EXTENT
PEOPLE-CENTRED HERITAGE

Falls to Hotham Alpine Crossing

Historical Archaeology Survey Report

Prepared for Parks Victoria

October 2023—Version 6

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ECAAS ISO 14001 CERTIFIED ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT
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Sydney
Melbourne
Brisbane
Perth
Hobart

EXTENT HERITAGE PTY LTD
ABN 24 608 666 306
ACN 608 666 306
info@extent.com.au
extent.com.au

SYDNEY
Level 3/73 Union St
Pyrmont NSW 2009
P 02 9555 4000
F 02 9555 7005

MELBOURNE
Level 1, 52 Holmes St
Brunswick East VIC 3057
P 03 9388 0622

BRISBANE
Level 12/344 Queen St
Brisbane QLD 4000
P 07 3051 0171

PERTH
Level 25/108 St Georges Tce
Perth WA 6000
P 08 9381 5206

HOBART
54A Main Road
Moonah TAS 7009
P 03 6134 8124

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Author(s):	Emily Simons, Alistair Hobbs, and Christopher Clark.

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1. Introduction

Extent Heritage Pty Ltd (Extent Heritage) was engaged by Parks Victoria (PV), to prepare a Historical Archaeological Assessment (HAA) in 2022 in advance of the proposed Falls to Hotham Alpine Crossing (FHAC) project. The proposed location of FHAC, and therefore the study area for this report is shown in Figure 1. The project includes an integrated hiking and accommodation scheme that will formalise 52 km of existing trails and 18 km of 4WD access tracks, as well as provide camping, accommodation, and toilet facilities at four overnight nodes, in addition to signage and trailheads within the Alpine National Park. The study area used throughout this report is based on information provided by Parks Victoria at the time of survey (early 2023). Proposed designs may be subject to change as the project progresses.

The HAA was prepared to assess whether the proposed works will impact any historical archaeological values within the study area. In accordance with Recommendation 1 of the HAA, and the Heritage Act 2017 (the Act), this report outlines the results of the historical archaeological survey which was conducted in conjunction with the standard assessment for Cultural Heritage Management Plan #18860. The survey was carried out between January 16th to February 3rd, 2023.

The entire study area is within the National Heritage Register curtilage for the Australian Alps National Parks and Reserves (#105891). While this listing does not include specific historical archaeology within the study area, it does reference values associated with the pioneering history of the high country (See Figure 4 for details). One known Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) site lies within the study area: the Red Robin Gold Mine and Battery (VHR number H1881). This site is also protected at a local level by its inclusion on the Heritage Overlay (HO1). 'Wallaces Hut' (VHR H1616) is in proximity to the FHAC study area, although was not subject to survey as part of this assessment (Figure 2).

While the entire study area was surveyed for historical archaeology, a focus was applied to areas in proximity to the Red Robin Gold Mine and Battery (H1881) as a site of alpine gold mining and processing, and the pioneering huts (Cope and Tawonga) within the study area.

Overall, this report concludes that there is currently no legislative requirement under the Heritage Act 2017 to obtain any approvals (permit or consents) prior to the proposed works commencing. However, should any redesign occur, a re-assessment will need to occur to determine whether there is any such requirement in line of altered impacts.

Figure 1. The Falls to Hotham Alpine Crossing (FHAC) study area.

2. Recognised heritage values

The following section summarises the statutory and non-statutory mechanisms in place for the protection of recognised heritage listings within the study area. Listings in proximity to the study area are identified, although not considered in detail. Places of heritage value outside of the study area, but within the Alpine Region, that are not protected through statutory means are similarly omitted from this report.

The geographic relationship between the listings discussed below and the study area are shown in Figure 2, Figure 3, and Figure 4.

2.1 Heritage Act 2017

All places on the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) and the Victorian Heritage Inventory (VHI) are legally protected under the *Heritage Act 2017* (hereafter 'The Act') – penalties apply for actions that may damage a place listed on either list in the absence of a permit (in the case of the VHR) or consent (in the case of the VHI) under the Act.

The Act confers blanket protection on all significant heritage material of over 75 years in age, regardless of whether it is included on a statutory list, this is particularly relevant to archaeological material.

2.1.1 Victorian Heritage Register

The study area includes one listing on the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR):

- 'Red Robin Gold Mine and Battery' (H1881).
    - The listing is separated into two locations: the Mine and the Battery. Only the area surrounding the Battery is within the study area, near the current, preferred location of 'Node 3', a proposed overnight accommodation (Figure 30).

The Red Robin Gold Mine and Battery is listed as both a registered place and a registered archaeological place, recognising that the historical archaeological deposits which may be present are deemed to be directly contributory to the place's state level significance.

The following Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) sites are nearby, albeit not within study area and therefore were not subject to survey. Moreover, Wallace's Hut and Maisie's Plots are not recognised for their archaeological value but rather historical and architectural significance. Therefore, while important to note, their heritage values are not considered for this assessment.

- 'Wallaces' Hut' (H1616), Wallaces Track Nelse. Located near the study area, south-east of Falls Creek.
- 'Tronoh Gold Dredging Ponds' (H1756), Dredge Hole Lane and Feathertop Track, Harrietville. Located south-west of the trailhead outside Harrietville.

- ‘Maisie’s Plots’ (H2424), Bogong High Plains Road, Falls Creek, Alpine Shire.

2.1.2 Victorian Heritage Inventory

The Victorian Heritage Inventory (VHI), under section 117 of the Act, lists all known archaeological sites and artefacts. Under the Act an 'archaeological site' means a place (other than a shipwreck) which:

a. contains an artefact, deposit or feature which is 75 or more years old;

b. provides information of past activity in the State;

c. requires archaeological methods to reveal information about the settlement, development or use of the place; and

d. is not associated only with Aboriginal occupation of the place

Penalties apply if actions that may damage a listed place are undertaken without approval under the Act

The Red Robin Mine is within the study area and included on the VHI as H8324-0035, however, this listing refers to part of the mining operations outside of the study area. In this instance the archaeological values of the broader site are afforded a higher level of protection through their recognition in the VHR listing – see above.

A further nine inventory items are in proximity to the study area. These may be seen in Figure 2, Figure 3, and Figure 4, and are listed as:

- ‘United Miners Mine and Battery Site’ (H8324-0019), Graveyard Gully, Harrietville.
- ‘Champion Battery’ (H8324-0020), Feathertop Track, Harrietville.
- ‘Razorback Battery’ (H8324-0024), Hotham Heights.
- ‘Biplane Battery Site’ (H8324-0026), off Alpine Road, Harrietville.
- ‘Tronoh Dredge Holes: North Hole’ (H8324-0029), Dredge Hole Lane, Harrietville.
- ‘Tronoh Dredge Holes: Turning Scars’ (H8324-0030), Dredge Hole Lane, Harrietville.
- ‘Tronoh Dredge Holes: South Hole’ (H8324-0031), Dredge Hole Lane, Harrietville.
- ‘Red Robin Mine’ (H8324-0035), Hotham Heights. Note that this site is also included in the VHR listing H1881, although this part of the mine lies outside of the study area.
- ‘Harrietville Chinese Camp Site’ (H8324-0042), Bon Accord Track, Harrietville.

None of these listings were subject to survey, as they are outside of the current study area.

2.1.3 Planning and Environment Act 1987

The same areas covered by the Red Robin Mine VHR listing (H1881) are included in the Alpine Council Heritage Overlay as HO1.

2.1.4 National and Commonwealth Heritage Lists

The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) is the central legislation that protects and manages "nationally and internationally important flora, fauna, ecological communities and heritage places."

The entire study area is included in the National Heritage List (NHL) as part of the *Australian Alps National Parks and Reserves* (AANP). The AANP encompasses eleven alpine regions across NSW, ACT, and Victoria, which are significant for their unique mountainous bioregion, historic mountain huts, and their role in human history.

The NHL listing recognises historical archaeology as a contributor to the place's National Heritage values. However, the Red Robin Mine (H1881) was assessed as not having outstanding heritage value to the nation – i.e. be in itself of National Heritage level significance (National Heritage List 2008), rather it retains a state level significance.

Therefore, there are no requirements regarding historical archaeology under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) related to the *Australian Alps National Parks and Reserves* (AANP).

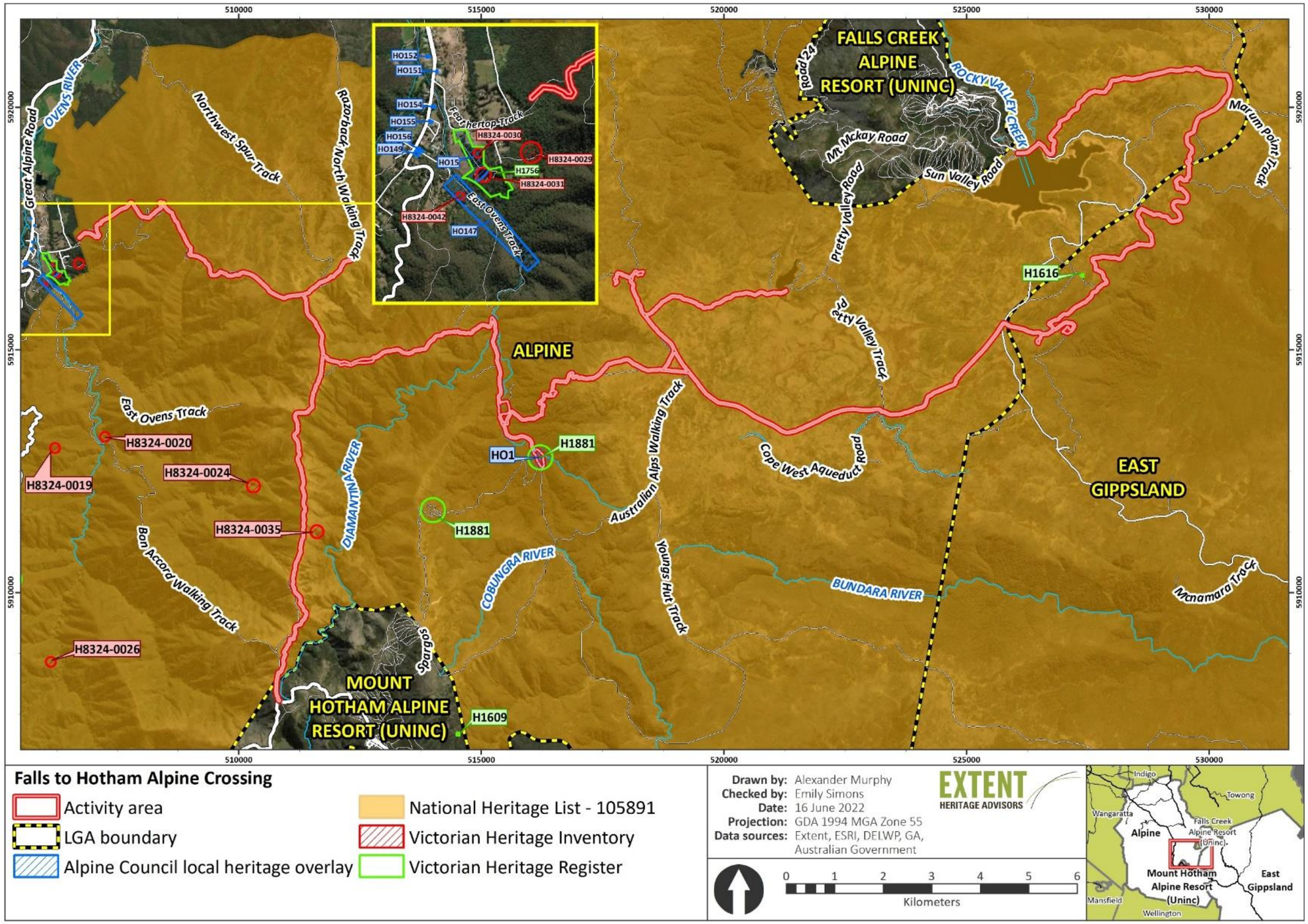
2.1.5 Register of the National Trust

The National Trust maintains a register of all types of cultural and natural heritage in Victoria, including buildings, trees, landscapes, gardens, public art and pipe organs. While inclusion on this list does not offer statutory protection under the Heritage Act 2017, items on this list still retain heritage value, and are therefore useful when examining a study area's potential to contain historical archaeology.

There is one registration within on the Register of the National Trust relevant to this survey report:

- Mountain Huts - Weston's, Blair, Cleve Cole, **Cope**, Fitzgerald, **Tawonga Huts Complex** (B6018).

The Cope and Tawonga huts are within the study area and were subject to survey.



Falls to Hotham Alpine Crossing

- Activity area
- LGA boundary
- Alpine Council local heritage overlay
- National Heritage List - 105891
- Victorian Heritage Inventory
- Victorian Heritage Register

Drawn by: Alexander Murphy
Checked by: Emily Simons
Date: 16 June 2022
Projection: GDA 1994 MGA Zone 55
Data sources: Extent, ESRI, DELWP, GA, Australian Government

EXTENT HERITAGE ADVISORS

0 1 2 3 4 5 6
Kilometers

Figure 2. VHR, VHI, and Heritage Overlay Listings within and in proximity to the study area

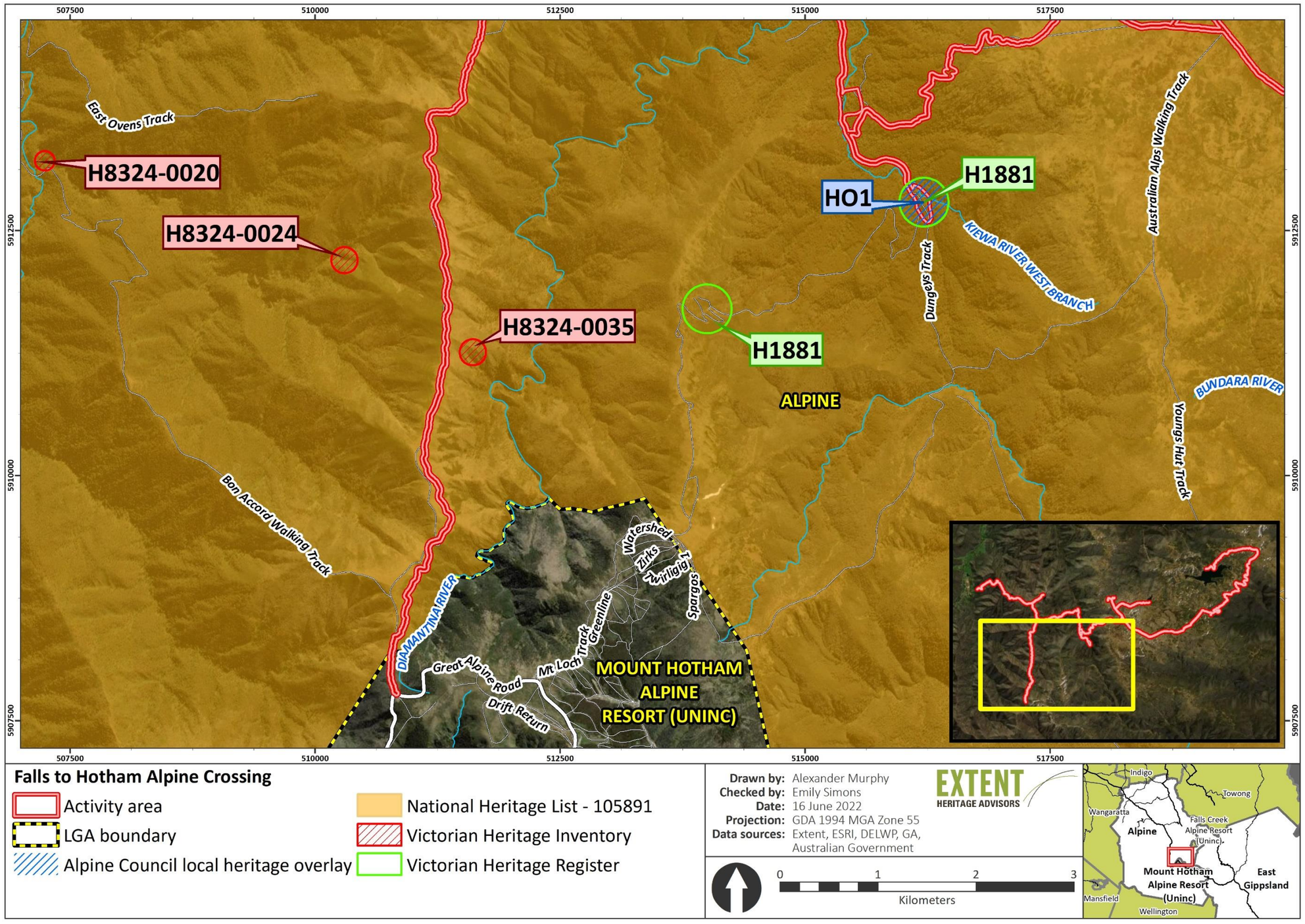


Figure 3. VHR, VHI, and Heritage Overlay Listings within the study area, detail of the area around the Red Robin mine.

