

DRAFT
FOR PUBLIC DISCUSSION
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WANDILIGONG
HERITAGE STUDY



"The Poplars", Wandiligong – image © State Library of Victoria

STAGE 2
ALPINE SHIRE HERITAGE STUDY

June 2008

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For:

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Wandiligong Heritage Study was prepared by Rob Kaufman, LRGM-Services, Heritage Consultants and Deborah Kemp, Heritage Advisor, and funded jointly by the Alpine Shire and Heritage Victoria. This report is a Heritage Study and not a Conservation Management Plan for Wandiligong. It was funded as a separate study within Stage 2 of the Alpine Shire Heritage Study because of complexities identified in Stage 1.

1.2 OBJECTIVES & METHODOLOGY

The objectives of this heritage study are to:

- Provide detailed analysis and assessment of the historic landscape of Wandiligong;
- Examine the present heritage controls over Wandiligong, assess performance, and provide advice or options for;
- Assess new places that were identified at Wandiligong in Stage 1 of the Alpine Shire Heritage Study (2004) at Wandiligong, and moved forward to Stage 2.

On agreement with Heritage Victoria and Alpine Shire, this study will not review the individual places currently included in the Alpine Shire Heritage Overlay, because of budgetary and time constraints. The study will naturally take on board previous studies to provide additional data for historic landscape analysis, but the primary aim will be to provide an objective analysis and assessment of the historic landscape as it exists now. Because Wandiligong has evolved rapidly in modern times, descriptions are sometimes at variance with those of previous studies.

1.3 STUDY AREA

Definition

For purposes of landscape analysis, the Study Area has been defined as per extent of listing of Wandiligong Valley in the Register of the National Estate. That is, about 12,000ha, extending to the ridge lines on either side of the valley and extending upstream from the Wandiligong township for 16km and downstream for 2km. For practical purposes, most concentration has been on the area in and around the township and extending a short distance upstream and downstream.

For purposes of review and assessment of Heritage controls, the Study area has been defined as the land within HO83, as marked on Map No 18HO, Alpine Planning Scheme.

A locality plan using satellite imagery has been included in Appendix 2.

1.4 METHODOLOGY

The methodology followed in the preparation of this report acknowledged that good planning decisions can only be made on the basis of a good understanding. The methodology followed was:

- Accumulation of relevant historical information charting the development of the study area. This included archival material (written documentation, plans), newspaper articles, recent published material, and historical photography.
- Accumulation of relevant contextual and comparative data.
- Detailed in-the-field examination.
- Preparation of summary contextual histories to provide a framework for understanding the place.
- Preparation of summary histories of the place, sufficient for significance assessment.
- Compilation of relevant comparative data, sufficient for significance assessment.
- Review of present planning structures.
- Heritage analysis leading to Planning Scheme recommendations.

1.5 PREVIOUS HERITAGE STUDIES

- *Background Report* (September 1975), National Trust of Australia (Victoria).
- *Notes on the Wandiligong Valley* (May 1976), National Trust of Australia (Victoria).

1.6 HERITAGE STATUS

1.6.1 STATUTORY LISTINGS

Victorian Heritage Register

- Wandiligong Primary School, VHR No H1638
- Growlers Creek Dredge, VHR No H1303

Heritage Inventory

- Ganders Reef Mine Site, HI No H8224-0057
- Growlers Creek Reserve, HI No H8224-0061
- Oriental Reef Workings, HI No H8224-0060

Alpine Planning Scheme

- HO 38, House, CA S26, Section T, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong
- HO 39, Cottage, CA S27B, Section T, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong
- HO 40, "Hazelbrook", CA S31, Section T, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong
- HO 41, Cottage, Lot 2 LP 110326, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong
- HO 42, Cottage, Lot 5, LP 123598, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong
- HO 43, Timber cottage, Lot 1 LP 126869, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong
- HO 44, House, CA S24A, Section U, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong
- HO 45, Timber cottage, CA 8, Section 16, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong
- HO 46, Timber cottage, CA 55, Section U, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong
- HO 47, Cottage, CA 16A, Section T, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong
- HO 48, Cottage, CA 16C, Section T, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong
- HO 49, Timber cottage, CA 106A, Section U, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong
- HO 51, Former Church of England, Moses Creek Rd, Wandiligong
- HO 51, Library, Moses Creek Rd, Wandiligong
- HO 52, Brick cottage, CA 33C, Section W, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong
- HO 53, Timber cottage, CA 36A, Section U, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong
- HO 54, Timber house and early sheds, CA 37, Section U, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong
- HO 55, Former Parsonage (Uniting Church), Part CA 37A, Section U, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong
- HO 56, Uniting Church, Part CA 37A, Section U, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong
- HO 57, Timber shop and dwelling, CA 44, Section W, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong
- HO 58, Former General Store, CA's 46 & 47, Section U, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong
- HO 59, "Nut Cottage", CA 53, Section W, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong
- HO 60, "Until", CA 68A, Section U, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong
- HO 61, Former Post Office, CA 75, Section W, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong
- HO 62, "Red Ruth", CA 77, Section U, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong
- HO 63, MUIOUF Hall, CA 83A, Section, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong
- HO 64, House, CA 91, Section W, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong
- HO 65, House, CA 98, Section U, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong
- HO 66, House, CA 101, Section W, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong
- HO 67, "Mill Cottage", CA 101A, Section W, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong
- HO 68, "Coburn Villa", CA 102L, Section W, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong

- HO 69, General Store, Lot 1 LP 124546, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong
- HO 70, Brick cottage, PC 160814, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong
- HO 71, “Cora Linn”, CA2, Section W, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong
- HO 72, Primary School No 275, School Rd, Wandiligong
- HO 73, Former Police Residence, CA 8C, Section U, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong
- HO 74, Timber cottage, CA 16, Section U, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong
- HO 75, Former Roman Catholic Church (St Peters), CA 42A, Section U, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong
- HO 76, “The Nut House”, CA S38C, Section U, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong
- HO 77, Cottage, CA 85, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong
- HO 78, Cottage, CA S25A, Section T, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong
- HO 79, Cottage, CA 102H, Section T, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong
- HO 80, “Glenora”, CA 34, Section U, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong
- HO 81, “Claremont”, CA 51, Section U, Parish of Bright, Wandiligong
- HO 82, Growlers Gold Bucket Dredge Site, Wandiligong
- HO 83, Wandiligong, as shown on Map 18H

1.6.2 NON-STATUTORY LISTINGS

Register of the National Estate

- Holy Trinity Church (former), Place ID 14317, Indicative Place
- Primary School No 275, Place ID 15554, Indicative Place
- Wandiligong Valley, Place ID 4580, Indicative Place

Register of the National Trust of Australia (Victoria)

- Wandiligong Valley, File No L10237
- Primary School No 275 – Wandiligong, File No B708
- Populus Nigra ‘Italica’ (Lombardy Poplar), File No T11399
- Church of England, File No ?
- MU Hall (recorded?)
- (Bandstand – Wandiligong, File No B3363 - file only)

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SUMMARY HISTORIES

2.1 CONTEXT HISTORIES

From draft Thematic Environmental History, Alpine Shire, LRGM-Services, 2004

2.1.1 GOLD IN VICTORIA

In just 10 years from the discovery of gold in 1851, the fledgling Colony of Victoria was turned from essentially a rural backwater into the most powerful and populous colony in Australia. The world came to the Victorian bush, and the colony's population increased sevenfold in that period. The impact of gold in regional Victoria was enormous, overlaying the sparse squatting occupation of the land with a robust network of towns, roads and farms.

2.1.2 GOLD IN THE ALPINE SHIRE

Wandiligong is a gold town, and the context in which it arose is important in understanding its formative years. The rich gold discoveries in Central Victoria in 1851 turned the young Colony of Victoria's attentions to the yellow metal, and further discoveries in most parts of the Colony followed rapidly. Early gold exploration and discovery within the area of the Alpine Shire is not well recorded, and no rewards were paid for any discoveries. However, prospectors opened up the upper valleys and mountain areas of the Shire, and were the vanguard of all the significant mining enterprise that followed within the Shire.

The following rough chronology illustrates the broader patterns of the progression of gold discoveries through the Shire, and region.¹

- *Beechworth: Gold was discovered in early 1852, and subsequent rushes brought large European populations into the region for the first time. The Omeo goldfield on the other side of the Divide was discovered at the end of 1851.*
- *Many new gold discoveries followed, with miners moving out of Beechworth into the surrounding districts. Traffic between Beechworth and Omeo via the high country began from 1852, and Government officials attempted to blaze tracks over Mt Hotham in 1852 and 1854.*
- *The first mention of prospecting in the Alpine Shire area was April 1852, when a party of Turon miners was leaving Wangaratta for the "Buffalo and Snowy Mountains", and there were hints that this party had found gold there before.*
- *Gold was discovered in the Cobungra River early in 1852, from the Gippsland side, by Dr Hedley of Port Albert. This followed on from discoveries at Omeo. It is not known if the first discovery was in Shire. The upper river, within the Alpine Shire, was rushed in 1859.*

- *John de Bromley was reputed to have found a gold-bearing reef at Harrietville in 1852. This is a long-standing oral tradition in the area, but its reliability is not known.*
- *1853: In January, the Ovens River, up to the sources of its tributary creeks, was recognised as auriferous. 'A considerable number of miners' were said to be at work in the gullies of the Buffalo Ranges. A prospecting party was leaving Beechworth for tour of inspection into the ranges². Sometime between August and October 1853, Pardoe & party discovered rich Buckland River field, leading to a rush of some 6000 to 8000 diggers in late 1853. In October, prospecting was being carried out at Happy Valley Ck, and between that creek and Barwidgee Creek. In November, a party from Beechworth prospected up the Buffalo River to the head of the King River. Some poor gold was later worked in patches along the upper reaches of the Buffalo River.*
- *1854: In January, gold was being worked in vicinity of Bright³. In March, the first mention of workings in vicinity of Wandiligong (Growlers Creek) were made⁴. In July, Riley's (Reform) Reef discovery was reported. In October, a new field was reported on the Ovens River, 14 miles above the junction of the Buckland River. Diggers were traversing Ovens valley, going from the Buckland to Omeo. The Upper Dargo was said to have been first prospected, by Bloomfield & party.*
- *1856: In January, 2000 diggers rushed to Happy Valley Creek. The Bluebell Reef, above what became Palmerston, or Gapsted, was discovered.*
- *1857: A new goldfield was reported on the Buffalo River.*
- *1860s: In 1860-61, gold was discovered at Running Creek, but Dixon & party were unsuccessful in claiming a reward. In 1860, Howitt found abandoned alluvial workings in the Upper Dargo, possibly those of Bloomfield. In 1861, gold was discovered and worked near Mt Fainter. In 1863 the Upper Dargo was rushed after new discoveries. In 1865, a report circulated of gold being found along the Kiewa River for 30 miles upwards of Gundowring Station.*
- *1884: The Tawonga reefs (Tawonga Goldfield) were discovered.*
- *Late-1800s: Government-sponsored Prospecting Associations are formed (eg Harrietville Prospecting Association), and mining tracks are cut by the Mines Department to facilitate access to remote fields and to stimulate prospecting.*
- *1940: The Red Robin Reef was found near Mt Loch, precipitating speculative pegging out of the Hotham Heights Goldfield, perhaps the last 'gold-rush' in Victoria.*

