain Bike Park steering committee is currently from GTI, Mount Alexander Shire Council, City of Greater Bendigo, Parks Victoria (adjoining land owner), DEPI (land owner), Hancocks Plantations Victoria (current lease holder), Harcourt Progress Group, Harcourt Valley Landcare Group/Connecting Country, Mount Alexander Sustainability Group, Castlemaine Rocky Riders Mountain Bike Club, and Bendigo Mountain Bike Club.

The feasibility and design study for the mountain bike park is being prepared by FreeRunning Enterprises and World Trails.

Cultural Heritage

This desktop study has been prepared ONLY to help guide the selection process for track corridors to ensure they are the most unlikely to harm cultural heritage values and are the most complaint with the legislation such as the Aboriginal Act 2006 and Heritage Act 1995. It is a precursor to any Native Title requirements and investigations (e.g., due diligence reporting and/or monitoring) for the presence of cultural remains along the corridors prior to works commencing. Hopefully this study will ensure the impacts are found to be negligible and/or easily mitigated through avoidance or building upon the ground, rather than excavation.

Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation

The Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation is the Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) for the area. An Indigenous Land Use Agreement was registered in November 2013 recognising the Dja Dja Wurrung people as the traditional owners of their country. The Heritage Impact Statement for the proposed mountain bike park will be discussed with the RAP.

If construction of the mountain bike park proceeds, the RAP will be invited to take an integral role in the project through a consultation process, participation (monitoring and construction) in the building activities, and the development of a management plan for the park.

ACTIVITY AND ACTIVITY AREAS

Pine plantation

The Mount Alexander Pine Plantation comprises 500 acres. It is bounded by Mount Alexander Regional Park (Park) on the east, Coopers Road on the north, and freehold land on the west and south. Access to the former pine plantation is off Danns Road.

The pine plantation contains a historic oak forest which is bookend on the north and south sides by peaks (See Map 3). The oak forest is a local picnic area. There are some existing dirt tracks in the pine plantation.

The State Government commenced clearing the land for the plantation in 1908 and in 1910 the first batch of pines was planted. The pine plantation was expanded to cover the whole lease area with the first plantings cut out during the Second World War, starting a process of cutting and replanting which continued until late in the 20th century. The pine plantation is currently under the stewardship of Hancocks Plantation Victoria, completely logged and due to be handed back to the Crown on 1 January 2015.

DESKTOP ASSESSMENT

Introduction

This assessment deals with the crown land sections (pine plantation and Park) of Mount Alexander as a single unit.

Mount Alexander Regional Park (Park)

The use of the pine plantation for both mountain bike riding and picnicking, which will be supported by associated Landcare activities fits well with the park's management recommendations. Currently the Park is used for a range of public recreational activities as well as for private, commercial operations, particularly stone quarrying and telecommunications facilities.

An Interim Management Plan was developed in 1991 for the Park and its principal management objectives were to:

- provide a wide range of informal recreational opportunities for large numbers of people in a natural environment, and
- conserve and protect natural ecosystems and landscapes, with special emphasis on the protection of significant species and sites

The Park currently comprises approximately 1400 hectares of Reserved Forest and a recent assessment by the Environment Conservation Council (ECC Box-Ironbark Investigation, 2001) recommended that it be reserved under the Crown Land (Reserves) Act, 1978. Although reservation has not yet been completed, Parks Victoria manages the area as a regional park in accordance with Government Policy in relation to the ECC's recommendations.

The ECC defined regional parks as areas of public land, readily accessible from urban centres or a major tourist route, set aside primarily to provide recreation for large numbers of people in natural or semi-natural surroundings. To the above objectives, the ECC added a further principal objective - to protect significant historic sites and Aboriginal cultural sites and places. The ECC indicated that scenic views, bush walking and mountain bike riding were permitted activities in regional parks.

Geology and geomorphology

Mount Alexander is part of the Great Dividing Range, Western Uplands area of central Victoria. It was formed approximately 370-80 million years ago when heat well below the earth's surface caused a melting of rock, forcing magma upwards. Remaining below the cool surface of the earth, the magma was able to solidify slowly, resulting in a hard crystalline formation characteristic of granite. Having cooled below ground, the granodiorite is classified as plutonic igneous rock.

The main watercourse draining from the country around Mount Alexander is Myrtle Creek, which runs to the east of the range, and is a tributary of Coliban River. Along the west of Mount Alexander is a separate system, with Forest and Barkers creek running towards Castlemaine where they intersect. Several gullies run down the east and west flanks of Mount Alexander.

The western slopes into Harcourt are very steep and heavily crowned with large rock outcrops. Eastern slopes are gentler and have fewer outcrops. The granite soils within the Mount are sandy to a sandy loam.

Flora and fauna

The granitic soils of Mount Alexander are fertile. Its vegetation has undergone major change since the arrival of Europeans, though clearance and also through the introduction of species and eradication of plants through grazing.

Much of the native timber of Mount Alexander was removed last century. The regenerating forest of Messmate, Manna Gum, Long-Leaf Box, Yellow Box, Blackwood, Golden Wattle and Black Wattle has originated from remnant pockets of native vegetation after the pressures of grazing were removed. The revegetation process has been hampered by drought, e.g., in1982-83 many trees died, especially on the western slopes of the mountain.

The Park contains several rare or endangered plants, namely Ballantinia, Swamp Diuris and Purple Diuris. The conservation of the Ballantinia is vital as it is listed as threatened under Schedule 2 of the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1998 (Vic).

The plantation, although heavily modified, does contain Dianella tarda, Late-flower Flax-lily present throughout the area and also possibly Dianella sp. aff. longifolia (Benambra), Arching Flax-lily. These species are VROT listed 'vulnerable' and should be considered in relation to track and site development.

The park also contains a range of habitats for wildlife. Three fauna species have been recorded as being rare or vulnerable in the Park. These are the Powerful Owl, Grey-crowned Babbler and Tuan.