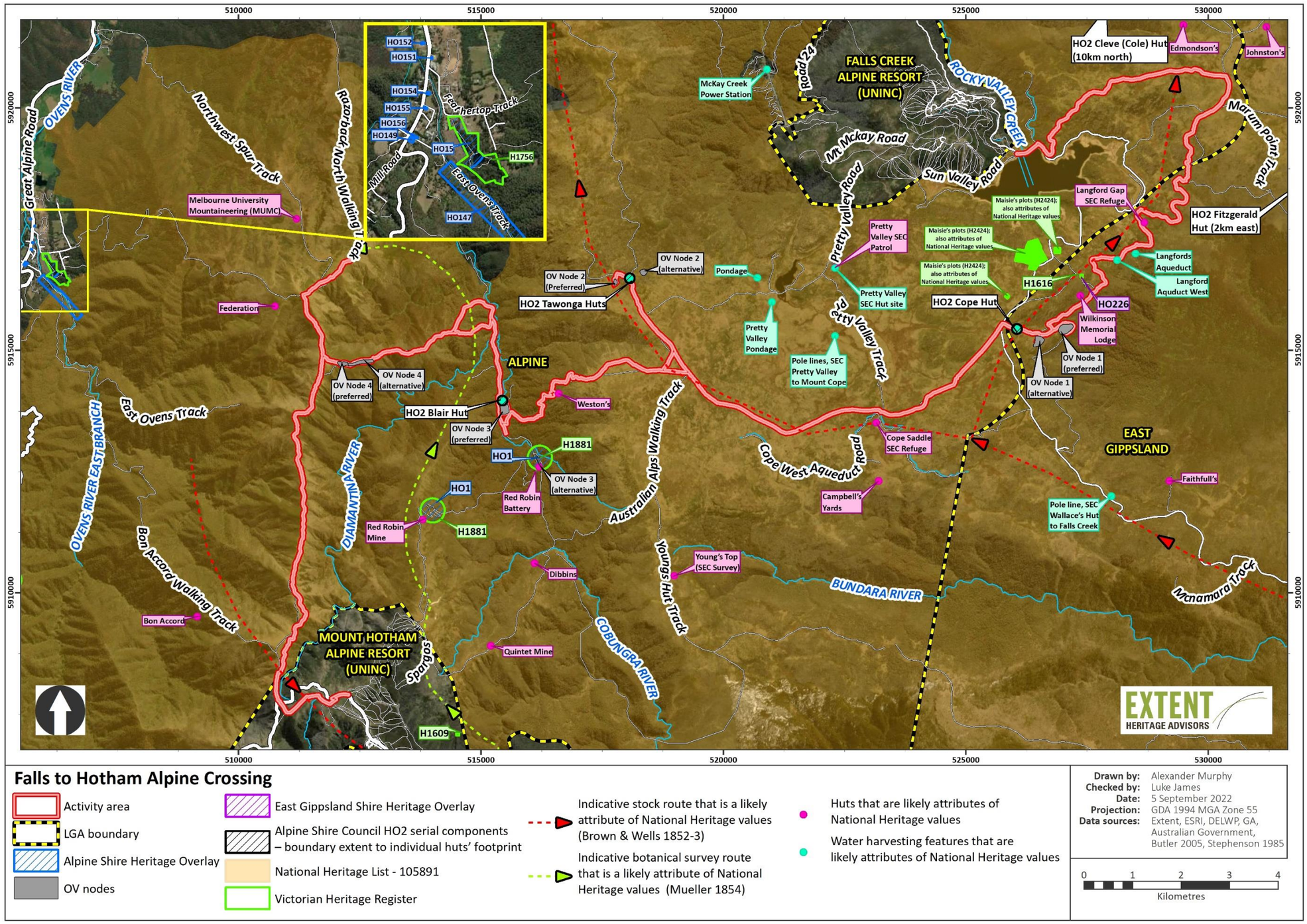


Figure 4. The study area with adjacent VHR, VHI, and Heritage Overlay listings. Other historical sites that may contribute to the National Heritage values are indicated in pink and teal.

3. Summary of the Historical Archaeological Assessment

The following section provides a summary of the HAA (Extent Heritage 2022) and includes information pertaining to the study area's historical archaeological significance, its historical development and occupation phasing.

This part of the report summarises the site's potential to contain archaeological evidence associated with the previous phases of its occupation, and the likely impact the proposed development may have on significant historical archaeological remains and deposits. It builds on the development history outlined above, previous findings of archaeological investigations in the vicinity and a detailed assessment of development phases in the study area, to determine its historical archaeological potential.

The potential for the archaeological resource to reveal useful information about previous occupation depends on its extent, nature, and level of preservation. Disturbed archaeological deposits in the form of fragmentary structural remains and random artefacts may provide evidence of previous occupation, but their use or value in reconstructing the past is inherently limited. This is because such features and deposits are disassociated from the stratigraphic sequence that establishes their provenance. Well preserved archaeological deposits have a higher research potential, and this contributes to their level of heritage significance.

The following is a summary of previous relevant archaeological studies and conclusions drawn from the HAA (Appendix A) regarding the study area's historical archaeological potential. This summary is of sufficient detail to inform conclusions on the site's historical archaeological significance, development, and occupation phasing. Appendix A should be referred to by reviewers seeking additional information about the historical context of the study area.

3.1 Relevant previous archaeological studies

The results of heritage database searches undertaken on 28 June 2022, and 19 September 2023, demonstrate that, to date, no previous historical archaeological excavations have been undertaken within the study area. However, several regional surveys have been undertaken which may contribute towards our understanding of the historical archaeological potential of the study area.

Archaeological Survey of Pretty Valley – Alpine National Park (Terra Culture Pty Ltd., 2000).

Terra Culture undertook an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage survey within Pretty Valley, Alpine National Park to assess archaeological potential prior to a car park upgrade and the formalisation of the campground, toilet, and fireplace facilities.

While the survey was focussed on identifying Aboriginal Cultural Heritage, two non-Aboriginal archaeological features were identified near the Pretty Valley cattle yards, associated with the 1946 Kiewa Hydro-Electric Scheme, and the Pretty Valley Hut, built approximately at the same

time. The report recommended a specific non-aboriginal heritage survey to be undertaken of these features. These two which are outside of the current study area.

22,000 Volts Underground Power Cable: The Springs Saddle to Mount Hotham Alpine Resort. Application to Heritage Victoria – Supporting documentation. (Arup Environmental & Planning, 2000).

Arup Environmental & Planning prepared a permit application to support the laying of a new secondary power cable from the Springs Saddle through to Mount Hotham and Dinner Plain. The cable follows already established tracks, and passes close to VHR 1881, Red Robin Mine and Battery.

The cable was to be laid in a trench approximately 300 mm wide by 700 mm deep, along pre-established routes totalling 34.5 km. The Red Robin Mine operator at the time, Ken Harris, and PV were consulted during this process, and the cable installation was not planned within 250 m of the mine or battery.

Assessment of the Cultural Heritage Values of the Australian Alps National Parks (Truscott, Grinbergs, Buckley and Pearson, 2006).

The Department of the Environment and Heritage (DEH) commissioned research and preliminary assessment of historic cultural heritage values of the Australian Alps National Parks that was completed in 2006. While this report assessed the historic heritage values of the entire 1.6 million hectares of the Australian Alps National Park, only relevant parts (those focussed on the Alpine National Park) are discussed below.

The assessment examined many of the known sites, including those discussed above (such as gold mines, batteries and huts). These were concluded to have historic heritage value to the region as they are tangible links to the earliest European use of the Alps. Moreover, it was concluded that undocumented huts and other historical sites are likely within the region.

This report, while focussed on other aspects of heritage value in the region, add to our understanding of the Alpine region's European history, and therefore what potential undocumented historical archaeological remains may be present.

Alpine Shire Heritage Study: Historical Archaeology Report (R. J. Kaufman, LRGM Services, 2008).

LRGM – Services undertook a historical archaeological survey of the Alpine Shire region to identify areas of archaeological significance, to make recommendations for inclusion of places in the Heritage Inventory, Heritage Register, or Heritage Overlay.

The report identified 227 archaeological sites with the Shire, which were subsequently added to the Local Heritage Places Database (LHPD). The sites were associated with post-contact alluvial mining throughout the valley areas, stock grazing in the High Country, the development of the Kiewa Hydro scheme, and the growth of alpine townships.

The assessment concluded that while alluvial mining was widespread in many valleys within the region, it occurred only in a limited fashion within the Keiwa valley. Reef mining similarly

occurred throughout the region with adits rather than shafts being the predominant method. Agricultural practices were undertaken in the valleys, with summer grazing occurring in the High Country.

Archaeological features may be former huts, tracks, and yard infrastructure. Logging occurred throughout the region, but little archaeological evidence remains of these practices. Similarly, evidence of tourism is limited, with areas of interest confined to the ski fields and Mt Feathertop.

Packhorse Heritage Trail Historical Archaeological Assessment, Falls Creek, Victoria (M. Schlitz, Biosis Research, 2010).

Biosis Research Pty Ltd completed a historical archaeological assessment for the proposed Packhorse Heritage Trail at Falls Creek Resort. The aim was to determine the feasibility of the heritage trail.

The assessment and subsequent survey demonstrated that no historical archaeological sites were present in the study area.

3.2 Summary of the historical development

This section summarises the known development history of the study area. Table 1 below provides an overview of the post-contact site history detailed in the HAA (Appendix A), drawing on archival information, including historical maps and aerial photography, to accurately chart activity within the activity area.

Table 1. Summary of the historical events and developments relevant to the study area.

Period	Development
Pre-1854	Numerous Aboriginal groups were living and accessing the Alpine region in all seasons for at least 20,000 years.
1854	Mount Hotham and Mount Feathertop surveyed by Ferdinand von Mueller.
1860s – 1920s	The alpine plains are used for seasonal summer grazing by stockmen.
c. 1860	Formation of the Prospecting Association at Harrietville. Many promising gold reefs opened in this period and continued in operation for decades.
1866	First speculative High Country grazing leases gazetted.
1870s	Gippsland Railway opens, facilitating trips to the Bogong Region.
1874	Sir Bowen George and party climb Mt Hotham, and Mt Feathertop via the Razorback track
1888	Jack Ryder builds the first Tawonga Hut, the earliest cattleman's hut on the Bogong High Plains.
1889	Irish immigrants, William and Stewart Wallace built Wallace Hut (H1616) on the plains near Falls Creek where they held a grazing lease.

Period	Development
1890s	A School of Mines opens in Harrietville.
1892 onwards	High altitude establishments constructed to service visitors during the summer months, e.g., Mrs Johnston's at Diamantina and St. Bernard's Hospice.
1914 – 1918	Wallace's Hut used by stockmen from NSW during a drought.
1920s – 1940s	The State Electricity Commission used Wallace's Hut to collect data for potential hydroelectric works. The roof and walls were covered in corrugated iron, the chimney was fixed, and a skillion lean-to was added. The numbers of recreational skiers increase, utilising the cattlemen's networks of trails and huts.
1929	Cope Hut is built by the Ski Club of Victoria.
1930s	W. B. Spargo spends eight years in the bush prospecting for gold around Mts. Loch and Hotham.
1936	The Alpine Road declared a Tourist Road.
1938	Construction starts on the Kiewa Hydro Electric Scheme.
1941	Spargo finally strikes gold 4 miles (6.5 km), from Hotham Heights. He stakes two claims: Red Robin Mine (H1881) and One Alone Mine. Both mines yield significant amounts of gold for the relatively small amount of quartz crushed.
1946	The township of Mt Beauty is established.
1952	Spargo sells Red Robin Mine
Mid-1950s	The grazing huts at the Tawonga Complex are updated to their current state, the fourth generation of huts on the site.
1956/1961	The West Kiewa Power Station is completed and by 1961 adapted waterways such as the Pretty Valley Pondage and aqueducts are completed.
1968	The Tourist Development Authority and the Federation of Victorian Walking Clubs conceptualise the Alpine Walking Track.
1970s	The Victorian portion of the Alpine Walking Track is established.
2001	The Red Robin Mine ceases to operate.

3.3 Phases of historical development

The area history, as summarised above, indicates that several phases of historical development occurred within the study area:

- Phase 0: Aboriginal land use
- Phase 1: Grazing and ephemeral land use, including recreation (1860s-1920s);
- Phase 2: Gold prospecting and mine establishment (1930s – 1970s); and
- Phase 3: Recreational use (1970s – current).

The identified phases of development with the potential to result in the creation of, or impact to, historical archaeological resources are discussed below. Figure 4, shows huts, indicative routes, and water harvesting features outside of the study area that may contribute to understanding archaeological features within the study area and a wider attribution of National Heritage Values in the Victorian Alpine Region.

3.3.1 Phase 0: Aboriginal land use

A detailed ethnohistory is available in the Falls to Hotham Crossing Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP #18890). It has been summarised below:

Numerous Aboriginal groups were living and accessing the Alpine region in all seasons for at least 20,000 years (Goulding 2002). Historical accounts and the archaeological record demonstrate that river valleys were favourable camping spots and travelling routes through the mountains. In winter, the upper reaches of the mountains would have been accessed for the annual bogong moth season. There is a possibility of temporary campsites associated with the bogong moth harvest on upper mountain reaches and ridges of the region, especially associated with granite tors and other landforms around which bogong moths gather.

3.3.2 Phase 1: Grazing and ephemeral land use, including recreation (1860s-1920s)

Minimal development has been identified as having occurred in the study area during this phase. Ephemeral use is notoriously difficult to ascertain, particularly through survey, however both the Tawonga Huts complex and Cope Hut reflect different elements of land use during this phase.

While Ryder's original 1888 hut at Tawonga is no longer extant, and the current buildings are the fourth generation of such huts, they reflect ongoing usage at the site from this early phase. Cope Hut was built towards the end of this phase and remains the only hut built for recreational purposes within the study area (other examples may be found throughout the Alpine region, outside of the study area). Nearby sites outside of the study area, such as Wallace's Hut (H1616), and Maisie's Plot may also be considered representative of this phase. Several huts in the area have subsequently succumbed to bush fires and neglect, others have been identified as possible representations of National Heritage Values (Figure 4).

Archaeological evidence is likely to be limited to ephemeral remains reflecting transitional or temporary use, including postholes, firepits, refuse pits, and isolated artefacts lost or discarded by people moving through the study area. It is possible that more substantial deposits and features relating to ephemeral/temporary structures or activities may exist in the study area, such as hut footprints, fences, and stock yards.

3.3.3 Phase 2: Gold prospecting and mine establishment (1930s – 1970s)

This period saw the continued processing of gold at nearby Harrietville, and ongoing searches for new sources. Bill Spargo spent much of the late 1920s and 1930s prospecting for high altitude gold, eventually finding two high altitude reefs: Red Robin Mine and One Alone Mine. Only Red Robin Mine is within the study area, and its establishment in 1941 was a notable event during this period. The mine continued in use until the early 2000s, although its remote location and high altitude led to seasonal variability in production and access.

This phase also saw the development of the Kiewa Hydro Electric Scheme, from the 1940s–1956. Pretty Valley Pondage, immediately adjacent to the study area is an example of waterways that were impacted by the construction of the dams and aqueducts during this phase.

Archaeological evidence is likely to be largely limited to deposits of construction materials required to build and repair the Red Robin battery. It may also include refuse pits, privies, sheds, surfaces, wells, isolated artefacts lost or discarded by people working at the mine and battery. Resources associated with the development of the Kiewa Hydro Scheme, may be huts, such as the SEC hut near the Pretty Valley Camping Area, foundations, tracks, and concrete stands (such as those identified in Terra Culture 2000, 17-18).

3.3.4 Phase 3: Primarily recreational use (1970s – current)

Phase 3 describes a period during which few structures aside from hiking huts were built across the study area. This period saw the development of the Alpine Walking track and associated infrastructure. Federation Hut at Mount Feathertop was built by the Federation of Walking Clubs in 1968, and refurbished in 1988 (Butler 2005, 380). The existing Diamantina Hut was built in 1967 on the site of the earlier 1920s hut.

These huts are not included on the VHI or VHR, nor do they yet reach the 75-year mark, from which the Act confers blanket protection, however, it is possible that these huts are accompanied by archaeological deposits that could yield information about their early use (see for example Figure 4).

Archaeological evidence of land use is likely to be limited to ephemeral remains of transitional or temporary use, isolated artefacts lost or discarded by people moving through the study area.

3.4 Statement of historical archaeological potential

Overall, the study area has low potential for historical archaeological resources, with the exception of areas immediately around the Red Robin Gold Mine and Battery, which has moderate-high potential (Figure 5).