Mining for gold has been an important historical theme in the development of the Alpine Shire, and was the most important economic driver in the second half of the nineteenth century. While production has been significant in State terms (conservatively about 2½ million ounces), the impact of gold went far beyond simple value of production. In the post-contact era, gold brought the first significant non-indigenous populations into the area, resulting in township formation in the Ovens valley, and rapid intensification of agriculture to supply the goldfields population. From a population of no more than a few score at the start of 1852, the number of people within the area of the Shire rose briefly to as many as 8000 at the end of 1853, as diggers poured into the Buckland valley, and formed camps along the Ovens River.

The use of Miners Right privileges to take up land for residences and for subsistence agriculture was pivotal to early township and intensive agricultural development within the Shire. At a State level, the massive boost in population led to concerted campaigns to loosen the grip of squatters on the land. The resulting land selection Acts from 1860 onwards had a great impact on the Shire, as they also did throughout regional Victoria. The miners from the Alpine Shire goldfields also played a significant part in the subsequent opening up of other goldfields in the mountains of Eastern Victoria, such as the Upper Goulburn and Crooked River fields.

2.2 SUMMARY HISTORY OF WANDILIGONG

2.2.1 ABORIGINAL OCCUPATION

While the Alpine Shire Heritage Study is by definition a post-contact study, the authors acknowledge that indigenous people occupied the Wandiligong Valley and other areas of the Alpine Shire for thousands of years before the arrival of the first Europeans. These people created pathways and camping places, and hunted and foraged in the mountains and valleys of the Shire. While much information has been lost, these people named geographic features and imbued the landscape with special cultural meanings and significance.

2.2.2 THE PASTORALISTS

Pastoral incursion into the Wandiligong Valley probably dates to the late 1840s at the earliest, even though the land formed part of earlier squatting runs. 1845 correspondence and sketch plan indicates that only Eurobin Creek, the lower reaches of the Buckland River, and both sides of the Ovens River at Porepunkah were being grazed. A sketch plan from 1849, supporting William Walker & Co's application for the Junction Run over the Ovens Valley upstream from the present position of Bright, shows detail of the valley of Morses Creek for only a short distance, and depicts the creek disappearing into "great piles of barren mountains". The company argued that William Forlonge, owner of the Wandiligong Run, used only the portion of his run in the Porepunkah area. Their application was unsuccessful. Accounts and reports of early gold discoveries on the Ovens and Buckland Rivers, curiously, make no mention of squatters upstream of Mr Hillias' run at Myrtleford, and some researchers have proposed that the Upper Ovens squatting runs were inactive at the time of gold discovery.

2.2.3 THE GOLD SEEKERS

Wandiligong was known as Growlers Creek until 1872, and was also sometimes referred to as Morses Creek upper township and Morses Creek. It appears to have had its beginnings in 1854, as an alluvial gold mining camp⁵. In 1858, Growlers Creek was described as a small diggings, inhabited by “a set of as merry fellows as ever threw care to the winds”⁶. We know little of the settlement of the mid-1850s, but given that the population appears to have been small and activity was based on alluvial gold mining, it is easy to imagine that it was more in the form of an extended mining camp, woven along the creek diggings. Alluvial mining generally attracted a transient population, and few buildings of any substance would have existed on the creek. Occupation would be predominantly under canvas. At this time, the Wandiligong diggings were relatively minor in importance within the Alpine Shire goldfields, and although occasionally described as rich, they were well eclipsed by the golden riches of the Buckland Valley, and the growing Ovens River diggings at Myrtleford, Bright, Freeburgh and Harrietville.

2.2.4 RISE AND DECLINE

Quartz mining was to transform the alluvial mining camps in the Ovens River Goldfields. Quartz mining brought with it capital, skills and steady employment, and the first township to experience the transformation was Myrtleford. Here, the opening of the Reform Hill reefs had an immediate impact, drawing township development towards the base of the hill and away from the Myrtle Creek crossing. Machinery was erected, and many diggers obtained employment on wages. In the Buckland, reefs were first opened in 1858, but early promise gave way largely to disappointment, and the industry was insufficient in the longer term to reverse the decline of the Buckland townships.

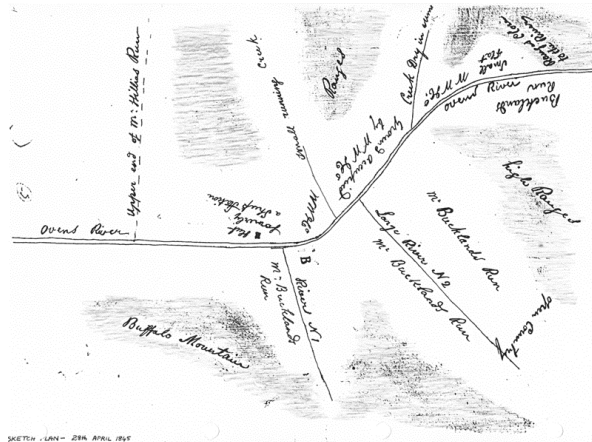
The Pioneer Reef at Bright and the Oriental Reef at Wandiligong were both discovered in 1858, and each had an impact on the adjacent settlements. A crushing mill was erected on the Pioneer in 1858, but it was rich returns from surface workings on the Oriental in late 1859 that focused attention on Wandiligong. The discovery of further rich reefs saw a rapid and massive transformation of the settlement. From 1860, it became the principal focus of commercial development in the Shire⁷, and for a number of years the largest township in the Shire. Peak mid-1860s population is sometimes quoted as high as 2500⁸. Detailed mining population figures for early 1864 show almost 1000 miners working in the vicinity of Wandiligong, later stabilising to about 600, so a township of some substance is indicated⁹. Stores, hotels and other businesses stretched along Morses Creek Road, and a number of stamp batteries (crushing mills) operated within the town. The Oriental Mine, the largest of dozens of working mines around the town, employed upwards of 200 men at its peak¹⁰.

The decline of Wandiligong was long and slow. Nevertheless, in the late 1800s the community had become well established and was very active, with social, sporting and horticultural clubs. Fruit orchards and nut groves were grown, as well as tobacco, hops and a variety of other crops. As reef mining ebbed, the population dropped from about 1100 to about 650 people between 1881 and 1891. This decline was arrested somewhat in the dredging era of the early 1900s, which provided considerable employment in the Upper Ovens and stimulated agriculture.

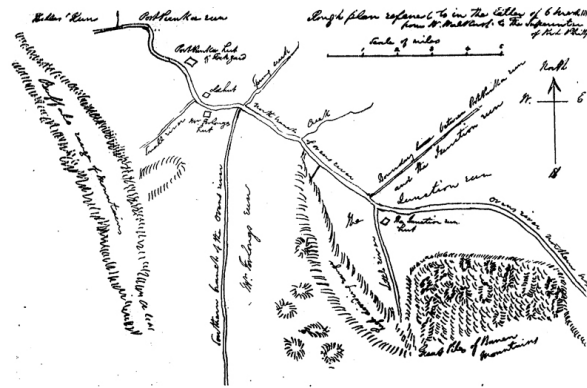
Population was around 800 in 1905, but had dropped to 685 (360?) by 1921, and gradually decreased to 132 in 1966¹¹. Modern development has seen a substantial rise in population, and new housing construction. The modern era has also seen transformation of the character of the place, from a spread out 'ghost town' of paddocks and old cottages, to a 'leafy village'.

SUMMARY OF EVOLUTION OF THE WANDILIGONG LANDSCAPE

- Pre-contact** Aboriginal camping grounds (perhaps seasonal) and hunting grounds. Hills and valley covered in mature eucalypt forest, with grassy understorey on river flats. Over thousands of years from the first arrival of man, subtle vegetation changes may have occurred, as indigenous people modified the areas that they used. Geographic features in the Wandiligong landscape would have been imbued with special cultural meanings and significance.
- Squatting era** Possible light grazing on river flats from 1849, but no firm evidence has been found that any actual grazing occurred or that structures existed in the vicinity of the present Wandiligong township area prior to the discovery of gold. Contemporary descriptions and reports of early gold discoveries in the Buckland and Ovens do not mention a squatting presence upstream of Myrtleford, and some researchers have proposed that the Upper Ovens runs were effectively abandoned in the early 1850s, even though the leases continued to be traded. Landscape little altered from pre-contact era, but Aboriginal occupation patterns are likely to have been disrupted as a result of wider squatting settlement.



Sketch plan of grazing runs drawn in 1845. Attached correspondence states that Mr Buckland's grazing activities are confined to River 1 & River 2 (Eurobin Creek & Buckland River), despite his run extending up the Ovens River, past the junction of Morses Creek. Wandiligong would be off the map, to the right, and not used for grazing



Sketch plan of grazing runs drawn in 1849. Morses Creek is shown as "Little river", hemmed in by "High dividing range" and "Great piles of barren mountains". As drawn, the creek appears to be shown only as far as the first constriction in the valley, at Dunphy's Hill

1854-1858

Gold diggers arrive and begin mining on creek. Landscape undergoes change, with settlement probably developing in the form of an extended mining camp, woven along the creek diggings. Few buildings of any substance would have existed on the creek, with occupation predominantly under canvas. Forest on the river flats is thinned, with some tree removal to facilitate sluicing and supply firewood needs. Well-worn foot and horse tracks appear along the creek, and water races are constructed along the foot of the hills. But the forested hills remain largely unchanged. It is possible that the first intensive agriculture at Wandiligong is undertaken late in this era, with Chinese diggers planting small market gardens to provide for their own and other local needs. Character of the creek changes, now running a maze through spoil heaps, sluicing pits and races.

