

NUMURKAH RECREATION PRECINCT

Contents

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Numurkah Recreation PRECINCT

LOCATION	87
• Precinct Boundaries and Map	88
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	89
• List of Culturally Significant Places	89
• Historical Context	90
PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION	93
• Urban Design, Views and Foci	93
• Culturally Significant Places	93
STATEMENT OF CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE	95
References:	96

NUMURKAH RECREATION PRECINCT

LOCATION

Precinct Boundaries And Map

The heart of the Recreation Precinct is the Numurkah Showgrounds and recreation reserve on the southeast of Broken Creek. The boundary of the precinct extends along the roadway west of Broken Creek, south over the road bridge and east along the Boulevard and Tunnock Road, and north along the showgrounds reserve. Refer to the map in Fig 1 for the boundary details.



Fig. 1 Map of Numurkah Recreation Precinct with location of some of the 14 significant places marked with red dots. Refer to the photo list of these places in the appendix.

NUMURKAH RECREATION PRECINCT

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Table One: List of Culturally Significant Places, their location , database number and historical context. Source Lorraine Huddle Pty Ltd 2006.

<i>Period</i>	<i>Associated Historical Themes</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Extant Places within the Numurkah Recreation Precinct</i>	<i>Location</i>
Victorian 1880s to 1900	Early agricultural development; Farmers settle the district.	1882	Show Yards/ Grounds reserved	Showgrounds
		1883	Footbridge and views to and from it.	Broken Creek
	Development of local institutions.	1891	Grandstand (Dem?)	Showgrounds
	Infrastructure: Railways open 1881. Water tank, tower, engine-house and settling tanks built.	1888	Water Tower and views to it.	Water Reserve West side of Broken Creek
Interwar 1920s-30s	Consolidation of cultural/ commercial institutions.	1923	Pig House	Showgrounds
		1929	Memorial Arch and Gates and views to them.	Showgrounds
Post War period 1946 - 1960s	Immigration; Soldier Settlement; improved irrigation and influx of new farmers, esp. dairying and fruit increases.	1954	Larger Trotting Track	Showgrounds
		1955	Trees in cattle area	Showgrounds
		1956	North Toilet Block	Showgrounds
		1959	Findlay Pavillion	Showgrounds
		1965	Sheep Pavillion	Showgrounds
Late 20 th C.		1975	Cattle Pavillion	Showgrounds
		1976	Poultry Pavillion	Showgrounds
		1977	Art and Craft Pavillion	Showgrounds
		c1980s	Apex park.	Brenion Street

NUMURKAH RECREATION PRECINCT

HISTORICAL CONTEXT¹

The showgrounds and reserves themselves contain several structures association with the cultural and recreational life of the town and its vicinity. This is particularly evident through the ground's historical association with the Numurkah Agricultural and Pastoral Society and with the notable individuals who, through their involvement with the Society were of significant influence in the economic development of the local area.

The area was thus long associated with agricultural activity. In the 1870s and 1880s the lands on the right bank of Broken Creek were also associated with Chinese market gardeners, who were driven from the town in the 1890s by harsher colonial immigration restrictions and 'anti-Chinese' laws.