The area immediately surrounding the Red Robin Gold Mine and Battery (H1881), has moderate-high potential for historical archaeological evidence associated with gold exploration, mining, and processing from Phases 2 through to its discontinuation in the early 2000s. The area containing the original Battery shed and extant standing structures has potential for archaeological remains associated with occupation from the early/mid-twentieth century onwards. The surrounding area has the potential to contain evidence of recorded and unrecorded outbuildings, yard spaces, landscape modifications, and sealed artefact deposits in refuse pits and within fill deposits in land modification features.

The study area has low potential for historical archaeological evidence resulting from seasonal grazing and recreational use in Phases 1 and 3. It is possible that the proposed trail follows or intercepts parts of former stock or grazing routes, however it is considered that the archaeological signature of such activities would be disparate and minimal. Therefore, the archaeological potential associated with these activities is considered low.

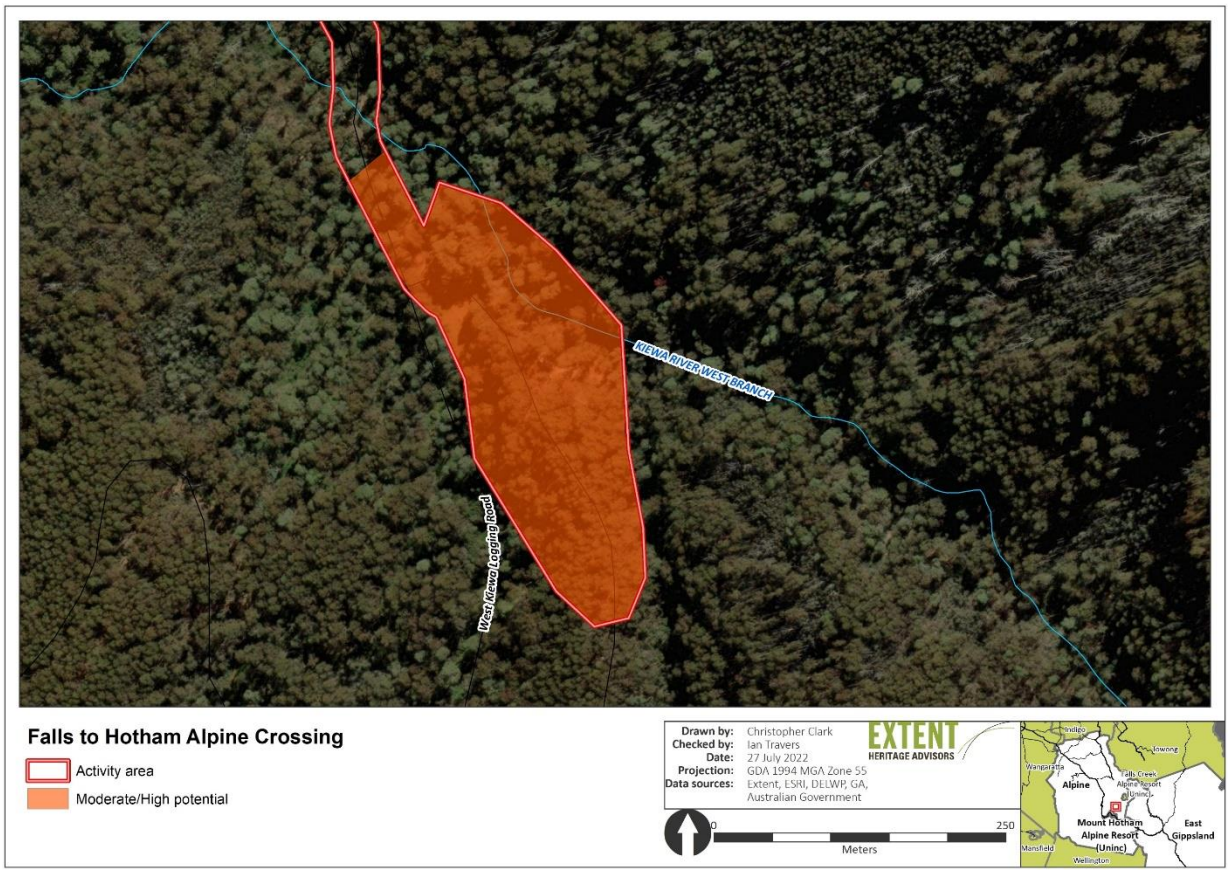


Figure 5: Red Robin Gold Mine and Battery showing moderate to high historical archaeological potential. *N.B. locations outside of this part of the study area have low potential to contain significant historical archaeology.*

4. Historical archaeological survey

The historical archaeological survey of the study area was undertaken over a three-week period, between 16 January to 2 February 2023. The survey was undertaken in conjunction with the standard assessment for Cultural Heritage Management Plan 18860.

The survey was led by Extent Heritage archaeologists Christopher Clark and Alistair Hobbs (Senior Heritage Advisors), supported by other Extent Heritage personnel Stevie Skitmore, Emily Simons, Ian Ostericher and Jack Anderson, with representatives from Parks Victoria and relevant Traditional Owner groups also participating in the survey.

No new historical archaeological places, or areas of interest, were identified during the survey.

Table 2. Personnel present during the survey.

Personnel	Organisation	Dates present
Christopher Clark	Extent Heritage	16 January – 20 January and 30 January – 02 February
Ian Ostericher	Extent Heritage	16 January - 02 February
Emily Simons	Extent Heritage	16 January – 20 January and 30 January – 2 February
Jack Anderson	Extent Heritage	23 January – 02 February
Stevie Skitmore	Extent Heritage	23 January – 27 January
Alistair Hobbs	Extent Heritage	16 January – 27 January
Rhiannon Ashton	Parks Victoria	16 January -20 January and 30 January – 02 February
Jeff Theys	Parks Victoria	23 January – 27 January
Luiz Dias Ferreira	Parks Victoria	31 January – 02 February
Monica Hersburgh	Parks Victoria	31 January
Jesse Nation	Parks Victoria	31 January

Personnel	Organisation	Dates present
Phillipe Ebsworth-McLeod	Jaithmatang Traditional Owner Group	16 January – 02 February
Luke Ebsworth-McLeod	Jaithmatang Traditional Owner Group	16 January – 02 February
Jida Gulpilil	Dalka Warra Mittung Aboriginal Corporation	16 January – 02 February
Ty Caling	Dalka Warra Mittung Aboriginal Corporation	16 January – 02 February
Clinton Edwards	Bangerang Aboriginal Corporation	16 January – 02 February
Roland Atkinson	Bangerang Aboriginal Corporation	16 January – 02 February
Jennifer Mason	Dhuduroa Waywurru Nations Aboriginal Corporation	23 January – 02 February
Nyawi Moore	Dhuduroa Waywurru Nations Aboriginal Corporation	16 January – 02 February
Ringo Terrick	Dhuduroa Waywurru Nations Aboriginal Corporation	16 January – 02 February
John Terrick	Dhuduroa Waywurru Nations Aboriginal Corporation	16 January -27 January
Craig Terrick	Dhuduora Waywurru Nations Aboriginal Corporation	30 January – 02 February
Thaedra Frangos	Dhuduroa Waywurru Nations Aboriginal Corporation	23 January – 27 January
Roderick McLeod	Jaithmatang Taditional Ancestral Bloodline Original Owners First Nation Aboriginal Corporation	17 January – 19 January
Basil McLeod	Jaithmatang Traditional Ancestral Bloodline Original Owners First Nation Aboriginal Corporation	17 January – 19 January

4.1 Objectives and rationale

The primary objective of the survey was to identify and record extant recorded historical archaeology within the study area, to determine whether these places may be subject to potential impacts from the proposed works.

Whilst the entirety of the study area was subject to vehicular and pedestrian inspection, the main focus of the survey was to investigate known places of historical archaeological resources that may be subject to impacts from the proposed works, including the Red Robin Gold Mine and Battery, and Tawonga Huts. The proposed locations of the Overnight Nodes were examined closely, as these areas will be subject to the most impact.

4.2 Methodology

The archaeological survey was undertaken in accordance with Heritage Victoria's *Guidelines for Conducting Historical Archaeological Surveys* (2020). The survey included examination of:

- any previously registered post-contact heritage within or adjacent to the study area;
- any unregistered places of historical archaeological potential; and
- points of interest identified during the survey.

Investigation of the main trail, as per the study area (Figure 1), consisted of a pedestrian survey with a focus on exposed sections of the walking and 4WD tracks. Where landscape and vegetation cover allowed, the full extent of the activity area was surveyed. At the proposed Overnight Node locations, participants were spaced at 2 m intervals and walked transects across the survey area. This enabled systematic and comprehensive survey coverage of the areas which will be subject to impacts, allowing for examination of all ground surfaces.

Photographs and field notes were taken during the survey to document current ground conditions, levels of disturbance, ground surface visibility (GSV), vegetation type, topography, and areas that may have potential to contain historical archaeological remains.

4.3 Limitations

The field survey of the study area was undertaken over 14 days from 16 January – 2 February 2023. A pedestrian survey was carried out through all accessible parts of the activity area. No major obstacles were encountered during the survey, however inclement weather did affect visibility on occasion, as did vegetation overgrowth. The majority of the activity area was surveyed on foot, although some locations required vehicle inspection.

Ground surface visibility along the existing trails was adequate, although overgrowth along the trail edge and within the proposed overnight node locations was poor. The existing trail and vehicular tracks provided clear visibility; however these areas have previously been disturbed, limiting the effectiveness of the archaeological survey along these tracks.

4.4 Result summary

The sole VHR listing within the study area, the Red Robin Gold Mine and Battery (H1881), was inspected.

Two other places within the study area were inspected: the Tawonga Hut Complex and Cope Hut (B6018), however no new archaeological remains were recorded in association to these sites.

No new historical archaeology, historical archaeological places, or points of interest were identified or recorded during the field survey.

4.4.1 Cope Hut (B6018)

Cope Hut is located just off the Cope Hut Track and east of the Bogong High Plains Road (Figure 4).

Cope Hut is an alpine hut funded by the State Tourist Commission and built by Bill Spargo in 1929. The hut is associated with the earliest days of ski tourism in Victoria and is included on the Register of the National Trust (Register of the National Trust, 1988).

Overall, Cope Hut is in good condition. It has wooden superstructure, remains clad in corrugated iron (Figure 6 & Figure 7), and retains a large stone fireplace and chimney (Figure 8 & Figure 9). The adjacent track, which runs toward the study area, is well maintained and formalised.

No new archaeological deposits were identified during the inspection of the hut and its surrounds.

The current proposed FHAC design should not cause any impact to the structure or its immediate surrounds. However, it is possible that FHAC may result in increased pedestrian traffic, which may cause limited, localised impacts.

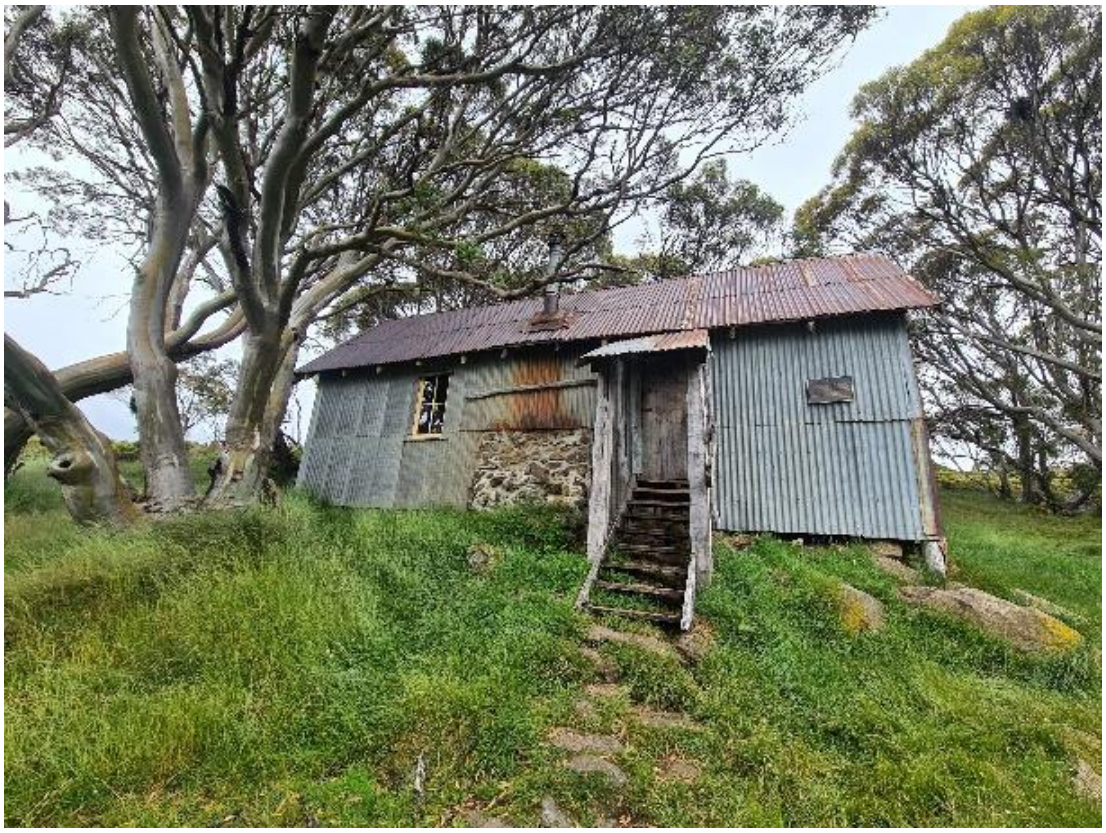


Figure 6: Cope Hut. View facing south from adjacent walking track.

Figure 7: Roof and eastern face of Cope Hut

Figure 8: Cope Hut – internal photograph

Figure 9: Cope Hut – internal photograph

4.4.2 Tawonga Huts (B6018)

The Tawonga Huts complex is within the study area, adjacent to Mount Jaithmathang and is included on the Register of the National Trust (Register of the National Trust, 1988).

The complex comprises four corrugated iron huts with glass windows, the grassy area surrounding them, and associated animal yards. It was used as a mountain base for cattle grazing by the Ryder family from 1888, when Jack Ryder built the first Tawonga Hut, an insubstantial structure but, nonetheless, the earliest cattleman's hut on the Bogong High Plains. The present buildings date from the mid-1950s and are the fourth generation of huts on the site (Register of the National Trust, 1988) (Figure 10, Figure 11, & Figure 12). The fence lines are also likely from this period, constructed from local tree and branch detritus and metal gates (Figure 13 & Figure 14).

Overall, no new historical archaeological resources were noted at the site. The Tawonga Huts are in good condition and do not face any perceived or immediate threats.

The current proposed FHAC design should not cause any impact to the structure or its immediate surrounds. However, it is possible that FHAC may result in increased pedestrian traffic, which may cause limited, localised impacts.

Figure 10: Tawonga Huts complex: Main cattle hut. Facing south.

Figure 11: Tawonga Huts complex: Main cattle hut. Facing south

Figure 12: Tawonga Huts complex: Main cattle hut. Facing north.

Figure 13: Tawonga Huts complex: Historical pasture fence line. Facing east.

Figure 14: Tawonga Huts complex: Detail photograph of current fence condition.

4.4.3 Red Robin Gold Mine and Battery (H1881)

The only VHR site within the study area includes four buildings: the battery, toilet block, a two storey dwelling, and a temporary living structure/shed. Derelict machinery and vehicles, and construction materials are littered throughout the site. No new surface archaeological deposits beyond the machinery were identified during the survey; however, it is likely that such remains may be present throughout the extent of the VHR listing, either concealed by overgrowth or as subsurface deposits.

The main battery building has a wooden superstructure and is clad in corrugated iron (Figure 15–Figure 16, Figure 21). Two of the outbuildings are similar, while the two-storey dwelling is built of stone and mortar (Figure 22). They all appear to have good structural integrity. Access to the generator and vehicles is restricted by fences (Figure 17 - Figure 18) as is the interior of the buildings. However, gaps around the door frame allowed for photographs to be taken of the building interiors (Figure 19–Figure 20).

The battery is a split-level building, stepping down a short slope. Internally, there is poor object integrity; wooden shelves contain rusted machinery parts from multiple historical periods. Sections of machinery have been repaired with PVC pipe and various other materials, reflecting the ongoing use of the site until the early 2000's.

The two-story dwelling is constructed of mortared stone with glass windows. The windows are currently covered by sheets of corrugated iron for protection and security (Figure 22–Figure 23). It is understood that the previous landowner (Ken Harris) built and occupied this dwelling when the site was in use, although the construction date is unclear.

A temporary living structure/shed (Figure 28–Figure 29) is located in proximity to the generator plant shed (Figure 24–Figure 26) and pile of abandoned building materials (slate pile shown in Figure 27). Given that a small pot-belly stove occupies a corner of the room (Figure 29), it is considered that this building would have once been used by the landowner as a temporary living structure during construction of the two-storey dwelling. As above, the construction date of this building is unclear.

