

HERITAGE CITATION REPORT



ALPINE SHIRE

name:	Unknown Woman's Grave	File No:	AS0548
Address:	Dargo High Plains Road DARGO		
Place Type:	Isolated Grave/Burial Site		
Citation Date:	2007	Significance Level:	Local



Unknown Woman's Grave

Recommended Heritage Protection	VHR -
	HI -
	PS -

History and Historical Context

The grave was marked by the Harrietville Historical Society in 1969 as the "Unknown Woman". Originally thought to be a woman who had died in childbirth while travelling on the road, researchers such as Rogers & Helyar now believe it may be Eliza Gardner, a 39-year old English woman who died of heart disease at 18 Mile Creek on 11 May 1867. Eliza had been in the Colony for 30 years, and had married Alex Gardner, an engineer - they had no children.

The grave could also be that of "Mother" Fraser, wife of Alex. "Mother" Fraser, or the "Fat Woman" of the High Plains, ran the shanty, after it was put up in 1865 to intercept the traffic between the Upper Dargo reefs and Grant. She was referred to as an old lady at the time, "18 stone and moustacheoed like a dragoon". She was well-liked by the struggling local diggers, but notoriously took full toll of the well-heeled. Her date of death and burial details have not been researched. The situation of the grave a short distance away from the old settlement of Frasers and the original Dargo road that ran through it suggests a link with the settlement. The small settlement of Frasers (Little Womans) served traffic on the Dargo road, and also the gold diggings on 25 mile Creek and 18 Mile Creek, from the mid-1860s.



References:

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- Rogers, J.G & Helyar, N., 1994, Lonely Graves of the Gippsland Goldfields and Greater Gippsland, p. 147
- Stennhuis L., 1998, Ghosts Towns of the High Plains, Research Publications Pty Ltd, p. 23
- R Kaufman & L Thompson, 2004, Lone Graves of Gippsland Pilot Heritage Study, Unpubl, p. 92

Relevant Historical Australian Themes

3.16 Struggling with remoteness, hardship and failure.

9.7.3 Remembering the dead

Description

Physical Description

The grave is situated beside the Dargo High Plains Rd and is surrounded by snow gums with snow grass understorey. A track leading to a nearby picnic area passes the grave. The picnic area shows evidence of former habitation, with the stone bases of several buildings visible. The grave itself measures 2.4 metres by 1.9 metres, is aligned east-west. It is marked with a concrete Latin cross, and a cast iron plaque on a concrete slab. A small brass relief image of a woman has been attached to the cross. The south and east side boundaries are marked with rocks, and bush timber poles have been laid on the north and west sides. The plaque reads "Peace be with her, and all who lie in these lonely graves, in the mountains and on the High Plains".

Physical Condition

Good

Usage / Former Usage

Burial site

Intactness

Integrity is fair only, with most visible fabric (cross, plaque and logs) being added in modern times. These alterations are only superficial, and the rock border and covering may be original fabric. If this is the case, the original grave may be quite intact.

Recommended Management

Grave site must not be further disturbed, or added to without consent and advice from Heritage Victoria. Grave may be at some risk from further road or track works

Comparative Analysis

Lone graves are product of their era when cemetery infrastructure and transport facilities were not always available in remote regional areas. The locations of the overwhelming majority of lone burials from the European pioneering period have been lost over time, and the Unknown Woman's grave is one of perhaps only 50 or so known to exist on the Gippsland fall of the ranges and Greater Gippsland between Melbourne, and Mallacoota. In the Alpine Shire a number of lone burials are recorded but only a very few sites are known. These known sites include the Tawonga Station graves. The Unknown Woman's grave is the best known in the Shire because of its proximity to a well used road, and easy public access. While it would be easy to conclude that the grave might have added significance as it is representative of the tragic and hurried roadside burials

that often occurred in the era, the grave is not beside the original road, but more behind Frasers settlement. The story of death in childbirth is tenuous, and recent studies suggest that there is no association with the high infant (and mother) mortality rates that characterised the period. Nonetheless, the grave has been endowed over time with a certain mystique, and it is widely known for its tribute to the other European pioneers of the district who died in the mountains, and whose final resting places are unknown.

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The Unknown Woman's Grave is situated beside the Dargo High Plains Rd and consists of a rock-covered rectangular mound bordered with logs, and marked by a cement cross and a brass plaque. The cross has an inset brass relief image of a woman. The history of the grave is not precisely known and it was earlier assumed that it was the grave of a woman who died in childbirth. Recent research indicates it may be the grave of Eliza Gardner who died at the nearby 18-Mile Creek diggings in 1867. She had no children.