1858-1860s

Rich gold-bearing quartz reefs are opened in the hills above the alluvial diggings. A substantial township develops, with stores, hotels, churches, schools, houses, and a population with estimates as high as 2500. Hills begin to be stripped of trees, to satisfy the demands of the mines for mine timber and fuel for the steam engines, as well as domestic demand for construction materials and firewood. Alluvial mining on the creeks continues, with Chinese miners dominating this activity. Land in the valley is cleared where close settlement is carried out. Clustering, crowded Chinese camps exist within the town, and to its immediate north. The township has an industrial character, with a number of large crushing mills erected in the town to serve mines high on the hills above. Inclined tramways stream out of the forest to the noisy crushing mills, some of which operate 24 hours a day. Commercial enterprises of all types line the main road. Peak period is the early 1860s, when Wandiligong becomes by far the largest, busiest and richest township within the area of the present Alpine Shire. By 1861, only about one-third of the

dwellings are tents or canvas-roofed structures, most occupied by Chinese diggers, and by 1871 virtually all occupation is in slab, weatherboard or (rarely) brick houses. As the settlement becomes more permanent, orchards and vegetable gardens are planted, and grazing of dairy cattle and other stock develops on adjacent land. The origin of the tree line above the township, marking the upper limit of the paddocks, is problematic. Certainly it does roughly mark the limit of useable land of moderate slope before the steep hillsides rise. But is it an artefact of clearing associated with mining and township development that was preserved to serve consequent agriculture, or is it the upper limit of land cleared specifically for agriculture?

1870s-1900

The township experiences decline as the reefing industry goes into doldrums. Population does not decrease at a dramatic rate, but businesses relocate to the better-situated Bright, and many buildings are transported out of the valley. The township gradually develops a patchwork of occupied and vacant blocks, with the latter often used for grazing. Orchards and nut farms thrive, hop growing is introduced, and a variety of crops including tobacco are planted on the valley floor. Scrub begins to cover the old abandoned alluvial diggings, and the forest on the hills regrows, cloaking the mine workings and tracks. Despite the decline, substantial brick buildings including school, MUIOOF Hall and library are built in the 1870s, and a Recreation Reserve is gazetted. A strong sense of community continues, and towards the end of the century the township shows a mature aspect, with the introduced roadside trees growing tall.



"View from above Mr Higgs House" looking NE, c1900 (photo courtesy D Hynes)

Early 1900s

Bucket dredging for gold is introduced to the Upper Ovens in 1900, and it is just a short time before these mechanical giants begin operating in the Wandiligong area. These dredges chew through the old alluvial diggings along the creek, transforming the diggings into large areas of shingle drift. Creek channels are realigned or braided in places. The steam-powered dredges require huge quantities of firewood for fuel, and logging of the surrounding hills and remaining forested farmland begins. The extent of hillside logging in the landscape at Wandiligong is not precisely known, but in some areas of the Upper Ovens whole hillsides are denuded. Large walnut groves are planted, and the first major apple orchard appears around the time of the First World War.

1930s

In 1917, pine trees are planted on dredge tailings south of Dougherty's Bridge, between Wandiligong and Bright. In the late 1920s, the government looks to expanding plantation softwoods in the State, and the Ovens River valley is one of the areas targetted. Large areas of native vegetation are cleared from some surrounding hills at Wandiligong by sustenance ('susso') workers in the Great Depression of the 1930s, and pine trees are planted. This dramatically changes the visual aspects of the valley, with darker green swathes of vegetation on the western side. Some extensions to the plantations are carried out in subsequent decades.



'Susso' crew planting pine trees on a cleared hillside (photo A Kennedy)

1930s-1970

Decline of the township continues, and the population drops from 360 (685?) in 1921 to just 132 in 1966. Houses disappear, but south of the township more large-scale apple orchards appear, and tobacco growing takes over large areas of the river flats. The landscape within the township is quite open and almost rural, with sheep grazing in empty allotments. Weed growth including Robinia trees covers the old diggings area near the junction of Morses and Growlers Creeks. Native forest on hillsides continues recovery.



Victorian Railways photos of Wandiligong c1950
(images © State Library of Victoria)



1970-present

Period of growth, and radical change in townscape. Development pressure brings new demand for land and housing at Wandiligong. A number of historic cottages are purchased and renovated to modern standards (expectations?). Modern housing begins to infill vacant residential blocks, and tree and garden plantings (formal & informal) are carried out. Modern buildings assume numerical and visual dominance in the township, and some subdivision is carried out. Modern housing comes in a variety of forms, including 2-storey houses, and large-footprint houses begin to be built in prominent positions in the farmland buffer. View lines into and out of township become more limited as new tree and garden plantings grow. Native forest on hillsides continues recovery. Agriculture continues to evolve, consistent with the historic experience in upper Ovens Valley. Apple orchards are extended and large packing sheds built, and more chestnut and walnut groves are planted.

DESCRIPTION & ANALYSIS OF PRESENT LANDSCAPE

“...The area rates well with reference to James Semple Kerr’s widely adopted ‘Conservation Plan’ system in terms of its ‘ability to demonstrate’ what a small nineteenth century semi-rural mining township looked like.... Walking around Wandiligong it is still possible to get a reasonable idea of what a Victorian gold town looked like.”

Tom Taylor, Wheelers Hill, in a submission to the project, 19 January 2004.

“This is a small valley of great charm. The surrounding hills are covered in natural forest and some softwood plantations. The valley floor is cleared and used for grazing, tobacco growing, orchards and chestnut trees. The chestnut trees are an important feature of the valley, both economically and aesthetically. Oaks and poplars also give variety to the landscape. The township of Wandiligong is a sprawling, ill-defined village. Its old houses sit comfortably on the hillsides and are set in large blocks, giving the town a semi-rural character. The old buildings are simple, unpretentious structures in themselves, but together combine to form an harmonious whole. Fussy gardens are almost non-existent. Instead, sheep graze between houses; chestnuts, walnuts and farm fences surround cottages. The cottages are given a sense of time and place by the presence of a number of larger buildings; the school, hall, post office, store and several churches. The buildings achieve an excellent affinity with the landscape. Indeed the whole valley is one visual entity. It appears as a pleasant Mosaic of patterns, forms and colours woven carefully together to achieve a satisfying blend. One sees it as a cultural and historic landscape, reflecting man's adaptation to the natural environment.”

Description in the Register of the National Estate, based on National Trust of Australia (Victoria) studies, 1970s

Are these statements true? This section of the report presents a detailed examination of the landscape of Wandiligong as it exists today.

4.1 CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

Many modern definitions of cultural landscapes have been attempted, but the succinctness of Sauer’s 1925 definition still appeals today:

“The cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a culture group. Culture is the agent, the natural area the medium, the cultural landscape the result.”¹

¹ Quoted in *World Cultural Landscapes, 1992-2002: A Review and Prospect*, Peter Fowler, 2002, in World Heritage Series No. 7, *Cultural Landscapes: The Challenge of Conservation*, UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2003, p16

Most modern definitions incorporate the concept of cultural associations, which may reveal additional hidden meanings in a landscape. The UNESCO World Heritage Centre has defined three cultural landscape categories². These are:

- (i) **Clearly defined landscape:** landscape that has been designed and created intentionally by the hand of man (includes parks, gardens etc).
- (ii) **Organically evolved landscape:** two types are identified:
 - Relict (or fossil) landscape:* shaped by a process which came to an end at some time in the past, with significant distinguishing features still visible in a material form
 - Continuing landscape:* landscape with an active social role in contemporary society, with the evolutionary process still in progress. At the same time, it exhibits significant material evidence of its evolution over time.
- (iii) **Associative cultural landscape:** has cultural associations to the natural element rather than material cultural evidence, which may be barely visible or absent.

The two Wandiligong descriptions quoted at the start of this section are worth examining in the light of these categories. The first statement clearly argues that at least the townscape of Wandiligong is a *relict landscape*. That is, that the old gold township of Wandiligong is sufficiently well-preserved to offer a reasonably authentic experience of a Victorian gold town, where continuing processes have not significantly impacted. The second statement presents the Wandiligong Valley as a completed artwork. No mention is made of continuing processes, and with the use of terms such as “*harmonious whole*”, “*one visual entity*” and “*sense of time and place*”, this statement also points to categorisation as a *relict landscape*. The concept of Wandiligong as a *relict landscape* (essentially an historic landscape), combined with the undoubted aesthetics of the place, were key to the introduction of HO83 to protect landscape (townscape) heritage values. The Wandiligong Valley does fit neatly into the *organically evolved landscape* category. But is it a *relict landscape* or a *continuing landscape*?

4.2 EXTENT

The Register of the National Estate defines the extent of the Wandiligong Valley landscape as:

About 12,000ha, near Bright. The boundary extends to the ridge lines on either side of the valley and extends upstream from the Wandiligong township for 16km and downstream for 2km.