Mount Alexander has a rabbit population but has weed infestations including St Johns Wart and blackberries.

CULTURAL HERITAGE

Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006

In Victoria, Aboriginal cultural heritage is protected by the *Aboriginal Heritage Act* 2006 (the Act) and the accompanying *Aboriginal Heritage Regulations* 2007 (the Regulations). All Aboriginal cultural heritage sites, places and objects are protected by the Act whether or not they have been previously identified. Under s. 27 of the Act it is an offence to knowingly, recklessly or negligently damage Aboriginal cultural heritage. Under s.28 of the Act it is an offence to do an act that is likely to harm Aboriginal cultural heritage.

The Regulations (Division 3) defines areas of Aboriginal cultural heritage sensitivity, which includes anywhere:

- within 50 m of a registered site
- within 200 m of a named waterway, and
- caves, rock shelters and cave entrances are also considered as areas of cultural heritage sensitivity.

Areas of cultural heritage sensitivity are used to define whether a cultural heritage management plan (CHMP) is necessary in advance of certain activities that cause ground disturbance. In accordance with the Act and the Regulations, the preparation of a CHMP is mandatory if:

- all or part of the activity is a high impact activity, and
- all or part of the study area for the activity is an area of cultural heritage sensitivity.

High impact activities are defined in Division 5 of the Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2007. This includes any disturbance of the ground or waterway by machinery in the course of grading, excavating, diggings or deep ripping (to a depth of 60cm or more). In the evaluation of high impact activities, the matter of any prior significant ground disturbance is taken into consideration.

Implications for pine plantation

(1) The online Aboriginal Sensitive Zone mapping shows there are two Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register sites/Sensitivity Zones that have an impact on the current feasibility study (See Map 4). One is located within the Mount Alexander Regional Park; the other is just within the boundary of the pine plantation. Under provisions of the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 areas of Aboriginal cultural sensitivity includes anywhere 50m of a registered site.

Recommendation 1 —the required 50m radius zones be established as no go zones.

(2) Also a recent survey for Aboriginal sites on the adjoining Mount Alexander Regional Park made a prediction that stone scatters are more likely to be found in two areas which should borne in mind in respect to the track corridors. These predictions were:
    - North-south: at a high elevation (close to crests, and especially at the top of the escarpment), on flat or gently sloping ground, and close to the escarpment – places which provide views and access.
    - East- west: along saddles between higher ground

Recommendation 2 —taking heed of the predicted likely locations (that is, adopting a strategy of avoidance or building upon the surface, rather than excavation) should minimise impacts and ensure compliance

Heritage Act 1995

The purpose of the Heritage Act is to provide for the protection and conservation of places and objects of cultural heritage significance and the registration of such places and objects; to establish a Heritage Council; and to establish the Victorian Heritage Register and Heritage Inventory.

Victorian Heritage Register

A list of heritage places and objects that have been determined to be of significance to the State of Victoria.

Implications for pine plantation

There are no places within the pine plantation lease area listed on the Victorian Heritage Register. There are two places in the adjoining Park – Blights Quarry and Silkworm Farm

Heritage Inventory

All historical archaeological sites in Victoria older than 50 years are protected under the Heritage Act, regardless if they are recorded by Heritage Victoria. For example, if a site is uncovered in the course of a construction project, it is an offence to knowingly disturb it without obtaining the appropriate Consent from Heritage Victoria.

The Heritage Act says that an archaeological site must relate to the non-Aboriginal settlement or visitation of the state and be 50 or more years old. In addition the key word in the Heritage Act definition talks about the word "deposit". So, in determining whether a place or feature or site is eligible for protection under the Archaeology section (Part 6) of the Act, it is important that it contains some form of deposit. Heritage Victoria advises that this is currently interpreted to mean that:

- It is likely to have a significant below-ground component
- There must be some sort of accumulated deposit that will probably relate to the previous occupation/use of the site;
- The nature/condition of the deposit is such that its investigation might give us more information about the use/nature of the place. The skills of an archaeologist (such as excavation or detailed survey) might contribute to our understanding of the place

Implications for pine plantation

There are two archaeological sites listed on the Heritage Inventory within the plantation, these being:

- Hermes no 8567 (H7724-0267) Harcourt Oak Plantation - not an issue as the mountain bike park will not touch this area. It is to remain a local picnic spot
- Hermes No, 8251 (H7723-0636) Picnic Gully Road house site (258400 5901550) - just recorded as stumps of removed timber house and remnant garden and considered to be a site of having little significance. (See Map 5)
- Old Harcourt Granite Quarry: The granite quarry nearby in the lease area is not a listed archaeological site and is considered to have little historical value. The quarry was reworked in recent times – stripped of its good stone and now mainly comprises waste rock. (See Map 6)
- The other historic site in the pine plantation is Target Rock. It is not a listed archaeological site but locally known. The site presents a bit of history to incorporate into the track network. (See Map 7)

Local Government level

Local government in Victoria is required to implement the objectives of planning as set out in the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*. These include:

- To provide for the protection of natural and man-made resources and the maintenance of ecological processes and genetic diversity.
- To conserve and enhance those buildings, areas or other places which are of scientific, aesthetic, architectural or historical interest, or otherwise of special cultural value.

A planning scheme is a statutory document which sets out objectives, policies and provisions relating to the use, development, protection and conservation of land in the area to which it applies.
Each local government area in Victoria, and some special planning areas, is covered by a planning scheme. A planning scheme may include a Heritage Overlay, which is the planning tool used to identify, conserve and enhance heritage places of natural or cultural significance within a

municipality. Other overlays that may also be used to conserve heritage places include the Significant Landscape Overlay and the Vegetation Protection Overlay.