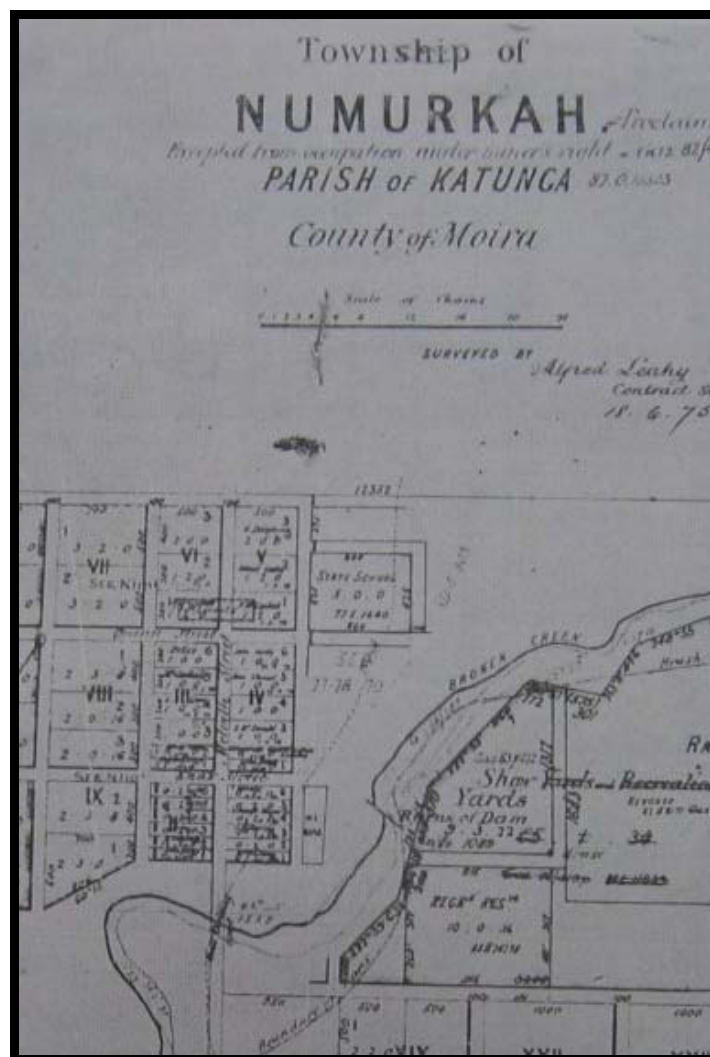


Fig 2: 1875 Town Survey Map showing the allotment for the Show Yards marked in at a later date. Note the "Ruins of Dam" in the approximate location of the timber footbridge. Source: Back-To-Committee 1970.

Numurkah is in the Parishes of Katunga and Drumanure and in 1994 was the administrative centre of the former Shire of Numurkah. The town was surveyed and proclaimed in 1875 (above). Population figures recorded for Numurkah show a dramatic increase in the 1880s following the opening of the Shepparton to Numurkah railway line in 1881 and extensions in 1888 to Cobram and Picola, and a further significant increase with the post World War II Soldier Settlement in the area: 96 (1881), 1,011 (1891), 1,174 (1901), 1,519 (1947), 2,658 (1976) and 3,128 (1991). The major periods of development in the Numurkah coincided with the main periods of population growth in the 1880s to early 1900s and during the postwar period.

Numurkah initially relied on the lagoon in Baala Creek and a well on the south-west corner of Quinn and Gray Streets outside the Bible Christian parsonage. The lagoon was often dry, however the construction of a weir at Dunbulbalane in 1887 by the Yarrawonga Waterworks Trust diverted water from Broken Creek into Baala Creek. In October 1888 tenders were called for a water tank, tower, engine-house and settling tanks at Numurkah. The 70-foot tower was constructed with 70,000 bricks and iron tank on top. In the meantime the Shire engineer had set up a steam pump on the bank of the lagoon. In 1892 the Numurkah Shire Waterworks Trust was established as a separate entity to the Shepparton Shire Trust.

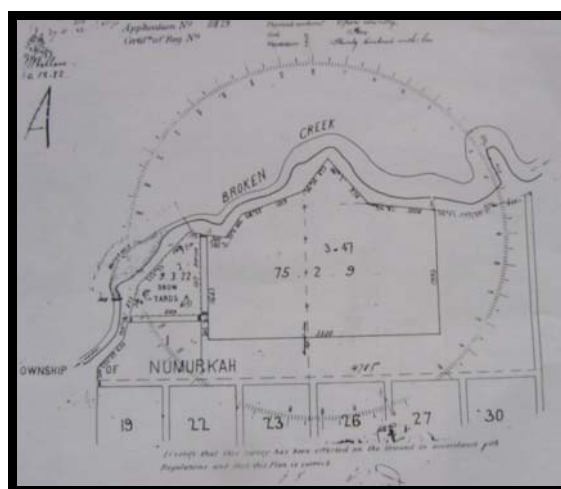


Fig. 3. 1882 Map setting out boundaries of Numurkah Recreation Reserve. Source: Land & Its People