Overall, the Red Robin Gold Mine and Battery is in good condition, however, as the mine is no longer in operation, a lack of maintenance, disrepair, and dilapidation threaten the structural integrity of extant structures, machinery, and residual objects, resulting in much of the site currently being unsafe for public access. At the time of survey, vandalism to the site appears at a minimum.

No new historical archaeological deposits were identified, although the condition of the site has significantly changed since its inclusion on the VHR.

Figure 15. Red Robin Gold Mine and Battery, split levels down a short slope.

Figure 16. Red Robin Gold Mine and Battery, opposite side of structure.

Figure 17. Discarded vehicles located around the battery perimeter.

Figure 18. Discarded machinery located around the battery perimeter.

Figure 19. Interior of the battery.

Figure 20. Interior of the battery. Note the PVC piping to the left in the foreground.

Figure 21. Exterior of the battery structure on the upper slope.

Figure 22. Rear exterior wall of the two-storey dwelling with lower windows covered in corrugated iron.

Figure 23. Entrance (on left) to two-storey dwelling.

Figure 24. Generator plant and storage shed, located behind the two-storey dwelling.

Figure 25. Generator plant and storage shed, located behind the two-storey dwelling.

Figure 26. Lister Start-o-Matic generator, as seen outside the shed in the previous figure.

Figure 27. Abandoned construction materials, located adjacent to the two-storey dwelling.

Figure 28. Shed / temporary structure, containing pot belly stove.

Figure 29. Interior of the shed / temporary structure, containing pot belly stove.

5. Impact assessment

The current design of the Falls to Hotham Alpine Crossing project does not propose any works which would require Heritage Act 2017 approvals.

There is low potential for significant historical archaeology within the study area, except for areas in proximity to the Red Robin Gold Mine and Battery (H1881). Regardless, while no significant historical archaeological remains were identified during the historical archaeological survey, it remains possible that buried or obscured material culture may be present. The proposed development may cause harm to these possible remains through excavation, track development, and increased public interaction. Mitigation measures are recommended to guide the development should historical archaeological material be exposed (see Part 6).

The most likely form of the currently unidentified historical archaeology are isolated artefacts deposited by early, post-colonial pioneers traversing and exploring the landscape. It is expected that trail formalisation and construction will have minimal impacts on topsoils, largely mitigated by keeping trail construction to existing tracks.

The most significant impact to potential archaeological resources would be at the proposed locations of the Overnight Nodes where accommodation would be constructed. These nodes include elevated camping platforms set on posts and the construction of toilets, shelters and connection paths. However, no new historical archaeology was identified at any of these proposed locations, and therefore, the risk of harm from the proposed development is considered low.

There is moderate to high potential for historical archaeological remains associated with Red Robin Gold Mine and Battery (H1881). However, it is understood that no Overnight Node location is planned within proximity to the Red Robin Gold Mine and Battery (Figure 30). Regardless, the project may transform the Red Robin Gold Mine and Battery into a tourist destination, if only through proximity, potentially resulting in impacts through increased visitation. A greater need for improved maintenance and safety requirements would likely be required prior to public access being provided.

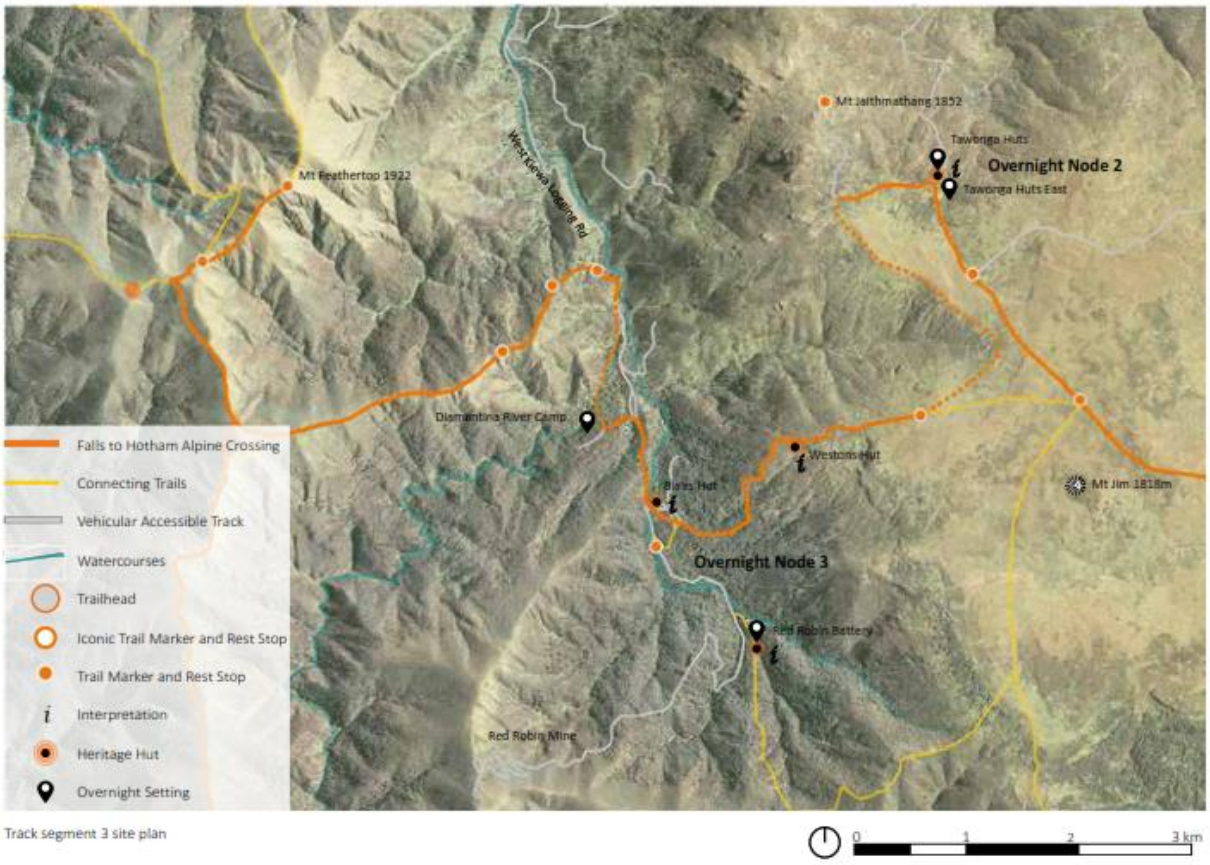


Figure 30. Proposed track segment 3. No proposed overnight Node locations are within proximity to the Red Robin Gold Mine and Battery. Source: Parks Victoria 2018, 46

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

Survey of the study area was undertaken between 16 January to 3 February 2023, with the aim to inspect and identify any historical archaeological places which may be harmed by the proposed activity. No new historical archaeological places were identified during the survey; however, several previously recorded places were inspected. A total of three known historical heritage places were inspected as part of the survey, these including the Red Robin Gold Mine and Battery (H1881), Cope Hut and the Tawonga Huts Complex (B6018).

The Red Robin Gold Mine and Battery are listed on the VHR as both a registered place and a registered archaeological place on the VHR, recognising that the historical archaeological deposits present are deemed to be directly contributory to the place's state level significance. Penalties apply for actions that may damage a place listed on either list in the absence of a permit (in the case of the VHR) or consent (in the case of the VHI) under the Act.

The Battery retains multi-period utilities reflecting the continued use of the site from 1940s to the early 2000s. The buildings are in good condition, although the condition of abandoned materials and machinery are at risk from degradation and damage.

As there are no formal impacts proposed within this place, there is no legislative need to obtain a permit or consent from Heritage Victoria prior to works commencing. Moreover, maintenance and works required to make the place safe for public visitation may be allowed under the current site-specific exemptions (see Recommendation 3 below).

Should a project redesign occur reintroducing a planned overnight node location within the Red Robin Gold Mine and Battery (H1881) curtilage, a permit application will need to be lodged with Heritage Victoria for consideration and granted prior to works commencing. Approval for the proposed works may or may not be given.

Cope Hut and the Tawonga Hut Complex (B6018) are not included on any statutory registers, but are recognised by the National Trust as having heritage values associated with early pioneering of the Alpine Region. No additional significant historical archaeological remains were identified during the survey of the study area. Furthermore, neither of these places will be impacted by the proposed development, however increased visitation does pose some minimal risk.

Recommendation 1: Avoidance

In the first instance, all impacts within the extent of Cope Hut, Tawonga Hut Complex, and the Red Robin Gold Mine and Battery should be avoided.

If impacts within proximity to the Red Robin Gold Mine and Battery are necessary, it is likely that a permit application will be required (see Recommendation 3). The application will be considered by Heritage Victoria, and approval for the proposed works may or may not be provided.

Recommendation 2: Liaison with Heritage Victoria

It is recommended that the results of this survey are conveyed to Heritage Victoria, either through email or a formal meeting. Consultation with Heritage Victoria throughout the life of a project such as FHAC is encouraged, as it enables clear communication between the client and a regulatory body, which can assist with smooth approval process.

Should changes in the project scope occur, it is recommended that the PV Heritage team, and a suitably qualified and experience heritage expert be engaged to shape and advise on the proposed changes and assist in ongoing consultation and communication with Heritage Victoria.

Should a permit be required for the works (see recommendation 3 below), a meeting will be required as a related reference number is mandatory for the Permit application.

Recommendation 3: Application for a Heritage Victoria permit

The current project design does not propose any impacts within the registered extent of the Red Robin Gold Mine and Battery (H1881). Therefore, there is currently no legislative requirement to obtain approval from Heritage Victoria prior to works commencing.

However, if the project scope changes and works are proposed within the boundary of the Red Robin Gold Mine and Battery (H1881), an application for a permit or permit exemption will be required according to the Heritage Act 2017 (Vic). The application will be considered by Heritage Victoria, and approval for the proposed works may or may not be provided. However, this permit would not be required if the proposed works are considered exempt under the site-specific exemptions. Exempt works are:

- Emergency and general maintenance repairs to all structures and equipment which do not involve demolition or removal.
- Installation of new equipment required for operational purposes where no substantial removal of significant fabric is required.
- Repairs to buildings which replace like with like.
- Installation of any safety equipment or earthworks required for the safe operation of the mine or to leave abandoned sections of the mine in a safe condition.
- Undertaking of safety and access works to restrict vehicular access to the site and minimise foot traffic near foundations.
- Installation of information signage for interpretation and public risk purposes.
- On-site works confined to those to protect and stabilise buildings and structures.
- Preliminary mineral exploration involving geological, geophysical, and geochemical surveys.

The intent of the above site-specific exemptions is described on the VHR citation for the Red Robin Gold Mine and Battery as follows:

> Through the registration of the Red Robin Gold Mine it is desired to retain the essential character of the place but to allow continued operation. The intent of the permit exemptions is to allow the normal day to day running and maintenance of the Red Robin Gold Mine as an operational, gold-producing facility. The permit exemptions recognise the remoteness of the place, the significance attached to the mine's continuing operation, and that prompt repair or replacement of failed equipment is of the highest priority and should be as the discretion of the owners. But this is based on the understanding that the replaced equipment will not be unnecessarily removed from the site.
>
> As a working mine, the Red Robin is subject to Occupational Health and Safety considerations and these are seen as important in the continued operation of the mine.
>
> The site's continued use also requires that from time-to-time machinery undergoes repair and this may require the dismantling of buildings to remove and/or repair large items of equipment. This should be allowed on the basis that reinstatement occurs in a manner that respects the heritage values of the place.

It is assumed that the stabilisation and repair of the abandoned buildings at the Red Robin Gold Mine and Battery can proceed in accordance with the site-specific exception clauses detailed above, to ensure the safety of both visitors and the continued integrity of the site. However, any works should be discussed with Heritage Victoria prior to initiation (See Recommendation 2 above).

Any impacts associated with construction of the overnight nodes, trail works or any other planned development as part of FHAC that falls within the curtilage of the Red Robin Gold Mine and Battery would likely require a Heritage Act permit. Once again, liaison with Heritage Victoria is recommended to determine this requirement.

Recommendation 4: Update of the VHR listing

It is recommended that the VHR listing for the Red Robin Gold Mine and Battery (H1881) is updated so that the record aligns with the with the current site condition as per the results of this report.

The Red Robin Gold Mine and Battery was in operation when the site was registered, however, that is no longer the case and listing description no longer reflects the reality of the site.

It is recommended that the listing be updated with the results of the survey, recent photos of the battery, and current condition. It is also recommended that the statement of significance is revised. The current statement of significance relies on the continued working of a historical mine, which is no longer the case.

In particular, the statement pertaining to 'Why it is significant' suggests that "*With its working battery, the mine is a unique representative of the traditional type of mining operation that dominated the Victorian Alps from the 1860s to 1950s*." However, the battery is no longer in operation, nor, from its construction in the 1940s, should it be considered representative of earlier mining processes.

Furthermore, the statement: *"The retention of all the existing elements at the mine from original to current (and future) use is crucial to the significance of the place"* supposes that the mine

would continue operation and that all existing elements would be retained and maintained through use. However, the abandonment of the mine has led to dilapidation, overgrowth, mechanical degradation, and increased public risk.

A revised and updated statement of significance would better reflect the current nature of the Red Robin Mine and Battery, and may result in more appropriate management, maintenance and overall protection of its significant heritage values.

Recommendation 5: Unexpected Finds Protocol and historical archaeology induction

It is recommended that Park's Victoria should provide their Unexpected Finds Protocol to all contractors engaged to undertake the project. All contractors and site workers involved in ground disturbance works must be made aware of this protocol and the steps required if suspected archaeological remains are identified. It is recommended that an historical archaeology induction be undertaken (either online or on–site).

The Unexpected Finds Protocol should provide a step by step process by which contractors may take if they encounter archaeological materials during the course of the project. It should detail the process by which a nominated archaeologist assesses potential historical archaeological material, and proposed communications with Heritage Victoria to determine whether any Heritage Act consents, archaeological investigations and reporting are be required.

An induction should be undertaken by an appropriately qualified historical archaeologist to educate personnel on their statutory requirements should any suspected historical archaeological remains be discovered during the works.

This induction should be undertaken prior to commencement of works and must include:

- Summary of statutory requirements pertaining to historical archaeology in accordance with the *Heritage Act 2017*;
- Summary of requirements stipulated by any Heritage Victoria issued consents or Permits;
- Outline of the site's history and any relevant statutory registrations (e.g. Victorian Heritage Inventory or Victorian Heritage Register) which may be present within work zones;
- Overview of most likely historical archaeological remains which would be encountered during works; and
- Summary and explanation of the Unexpected Finds Protocol, including details of who to contact in the event of suspected finds.
- This induction should be undertaken prior to workers commencing on-site. The induction can be undertaken either online or on-site.

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Appendix A. Historical Archaeological Assessment

EXTENT
PEOPLE-CENTRED HERITAGE

Falls to Hotham Alpine Crossing

Desktop Historical Archaeology Assessment

Prepared for Parks Victoria

July 2022—Final V1

ECAAS ISO 9001 QUALITY MANAGEMENT CERTIFIED
ECAAS ISO 14001 ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT CERTIFIED
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EXTENT HERITAGE PTY LTD
ABN 24 608 666 306
ACN 608 666 306
info@extent.com.au
extent.com.au

SYDNEY
Level 3/73 Union St
Pyrmont NSW 2009
P 02 9555 4000
F 02 9555 7005

MELBOURNE
13/240 Sydney Rd
Coburg Vic 3058
P 03 9388 0622

BRISBANE
Level 12/344 Queen St
Brisbane Qld 4000
P 07 3051 0171

PERTH
25/108 St Georges Tce
Perth WA 6000
P 08 9381 5206

HOBART
54A Main Road
Moonah Tas 7009
P 03 6134 8124

Document information

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Author(s):	Christopher Clark, Emily Simons and Hayley Edmonds

Document control

Version	Internal reviewer	Date	Review type
1	Christopher Clark	27/07/22	Technical

Contents

List of figures

1. Introduction

1.1 Project brief

Extent Heritage Pty Ltd have been commissioned by Parks Victoria to prepare a desktop historical archaeology assessment covering the Falls to Hotham Alpine Crossing (FHAC) project area. The FHAC is proposed within the Alpine Shire of Victoria and proposes the construction of approximately 52km of trails along the Alpine Crossing Trail stretching from Lake Side in Falls Creek to Loch carpark at Mount Hotham ('the study area') (Figure 1).

Parks Victoria proposes to redevelop and extend the FHAC, a renowned and iconic five-day walking experience across a section of the Australian Alps. The project integrates the formalisation of 52km of existing walking trails, 18km of 4WD access tracks, the construction of camping platforms and hut accommodations at four overnight nodes, and the development of signage and trailheads within the Alpine National Park.