Implications for pine plantation

There are not places listed on the Mount Alexander Planning Scheme, Heritage Overlay

LAND USE HISTORY

Ethnographic Information

Insights into the Aboriginal history of Mount Alexander and surrounds have been presented in a number of reports, including:

- Clark, Nicholas. 1995: *Trackback. Aboriginal history and archaeology in Djadja Wurrung country (Central Victoria) examining Mount Kooyoora, Mount Alexander and Mount Tarrengower*. Albert Park: Clarkeology.]
- Presland, G. (ed.) 1977: *Journals of George Augustus Robinson. January-*
- *March 1840*. Second edition. Records of the Victorian Archaeological Survey
- no. 5. Melbourne: Ministry for Conservation.
- Anderson William, Mount Alexander Aborigines Site Survey (draft), D Vincent Clark & Associates, report for Parks Victoria, May 2012
- Carr, H.A. 2002: *Bridging the Generations: the story of Harcourt*. Self published.
- Gerry Gill, Mt Barker Stone Arrangements Precinct Research Project

They suggest that Mt Alexander and Mt Barker, lying to the north, were strategic look-outs. Nicholas Clark (1995) was of the opinion that Mount Alexander was situated close to the territorial boundary between two different Aboriginal Groups - the Dja Dja Wurrung and the Daung wurrung - that were hostile to each other and are known to have been in conflict at the time of European settlement.

The explorer Major Thomas Mitchell climbed Mount Alexander in late September 1836.He was impressed by what he saw:

"I came at length upon an open valley enclosed by hills very lightly wooded. This change was evidently owing to a difference in the rock which was a fine-grained granite, whereas the hills we had recently crossed belonged chiefly to the volcanic class of rocks … The hills presented a bold sweeping outline and were no longer broken by sharp-edged strata but crowned with large round masses of rock … and lastly the timber, which on the other ranges consisted chiefly of ironbark and stringybark, now presented the shining bark of the bluegum or yarra and the grey hue of the box." (Mitchell 1839, 279)

Major Mitchell initially named the peak Mount Byng, but later gave it the name of Mount Alexander. The mountain was reportedly known in the Dja Dja Wurrung language as Lanjanuc or Lanjal (Presland 1977, 12, 22).

Squatters arrived in the area in the late 1830s. The main runs established around Mount Alexander were:

- 1838 - William Bowman and his father-in-law William Hutchinson took thousands of acres of land from the west bank of the Coliban River to the Mount Alexander Ranges [1] Later broken up into two runs: Sutton Grange and Stratford Lodge.

[1] Mount Barker Stone Arrangements Precinct, Research Project, Report on Non-Indigenous Land Use and Boundaries, July 2010, P.3

- c.1840 - James Donnithorne and Stuart Donaldson took 30,000 acres on the west side of Mount Alexander. Mount Alexander station (also known as Mount Alexander No. 1 or Bullock Creek run) was taken over by William Barker in July 1845. In 1848, William Barker was grazing 7,000 sheep. [2] The northern boundary of Barker's run was described as *running to the lowest and most eastern dip of Mount Alexander, from thence following the principal range of Mount Alexander* [The Argus 26 September 1848, P.1]

When Robinson visited the area he reported that there has been a decade of 'casual' violence against Aborigines for real or perceived crimes against white property (typically the theft of sheep). Newspaper reports support this … A *party of aborigines, about thirty-six in number, came to an outstation under Mount Alexander belonging to Mr. Henry Munro, and brandishing their spears, ordered the shepherds and watchmen into the hut. A part of their number remained at the hut door as a guard over the prisoners; the remainder drove the sheep away into the bush, and were after some time followed by the others*. [Sydney Gazette & NSW Advertiser, 8 February 1840, p. 2]

Revenge attacks were commonplace, people died on both sides, e.g., The Sydney Morning Herald in 1884 reported that an Aboriginal man *was found wounded on Mount Alexander, and died afterwards in Melbourne Hospital, supposed to have been wounded by Mr Bennett's shepherd. Who was found murdered* [Sydney Morning Herald, 29 July 1844, p. 2]

Mount Alexander is also historically linked to an important Aboriginal leader – Manungabum, His status as a warrior and mediator with the disease-bringing serpent Mindi made him an important figure at the time of European settlement (Clark 1995, 52). George Augustus Robinson, Chief Protector of Aborigines, reports that, during his stay at Monro's Station, he visited Manungabum's camp, which was positioned to the north of Mount Alexander, perhaps at the saddle between Mount Alexander and Mount Barker (Presland 1977, 24).

Gold Rush

The squatter period was short-lived, however, due to the discovery of gold on Barker's property which caused the Mount Alexander Gold Rush to commence in1851. The gold rush brought about major changes to the environment of Mount Alexander, one consequence being the felling of trees to provide timber for the burgeoning population.

Forestry (impact on both Park and Pine Plantation)

Forestry was once a significant employer in the Harcourt District. A visitor to the area in 1857 described the landscape around Harcourt as being 'park-like' with big trees dotted on grassy pastures. During 1867 Robert 'Redgum' Barbour set up sawmill at Harcourt, near the railway station, part of a chain of sawmills stretching from Macedon to Moama. Barbour employed teams of tree-fellers and sawyers to work in the bush. He had a ready market for timber to be used as wharf piles, mine timbers and railway sleepers, both in Victoria and for export. Using axes, maul, wedges and crosscut saws, the timber getters worked in cooperation with the early settlers, who wished to clear the big trees off their land to establish apple orchards. Timber was also taken to fuel steam engine boilers.

In 1870, William Ferguson, Inspector of Forests, reported that Mount Alexander and its adjoining ranges were almost entirely denuded of timber. He urged the protection of and growth of indigenous trees near the goldfields. If this proved impossible he recommended plantings of non-indigenous trees in order that a constant supply of timber would be readily obtainable. [Harcourt Community website]

[2] Mount Barker Stone Arrangements Precinct, Research Project, Report on Non-Indigenous Land Use and Boundaries, July 2010, P.6

Food bowl (impact in Harcourt Valley)

Another impact of the gold rush on the Harcourt valley was turning it into a food bowl.