NUMURKAH RECREATION PRECINCT

THE A&P SOCIETY SHOWGROUNDS

The first agricultural and pastoral show to be held at the show yards was in 1882, the year in which the yards were opened, only a year after the Society first petitioned the government for the land to be set aside for that purpose. The initial pegged land was deemed inadequate and the reserve was expanded to its full 23 acres in 1887.³ The first show included a horse parade, establishing early on the grounds association with the horse as well as with pastoral and agricultural activities.

A grandstand is first mentioned at the 1891 show, which was attended by the governor Earl Hopetoun.

The grounds witnessed a period of increased recreational and cultural investment in the 1920s. In 1923 the Numurkah Football Club took a ten year lease on the grounds, testifying to the site's ongoing association with recreational activity. In 1929 the memorial gates were opened by Dr Harbison. Now known as the A&P Society Gates, they were erected in memory of Thomas Thornton, secretary of the Society during 1906-8, following his death in 1926. The gates were donated by the Thornton Brothers, his sons, and presented by James Williams who was at the time the sole survivor of the original trustees.⁴ The show that year was opened by Robert Menzies, then state agricultural minister. The memorial gates are thus significant as markers of the importance of the Society and of agriculture generally in the development of Numurkah, but also through their close association with significant individuals in the history of the area.



Figs 4 and 5. The A&P Society Memorial Gates 1929. Source: Lorraine Huddle & Ian Wright 2003.

The grounds were also the site of cultural events important in the life of the local community, such as the Back-To Jubilee Show of 1933.

The ground witnessed another period of development in the post war period. In 1949 the grandstand was shifted and 'many large pepper trees' and sugargums were removed along with the resurfacing of the oval. The trotting track was also enlarged in 1954. While the exact date of planting is not known, the fact that the pepper trees were already large in 1949 is testament to the age of the survivors. However it is known that further trees were planted in the cattle area in 1955.

NUMURKAH RECREATION PRECINCT

In 1959 the toilet block was constructed in the northern end of the grounds, and in 1959 the Findlay Pavillion cost £816. A further listing of the principal structures and their associated historical influences are outlined in Table One.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

URBAN DESIGN, VIEWS AND FOCI

Very important views and foci in this precinct have been created by the careful design of utilities such as the water tower and footbridge within the natural features of the river and trees in the precinct.

Figure 6 below illustrates this point. Other important views include but are not limited to views of the entry gateway to the showground's.



Fig. 6 The wooden footbridge across Broken Creek links the Showground's with the town centre. The water tower was built in 1888 but a footbridge was first built on the site in 1883.⁵ Source: Ian Wight 2003.

The importance of large mature trees to create and enhance views of important landmarks such as the river, water town, entry to the showground's, and as a backdrop along the river and the showground's is paramount.

Early pioneers and residents of Numurkah planted hundreds of shady trees, such as kurrajongs, pepper trees, and sugar gums, to provide relief from the heat as well as beautifying the flat bare streets and other development sites such as the show grounds. It was noted in 1942 that "the streets are all well kept and most

NUMURKAH RECREATION PRECINCT

of them are planted with shapely trees.⁶



Fig 7. An early view from the water tower. This view illustrates the importance of trees for improving the views and amenity of the streets. Note the trees have protective fences around each tree. Source. SLV.

However, with the introduction of timber poles to hold electricity wires, increasing numbers of cars, and the lack of commitment to the ongoing maintenance of living trees, the fundraising and voluntary efforts of the early settlers have been steadily erased and the streets and showground's are mostly bare without protection for residents and visitors, from the damaging UV light from the sun. By 1949 many of the large pepper trees and sugar gum trees in the showground's were destroyed and this trend has continued until very recently.

