

Place Details

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Hanging Rock, South Rock Rd, Newham, VIC, Australia

Photographs	None
List	Register of the National Estate (Non-statutory archive)
Class	Natural
Legal Status	Registered (14/05/1991)
Place ID	4257
Place File No	2/06/101/0003

Statement of Significance

Hanging Rock is important for its aesthetic quality for the following reasons: it is a landmark feature in the surrounding countryside due to its height and rock formations; it provides a variety of scenery of intimate forest areas with added interest from wildlife, enclosed narrow rock passages, and viewing platforms from which panoramas can be experienced; and it is perceived by the public as having an aura of mystery due to its association with the bushranger Dan Morgan, the Joan Lindsay novel and the uncommon rock formation with narrow but tall internal spaces. (Criterion e 1)

A place of recreation since the 1860s and a Crown recreation reserve since 1884, Hanging Rock reserve has a strong association with the social and cultural life of large numbers of Victorians and visitors from further afield. Long traditions of picnicking exist and are strongly maintained today. (Criterion G.1)

Hanging Rock has an association with the early European exploration of Victoria. It was named Mt Diogenes by Sir Thomas Livingstone Mitchell, surveyor general, during his 1836 journey, a trip which played a major role in opening up the Port Phillip district. The rock is also associated with the bushranging era, apparently having been used by bushranger Dan (mad dog) Morgan as a lookout. (Criterion A.4)

Hanging Rock reserve contains one of the few remaining remnants of the vegetation that occurred in the area between the Macedon range and the Cobaw prior to European settlement. (Criterion A.1)

Hanging Rock is an unusual volcano for Victoria both in terms of its form and rock composition. It lies along the time boundary between the older volcanic and newer volcanic series (late Miocene) and results from a process of magma differentiation that is restricted to two small areas of the state (Gisborne/Woodend and Daylesford). (Criterion A.1)

The volcanoes of these areas constitute a distinctive, small volcanic province that has affinities with provinces in the eastern Highlands in NSW and Queensland. This Victorian province is the western most and most recent of these. (Criterion B.1)

The site is an important teaching and reference site to illustrate the influence of lava type on volcano form and is the best example of this type in Victoria. Recent isotopic dating of the rock material has supported earlier (1930s) evaluation of the age and origin of the volcanic material. (Criterion D.1)

The site is a reference site for a flow-dome in Victoria and is an important research site for dating. (Criterion C.1)

The Commission has determined that this place has Indigenous values of national estate significance. The Commission is currently consulting with relevant Indigenous communities about the amount of information to be placed on public record.

Official Values Not Available

Description

Hanging Rock is a volcanic eruption point that produced a small volume of soda-trachyte lava (silica rich) with little or no pyroclastic or fragmental material. Dating of Hanging Rock lava and that from adjacent similar eruption points indicates a late Miocene age (about 6 million years). The lava is of a higher viscosity than most other tertiary volcanics in Victoria and its greater resistance to flow caused the growth of a dome or Tholoid around the eruption point producing a steep-sided, fractured mass of lava rather than the thin sheets or flows resulting from the basaltic volcanoes. The structure is also known as a Mamelon. Cooling of the rock produced numerous vertical fractures which shape the cliff faces and have been enlarged by weathering to produce a complex of pinnacles, craggy overhangs, small caverns and boulders on the slopes of Hanging Rock.

The vegetation of the rock is characterised by scattered trees and shrubs growing amid the pinnacles. The area contains one of the few remnants of native vegetation between the Macedon Range and the Cobaws. Although only three kilometres from Mt Macedon Regional Park the vegetation associations are different. The overstorey is comprised of narrow-leaf peppermint (*EUCALYPTUS RADIATA*), candlebark (*E. RUBIDA*) and on the northern aspect manna gum (*E. VIMINALIS*). On the northern aspect minor species include silver wattle (*ACACIA DEALBATA*), blackwood (*A. MEARNsii*) and *POMADERRIS ASPERA*. The vegetation on the southern slopes is denser than that of the northern slope due to the shade cast by the rock. The understorey is sparse with only occasional blackwoods and *POMADERRIS*. The herb layer is dense with bracken (*PTERIDIUM ESCULENTUM*).

Hanging Rock is a local landscape feature. It rises out of the a forest base in a cluster of vertical rock pinnacles to a height of 100m, contrasting dramatically with surrounding flat grasslands. At the base of the rock the vegetation provides enclosed forest scenery with additional interest from the resident wildlife which includes koala, wallabies and birds. Within the rock formation area there are a number of internal rock enclosed passages.

From the summit lookout panoramas are experienced. An addition to the aesthetic quality is an aura of mystery surrounding the rock which is now entrenched in public perceptions. This is probably due to the rock being used as a hideout/lookout by the bush ranger Dan Morgan, being used in the Joan Lindsay novel *Picnic at Hanging Rock* as a place where mysterious and unexplained events occurred and the rock formations which create a formidable and imposing presence when experienced from the narrow internal passageways.

Significant Indigenous values are known to exist in this area. The Commission is currently consulting with relevant Indigenous communities about the amount of information to be placed on public record.

History Not Available

Condition and Integrity

The reserve is in good condition. The committee of management is committed to a programme of preservation and conservation including tree planting, re-vegetation and maintenance of the landscape. The southern slope of the rock has many patches of blackberry.

Location

About 25ha, 2km south of Newham, comprising that part of Hanging Rock Reserve within the road encircling Hanging Rock.

Bibliography

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