Harcourt had fertile soils. One of the first to recognise this was Samuel Sutton, who arrived in 1853 and started a garden. At first he grew vegetables, which were carted to Castlemaine in a dray for sale to the diggers in Castlemaine's market buildings. Afterwards he grew fruit trees and proved the land suitable for fruit growing. Land for the first commercial orchards was cleared and planted by Nathaniel Vick, Henry Ely, William Ely and William Eagle in 1859. The Lang family were also early orchardists. These families helped pioneer an industry, e.g., the Lang family were exporting fruit to Britain by the 1880s. Harcourt's fruit industry still thrives with Harcourt proudly signposted as "The Apple Centre of Victoria". [George Milford]

Granite Quarrying (Park and Pine Plantation)

In the early 1860s granite quarry commenced on Mount Alexander. Stone quarrying involved such activities as drilling, hammering, digging, turning cranes, pushing carts, splitting rock, carting and blacksmithing. It began on Mount Alexander in response to the construction of the Melbourne to Bendigo railway. Supply initially consisted of stone split from the many exposed surface boulders on the mountain. This surface stone supplied sufficient material to build the local railway bridges, viaducts and platforms.

Sub-surface quarrying of granite on Mount Alexander commenced with the activities of Joseph Blight. Having become a gold miner on the Eureka Reef, near Chewton, he ventured back into his old quarrying profession. While Joseph supplied granite for the railway, it was not until 1862 that he began to work the area to be known at 'Blights quarry'. Soon Joseph Blight was exporting stone as far away as Europe

It was not until 1928 that another significant quarry was established on Mount Alexander - the Harcourt Granite quarry. This was followed in the 1940's by several others including Tingay & Oliver, Lodge Brothers, Vescovy & Hendersons, Giannarelli, and Laytons. The old technology was replaced by new including motorised engines, pneumatic drills, gang saws, trucks, and cranes powered by diesel or electricity replaced the use of hand wound cranes. Stone extraction continues to this day, though on a tiny scale; most quarries are now abandoned.

Silkworms (Park)

Mount Alexander has another claim to fame, its historical association with Mrs Bladen Neill and the formation Victorian Ladies Silk Association.

Mrs Bladen Neill was an important figure in 19th century Australian agriculture. She wanted to *"astonish the most incredulous"* by showing how with minimal capital outlay, profitable employment for women and children could be obtained through cottage industries. Her chosen model was silkworm farming with its basic requirements of Mulberry trees, silkworms, buildings and equipment

In 1872, the Victorian Ladies Silk Association secured a land grant of 1,000 acres at Mount Alexander from the Minister of Lands. The reserve at Mount Alexander was side aside for the purpose of sericulture.

The Castlemaine Mail (1874) described the Mount Alexander silk worm farm reserve in some details *…. A very pretty cottage has been erected for Mr and Mrs Grover, the lady manageress of the Establishments and the pupils. This is to be situated at the extreme southern end of the allotment and is surrounded by outhouses suitable for a Farm. About 100 yards west of this is erected a very commodious building, called a magnannerie, and in this the feeding and breeding of the silk worm is*

carried out. The other part of the ground is trenched and planted with white mulberry trees and cuttings of various varieties ….

By 1875 a large amount of money had been invested but by 1877 the silk worm farming enterprise was foundering. The climate was found to be unsuitable for the mulberry tree. In 1877 the mulberries were removed to cropper's lagoon, 4 miles from Corowa.

Trigonometric station (Park)

A granite cairn marking the summit was built in 1876 and serves as a trigonometric station. The Mt Alexander Cairn is one of only three examples in Victoria of mortared stone geodetic triangulation stations, the others being Mt Macedon and Warby North.

Target Rock (Pine Plantation)

Target Rock is a notable feature of the north-west slopes, marking the site of a rifle range utilised by the militia between the Boer War & World War I. Clearing of the pine trees in 1998 enabled the rock to be located again. Upon the flat vertical west face of Target Rock can still be seen the outline of a circular target – probably painted with bitumen. From 1899 this was used a target for a rifle club formed in Harcourt as a response to the outbreak of the Boer War.

Tourism (Park)

From the mid 1920s, public-spirited citizens in many parts of Victoria got together with State and local government bodies on infrastructure projects to grow and support tourism. Mount Alexander was a focus for such activities, resulting in a tourist road (Joseph Young Drive) being constructed along the ridge line, a Koala Park (old and new) established, numerous walking tracks (including West Ridge, Messmate, Leanganook and Cockatoo tracks) built, two lookouts opened up (Shepherds Flat and Langs) and the creation of the Leanganook Picnic Ground.

Mt Alexander Koala Park (Park)

In 1941 a 50 acre fenced reserve was established in Manna Gum forest at about 600 m altitude on Mt Alexander and 54 Koalas from Phillip Island were introduced. The project was heavily supported by the Castlemaine Publicity and Tourist Association and local community service clubs raised money by public subscription. By 1944 the area of the enclosure had been doubled and a further 152 Phillip Island animals were introduced. In 1947 it became necessary to begin a program of applying metal bands to the trunks of over-browsed trees to prevent Koala access, and moving the band to a different tree after the original tree had recovered. Eventually, it became necessary to reduce the population within the enclosure and 100 Koalas were liberated into the surrounding forest. [*Hunted, Marooned, Re-introduced, Contracepted: A history of Koala Management in Victoria*, Peter Menkhorst]

Oaks Picnic Area (Pine Plantation)

During the nineteenth century, Victoria massive tanning industry was based on wattle bark. Wattle bark contains high levels of tannin and was acknowledged in the nineteenth century as one of the world's best barks for use in leather tanning. The stripping of bark from wattle trees required an axe for the stripping, a heavy implement for knocking off small branches, and leather straps to tie the bark into bundles ready for transport. The method of stripping was wasteful and destructive, with only the trunk of a tree being stripped, and the process usually proved fatal to the tree.