This desktop assessment examines the potential for historical archaeological resources to be present within areas proposed for impact, and to determine whether further management of these resources will be required before, during and after the proposed development.

Within the activity area there is one VHR site (H1881), split over two locations, which are also included in the local Heritage Overlay (HO1). The activity area is also located within the curtilage of the Australian Alps National Parks and Reserves National Heritage place (Place ID 105891).

1.2 Proposed development

The FHAC project will involve the re-development of the current Alpine Crossing track, the construction of additional connecting tracks, a 4WD track, the construction of accommodation 'nodes', and the installation of wayfinding and information signage (Figure 3).

1.3 Report Objectives

This report has been prepared with the following objectives:

- to identify any heritage listings (local, state and Commonwealth) relevant to the study;
- to assess the activity area's potential to contain historical archaeological evidence;
- to assess the level of significance of the activity area's historical archaeological resources;
- to identify whether the proposed development would impact on significant historical archaeological evidence;
- to determine what legislative restraints and obligations under the *Heritage Act 2017* (VIC) and other relevant controls apply; and

- to provide clear articulation of heritage approval processes and outline any further archaeological investigation that may be required in advance of the activity area's redevelopment.

1.4 Limitations

This report does not consider Aboriginal cultural heritage, including archaeology, or any built heritage requirements that may relate to buildings within or adjacent to the activity area. Extent is preparing separate reports that relate to these elements. This report also does not deal in depth with the Australian Alps National Parks and Reserves National Heritage listing (Place ID 105891), as this is examined as part of a separate scope of works.

This report presents the findings of a desktop assessment and has not been informed by a site visit. That a survey be carried out is however a recommendation (Recommendation 1) of this report.

1.5 Authorship

This report was prepared by Christopher Clark (Senior Heritage Advisor, Extent Heritage), Emily Simons (Heritage Advisor) and Hayley Edmonds (Research Assistant). Technical review was undertaken by Christopher Clark and Ian Travers (Director).

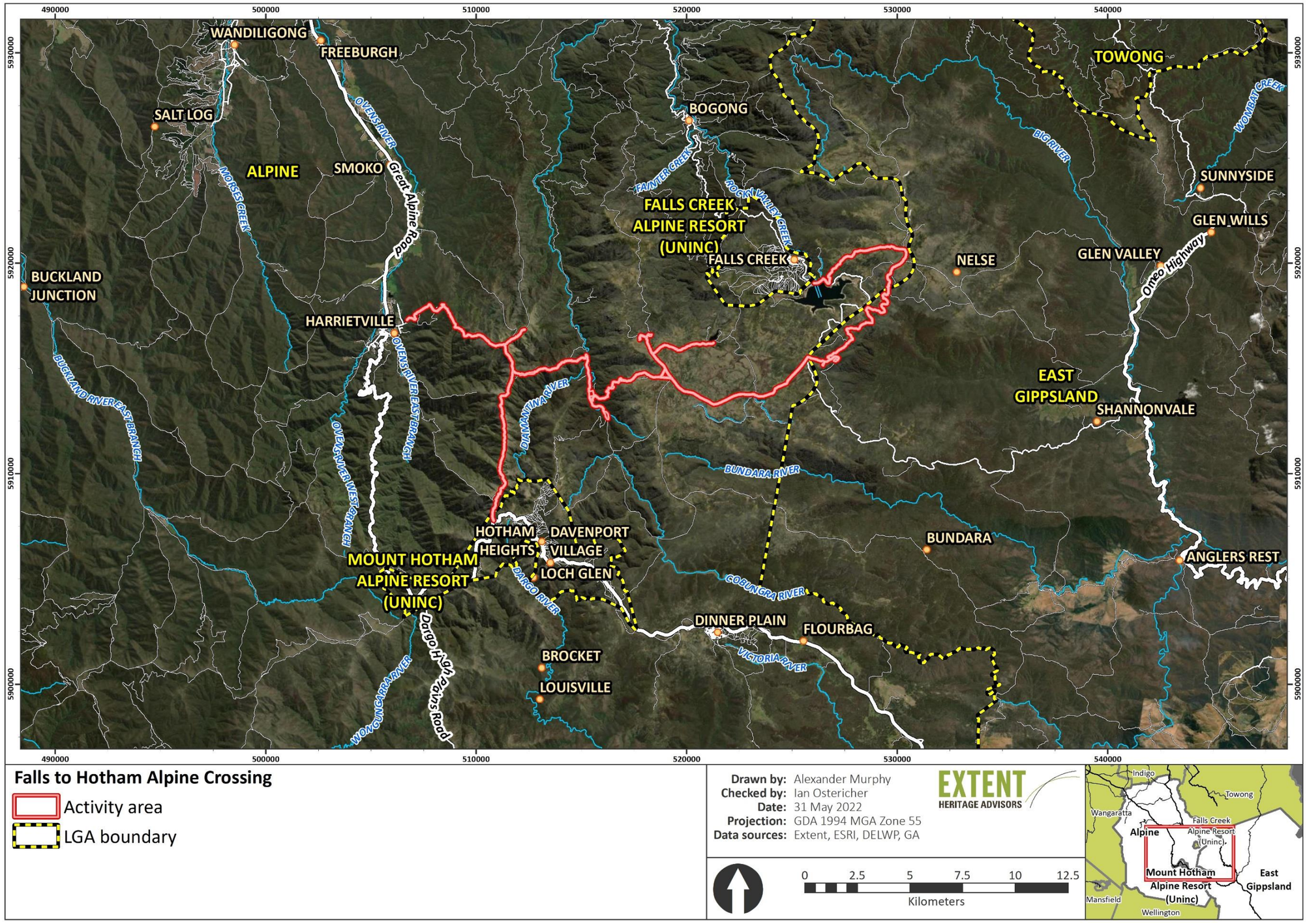

Figure 1. Location of the activity area in the context of the Victorian Alpine region.

Figure 2. Location of the activity area outlined in red.

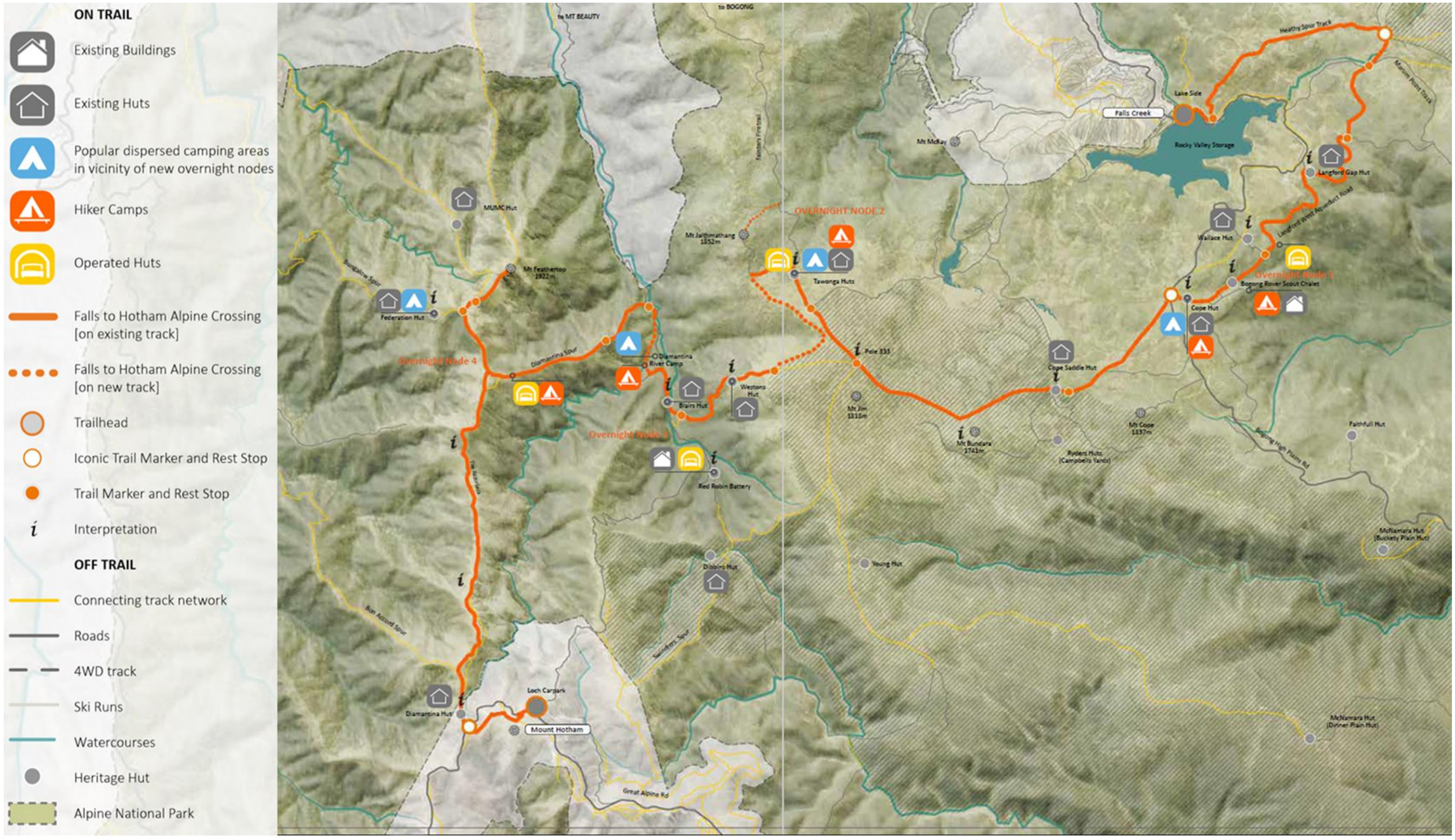

Figure 3. Falls to Alpine Crossing concept map, reproduced from the Falls to Hotham Alpine Crossing Masterplan.

2. Legislative context and heritage designations

The following section summarises the relevant legislation applicable to historical archaeology in Victoria, and the results of heritage database searches undertaken on 28 June 2022. Heritage listings applicable to the activity area and properties in proximity to it are outlined below (Figure 6 and Figure 7).

2.1 Heritage Act 2017

All places on the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) and the Victorian Heritage Inventory (VHI) are legally protected under the *Heritage Act 2017* (the Act) – penalties apply for actions that may damage a place listed on either list in the absence of a permit (in the case of the VHR) or consent (in the case of the VHI) under the Act.

The Act also confers blanket protection on all significant heritage material of over 75 years in age, regardless of whether it is included on a statutory list, and this is particularly relevant in relation to archaeological material. The VHI, under section 117 of the Act, lists all known archaeological sites and relics. Penalties apply if actions that may damage a listed place are undertaken without a consent under the Act. Under the Act an 'archaeological site' means a place (other than a shipwreck) which:

a. contains an artefact, deposit or feature which is 75 or more years old;

b. provides information of past activity in the State;

c. requires archaeological methods to reveal information about the settlement, development or use of the place; and

d. is not associated only with Aboriginal occupation of the place

2.1.1 Victorian Heritage Register

The VHR provides a listing of places or objects, including buildings, structures and areas/precincts which have been assessed as being of outstanding cultural significance within the State of Victoria using assessment criteria established by the Victorian Heritage Council.

The activity area includes one listing on the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR):

- ‘Red Robin Gold Mine and Battery’ (H1881).
    - The listing is separated into two locations: the Mine and the Battery. Only the area surrounding the Battery is within the activity area, near the current, preferred location of ‘Node 3’, a proposed overnight accommodation (Figure 5).

The Red Robin Gold Mine and Battery is listed as both a registered place and a registered archaeological place, recognising that the historical archaeological deposits present are deemed to be directly contributory to the place’s state level significance.

The following Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) sites are nearby, albeit not within the activity area. Therefore, while important to note, their heritage values are not considered for this assessment.

- 'Wallaces Hut' (H1616), Wallaces Track Nelse. Located near the activity area, south-east of Falls Creek.
- 'Tronoh Gold Dredging Ponds' (H1756), Dredge Hole Lane and Feathertop Track, Harrietville. Located south-west of the trailhead outside Harrietville.

We are also aware that Parks Victoria are currently in the process of recommending 'Maisie's Plots' for registration on the VHR (pers. Comm Kim Wilson 17/07/22). Parks Victoria are confident this site will meet the threshold required for inclusion. This proposed site is not within the activity area (Figure 4).

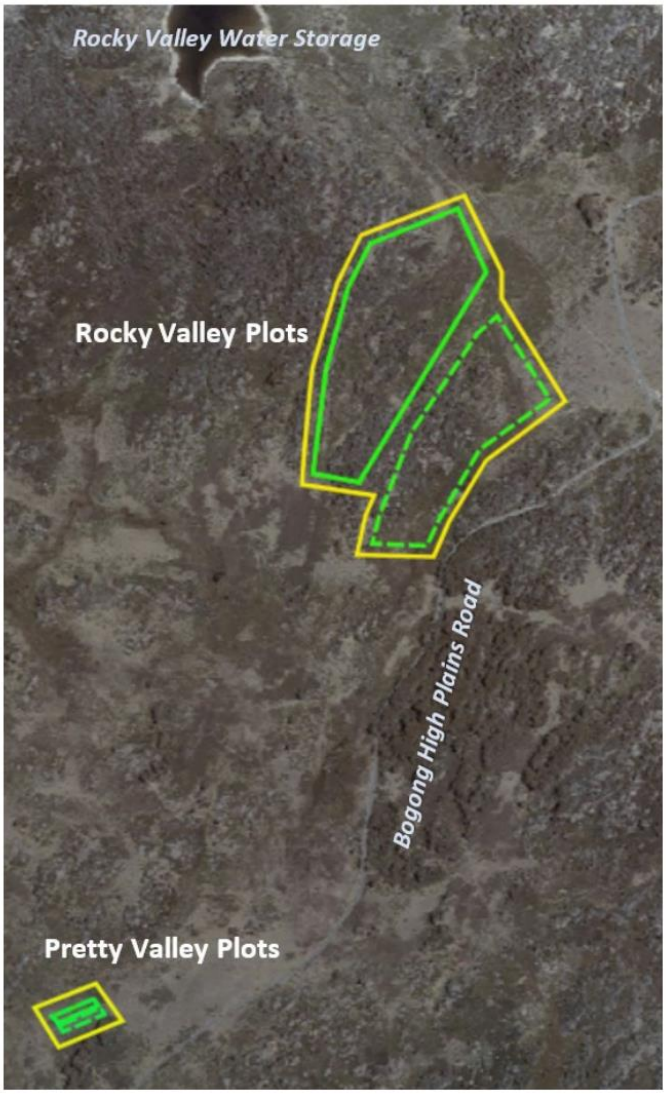

Figure 4: Approximate site extents proposed by Parks Victoria as part of the Maisie's Plot VHR nomination.

2.1.2 Victorian Heritage Inventory

The activity area does not include any listings on the Victorian Heritage Inventory (VHI).

However, nine inventory items are near the activity area. These are:

- 'United Miners Mine and Battery Site' (H8324-0019), Graveyard Gully, Harrietville.
- 'Champion Battery' (H8324-0020), Feathertop Track, Harrietville.
- 'Razorback Battery' (H8324-0024), Hotham Heights.
- 'Biplane Battery Site' (H8324-0026), off Alpine Road, Harrietville.
- 'Tronoh Dredge Holes: North Hole' (H8324-0029), Dredge Hole Lane, Harrietville.
- 'Tronoh Dredge Holes: Turning Scars' (H8324-0030), Dredge Hole Lane, Harrietville.
- 'Tronoh Dredge Holes: South Hole' (H8324-0031), Dredge Hole Lane, Harrietville.
- 'Red Robin Mine' (H8324-0035), Hotham Heights. Note that this site is also included in the VHR listing H1881, although this part of the mine lies outside of the activity area.
- 'Harrietville Chinese Camp Site' (H8324-0042), Bon Accord Track, Harrietville.

2.2 Planning and Environment Act 1987

The Victorian *Planning and Environment Act 1987* is the legislative instrument for all state planning schemes. It was created to establish a framework for planning the use, development, and protection of land in Victoria. Protection of heritage through the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* is most often enacted through heritage overlays created as part of local council planning schemes.

The same areas covered by the Red Robin Mine VHR listing (H1881) are included in the Alpine Council Heritage Overlay as HO1.

2.3 National and Commonwealth Heritage Lists

The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) is the central legislation that protects and manages "nationally and internationally important flora, fauna, ecological communities and heritage places."

The entire activity area is included in the National Heritage List (NHL) as part of the *Australian Alps National Parks and Reserves* (AANP). The AANP encompasses eleven alpine regions across NSW, ACT, and Victoria, which are significant for their unique mountainous bioregion, historic mountain huts, and their role in human history.

The NHL listing however does not recognise historical archaeology amongst the place's National Heritage values. Moreover, the Red Robin Mine (H1881) is explicitly stated to have

been assessed as not having outstanding heritage value to the nation – i.e. be in itself of National Heritage level significance (National Heritage List 2008).