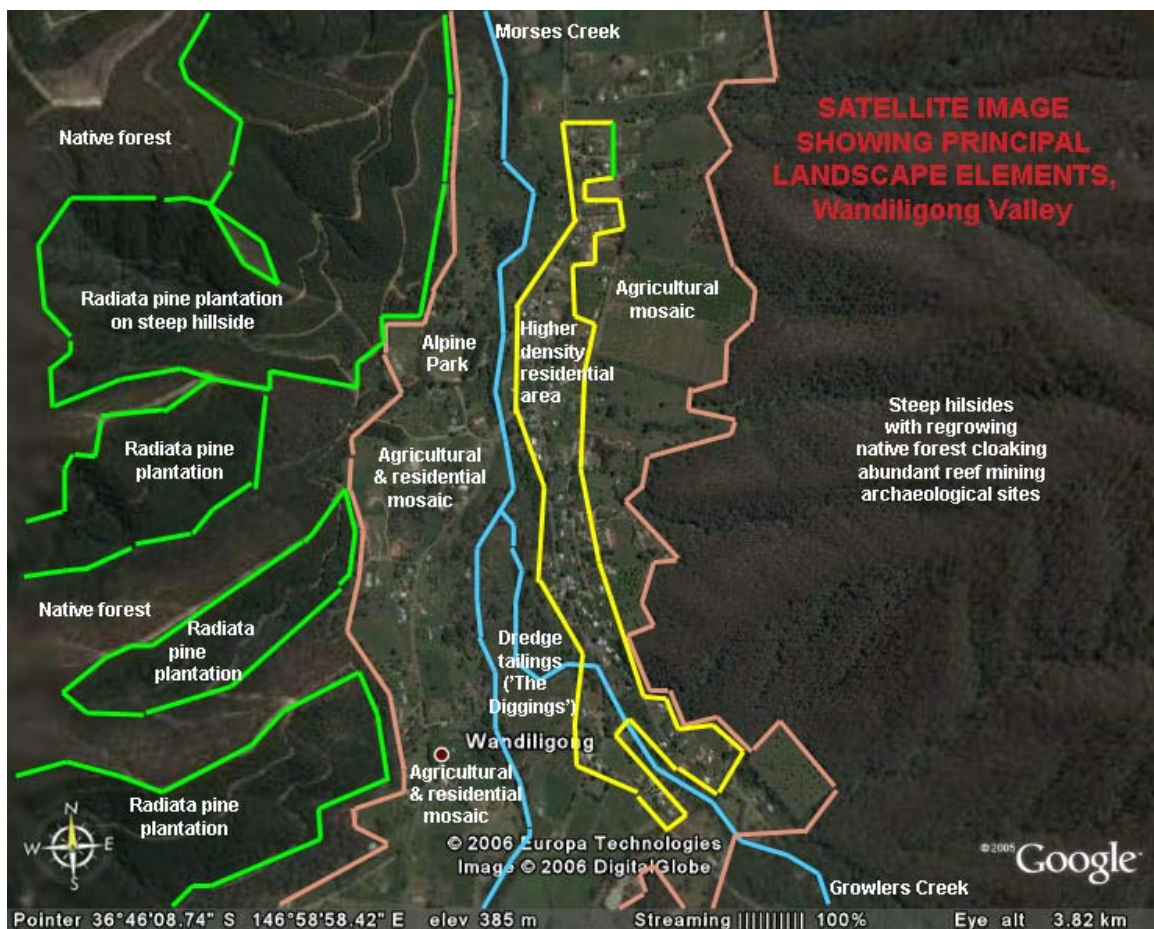
For the purposes of this report, the area around the township and extending a short distance upstream and downstream has been concentrated on.

² World Heritage Series No. 7, *Cultural Landscapes: The Challenge of Conservation*, UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2003, p11

4.3 LANDSCAPE ELEMENTS

The principal broad landscape elements of the Wandiligong Valley have been identified on the following satellite imagery (© DigitalGlobe 2006). These consist of:

- A higher density residential area (main Wandiligong township development).
- Cleared buffer consisting of low-density residential development and agricultural mosaic, with contributing landscape features such as Alpine Park, 'The Diggings', etc.
- Agricultural mosaic extending away north and south of the above.
- High framing hills clad in native forest and some pine plantations.



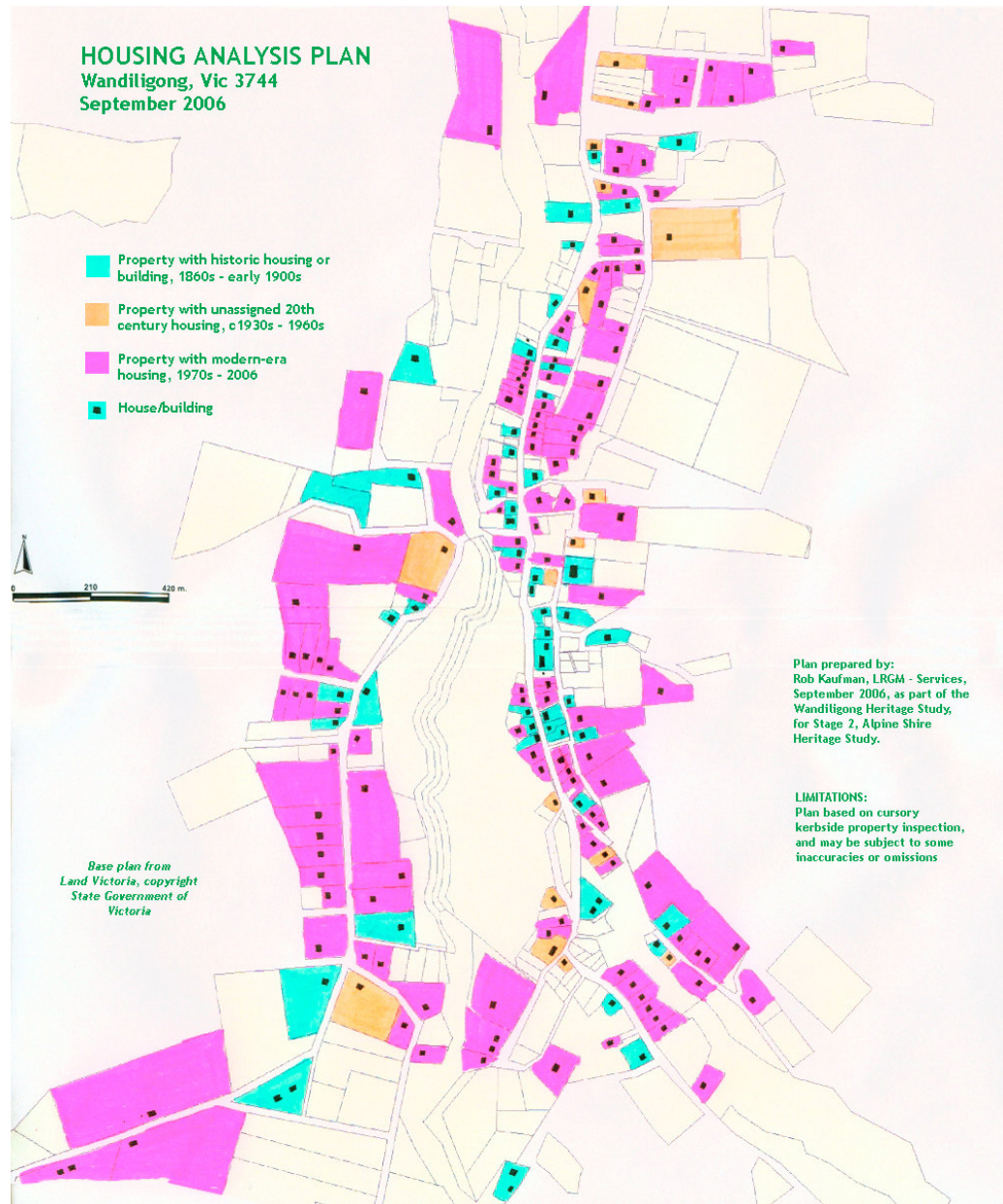
4.3.1 TOWNSCAPE

Form and Extent

The township of Wandiligong is geographically constrained, with steep hills rising each side of a relatively narrow river valley. It would therefore be logical that any substantial township development such as that experienced by Wandiligong in the early 1860s would be linear. The degree to which historical cultural activities have also contributed to the linear development of the township can only be guessed at.

However it is probable that the small proto-township of the mid-1850s (essentially a mining camp) that existed along the course of Morses Creek was also linear, following the gold-bearing banks of the creek on both sides. The reef discoveries that followed, attracting and entrenching a permanent population, were distributed in a swathe on the hillsides above the township, principally on the eastern side, and along Growlers Creek. This distribution was mirrored by township development in the base of the valley, from north of Peabody Gully, south into the valley of Growlers Creek.

Housing Analysis



A cursory kerb-side survey of housing and other buildings within HO83 was undertaken, not including sheds or commercial farming infrastructure such as Smith's apple shed (see above plan). Houses include some former shops or other commercial buildings that are now used as private residences (eg former Post Office building HO61). The survey did not include the numerous non-historic buildings in the sprawling Camp Wandiligong, which covers several titles on School Road. The purpose of the survey was to obtain approximate data on the buildings of various eras, sufficient to enable meaningful analysis, and is subject to the accuracy limitations of surveys of this type. A summary of results is set out below:

Modern – development from c1970s:

Houses: 130 (includes new house at HO60)
Other buildings: 0

Unassigned – non-historic 20th century buildings, c1930s-1960s:

Houses: 16
Other buildings: 1 (hotel)

Historic buildings – 1860s-early 1900s:

Houses: 45 (includes additional, unused slab house at HO76, and manse at church HO55)
Other buildings: 6 (3 x churches, MU Hall, library, school)

Total houses: 191
Modern: 130 (68%)
Other non-historic: 16 (8%)
Total non-historic: 146 (76%)
Historic: 45 (24%)

Total buildings (exc sheds etc): 198
Modern or non-historic: 147 (74%)
Historic: 51 (26%)

Historic Houses and Cottages

These are dotted throughout the township, and many are in prominent positions in the landscape because they are built on or close to the road frontages (eg HO70, HO61). Others are set back (eg HO54) or hidden behind garden or tree growth (eg HO65), limiting their visibility. Integrity varies widely. Some cottages/buildings have excellent integrity (eg HO71, HO77, HO61, HO65, HO81), while many others have been severely architecturally compromised by modern alteration (eg HO59, HO58, HO53, HO45, HO76). Others show alterations or extensions varying from minor to fairly substantial (eg HO69, HO62). As would be expected with the aging, predominantly timber buildings, the better the integrity, the poorer the condition generally applies.

Designs vary widely, and include miner's cottages, mid-nineteenth century vernacular cottages (eg HO65), and a Victorian-style villa (eg HO71). Most of the original cottages (excluding former commercial buildings) have a small footprint.



Examples of small nineteenth century cottages at Wandiligong

Other Historic Buildings

The remaining community infrastructure (churches, hall, school, library) has excellent architectural integrity, and most buildings are prominent in the townscape. The Primary School, the largest of the buildings, has had considerable alteration to its setting, with new buildings erected, trees and gardens planted, and formal parking areas and pathways installed. With the old elm trees now effectively screening views from the front, the building is no longer as visually prominent as in previous years.