The demand for wattle bark had a rapid and pronounced effect on the native forests. In 1878, a Wattle Bark Board of Inquiry, established to consider and report on the state of the resource, found that years of indiscriminate and unregulated stripping had brought the genus *Acacia* (or wattle) to the edge of

extinction in many places. One response to this was by the owner (George Cunnack) of a Castlemaine Tanning factory – the growing of Valonia Oak.

The Valonia Oak (*Quercus aegitops*) is one of the principal tan yielders of the world: the tannin coming from the cups of the acorn, not the seeds. During the nineteenth century, English tanning firms were importing thousands of tons of the cups from its native land, Turkey.[3] Extracts of evidence given before the Victorian Royal Commission into Vegetable Products in 1887 show that the first importation of Valonia oaks into Australia for growing locally as a commercial product was due to Mr George Cunnack, tanner, currier, and leather merchant, at Castlemaine, Victoria.[4]

In 1878, Cunnack's tannery at Winters Flat, Castlemaine, was treating about 240 hides per week and consuming about 650 tons of wattle bark per annum. Cunnack, through the introduction of the Valonia Oak sought to provide a local replacement for wattle bark (the colony's principal tanning product), as all the quality wattle trees of the Castlemaine district had been killed off by uncontrolled bark stripping.

In 1900, George Cunnack's influence was behind the establishment of a second Valonia Oak plantation at Castlemaine, when the Lands Department establish a plantation at the foot of Mount Alexander, between the property of the late Mr. P. Trevan and Picnic Gully. An area of about twenty acres was grubbed, fenced and planted with oaks of various species, as well as intermediate rows of elms to protect the oaks till sufficient height.[5]

The *Mount Alexander Mail* in July 1911 reported that the growing of Valonia Oaks in Picnic Gully had not proved successful, the growth of the trees having being very slow, with many failing to start at all. The lack of success marked down to the site chosen receiving the drainage from Mount itself, it proved to be particularly wet, and adequate drainage not being provided.[6] The lack of success had resulted in the plantation's being virtually abandoned, the government turning its silvicultural attention on Mount Alexander to clearing and planting land surrounding the oak plantation with exotic conifers.[7]

Although proving too wet for the valonia oaks other oak varieties became well established. This forest is a great example of biodiversity, with Algerian oaks, bristle-tipped oaks, cork oaks and English oak trees. Seedling oaks will most likely be crossbreeds as they result from fertilisation of the flowers by wind-blown pollen. The oak forest is a great picnic spot in summer and autumn. [Harcourt Community website]

Pine plantation

In 1910 the first pine plantation of 20,000 Radiata Pine was established south of the Oak Forest. The pines being planted eight feet apart were very striking, with rows extending for hundreds of metres in straight, even order, right up the hill. Strong demand from Harcourt fruit growers led to an expansion of the pine plantations to provide wood for packing boxes.

---

3 Maiden, J.H, *The Valonia Oaks*, Agricultural Gazette of N.S.Wales, July 1899, p.1

4 Maiden, J.H, *The Valonia Oaks*, Agricultural Gazette of N.S.Wales, July 1899, p.1

5 Mount Alexander Mail, 20/7/1911

6 Mount Alexander Mail, 20/7/1911

7 Mount Alexander Mail, 20/7/1911

Much of the Radiata Pine was purchased by the Harcourt Cooperative saw mill and case-making factory which previously had to rely on supplies of timber from outside the district. The Harcourt Cooperative saw mill and case factory (opened 1936) was located in Coolstore Road, near the railway station, producing a constant supply of pine bushel apple boxes. An adjacent sawmill was operated by the Harcourt Fruit Supply Ltd in conjunction with its packing shed. Bushel cases for transport of fruit have now been superseded by bulk bins and cardboard cartons.

Harcourt Forest Industries opened a refurbished sawmill at Harcourt in March 1980 to mill softwood for the furniture and beam market. This venture was relatively short-lived. In a further use of Radiata Pine, Howard Grant operated a pallet-making factory and sawmill on the site of the Harcourt Fruit Supply until 2006.

Communications

The mountain has a number of transmission sites including broadcast tower, Southern Cross TV site, and masts for Telstra, Optus and Victoria Police

ARCHAEOLOGY

Several archaeological investigations have focused on Mount Alexander and surrounds, including for:

Parks Victoria

- Anderson, W. 2012 Mount Alexander Aboriginal Sites Survey, Dr Vincent Clark & Associates; A report for Parks Victoria, Draft

Latrobe University, Bendigo

- Gill, G. 2011: Mt Barker Stone Arrangements Precinct Research Project. Bendigo: La Trobe University, Unpublished Report

VicRoads

- Clark, V., Murphy, A. Lane, S. and Smith J. 1999: Calder Highway Faraday to Ravenswood, Archaeological and Heritage Study, Volume One, Report to VicRoads
- Clark, V. and Howes, J. 2010: Calder Highway Faraday to Ravenswood Harcourt North Section, Results of Archaeological Monitoring During Construction. Report for VicRoads
- Clark, V. and Howes, J. 2010: Calder Highway Faraday to Ravenswood Harcourt South Section, Results of Archaeological Monitoring During Construction. Report for VicRoads
- DuCros, H. 1997: An Archaeological and Cultural Investigation of the Calder Highway, Harcourt Planning Study. Report for VicRoads
- Everett, C. and du Cros, H. 1998: An Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Investigation of the Calder Highway, Harcourt to Ravenswood corridor study. Report to VicRoads

Coliban Water

- Meara, T. and Allia, S. 2010: Castlemaine Link and Harcourt Modernization Project, Harcourt Victoria: Cultural Heritage Assessment, Volume 1: Report to Coliban Water

Telecommunications

- Murphy, A. 1994: Archaeological Survey of Proposed Optus Tower Sites: In the Outer Melbourne Region, Victoria. Report for Optus Communications Pty Ltd
- Weaver, F. 1991: The Mount Alexander Archaeology Survey. Report for Telecom Australia.

Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register

The most recent and comprehensive survey of Mount Alexander - Anderson, W. 2012 Mount Alexander Aboriginal Sites Survey, Dr Vincent Clark & Associates – identified some key matters that should be considered, these being

Listed sites
24 sites are listed on the Victorian Aboriginal Register places for Mount Alexander. All are stone scatters and are located on roads. Two of these sites have implications for the feasibility study:

- One site is just within the Park but close to the boundary, and
- The other is just within the pine plantation

Survey limitations

- Mount Alexander presents a challenging environment in which to conduct surveys - rough terrain, dense vegetation and poor visibility. This means that surveying is really limited to places where there is some level ground, which tend to be associated with paths and tracks.
- areas of the mountain have suffered significant ground disturbance through erosion and use of machinery

Stone scatter sites

- All sites recorded were flaked stone artefact scatters. Mainly two types of stone is found - quartz (locally abundant across Mt Alexander as both pebbles and embedded in other rocks) is the most common material, followed by tachylte or trachytes (vitreous basaltic rock from the Malmsbury region)
- Types and fragments and debitage indicate that stone knapping and tool manufacture were practiced at sites on the hill-top. The presence of five cores at Lang's Lookout West supports tool production

Predicted stone scatter site locations

- Natural features: an apparent correspondence between the artefact scatter and natural features in its surroundings, e.g., the granite boulders at Dog Rocks
- East-west: along saddles between higher ground
- North-south: at a high elevation (close to crests, and especially at the top of the escarpment), on flat or gently sloping ground, and close to the escarpment – places which provide views and access.

Scarred trees

- Scarred trees are unlikely to be present due to the complete clearance of vegetation on the mountain by 1870s, e.g., the inspection of two of the six previously recorded scarred trees found that these do not bear cultural markings [8]

Drinking wells

- Possible. Some circular depressions in granite outcrops might, however, have been created or enlarged to be used as basins or wells for water storage. The possible rock wells raise the issue of distinguishing between natural and cultural elements of the landscape [9]

8 Anderson, W. 2012 Mount Alexander Aboriginal Sites Survey, Dr Vincent Clark & Associates; A report for Parks Victoria (Draft), p.43

9 Anderson, W. 2012 Mount Alexander Aboriginal Sites Survey, Dr Vincent Clark & Associates; A report for Parks Victoria (Draft), p.43

Recommendation

- Investigation—Should any works be undertaken that involve ground disturbance such as path clearance - it is recommended that the affected area should be investigated for the presence of cultural remains prior to the works commencing [10]
- Mitigation—modifications to existing tracks and any new sections or diversions will have minimal impacts through the use of utilising existing animal tracks, depositing track material rather than any excavating, and utilising rock features/logs as much as possible.

HERITAGE IMPACT STATEMENT

Current use of the place - *description of the current use/proposed uses*

Existing condition of the registered place - *brief summary of the existing condition*

Cultural heritage significance of the place

What physical and/or visual impact will result from the proposed works? i.e.: what will be the effect on the cultural heritage significance of the place

Detrimental impacts? - provide reasons why the proposal should be permitted

Has the design been influences by, or had to address any statutory provisions?

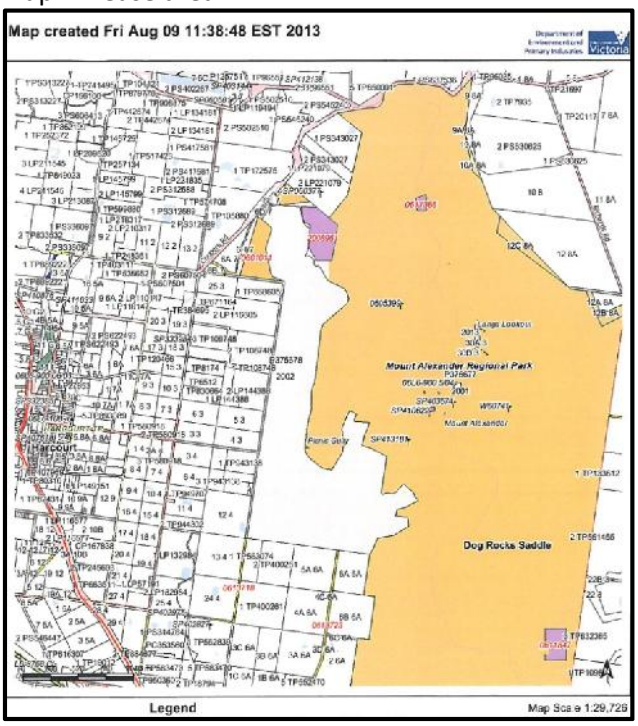
Measures are proposed to mitigate the detrimental impacts?