Therefore, there are no requirements regarding historical archaeology under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) related to the *Australian Alps National Parks and Reserves* (AANP).

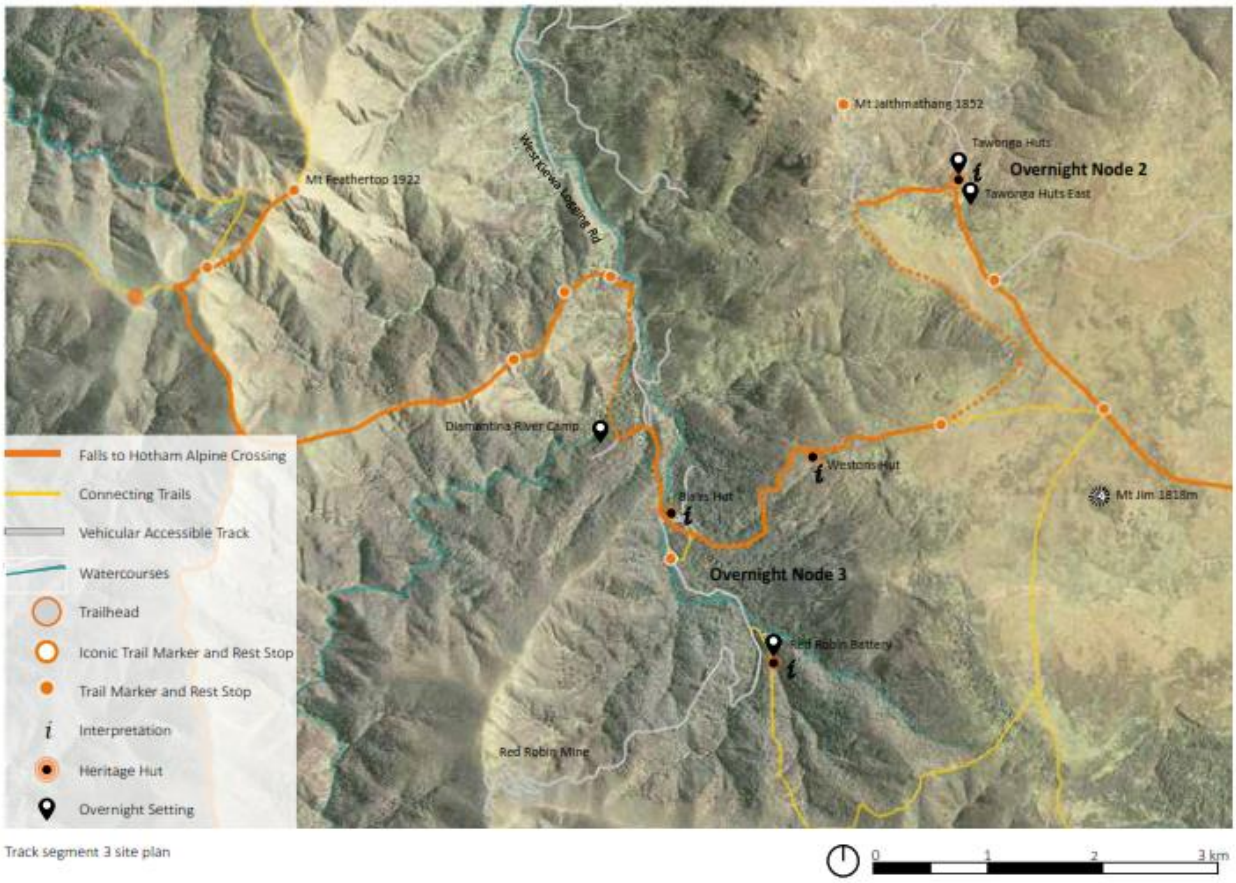

Figure 5. Proposed track segment 3. Note Overnight Node 3 close by Red Robin Battery (H1881). Source: Parks Victoria 2018, 46.

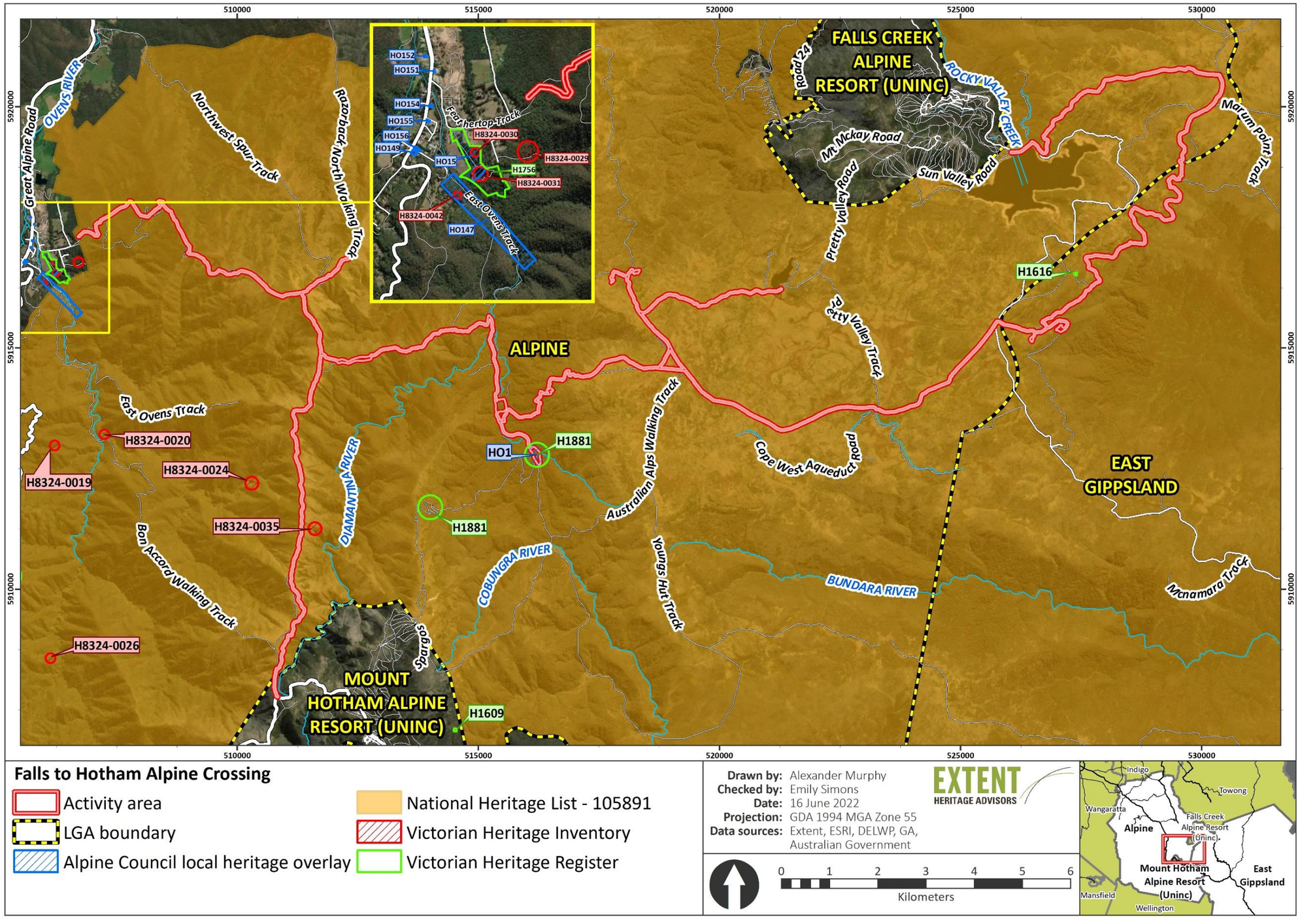

Figure 6. VHR, VHI, and Heritage Overlay Listings in the vicinity of the activity area. *N.B. HO1 and H1881 are within the activity area*.

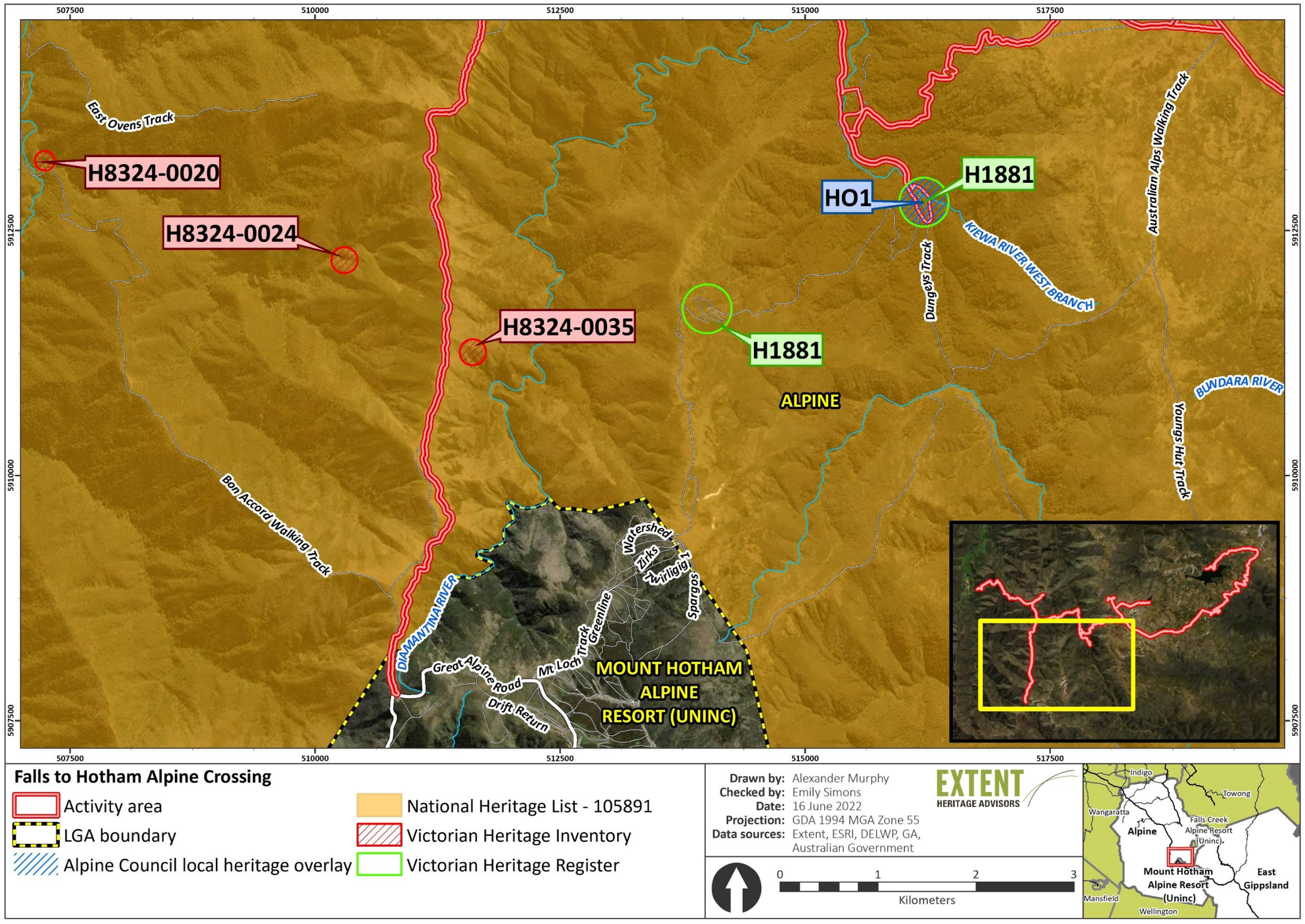

Figure 7. VHR, VHI, and Heritage Overlay Listings within the activity area, detail of the southern part of the track.

3. Development history

This section describes the known development history of the activity area. It draws primarily upon archival information, including historical maps and aerial photography, to accurately chart activity within the activity area. This provides a basis from which an assessment can be made of the extent to which related archaeological deposits may survive within it.

3.1 Aboriginal ethnohistory

A detailed ethnohistory is available in the Falls to Hotham Crossing Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP #18890). A summary of this ethnohistory is included below.

Numerous Aboriginal groups were living and accessing the Alpine region in all seasons for at least 20,000 years (Goulding 2002). Historical accounts and the archaeological record demonstrate that river valleys were favourable camping spots and travelling routes through the mountains. In winter, the upper reaches of the mountains would have been accessed for the annual bogong moth season. There is a possibility of temporary campsites associated with the bogong moth harvest on upper mountain reaches and ridges of the region, especially associated with granite torrs and other landforms around which bogong moths gather.

Figure 8. 1890 photograph showing Aboriginal life in the Victorian Alps (Wood 1890).

3.2 Early post-contact to late-nineteenth century

The activity area has been subject to exploration, mining, hiking, and recreational winter activities since the mid-19th century. This has resulted in a rich history of post-contact land use, which would have left an archaeological signature within the landscape.

3.2.1 Exploration

The first scientific surveys of the region were conducted by then Government Botanist Ferdinand von Mueller for the Governor of Victoria, Charles Hotham, in the 1850s. Von Mueller visited Mt Buffalo in February 1853, and Dinner Plain, Mount Hotham and Mount Feathertop. In the report of his journey, von Mueller noted that *'the ranges hereabouts'* had never been traversed by Europeans and *were 'generally fertile, and timbered with the mountain white gum-tree (Eucalyptus phlebophylla)'* (The Argus 1855, 6). Von Mueller proposed to name the tallest mountain 'Mount Hotham', and the second tallest 'Mount La Trobe'. The two peaks had previously been named by stockmen from Cobungra, as 'Baldy' and 'Feathertop' respectively. Mount Hotham continued to be known locally as Baldy for some decades while officially known as Hotham.

The opening of the Gippsland Railway in the 1870s facilitated excursions and daytrips to the Bogong region. It was reported in 1874 that the railway had caused '*much more attention to be directed towards that portion of the colony than at any other previous time. Selectors and speculators have found their way thither, and a general desire has been manifested to become better acquainted with a part of Victoria which has hitherto been a terra incognita to the greater portion of her inhabitants*' (*The Argus* 1874, 4). A party containing Sir George Bowen, the Governor of Victoria, as well as the Minister of Lands, the Surveyor-General and the Secretary for Mines travelled through the region in early 1874. The party ascended Mount Hotham and journeyed along the Razorback to Mount Feathertop. Sir Bowen named their campsite 'Diamantina Springs', after his wife Lady Roma Diamantina Bowen (*Illustrated Australian News for Home Readers* 1874, 26).

3.2.2 Grazing

The first high country grazing lease on the Bogong High Plains was gazetted in 1866, though it was a speculative lease and the area was not actually grazed until the late 19th century, reaching full occupation by the early 20th century (LGRM Services 2005, 25). The graziers established a network of huts, yards and tracks through the summer pasture areas.

Wallace's Hut, south of Rocky Valley Dam, is the oldest known surviving hut on the Bogong High Plains, dating from c. 1889. The hut was built by the Wallace Brothers to serve grazing leases on the High Plains held by the family (Figure 10).

Figure 9. Diamantina Springs, Australia Alps, 1874 (Source: SLV, FL15606909).

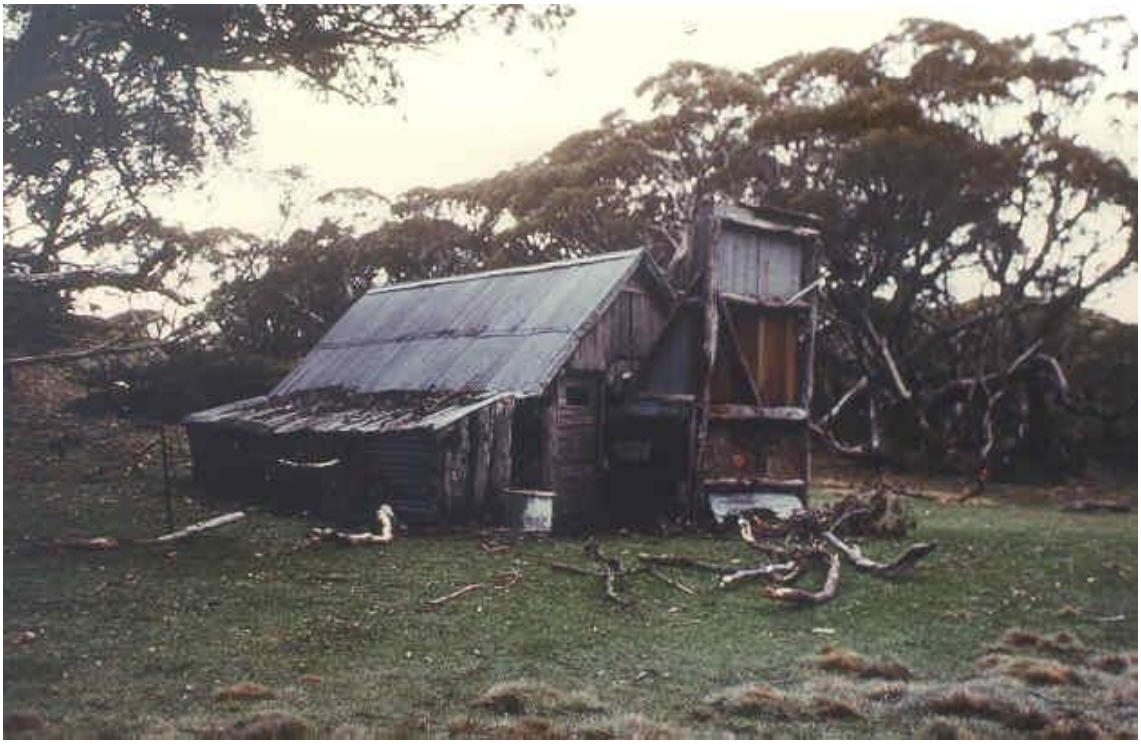

Figure 10: Wallace Hut (H1616). Source: Hermes Orion.