Examples of community infrastructure at Wandiligong:

*Above: Primary School
Left row, from top:
Free Library, Post Office, Church of England.
Middle row, from top:
MU Hall, Wesleyan Church, Roman Catholic Church*

Examples of surviving commercial premises at Wandiligong:



Modern Housing

Modern housing is of a wide variety, including mock 'heritage' cottages, large brick villas, log houses, vernacular kit homes, etc. Characteristic of most modern housing is a substantially larger footprint than the historic cottages. Set-back varies, but is typically greater than that of the historic housing. Height, roof lines and cladding vary widely. The scale of some modern housing rivals that of some of the historic community infrastructure buildings (school, churches, hall), reducing the contrast that formerly existed between those buildings and the small, historic cottages.



Some examples of modern housing at Wandiligong...

Historic Precincts

Wandiligong was examined for the existence of well-preserved historic precincts within the township. In general, it was noted that the infill modern housing had effectively limited the potential for these to exist. The most promising area was found to be the section of Morses Creek Road between Gillards Lane and the present community Post Office. This contained many historic buildings included as individual listings in the Heritage Overlay, and the analysis is tabulated below. Properties are assessed in order, from the north end of the east side of the road southwards, and then northwards on the west side of the road.

BUILDING TYPE	HISTORIC	NON-HISTORIC	VACANT	NOTES
House		*		Modern
House		*		Modern
-			*	
House		*		Modern
Library	*			Well-preserved with good integrity
Church	*			Timber church well-maintained in original form
-			*	Frontages on three roadways
House	*			Substantially altered in modern renovation (altered form and materials)
House	*			Modern renovations, but integrity fair-good(?). Low visibility from road
Manse	*			Well-preserved with good integrity
Church	*			Well-preserved with good integrity
-			*	
House		*		Modern
House		*		Modern
Shop	*			Shop front on road now trading. Integrity good.
House	*			Former store, radically altered with second storey extension
House	*			Former store. Substantially altered in several modern renovations – extended, shop front removed, etc
House	*			Former Post Office, well-preserved with good integrity (re-clad sensitively)
House	*			Substantially altered with brickwork rendered. Alterations may be reversible
House		*		Modern
House		*		Modern
-			*	
-			*	
House		*		Modern
House	*			Good integrity (?)
House		*		Modern
Hall	*			MU Hall, well-preserved with good integrity
House	*			Integrity fair-good

Of the 28 blocks (considering the church & manse as separate), fourteen, or 50%, have historic buildings. Of these, five are substantially altered (compromised), leaving nine with at least fair-good integrity. These ten include four of the six important public infrastructure buildings surviving at Wandiligong (the Primary School and another church are the others, both on School Road). There are nine modern houses, and available blocks for a further five. Modern housing and one substantially altered historic house adjoin the ends of the section examined. Overall, the integrity of this section was considered insufficient to warrant classification as an historic precinct. Several variations which included other nearby historic buildings including the Primary School were examined, and similar conclusions were arrived at.

Township Vegetation

Formal and informal gardens and exotic tree plantings are common in Wandiligong, and particularly along Moses Creek Road and Williams Road, where many houses are obscured. This provides a strong impression of a leafy English village, particularly in autumn when the township displays a riot of colour. The creek area, once barren dredge tailings, now has high stands of maturing eucalypts. Modern exotic tree plantings have risen to limit view lines into and within the township, a point reinforced by reference to historical photography that shows a quite open landscape. Historic early ornamental tree plantings persist throughout the township, but have lost much of their prominence in the landscape with modern development.



Formal gardens, gateposts and the 'greening' of modern Wandiligong



The greening of Wandiligong (top photo c1900, the lower October 2006). The earlier photograph was taken at the bottom of the street at bottom-right of the 2006 photograph. However none of the township on the east side of the creek is now visible from this position, because of tree growth (c1900 photo courtesy Damien Hynes – source unknown).

The areas where view lines have been extended in modern times are:

- Along a section of Morses Creek Road between the MU Hall and the old Post Office, where the steep bank on the western side of the road has been recently cleared. This provides views down to meandering channels on the creek flat, and stands of maturing eucalypts;
- On 'The Diggings' where concerted community action over many years has resulted in the clearing of weed growth.

Roads and Laneways

The roads and laneways of the early township of Wandiligong are preserved in the modern townscape. The winding roads and narrow laneways contribute to the aesthetic qualities of the place, but are unremarkable historically as roadways and easements are always entrenched by the original title surveys. The pattern of long, side-cut, winding, longitudinal roads (Morses Creek Road, School Road) and short, steep, transverse laneways is more a geographical than a cultural artefact, relating to the topographical constraints of township-building in a tight valley.

Because the title surveys of the township of Wandiligong were carried out relatively late and continued spasmodically, there may be some differences between the preserved layout representing the maturing township of the 1870s onwards, and the bustling boom town of up to 2500 people in the early-mid 1860s, in both extent and form.

4.3.2 PERIPHERAL FARMING AREAS

Farming in peripheral areas has demonstrated the same adaptation and variety that has characterised agriculture in the upper Ovens portion of the Alpine Shire since the 1860s. Extensive apple orchards grow in the valley, and tobacco cropping is carried out. Large nut plantations exist on the edges of the township, bridging the gap between the town and the forest with a green sward from spring to autumn, interspersed with grassed grazing land. A pleasing and evolving agricultural mosaic has been created in the valley.

Hillsides

The hillsides have been little altered in modern times. The hillsides rise steeply above the town, and are cloaked in regenerating native forest, comprised principally of a grey-green overstorey of peppermint gums (*Eucalyptus radiata*). On the west side of the valley, dark green patches mark plantations of Radiata Pine (*Pinus radiata*) that provide a strong colour contrast to the native forest. To the south and the east of the township, the valleys of Morses Creek and Growlers Creek lead the eye into what presents as a natural landscape of high, forested mountain ranges. To the north, the hillsides continue to frame the widening valley of Morses Creek as it approaches its junction with the Ovens River.

4.4 SUMMARY

- The townscape of Wandiligong today bears no relationship to the booming quartz mining township of Growlers Creek, other than in its extent and layout. Townships such as Wandiligong were large, robust centres of industry which took heavy and highly-visible toll of the natural environment, very different to the “leafy village” we see today. There is only the faintest trace left of the vibrant commercial district which once spanned the length of Morses Creek Road within the township. The townscape does contain evidence of the decline of Wandiligong – the town did not collapse to a nucleus, but retained its extent even as the houses and businesses disappeared, creating a patchwork of occupied and unoccupied blocks. This was probably where the greatest cultural significance of the 1960s-70s townscape lay, as the decline did not produce well-preserved 19th century streetscapes, the experience at other notable ‘historic gold towns’ such as Maldon and Chiltern.
- Its built infrastructure does not reflect the importance of the place as the premier early quartz-mining field of the Upper Ovens, itself the most productive reefing area in Eastern Victoria, outside the Walhalla-Woods Point belt. Very few of the surviving early buildings in Wandiligong relate to the peak years of quartz mining in the valley in the 1860s, its most historically significant era. However, a few substantial buildings such as the school, churches and MU Hall remain as clues or links to a greater past. The low survival rate of buildings relates to the long decline of the township, the materials used (timber predominantly, rather than more durable stone or brick), and the type (many prefabricated, transportable houses were put up, and later re-located). The open areas within the patchwork of 1960s Wandiligong were once occupied, and today modern housing development is filling the spaces, far outstripping surviving historic buildings numerically (about 3 to 1). Because of the dominance of modern buildings, however ‘sympathetic’ they may be, the integrity of Wandiligong as a devolved mining townscape is relatively poor, compared to such places as Walhalla.
- The broader landscape contains visual evidence of the growth of the softwood timber industry and diverse agriculture, framed in native timber-clad hills. The evidence of gold mining is a hidden layer within the landscape (with the exception of the recent Williams United Mine headframe, which is gradually being shielded by new tree growth). The quartz mines, mullock dumps and mine tracks are cloaked in the regenerating forest, and the alluvial workings consist of modified (landscaped) dredge tailings, whose provenance is not readily apparent to the casual observer. Glimpses of mining features within the town are visible on close inspection – a few loom tunnels, the odd water race – but nothing other than scant archaeological traces is left of any the great batteries and associated industry that drove the development of the town. As an historic cultural landscape, the Wandiligong valley holds no greater level of information than the Ovens Valley at Bright, Harrierville or Myrtleford, or the Upper Kiewa Valley. That the landscape is so cryptic of traces of the mining industry that was its principal economic driver and shaper devalues the significance of the valley as an historic cultural landscape (cf Maldon, for

- example, which has large mullock dumps, battery sand heaps etc in highly visible locations within the town).
- Hidden meanings in the associative landscape relating to thousands of years of occupation of the area by indigenous people are not known, and are likely to have been lost in the near-destruction and dispersal of groups with connection to this country, by early European settlement.

The Wandiligong Valley is a cultural landscape in that it is a product of the hand of man, but its value and strong appeal today is based more in the widely-recognised aesthetic aspects of the place, than in its historical information. Wandiligong as it exists today is more a *continuing landscape* with historic features woven within it, than a *relict landscape* (historic landscape). The individual historic features remain of significance, but collectively their value as contributors to a *relict landscape* has diminished in modern times. The townscape is relatively poor in visible information on the era of Wandiligong's greatest cultural heritage significance.

Fundamental to the extraordinary visual charm of Wandiligong is firstly that it is constrained within a relatively narrow valley which provides a mountainous backdrop and focuses the eye of the viewer along the valley. Secondly, the winding Moses Creek Road affords a variety of views from many levels, providing the viewer with a kaleidoscope of perspectives. The abundant deciduous trees cause these perspectives to vary considerably seasonally, from the riot of autumn colour, to the stark bare branches of winter, to the lush green of spring and summer.

In the 1960s, the sprawling, open, ill-defined village with its dotting of old cottages, historic buildings, mature exotic trees, vacant blocks and semi-rural atmosphere defined its charm. Today, the 'leafy village' created by modern development, combined with a dotting of historic buildings and the winding roads and narrow laneways that connect the viewer to the past, defines its charm.

CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

5.1 PREVIOUS ASSESSMENTS

Register of the National Estate

The following Statement of Significance was prepared by Nominator, and included in the Register entry:

The valley is significant for its visual charm. It consists of a sprawling village of old, simple, unpretentious buildings interspersed with chestnut and walnut trees and surrounded by hillsides covered in natural forest and some softwood plantation. The building and landscape combine to form a harmonious whole producing a pleasant mosaic of patterns, forms and colours woven carefully together. It is also a cultural and historic landscape reflecting man's adaptation to the natural environment.