Conclusion

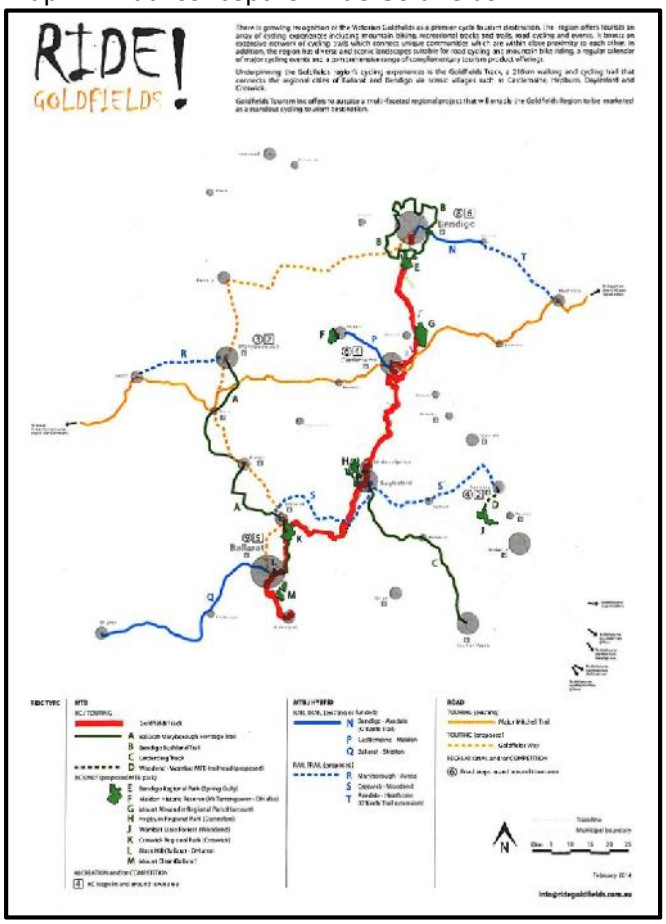
[10] Anderson, W. 2012 Mount Alexander Aboriginal Sites Survey, Dr Vincent Clark & Associates; A report for Parks Victoria (Draft), p.45

APPENDIX

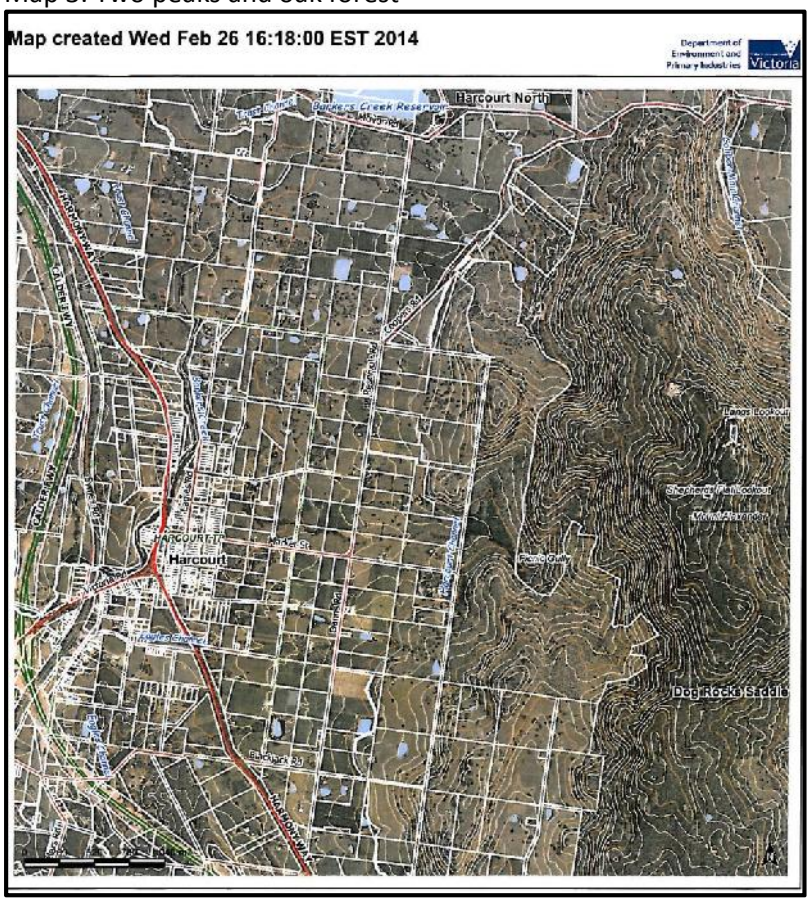
Map 1: Lease area



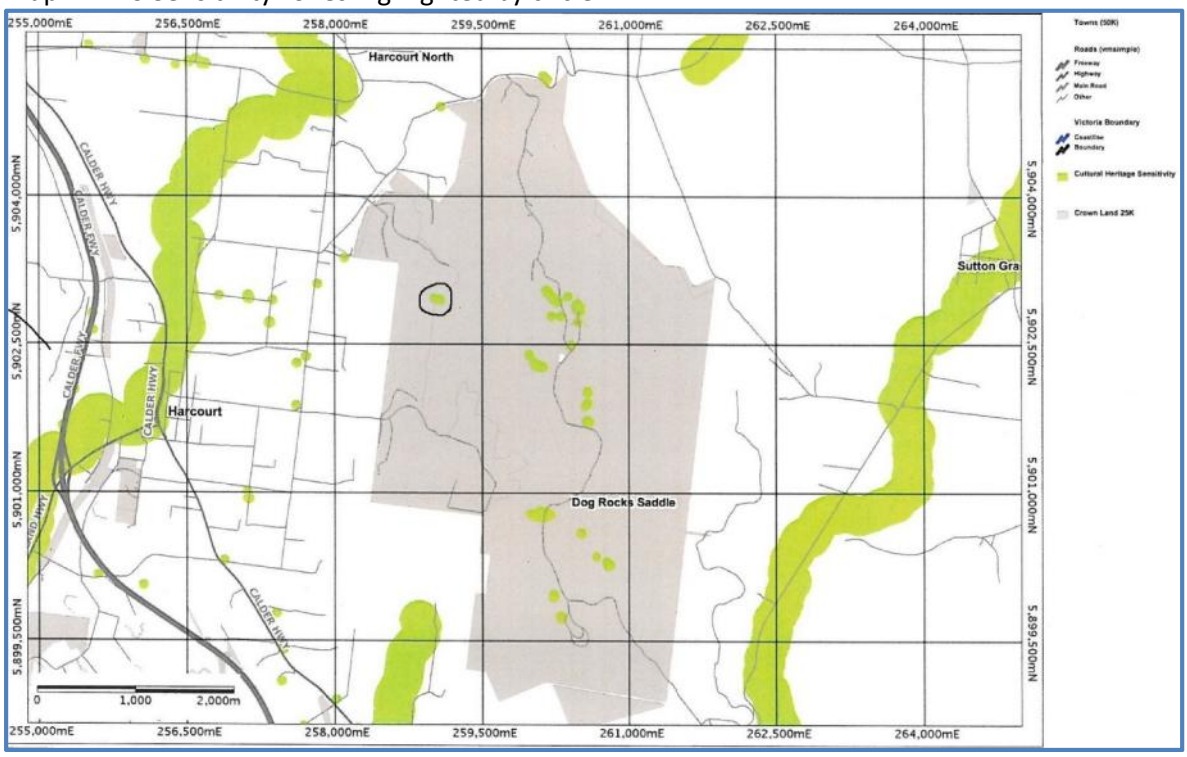
Map 2: Initial concept for Ride Goldfields