One priceless consequence has been a reduction in visual qualities such as picturesque views, skylines and the beauty of individual trees.



Fig 8. View of large mature pepper trees around a country showground's, illustrating the possible view of those in Numurkah prior to their removal. Source: Lorraine Huddle Pty Ltd 2005.

NUMURKAH RECREATION PRECINCT

STATEMENT OF CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE⁷

Numurkah Recreation Precinct

The history and description, which precedes this Statement of Cultural Significance, is the source of evidence for the statement below.

The **Numurkah Recreation Precinct** is **aesthetically significant** at the **LOCAL** level (AHC criteria D.2, E.1). It demonstrates many original and early design qualities associated with the recreational and water infrastructure development of Numurkah, between the 1880s and 1950s. These include the 1882 showgrounds, c1883 footbridge over Broken Creek, 1888 brick water tower, the 1929 A&P Society Memorial entry arch and gates to the Numurkah Show Grounds, the Apex Park, and historic trees associated with the beautification of the area. The area is enhanced by several several views to and from the features above.

The **Numurkah Recreation Precinct** is **historically and socially significant** on a **LOCAL** level, (AHC **A.4, G.1, H.1**) (AHC **A.4**) The Showgrounds are important for its close association with the agricultural, cultural and economic development of the community from its inception in 1882 to the present day. They are also associated with the Agricultural and Pastoral Society and is linked thereby to a significant group and individuals who were important in the historical shaping of the area. (AHC **H.1**) and as a site of ongoing recreational and cultural activity, it is also of recognised community significance in developing cultural and commercial life as well as being interwoven with the history of Numurkah (AHC **G.1**). It contains sites and structures that are socially and historically significant on a local level, particularly A&P Memorial arch and gates, that played an important role in the history of the area within the precinct. (AHC **A.4, D2**)

The **Numurkah Recreation Precinct** is **scientifically significant on a LOCAL level (Criteria C2, F1)**. The materials and workmanship seen in the significant timber bridge and brick and iron water tower infrastructure are technically important and increasingly rare examples in Numurkah.

Overall, the Numurkah Recreation Precinct is culturally significant at the LOCAL level.

NUMURKAH RECREATION PRECINCT

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- 1 Incorporating material from *Moira Shire Thematic Environmental History*. Sources: *VMD*, 1994, p. 649; Watson, *Forgotten Towns*, p. 347; *Vision and Realisation*, Vol. 3. pp. 799, 866-7; *VMD*, various years - see Appendix A; Gazetteer of Australian Cities; Wise's Victoria Post Office Directory 1884-1885, 1888-1889; Bossence, *Numurkah*, pp. 97, 105, 119-21, 146, 155, 334-5, 341-3; Plan of Township of Numurkah, 1918. Source: State Library of Victoria, Maps collection; Baragwanath, Pam, *If The Walls Could Speak : A Social History of the Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria*, Mechanics Institute Inc., Windsor, 2000, p. 221; Challinger, *Historic Court Houses of Victoria*, p. 147; Clark, Ian & Heydon, Toby, *Aboriginal Placenames of Victoria*, Database on CD-Rom, Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages, Melbourne, 2002.
- 2 *Municipal Directory of Victoria* 1901.
- 3 *Land and Its People*, p.4.
- 4 *Land and Its People*, p.17.
- 5 Bossence, *Numurkah*, p.20.
- 6 *Numurkah Leader*, 22 September 1942.
- 7 Definitions used are from the Burra Charter 1999; historical themes relate to the Principal Australian Themes – Australian Heritage Commission; criteria for Locally Significant places are from the Australian Heritage Commission and in the case of State Significant places, from Heritage Victoria; levels of significance used are State and Local, which directly relate to the two legislative authorities who administer the protection of heritage places, the State Government and Local Government respectively