How is it significant?

The Unknown Woman's grave is historically and socially important to the Alpine Shire.

Why is it significant?

The Unknown Woman's grave is historically significant as a relatively rare, accessible and recognisable lone grave that is representative of the isolation and hardships of life in the mountains in that era. The grave is socially significant for the community value vested in the site for its commemoration of not only the person buried there but for others whose last resting places in the mountains are unknown.

Assessment Against Criteria

Criterion A

ITS IMPORTANCE IN THE COURSE, OR PATTERN, OF AUSTRALIA'S NATURAL OR CULTURAL HISTORY

A.1 Importance in the evolution of Australian flora, fauna, landscapes or climate.

A.2 Importance in maintaining existing processes or natural systems at the regional or national scale.

A.3 Importance in exhibiting unusual richness or diversity of flora, fauna, landscapes or cultural features.

A.4 Importance for association with events, developments or cultural phases which have had a significant role in the human occupation and evolution of the nation, State, region or community.

Has importance for association with an era when lone burials were common in remote places, because of lack of centralised burial facilities and poor transport conditions.

Criterion B

ITS POSSESSION OF UNCOMMON, RARE OR ENDANGERED ASPECTS OF AUSTRALIA'S NATURAL OR CULTURAL HISTORY

B.1 Importance for rare, endangered or uncommon flora, fauna, communities, ecosystems, natural landscapes or phenomena, or as a wilderness.

B.2 Importance in demonstrating a distinctive way of life, custom, process, land-use, function or design no longer practised, in danger of being lost, or of exceptional interest

Has importance as a relatively rare, accessible and recognisable lone grave that is representative of the isolation and hardships of life in the mountains in that era.



Criterion C

ITS POTENTIAL TO YIELD INFORMATION THAT WILL CONTRIBUTE TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF AUSTRALIA'S NATURAL OR CULTURAL HISTORY

C.1 Importance for information contributing to a wider understanding of Australian natural history, by virtue of its use as a research site, teaching site, type locality, reference or benchmark site.

C.2 Importance for information contributing to a wider understanding of the history of human occupation of Australia

Criterion D

ITS IMPORTANCE IN DEMONSTRATING THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERISTICS OF: (I) A CLASS OF AUSTRALIA'S NATURAL OR CULTURAL PLACES; OR (II) A CLASS OF AUSTRALIA'S NATURAL OR CULTURAL ENVIRONMENTS

D.1 Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of the range of landscapes, environments or ecosystems, the attributes of which identify them as being characteristic of their class.

D.2 Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of the range of human activities in the Australian environment (including way of life, philosophy, custom, process, land use, function, design or technique).

Criterion E

ITS IMPORTANCE IN EXHIBITING PARTICULAR AESTHETIC CHARACTERISTICS VALUED BY A COMMUNITY OR CULTURAL GROUP

E.1 Importance for a community for aesthetic characteristics held in high esteem or otherwise valued by the community

Criterion F

ITS IMPORTANCE IN DEMONSTRATING A HIGH DEGREE OF CREATIVE OR TECHNICAL ACHIEVEMENT AT A PARTICULAR PERIOD

F.1 Importance for its technical, creative, design or artistic excellence, innovation or achievement

Criterion G

ITS STRONG OR SPECIAL ASSOCIATIONS WITH A PARTICULAR COMMUNITY OR CULTURAL GROUP FOR SOCIAL, CULTURAL OR SPIRITUAL REASONS

G.1 Importance as a place highly valued by a community for reasons of religious, spiritual, symbolic, cultural, educational, or social associations.

Has symbolic and social importance as a place that has come to commemorate not only the person buried there, but the European pioneers of the Alps whose last resting places in the mountains are unknown. This value is recognised in the attached plaque.

Criterion H

ITS SPECIAL ASSOCIATION WITH THE LIFE OR WORKS OF A PERSON, OR GROUP OF PERSONS, OF IMPORTANCE IN AUSTRALIA'S NATURAL OR CULTURAL HISTORY

H.1 Importance for close associations with individuals whose activities have been significant within the history of the nation, State or region

Recommendations 2007

External Paint Controls

Yes

HERITAGE CITATION REPORT



ALPINE SHIRE

Internal Alteration Controls	No
Tree Controls	No
Fences & Outbuildings	No
Prohibited uses may be permitted	Yes
Incorporated Plan	-
Aboriginal Heritage Place	No