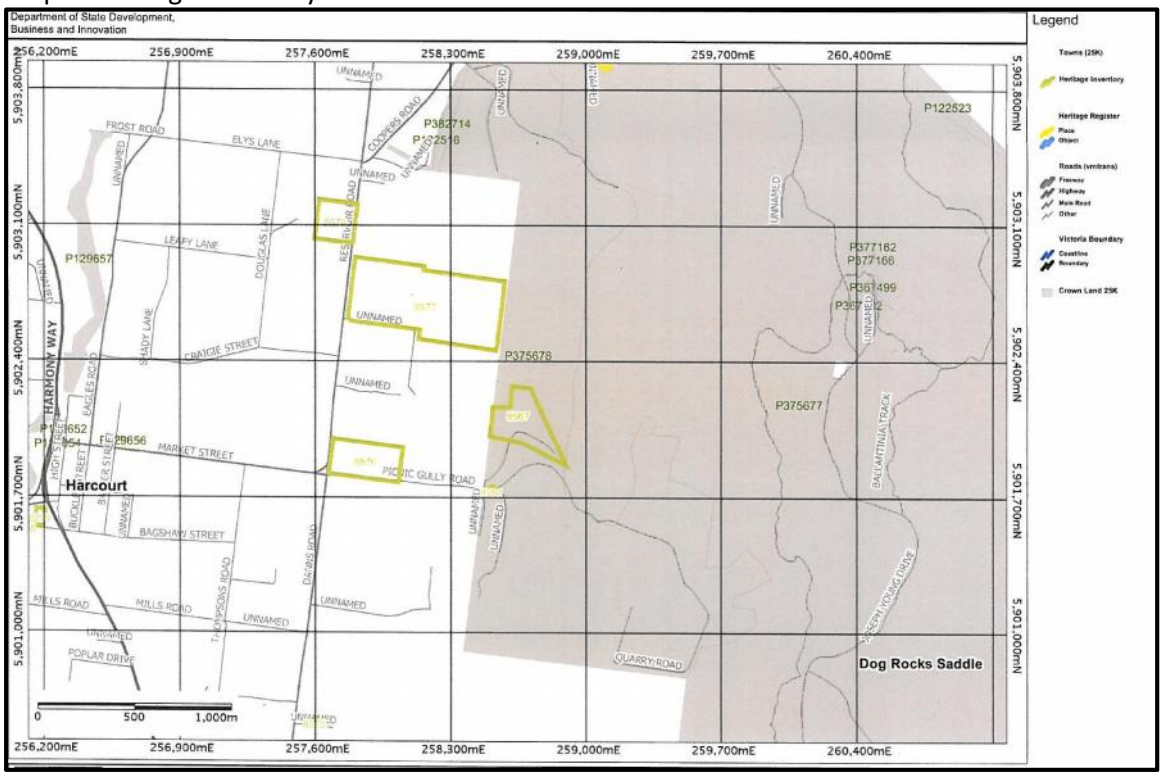
Map 3: Two peaks and oak forest



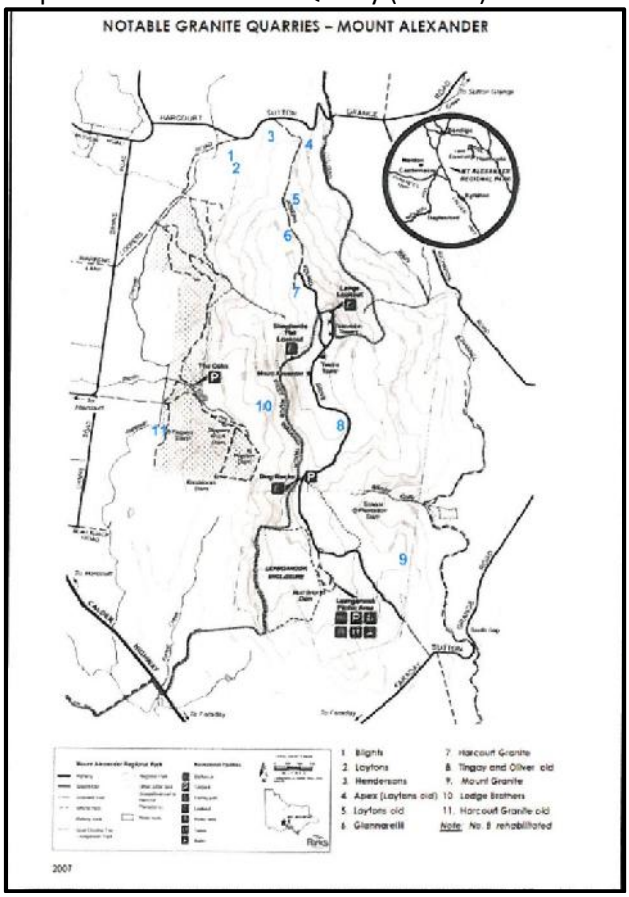
Map 4: Two Sensitivity zones highlighted by circle



Map 5: Heritage Inventory sites



Map 6: Harcourt Granite Quarry (Site 11)



MAP 7: Showing location of Target Rock