This statement is principally one of aesthetic landscape significance, and while historic aspects are referred to, these and their level of significance are not elucidated.

5.2 SIGNIFICANCE ASSESSMENT

5.2.1 HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT ERA

Wandiligong's most significant era historically was the 1860s to early-1870s, when it was Alpine Shire's largest and busiest township, and centre of commerce. Historical significance is reinforced for the early 1860s, when it was the centre of the most productive reef mining field in Eastern Victoria, at a period before new discoveries in the Walhalla-Woods Point belt came into full production. The Oriental Mine at Wandiligong was the largest reef gold producer in Eastern Victoria in the early to mid-1860s. Large-scale production (and employment) had ceased by the end of the 1860s. Wandiligong continued on as one of the Alpine Shire's larger towns for a considerable period after the 1870s, experiencing a very slow decline. Agriculture gradually replaced gold mining as the town's economic base, and without the very close proximity of Bright, it is likely that the decline of Wandiligong township would have been more dramatic.

5.2.2 HISTORIC FABRIC ASSESSMENT

Fabric within HO83 from the most significant era historically, 1860s-early 1870s:

- Well-preserved historic precincts: Nil
- State of preservation of commercial district: Poor
- State of preservation of community infrastructure: Poor (1 church)
- State of preservation of industrial infrastructure: Poor (archaeological sites only)
- State of preservation of residential infrastructure: Poor
- Tree plantings: Poor (?)

Fabric within HO83 from the continuing era as a significant township within Alpine Shire, early 1870s-c1920s:

- Well-preserved historic precincts: Nil
- State of preservation of commercial district: Fair (former shops near old Post Office)
- State of preservation of community infrastructure: Good (3 churches, manse, MU Hall, Library, Primary School, Post Office)
- State of preservation of industrial infrastructure: Poor (archaeological sites only)
- State of preservation of residential infrastructure: Fair (many houses survive, but vacant blocks stood as testimony to the large number removed)
- Tree plantings: Good (?)

Only some 40% of the open-space vacant blocks that once provided crucial visible evidence of the long period of decline of the township remain undeveloped (without housing), and many of these have seen plantings of ornamental or nut trees in modern times, further altering the landscape. Older trees at Wandiligong were once prominent and important landmarks in the *relict landscape*, but in a similar manner to the isolation of the old buildings, they have been largely buried in the vigorous new plantings of the modern townscape.

5.2.3 COMPARISONS

Relict Landscape Resulting from the Demise of a Victorian Gold Town

With Wandiligong, simplistic comparisons relating to survival of fabric are inadequate for comparative purposes. As a *relict landscape*, the Wandiligong of the 1960s-1970s was unusual because of the high level of visual information it contained about the decline of a Victorian gold town. This information, vested in the extent of the town and its patchwork of vacant and occupied residential blocks, is now largely buried in a modern townscape, and hence its value has been compromised, although not destroyed. Walhalla is an example of a place that still retains much of this sort of information, although modern planning controls are producing re-creations that obfuscate the visual evidence.

Within the Alpine Shire, there are a number of former gold town sites, but no built fabric remains and the evidence of their boom and decline is largely held in their archaeology and forested context. These former towns such as Louisville, Bocket, Brandy Creek and the Buckland valley towns present very differently to Wandiligong. Central Victoria has many small gold towns whose townscapes contain strong visual information about their rise and decline (eg Tarnagulla). However, the extent of many of these towns has shrunk to a central core, and the experience of these places is different to Wandiligong. Moliagul is an example of a once large gold town whose most prominent (and almost only) building is now a large church sitting incongruously in a paddock. Many of the little towns are now experiencing development pressures by people seeking rural lifestyles while working in larger centres such Bendigo and Ballarat, and even Melbourne. In general, the central Victorian towns lack the strong scenic qualities afforded by the mountains which frame Wandiligong.

Fabric-Related Comparisons

As an historic gold-mining townscape, the Wandiligong of today compares poorly to many other Victorian gold mining towns. In the region, towns such as Beechworth, Chiltern and Yackandandah are much better preserved, particularly in relation to their commercial districts. Outside the region, towns such as Maldon and Walhalla are well preserved and contain abundant visual evidence of their origins.

In the Alpine Shire, Wandiligong does not compare well as an historic townscape to towns such as Myrtleford and Bright. None are strong in highly visible information on their gold origins, but Myrtleford and Bright are strong in the fabric of their evolution, based in diversification and regular urban renewal. Wandiligong's evolution was based in decline, and today's fabric is dominated by the very new, with a sprinkling of the very old. For the keen-eyed observer or one familiar with the history of the town, this sharp new/old division may still communicate the story, but for the casual observer the distinction between routine urban renewal and residential re-establishment may be too subtle, especially where 'sympathetic' development has produced a number of houses of older-style design. Porepunkah, a smaller former gold town with a dominance of modern buildings and a sprinkling of historic buildings, has some similarities in its fabric to Wandiligong (though scaled-down), but its aesthetic landscape values are very different. The best preserved historic townscapes in the Alpine Shire are, not surprisingly, those of Mount Beauty and Bogong Village, associated with the development of the Kiewa Hydro Electric Scheme in the 1940s.

5.3 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

5.3.1 PREVIOUS SIGNIFICANCE

A succinct and suitable statement of cultural heritage significance for the former *relict landscape* (townscape) of the 1960s-1970s has not been found, and of course cannot be prepared in hindsight. However, the significant elements appear to have been:

- The old cottages which dominated the built fabric and represented the last vestiges of old Wandiligong;
- The scale of the larger buildings such as the school, which gave visual clues to a former greatness;
- The patchwork of vacant residential blocks, often used for grazing, that represented the long demise of the town and retained its extent, providing the open, semi-rural landscape;
- Numerous mature ornamental and fruit/nut trees distributed throughout the town on empty blocks, roads, laneways, and occupied blocks, representing former civic pride and the industries of its former residents.

Contributing to its landscape value (but not its cultural heritage significance) were the winding roadways and laneways, and the outstanding setting of the diverse agricultural mosaic, framed in high eucalypt and pine clad hills.

In essence, the cultural heritage landscape significance appears to have been based in the high level of information the townscape contained about the demise of a Victorian gold town, and assisted by the aesthetic landscape elements.

5.3.2 RNE UPDATE

The Statement of Significance for the Register of the National Estate should be updated, along the following lines:

The valley is significant for its visual charm. It consists of a sprawling, growing, leafy village of modern housing interspersed with old, simple, unpretentious buildings, and sprinkled with older ornamental, chestnut and walnut trees. Bordered by diverse agriculture and framed by hillsides covered in natural forest and some softwood plantation, the township and landscape combine to form a harmonious whole producing a pleasant mosaic of patterns, forms and colours woven carefully together. It is a vivid cultural landscape reflecting man's adaptation to the natural environment.

This statement adequately reflects the aesthetic significance of the landscape. Within HO83, as the township has been re-developed, the townscape cultural heritage values have been eroded. The most significant heritage values at Wandiligong have been shifting towards the individual historic features such as buildings, and away from the townscape. A Statement of Significance for the residual townscape cultural heritage values has not been prepared, and would be difficult because the townscape is in a state of flux. The updated RNE statement

above is adequate. Statements of Cultural Heritage Significance for some individual places at Wandiligong are included the Local Heritage Places Database (LHPD) maintained by Heritage Victoria, and in the Victorian Heritage Register.

Older trees at Wandiligong were once prominent and important landmarks in the *relict landscape*, and had a relatively high level of cultural heritage significance. But like the old buildings they have been largely buried in a modern townscape, and this has reduced their level of significance. Unless strong individual historical associations can be demonstrated, the older trees are better considered in light of their contribution to aesthetic landscape values. Age in itself is not sufficient to demonstrate cultural heritage significance, and historical associations are necessary. In Bright for example, several early prominent tree plantings were identified as having strong and direct associations with specific town beautification programs relating to development of the tourism industry in the Alpine Shire, and were provisionally assessed as of cultural heritage significance. At Myrtleford, the Corroboree Tree (Big Tree) demonstrates a strong cultural, associative and symbolic significance, relating to indigenous occupation of the area.

5.4 LEVELS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Townscape cultural heritage values:	Local
Landscape aesthetic values:	Not assessed, >local
Individual heritage place values:	Vary from local to State

REVIEW OF PLANNING CONTROLS

6.1 THE HERITAGE OVERLAY

6.1.1 HAS HO83 WORKED?

The Wandiligong townscape may have been an outstanding *relict landscape* (historic landscape) when heritage controls were first introduced. *Relict* or historic landscapes cannot be protected when continuing processes (modern housing, private gardens & trees in the case of Wandiligong) are allowed to come to dominate the landscape. The idea that continuing processes at this level can be accommodated in a manner sympathetic to the heritage landscape values is untenable, as it only produces at best (or worst) a modern landscape that gives the impression of a heritage landscape. The quaint relict landscape of Wandiligong of the 1970s could only have been fully protected (preserved) by limiting the quantity of residential development to a level that allowed continued dominance of the authentic historic features and character, a planning prescription that would have been fraught with difficulties, probably insurmountable.

The Wandiligong Preservation Society acknowledged deficiencies in 1988 in their publication *Wandiligong – A Valley Through Time*:

“.. another public meeting, in June 1986, was held. On this occasion it became clear that the intended protection and preservation was not operating. This dismayed many in the audience who had been looking with apprehension at some buildings that introduced a growing urban style to the built up areas.”

“Wattles, Kunzeas crab apples and gums are disappearing from roadways and lanes adding to the effect of a town caught between the simplicity of the past and unsympathetic developments of the present.”

The only measure by which HO83 has succeeded is that by-and-large the heritage controls on housing density and design have managed to maintain a pleasing aesthetic landscape even as Wandiligong rapidly evolved. This is demonstrated by the continuing popularity and importance of Wandiligong as a scenic visitor experience within the Alpine Shire, and the continuing pride-of-place demonstrated by the Wandiligong community.

6.1.2 WHAT IS HO83 PROTECTING?

The Heritage Overlay entry for Wandiligong (HO 83) provided nominal protection for the historic townscape of Wandiligong. However today, that historic townscape is embedded in what has become essentially a modern townscape, where modern buildings, gardens and tree plantings dominate numerically and visually.