3.2.3 Gold

Gold was discovered in Central Victoria in 1851, and discoveries in the Aline region soon followed at Omeo in 1851 and Beechworth in 1852. A route across the high plains between the goldfields was in use by 1852, with Government officials attempting to blaze tracks over Mount Hotham in 1852 and 1854 (LGRM Services 2005, 36).

The town of Harrietville developed in association with prospecting and goldmining activities from 1860. In May of that year, it was reported that a prospecting association had been founded in the locality, the report noting that the name Harrietville was in reference to the first white women to have been there (The Age 1860, 5). It was reported in December 1860 that '*the creek miners about Harrietville are realising in every instance handsome wages, this taken in connection with the promising appearance of the quartz reefs in that locality, augurs well for the future prosperity of Harrietville'* (Ovens and Murray Advertiser 1860, 3).

Harrietville saw hundreds of gold reefs opened from this period. One early rich reef was the Rose, Thistle & Shamrock reef, which remained in operation until the 1930s. It had the highest recorded production in the State, yielding nearly 80,000 ounces of gold (LGRM Services 2005, 41). A School of Mines opened at Harrietville in the 1890s, as British capital was introduced to stimulate the local reefing industry (LGRM Services 2005, 41).

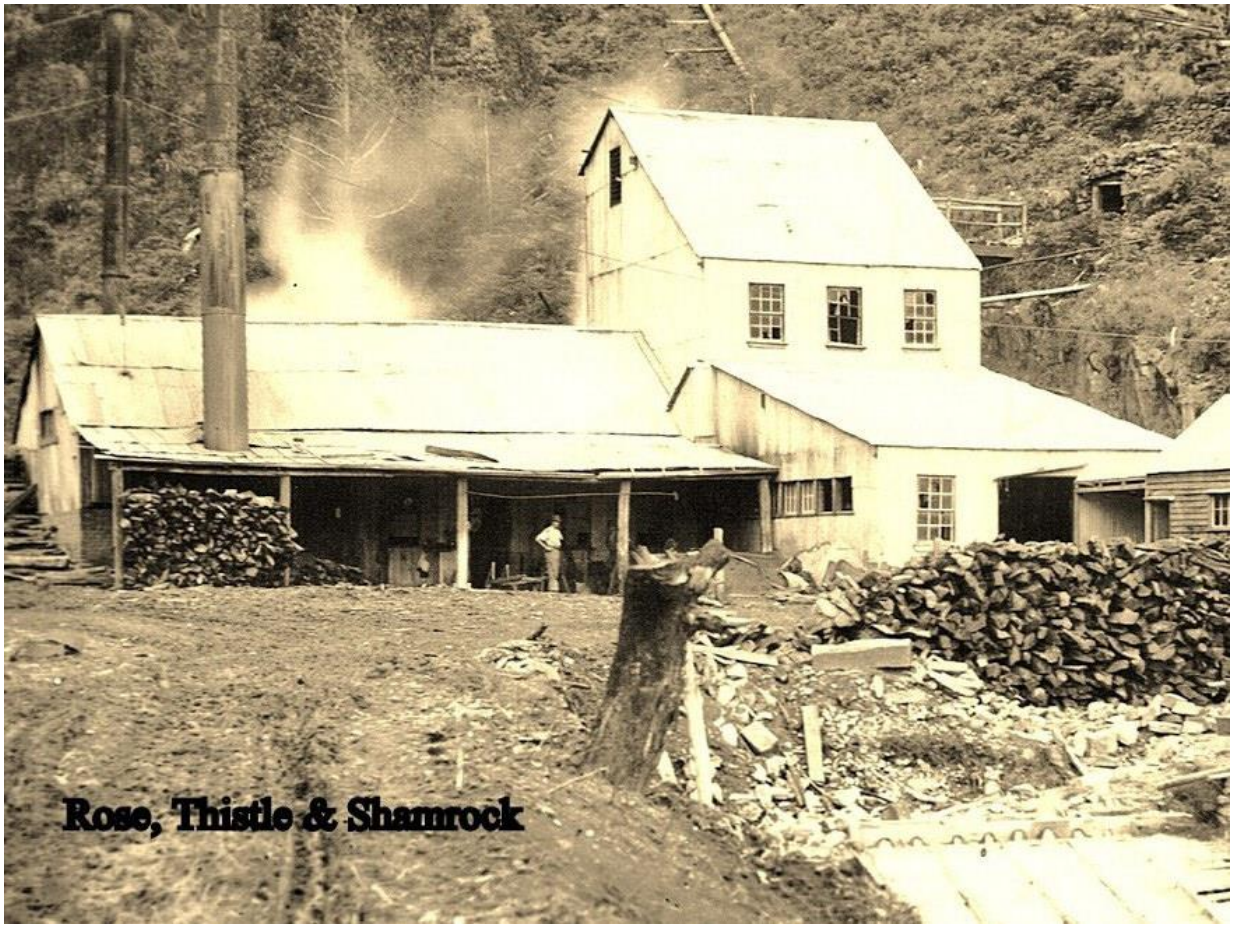

Figure 11: Rose Thistle and Shamrock mine, undated (Harrietville Museum & History, 2022).

3.3 Twentieth century

3.3.1 Recreation

Visitors to the region in the late 19th century were serviced by establishments such as St Bernard's Hospice and Mrs Johnston's at Diamantina. In 1892 it was reported that Mr Percy Tulloch was currently constructing a house at Diamantina Springs for Mrs Johnston, which was to be the highest habitation in Victoria, at 5,950 feet (*Bendigo Advertiser* 1892, 3). The hospice was kept open only '*during the summer months, and as soon as the cold weather appears,* [Mrs Johnston] *emigrates, like Jacob of old, with her flocks and her herds, down to the warmer climate of Bright'* (*Bendigo Advertiser* 1894, 6).

Accounts from the 1880s note that the road over Baldy, as Mount Hotham was colloquially known, along the Razorback to Mount Feathertop was comfortably travelled in the summer months – *'you can drive your great grandmother there.'* However, *'for nine months of the year the summits are snow clad'* (*The Argus* 1884, 4).

By the 1920s, the Alpine Road had fallen into disrepair, and the Country Roads Board (CRB) took responsibility for its maintenance in 1923 (LRGM Services 2008b, 58). The reconditioning works were complete by the mid-1930s, with the road declared a Tourist Road in 1936 (LRGM Services 2008b, 57). The CRB built several huts and facilities along the road as part of these works, including the Hotham Heights Chalet, built in 1924 and a hut at Diamantina, built in the 1920s, and replaced in the late 1960s.

The Bogong High Plains were skied from Mount Hotham in the 1920s, the excursioners meeting and interacting with the cattlemen who used the plains, and their network of trails and huts. The old network of mining track snow poles dating from the 1890s were renewed in 1925 (LRGM Services 2008b, 59). The Ski Club of Victoria was formed in 1924, with their early efforts focussed on developing Mount Hotham and nearby Mount Buller (LRGM Services 2008b, 59). The Ski Club sought and won funding from the State Tourist Committee in the late 1920s to build purpose-built huts to replace the reliance on the existing deteriorating cattlemen's huts. An article from 1927 noted that:

> The rapid development of snow sports in the winter months has caused a demand for more accommodation in this elevated region in summer, which has now reached such dimensions as to make it imperative that something more should be done in this direction. The board has, therefore, decided, in consultation with the Tourist Resorts Committee, to give private enterprise an opportunity of providing this additional accommodation by inviting offers for the lease of its cottage at Hotham Heights for a period of five years (*The Age* 1927, 12).

Huts built in this period included:

- Feathertop Bungalow, opened in 1925 and later run by the Victorian Railways, destroyed in the 1939 bushfires (LRGM Services 2008b, 59);
- Cope Hut, built 1929 by the Ski Club of Victoria (Butler 2005, 253); and

- Bon Accord Hut, built 1929 for the Tourist Resort Committee, rebuilt in 1939 for the Victorian Railways (Butler 2005, 164).

By the early 1930s, a network of snow poles, ski trails, and huts was established and regularly used by tourists through the Bogong High Plains between Mount Hotham and Mount Feathertop. A number of these facilities were burnt in the 1939 fires, with Mt Hotham Chalet, St Bernard Hospice, Feathertop Bungalow, and huts on the Razorback and Bon Accord Spur, and at Diamantina, Whisky Flat and Dinner Plain all destroyed.

3.3.2 Red Robin Mine

In 1941, two gold reefs were discovered near Hotham Heights by Bill Spargo. Spargo had worked as a roadman for the Country Roads Board through the 1920s, also managing the Hotham Heights Chalet from 1927. Spargo was in search of gold in the region for a number of years prior to his discovery. Spargo's Hut at Hotham Heights was built in 1928-9 as a base for his summer prospecting activities (Butler 2005, 1060). Spargo named the two reefs Red Robin and One Alone (Figure 15).

The Red Robin Mine, named for the ubiquitous Robins that accompanied Spargo's expeditions, yielded 173 oz. of gold from its first two tonnes of quartz (*The Herald*, 7 April 1941, 7). The surprise find led to the last gold 'rush' in Victoria with Spargo refusing a £60,000 purchase offer and some few others staking claims in the vicinity (*Camperdown Chronicle,* 24 June 1941, 4). While the initial findings of the Red Robin mine were good and continued throughout the decade, the remoteness of the mine resulted in unreliable access, primarily due to seasonal variability (*The Argus,* 6 June 1947, 16; *The Age*, 30 November 1949, 8; *The Age,* 13 April 1950, 6; Figure 16). Overall therefore, the yields of the Red Robin Mine were not considered extraordinary. Spargo sold out from the mine in 1951 and retired to Magnetic Island, Queensland (Garden 2002). Spargo sold his hut to Harold Maddison upon leaving; it is not known who he sold the mine to (Butler 2005, 1061). The mine continued producing quartz and gold until the early 2000s, retaining value through its traditional methods and novel attempts at operating the battery over winter.

Sambas Gold Mine (H2356), although outside the activity area, shares similarities to the Red Robin Mine (HV 2014, 5) as they are both adit-type mines which operated through the 19th century. These mines are indicative of the earliest European use of this part of Victoria, being largely associated with gold mining.

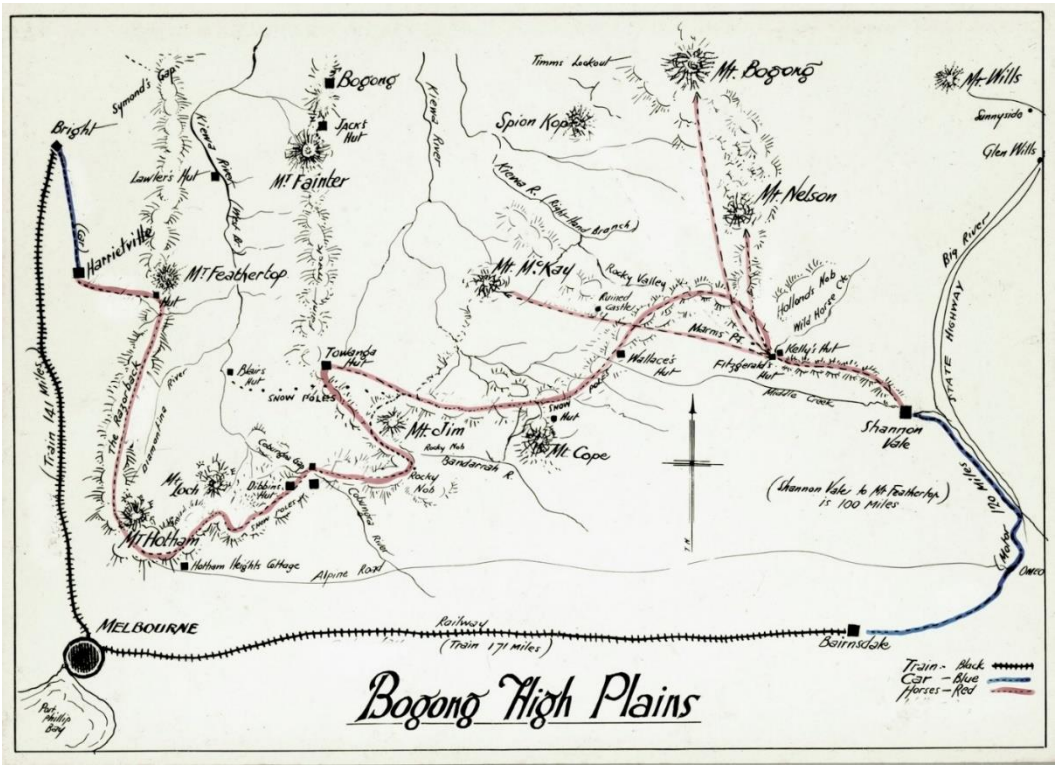

Figure 12. Bogong High Plains, c. 1929 (Source: SLV FL1552673).

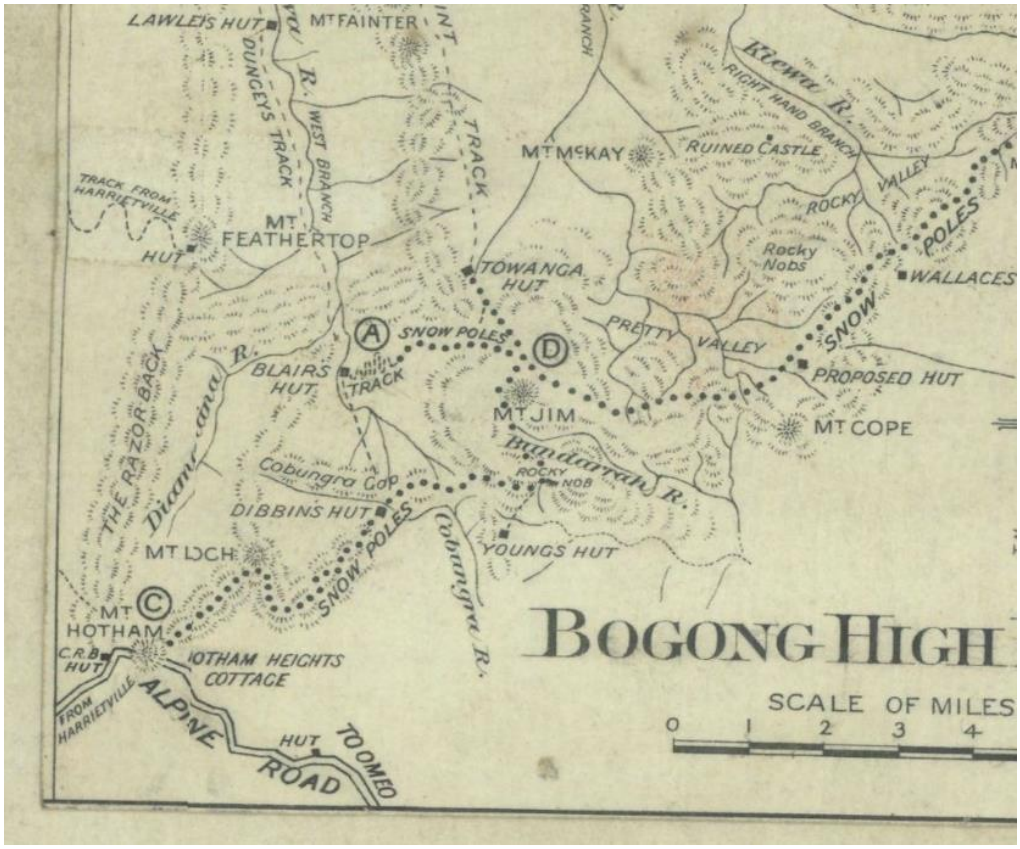

Figure 13. Bogong High Plains, excerpt from Tourists Map North Eastern Victoria, Bogong High Plains, Mt Buffalo &c., 1933 (Source: PROV M/T298D).