Within the higher-density residential area of HO83, (zoned LDRZ in the Alpine Planning Scheme), only the smaller proportion of the vacant residential blocks (less than 60) now remain unoccupied (ie without housing). In the lower-density, elevated areas (zoned FZ in the Alpine Planning Scheme), the proportion

unoccupied is slightly greater, with just under 70 blocks (or separate titles as shown on planning maps) without housing development. Under present controls and without further sub-division, these 120-130 blocks represent the upper limit of future housing development within HO83 at Wandiligong, approximately a 60% potential increase to current house numbers. If this increase was realised, the proportion of historic buildings within HO83 would have shrunk further, from about 25% to about 15%.

That diligently-applied HO83 controls could successfully protect aesthetic landscape values with this level of increase is without doubt, but the purpose of HO83 is, of course, to protect cultural heritage landscape values. The former *relict landscape* at Wandiligong is being increasingly reduced to individual historic features within a contemporary townscape. There will come a time when HO83 is a redundant control, and individual HO listings are adequate for protection of remnant cultural heritage values at Wandiligong. The rationale for this eventual redundancy can be very clearly and simply summarised:

The relict landscape (townscape) that was identified as sufficiently culturally significant to merit Heritage Overlay protection was composed of a number of elements. These included:

The old buildings which dominated the built fabric and represented the last vestiges of old Wandiligong;

The patchwork of vacant residential blocks, often used for grazing, that represented the long demise of the town, and provided the open landscape;

Numerous mature ornamental and fruit/nut trees distributed throughout the town on empty blocks, roads, laneways, and occupied blocks, representing former civic pride and the industries of its former residents.

Contributing to its landscape value (but not its cultural heritage significance) were the winding roadways and laneways that were set in place during the first town surveys, and the outstanding setting of the diverse agricultural mosaic, framed in high eucalypt and pine clad hills.

Today, the townscape elements have been radically affected as the proportion of modern fabric grows, and the endpoint of that evolution will be:

The old buildings which once dominated the built fabric will represent only a small proportion of the built fabric. Even today, the older buildings represent only about a quarter of the built fabric. Their prominence in the landscape has also been reduced, as modern tree and garden plantings continue;

The remainder of the vacant blocks will be filled, completing the divorce of the old buildings from their context and the cloaking of their connections (view lines), rendering them individual historic features within a modern townscape. The principal visual evidence of the long decline of the township will be gone. Today, the majority (some 60%) of the vacant blocks within HO83 have been infilled by modern housing;

The old trees, once also dominant features, are even now competing against a vigorous layer of fast maturing trees, and this process will continue.

This conclusion will offer little comfort for those sections of the Wandiligong and wider community who have fought for so long to preserve the historic landscape values of the town, but it must also be the inevitable result of a planning process that has allowed modern development to dominate the townscape numerically and visually. This may be regarded as a form of ‘death by stealth’ by supporters of overarching heritage controls. In other words, the perception may be that modern development has been allowed to occur both ‘sympathetically’ and ‘unsympathetically’ to the historic townscape, and when it has reached a point of dominance, it could potentially be used as a tool to dismantle heritage controls.

In the opinion of the consultants, the process was inevitable, and is irreversible and inexorable. That is:

The original cultural landscape values were insufficient or too nebulous to ‘sterilise’ the townscape (stop all development);

The bulk of the possible modern development has occurred, and removal of these ‘accretions’ to restore the former townscape would not be possible, nor necessarily good heritage practice (ie the township has now moved on to another active historical phase);

Future development could not be successfully proscribed, because the former relict landscape heritage values have already been considerably diminished by recent development.

Management of future development remains the only option available to protect landscape values.

Two shortcomings in the application of Heritage Overlay controls for Wandiligong have been identified:

Existing Heritage Overlay place entries, inherited from the Planning Scheme of the former Shire of Bright, do not seem to have carried adequate individual architectural prescriptions to guide planners in decision making. This may have resulted in inappropriate alterations being made to a number of historic buildings in Wandiligong (some alterations may have been completed before HO controls were instituted). In determining the scope of this study, it was decided that review of all existing HO place listings for Wandiligong was beyond the budget and time limitations of the project, so it has not been possible to undertake detailed assessment of the heritage values or significant landscape contributions that still reside in these buildings. It has also not been possible to provide individual management prescriptions for prior HO listings;

Heritage Overlay controls such as HO83 are very clumsy in maintaining the often nebulous landscape values and managing ‘sympathetic’ development, especially where a full-time Heritage Advisor is not available to make day-to-day decisions. The lack of detailed prescriptive guidelines at the townscape (landscape) level leaves the process open to a degree of interpretation, leading to what could possibly be seen as inconsistent decision-making in development planning matters.

Wandiligong Valley remains a significant and very valuable aesthetic landscape to the local community and to the Alpine Shire, and the Shire must look to the correct tools to deal with development and management issues.

6.2 OTHER CONTROLS/STRATEGIES

6.2.1 SIGNIFICANT LANDSCAPE OVERLAY

The Significant Landscape Overlay for Wandiligong (SLO3) identifies the significant landscape. Objectives and additional guidelines contained in Schedule 3 to the Significant Landscape Overlay are confined to two short paragraphs, and are general and subject to interpretation. The controls are not prescriptive enough in themselves to adequately protect landscape values where development pressure is intense.

6.2.2 MUNICIPAL STRATEGIC STATEMENT

The Municipal Strategic Statement (p24, APS) contains Strategic Directions and implementation measures to reinforce protection of the Wandiligong landscape. These directions and measures are inadequate to provide protection of the significant aesthetic landscape unless backed up by suitable, prescriptive planning controls. Two points in the Strategic Directions need comment:

Historical Density of Development

This is a fairly meaningless term, given that Wandiligong has experienced very high and very low housing (and commercial) density at various stages of its history. At its peak, it may have been four times the present density or more, and at its lowest was less than one-third the present density. The era of highest density corresponds with the era of highest cultural heritage significance.

Enhancing Historic Character

Authentic historic character can only be enhanced by removing accretions (in this case, subsequent 'non-historic' developments), or providing mechanisms that somehow amplify visual appreciation or understanding of historic character (interps etc). Development can be sympathetic or neutral, but it cannot enhance historic character. Sympathetic development, where it is substantially greater than the authentic historic urban fabric as in the case of Wandiligong, can create the illusion or perception of an historic character that can be very different to the original (pre-development) character of a town.

OPTIONS

There are a number of options available to Council, and each is examined in the following table. In all options, present individual HO place entries are retained.

No.	OPTION	OUTCOME
1	Do nothing. Retain present heritage controls and leave current planning practices in place	Likelihood of further inconsistent decision making as Wandiligong townscape continues to evolve.
2	Retain present heritage controls and adopt more tighter and more prescriptive planning practices	Would increase effectiveness and administration of controls, but open to challenge based on diminishment of townscape heritage values
3	Retain present heritage controls and restore Wandiligong townscape to its former (c1970) <i>relict landscape</i> by removal of accretions (modern development)	Theoretical option only – roll-back impractical in regard to legal sustainability, and inconsistent with good heritage practice in regard to degree of alteration/reconstruction necessary.
4	Retain present heritage controls and stop further development on vacant township blocks	Theoretical option only – unlikely to be sustainable against legal challenges
5	Drop existing heritage controls on broader townscape (HO83) based on diminishment of heritage values, and manage aesthetic landscape through SLO	Increased likelihood of inconsistent planning decisions, with poor outcomes for the aesthetic and remnant historic landscape values.
6	Drop existing HO and SLO controls	No protection for significant landscape, and poor outcomes for heritage and aesthetic values at Wandiligong
7	Institute prescriptive development controls such as a Design & Development Overlay (DDO), and drop existing heritage controls on broader townscape (HO83)	

Only two of the above options (2 & 7, highlighted) represent good outcomes for Wandiligong, by improving consistency of decision making. They give Shire planners the prescriptions they need to make consistent decisions by removing much of the present scope for interpretation, and hopefully will afford concerned sections of the Wandiligong community a renewed confidence in the ability of the Shire to satisfactorily handle planning matters there.

However, there are differences between the two options. Option 2 above would remain open to individual challenges because the prescriptions would be based on historic landscape values that are often nebulous and in themselves subject to interpretation. These values have been considerably diminished by modern development over the last 25-30 years. Option 7 however is rigid and enforceable, and has been introduced at places such as Walhalla because of its ability to deal satisfactorily with both cultural heritage and aesthetic landscape issues. These

two options are referred to as *Option A* and *Option B* in the next section of this report.

Also, the purpose of HO83, to protect cultural heritage townscape values within the wider cultural landscape, has to be examined. If it is retained, HO83 will not in fact protect townscape heritage values, but oversee further diminishment of the values as it manages development on the remaining vacant blocks. At a time in the future when the remaining blocks are developed, HO83 becomes effectively redundant, and no longer the appropriate control for long-term management of the Wandiligong aesthetic landscape.

RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 SUMMARY OF HERITAGE STUDY

At Wandiligong, urban fabric is overwhelmingly modern or old, with little in between, reflecting a history of pre-eminence in the early gold era, followed by a long period of decline, followed by modern development which currently contributes some three-quarters of the urban fabric. Wandiligong evolved very differently to many other historic gold towns in Victoria such as Maldon and Chiltern because its decline produced a sprawling mosaic of historic buildings and vacant blocks in a semi-rural landscape, rather than well-preserved nineteenth-century streetscapes.

This taken into account, it was impossible to maintain townscape cultural heritage values by allowing any significant amount of modern development at all, and the idea that 'sympathetic development' could accommodate these values was a simplistic though earnest one adopted by the former Shire of Bright as development pressure grew. In the opinion of the consultants, the decision to go down this line was inevitable because cultural values sufficiently high to 'sterilise' the devolved townscape of the period were never demonstrated. Open space (vacant blocks) was a crucial component of the significant cultural landscape of the 1960s-70s, and subsequent infill development has now removed the greater part of the open space within the township. In this narrow sense, sympathetic or unsympathetic is irrelevant, but of course other issues such as maintenance of the significant aesthetic landscape of Wandiligong identified by the National Trust and enshrined by the Register of the National Estate were also in play.

As the process of infill development continues, the relevance of HO83, the overarching townscape entry in the Heritage Overlay, decreases as the original townscape cultural values are inexorably eroded. Conversely, the importance of individual place entries in the Heritage Overlay increases as the individual historic features are being further buried in the increasingly modern townscape.

Wandiligong is a significant, evolving aesthetic landscape with underlying cultural layering and components, and is a valuable asset to the Alpine Shire and local community. Protecting and enhancing these values remains a challenge for planning in the Alpine Shire.

8.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this draft study, the following provisional recommendations are made. Adoption of Options A or B will ultimately be a political decision on the part of Council, in consultation with the local community.

Option A

Retain HO83, and obtain more prescriptive guidelines to assist planning decisions.

Option B

Replace HO83 with a suitable prescriptive control such as a Design & Development Overlay, to protect significant aesthetic landscape values at Wandiligong. A DDO can be prescriptive in such things as set-back, footprint, scale, materials and other design parameters.

The DDO would need to be very clear in its Objectives, and definitive of the significant aesthetic landscape elements it is protecting/enhancing. For Option B, watertight strategies must be developed to ensure a seamless transfer of controls, to protect significant aesthetic and historic landscape values at Wandiligong during the transfer period.

Other Recommendations

- Retain existing HO place entries, to protect individual features which contribute cultural layering and value to the significant aesthetic landscape of Wandiligong;
- Obtain detailed architectural prescriptions for existing HO place entries at Wandiligong to guide planners in decision-making on alterations to heritage places;
- Add the following five places to the Heritage Overlay of the Alpine Planning Scheme.

8.3 ADDITIONAL STAGE 2 PLACE ASSESSMENTS

Following Stage 1 of the Alpine Shire Heritage Study, five additional significant places at Wandiligong were moved forward for Stage 2 assessment. A summary of the assessments is included below. Full assessments are included in the Local Heritage Places Database (LHPD)

THE POPLARS

924 Morses Creek Road, Wandiligong

Avenue of poplars planted 1931-32 along driveway by E C Dyason. An 'icon' of Wandiligong for its outstanding displays, and popular with sightseers, artists and photographers for decades.

Management Recommendation

Retain mature trees as long as condition allows, and provide advice/assistance that encourages replanting with identical variety to retain avenue of trees in the longer term.

Planning Recommendation

Add Poplars to Heritage Overlay of the Alpine Planning Scheme.

SLAB SHED

7 Gillards Lane, Wandiligong

Built on property of T Watters, a Cornish miner who was engineer in charge of the adjacent Oriental Mill. Rare example of a once-common early construction method.

Management Recommendation

Retain original vertical slab walls as long as condition allows. Allow roof replacements (corrugated iron), and propping & bracing to prolong survival of slabs. Long-term conservation not likely to be feasible, given condition.

Planning Recommendation

Add Slab Shed to Heritage Overlay of the Alpine Planning Scheme.

ALPINE PARK

Alpine Park Lane, Wandiligong

Recreation ground since perhaps the 1860s, and important to community. Built infrastructure is modern.

Management Recommendation

Retain informal nature of reserve, and retain sportsground (grassed oval) in west-central area and picnic areas along creek at western side. Discourage extensive development of formal gardens that would alter the character of the place, and developments that would restrict public access (eg gates).

Planning Recommendation

Add Alpine Park to Heritage Overlay of the Alpine Planning Scheme.

SLAB COTTAGE

Sideling Track, Wandiligong

Circa early 1860s slab cottage, with later dairy & cellar.

Management Recommendation

Main house is already on HO. Preservation of existing original fabric of slab house is a priority, but replacement of unserviceable timber elements with like materials is permissible, provided it helps prolong the survival of remaining original fabric.

Planning Recommendation

Add slab house, dairy and cellar to the extent of the existing Heritage Overlay entry in the Alpine Planning Scheme.

ORIENTAL MINE

Wandiligong

Extensive network of sites including adits, open cut, mullock dumps, tracks, tramways & hut sites. Largest and most influential of the Alpine Shire reefs in 1860s, and operations crucial to rapid expansion of Wandiligong from 1860 (historical, archaeological).

Management Recommendation

Promote retention and preservation of Oriental Mine Open Cut as part of conditions of any Mining Licence granted over the Oriental Reef or associated adjacent workings.

Planning Recommendation

Add Oriental Open Cut only to HO.

APPENDIX 1: BIBLIOGRAPHY

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APPENDIX 2: MAPS

ALPINE PLANNING SCHEME - LOCAL PROVISION



5,923,700

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This map should be used in conjunction with additional Planning Controls Maps (if applicable) as indicated on the RUSO 1010 MAPS

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AUSTRALIAN MAP GRID ZONE 56

THIS MAP INCORPORATES APPROVED OVERLAYS AS AT 17/05/2011 Amendment C3 Approved 23/10/2010

INDEX TO ADJOINING METRIC SERIES MAP

1	2	3	4
5	6	7	11
10	14	15	16
18	20	21	24

HERITAGE OVERLAY

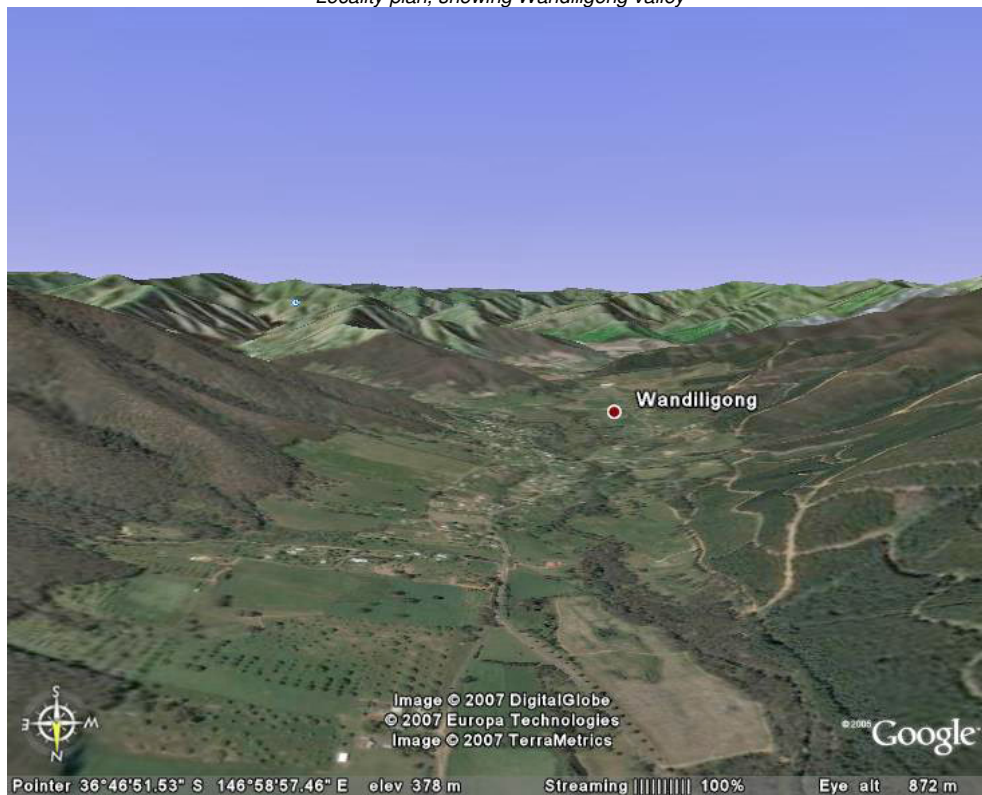
MAP No 18HO

PLAN & PERSPECTIVE VIEWS GENERATED IN GOOGLE EARTH

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Locality plan, showing Wandiligong valley



View along Wandiligong valley, from the north



View north along Wandiligong valley, looking towards Bright



View from ridge on south side of Growlers Creek



View south from ridge between Ovens River & Morses Creek valleys



View east from ridge on west side of Wandiligong valley

APPENDIX 3: ADDITIONAL HISTORICAL PHOTOGRAPHY



Deserted gold diggings on Morses Creek, Washbourne photo c1870 - © State Library of Victoria



Church of England picnic at Alpine Park, 1897 – image courtesy D Hynes, copyright unknown



Morses Creek, 1874 – stylised print by W Forrest from painting by N Chevalier - © National Library of Australia



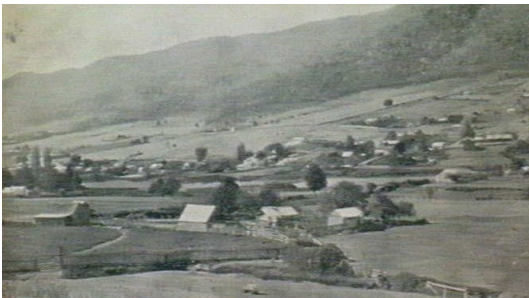
Wandiligong main street looking north, nd (c1900) – image courtesy D Hynes, copyright unknown



Earliest photograph found showing Wandiligong landscape, 1877 – image courtesy B&DHS Inc



Wandiligong Primary School, nd (c1900) – image courtesy D Hynes, copyright unknown



Wandiligong looking north-east, c1909 - © State Library of Victoria



"Wandiligong view looking over Mr Dagon's house", nd (c1900) – image courtesy D Hynes, copyright unknown

APPENDIX 4: MISCELLANEOUS REFERENCES (ENDNOTES)

- ¹ Information for this section principally derived from *The History of Gold Discovery in Victoria*, J Flett, 1970.
- ² *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 January 1853.
- ³ *Argus*, 24 January 1854.
- ⁴ Letter from R Stephenson to his wife at Beechworth, March 1854, quoted in *Bright, A Local History, The Early Years*, A M Breen, 1979 (unpublished thesis – Bright Library).
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- ⁶ *Ovens & Murray Advertiser*, 22 October 1858.
- ⁷ eg *Ovens & Murray Advertiser*, 23 June 1860 and *The Constitution* (Beechworth) 27 June 1861.
- ⁸ *Wandiligong – A Valley Through Time*, Wandiligong Preservation Society, 1988, p15. 1861 census figures: 1388 people at Moses & Growlers Creek, & Ovens River.
- ⁹ *Mining Surveyors & Registrars Reports* (quarterly), Department of Mines, 1864-65.
- ¹⁰ Refer *Reminiscences of Early Wandiligong*, J Walker, published in the *Alpine Observer*, 20 August to 1 October 1920, for descriptions of the early township.
- ¹¹ *Wandiligong – A Valley Through Time*, Wandiligong Preservation Society, 1988, p15-16. 1905 figure from *Australian Handbook 1905*, p485.