Figure 14. William B. Spargo. Source: *The Herald* 17 June 1941, 3.

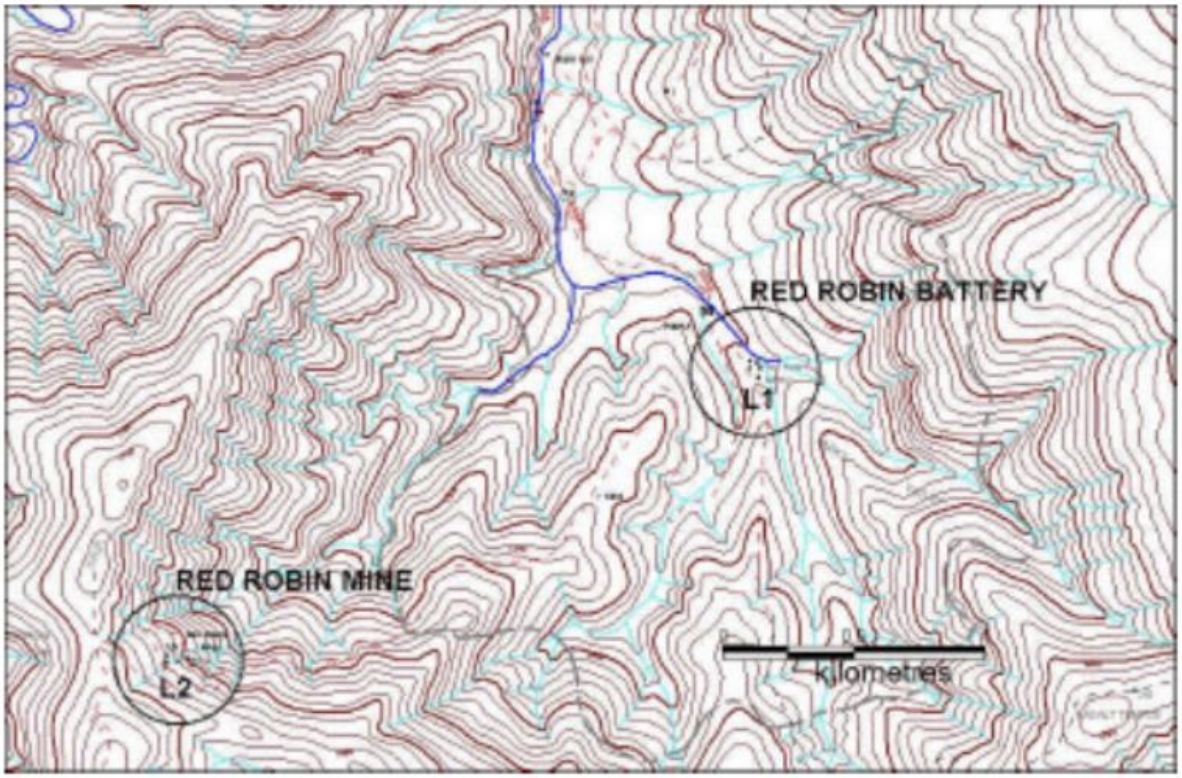

Figure 15. Red Robin Mine and Battery plan. Note the Battery is the structure within the activity area. Source: VHR Report H1881 (2000).

32OZ A TON FROM RED ROBIN MINE

Six tons of quartz treated at Bairnsdale School of Mines yesterday yielded 192½oz of gold, worth about £2,000.

This was the fourth crushing from the Red Robin mine at Mt Loch, in the Australian Alps, four miles from Hotham Heights Chalet, owned by Mr William Spargo. In the four crushings from this mine, which is 5,000ft above sea level, Mr Spargo has won 665oz of gold from 12 tons of quartz.

Development is being delayed pending construction of a road and procurement of mining machinery and labour.

Figure 16. The Argus, *32 oz a ton from Red Robin Mine,* 6 June 1947, 16.

3.3.3 Kiewa Hydro-Electric Scheme

The Victorian Hydro-Electric Company, a private company, carried out the first scientific survey of the region for the purposes of hydro-electric development in 1910 (LRGM Services 2008b, 76). The Company proposed the 'conservation and utilisation of the water resources of the Bogong High Plain' through the creation of 'lakes in two of the valleys of the tableland which would store 30,000 acre-feet (c. 37,000 megalitres) of water annually from the rain and snowfall of the winter and spring, and to discharge this water in the summer season back into the Kiewa River.' The lakes were proposed to be constructed at Pretty Valley and Rocky Valley. (*The Yackandandah Times* 1917, 2). The Victorian Government took control of power generation in 1921, forming the State Electricity Commission (SEC), after which the 1917 plan was reviewed but put aside, with the SEC progressing instead a more modest scheme in the Rubicon-Mount Sugarloaf region. Surveys of the Kiewa area continued however throughout the 1920s and 1930s, and in 1937 the SEC recommended that the Kiewa Scheme proceed, with construction commencing in 1938 (LRGM Services 2008a, 12).

The early stages of development of the Kiewa Scheme saw the construction of a main access road, the township of Bogong, and the Clover Power Station. A new proposal approved in 1947 more than doubled the capacity of the initial scheme, and construction activities and personnel increased substantially (LRGM Services 2008a, 12). In the late 1940s, most activity was centred on construction at West Kiewa Power Station, Rocky Valley Reservoir, McKay Creek Power Station, Bogong Creek Aqueduct and the Big Hill Power Station (LRGM Services 2008a, 12).

In 1946, work begun on the new township of Mount Beauty, a model town designed for the hydro workers. Previously the ski-fields of Bogong High Plains had generally been accessed from Mount Hotham. The new access road to Mount Beauty opened up the region, resulting in ski clubs applying for occupancies at Falls Creek in the late 1940s. The first hut was erected in 1947 by the Ski Club of Victoria, and in 1948 the first lodge was constructed by the Skyline Ski Club (LRGM Services 2008a, 12). In 1951 the first ski tows were built at Mount Hotham and Falls Creek (LRGM Services 2008b, 59).

The West Kiewa Power Station was completed by 1956, and by June 1961 the Rocky Valley Reservoir, McKay Creek Power Station, Pretty Valley pondage, and 35 kilometres of unlined aqueducts feeding the two storages had been completed. (LRGM Services 2008a, 12-13). Several huts were built by, and existing huts used by, the SEC in this period. New huts included the Cope Saddle SEC refuge hut, built c. 1950s; and the Pretty Valley SEC hut, built c.1960.

3.4 Late twentieth century

In 1968, The Tourist Development Authority (later Ministry of Tourism) and the Federation of Victorian Walking Clubs developed the concept of a 'tri-state' alpine track. Federation Hut at Mount Feathertop was built by the Federation of Walking Clubs in 1968, and refurbished in 1988 (Butler 2005, 380). The existing Diamantina Hut was built in 1967 on the site of the earlier 1920s hut. The Victorian element of the Alps Walking Track was established in the 1970s with the first tracks being built in 1970-71 in partnership with the Forests Commission. The track was designed to follow the spurs and ridges of the mountains in the Falls Creek – Hotham Heights area (Australian Alps Walking Track (655km), Australian Alps, Victoria, 2020).

Figure 17. Detail Kiewa Scheme general plan, 1958 (Source: SLV, FL159224965).

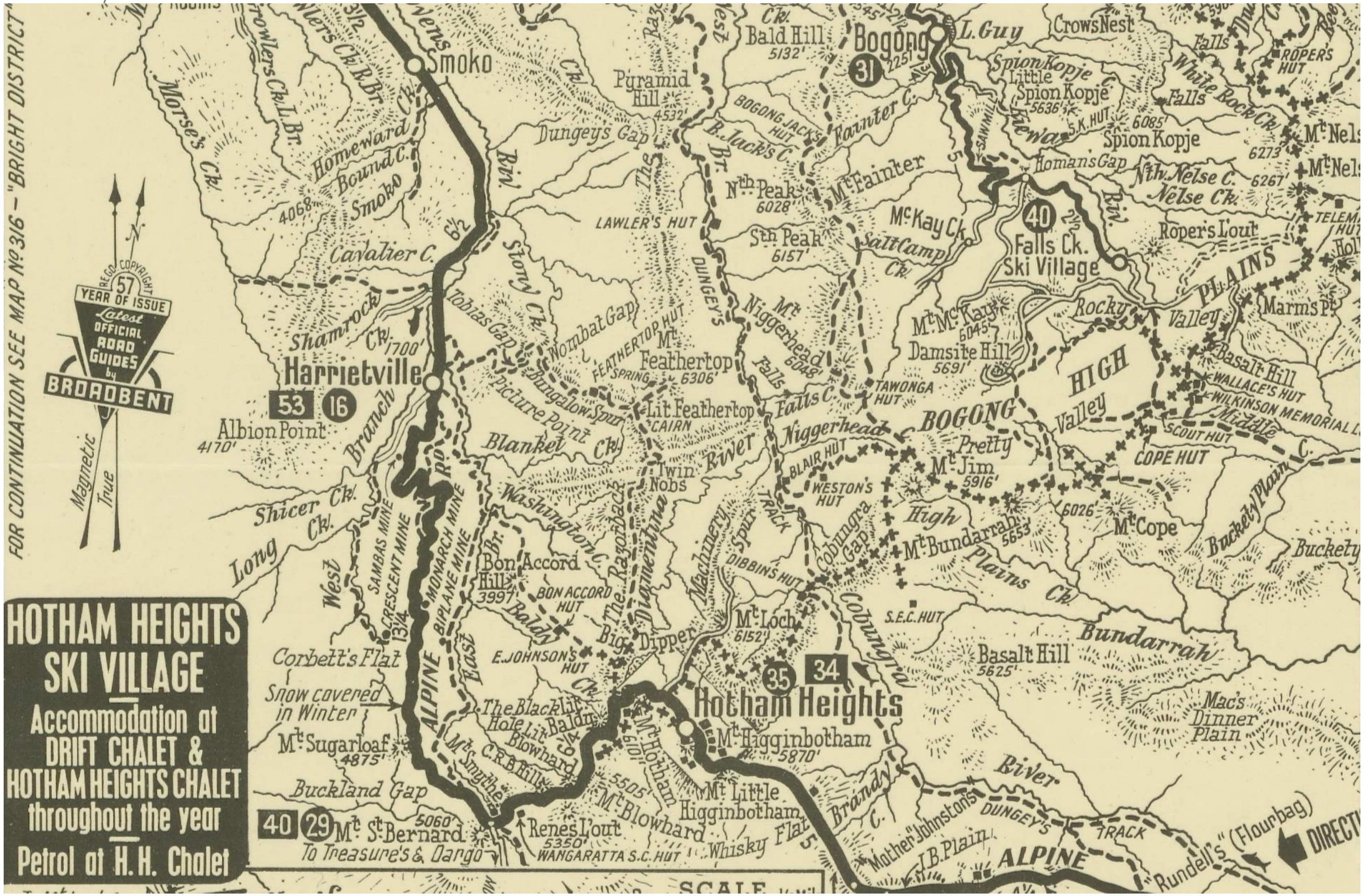

Figure 18. Detail of Broadbent's Official Copyright Map No. 323B Across the Alps, c. 1953 (Source: SLV FL 16419485).

3.5 Summary of site history

The table below provides an overview of the post-contact site history detailed in part 3 of this report.

Period	Development
Pre-1854	Numerous Aboriginal groups were living and accessing the Alpine region in all seasons for at least 20,000 years.
1854	Mount Hotham and Mount Feathertop surveyed by Ferdinand von Mueller.
1860s – 1920s	The alpine plains are used for seasonal summer grazing by stockmen.
c. 1860	Formation of Prospecting Association at Harrietville.
1889	Irish immigrants, William and Stewart Wallace built Wallace Hut (H1616) on the plains near Falls Creek where they held a grazing lease.
1914 – 1918	Wallace's Hut is used by stockmen from NSW during a drought.
1920s – 1940s	The State Electricity Commission used Wallace's Hut to collect data for potential hydroelectric works. The roof and walls were covered in corrugated iron, the chimney was fixed, and a skillion lean-to was added.
1930s	W. B. Spargo spends eight years in the bush prospecting for gold around Mts. Loch and Hotham.
1938	Construction starts on the Kiewa Hydro Electric Scheme
1941	Spargo finally strikes gold 4 miles (6.5 km), from Hotham Heights. He stakes two claims: Red Robin Mine (H1881) and One Alone Mine. Both mines yield significant amounts of gold for the relatively small amount of quartz crushed.
1952	Spargo sells Red Robin Mine
1968	The Tourist Development Authority and the Federation of Victorian Walking Clubs conceptualise the Alpine Walking Track.
1970s	The Victorian portion of the Alpine Walking Track is established.
2001	The Red Robin Mine ceases to operate.

4. Historical archaeological potential

This section builds on the development history outlined above, through the findings of previous archaeological investigations in the vicinity and a detailed assessment of development phases in the activity area, to determine its historical archaeological potential.

4.1 Relevant previous archaeological studies

No previous historical archaeological excavations have been undertaken within the activity area.

However, some regional studies have been undertaken which contribute towards our understanding of the historical archaeological potential of the activity area

Assessment of the Cultural Heritage Values of the Australian Alps National Parks (Truscott, Grinbergs, Buckley and Pearson, 2006).

The Department of the Environment and Heritage (DEH) commissioned research and preliminary assessment of historic cultural heritage values of the Australian Alps National Parks that was completed in 2006. While this report assessed the historic heritage values of the entire 1.6 million hectares of the Australian Alps National Park, only relevant parts (those focussed on the Alpine National Park) are discussed below.

The assessment examined many of the known sites, including those discussed above (such as gold mines, batteries and huts). These were concluded to have historic heritage value to the region as they are tangible links to the earliest European use of the Alps. Moreover, it was concluded that undocumented huts and other historical sites are likely within the region.

This report, while focussed on other aspects of heritage value in the region, add to our understanding of the Alpine region's European history, and therefore what potential undocumented historical archaeological remains may be present.

4.2 Phases of historical development

Several phases of development have been identified within the activity area, including the following:

- Phase 1: Grazing and ephemeral land use, including recreation (1835-1920s);
- Phase 2: Gold prospecting and mine establishment (1930s – 1970s); and
- Phase 3: Recreational use (1970s – current).

Identified phases of development with the potential to result in the creation of, or impact to, historical archaeological resources are discussed below.

4.2.1 Phase 1: Grazing and ephemeral land use, including recreation (1835-1920s)

Minimal development is identified as having occurred in the activity area during this phase. Small huts such as Wallace's Hut (H1616) were constructed for shelter and retained sparse furnishings. Many huts in the area have though succumbed to bush fires and neglect.

Archaeological evidence is likely to be limited to ephemeral remains reflecting transitional or temporary use, including postholes, firepits, refuse pits, and isolated artefacts lost or discarded by people moving through the activity area. It is possible that more substantial deposits relating to ephemeral/temporary structures or activities may exist in the activity area, but there is no evidence for this in the available records.

4.2.2 Phase 2: Gold prospecting and mine establishment (1930s – 1970s)

During this period, Spargo was one of the few individuals exploring the Alpine region for gold. While earlier gold fields had been found at nearby Harrietville, that was at a lower elevation. The establishment of the Red Robin Mine and Battery may be the only notable historical event during this period within the activity area.

Archaeological evidence is likely to be largely limited to deposits of construction materials required to build and repair the battery. But it may also include refuse pits, privies, sheds, surfaces, wells, isolated artefacts lost or discarded by people working at the mine and battery.

4.2.3 Phase 3: Primarily recreational use (1970s – current)

Phase 3 describes a period during which few structures aside from hiking huts were built across the activity area. None of these huts is included on the VHI or VHR, but it is possible that they are accompanied by archaeological deposits that could yield information about their use.

Archaeological evidence of land use is likely to be limited to ephemeral remains of transitional or temporary use, isolated artefacts lost or discarded by people moving through the activity area.

4.3 Statement of historical archaeological potential

The activity area has low potential for historical archaeological evidence resulting from seasonal grazing and recreational use in Phases 1 and 3.

It is possible that the proposed trail follows or intercepts parts of former stock or grazing routes, however it is considered that the archaeological signature of such activities would be disparate and minimal. Therefore, the archaeological potential associated with these activities is considered low.

The area immediately surrounding the Red Robin Battery (H1881), has moderate-high potential for historical archaeological evidence associated with gold exploration, mining, and processing from Phases 2 and 3. The area containing the original Battery shed and extant standing structures has potential for archaeological remains associated with occupation from the early/mid-twentieth century onwards. The surrounding area has the potential to contain

evidence of recorded and unrecorded outbuildings, yard spaces, landscape modifications, and sealed artefact deposits in refuse pits and within fill deposits in land modification features.

Overall, the activity area has low potential for historical archaeological remains, with the exception of locations in proximity to the Red Robin Battery, which has moderate-high potential.

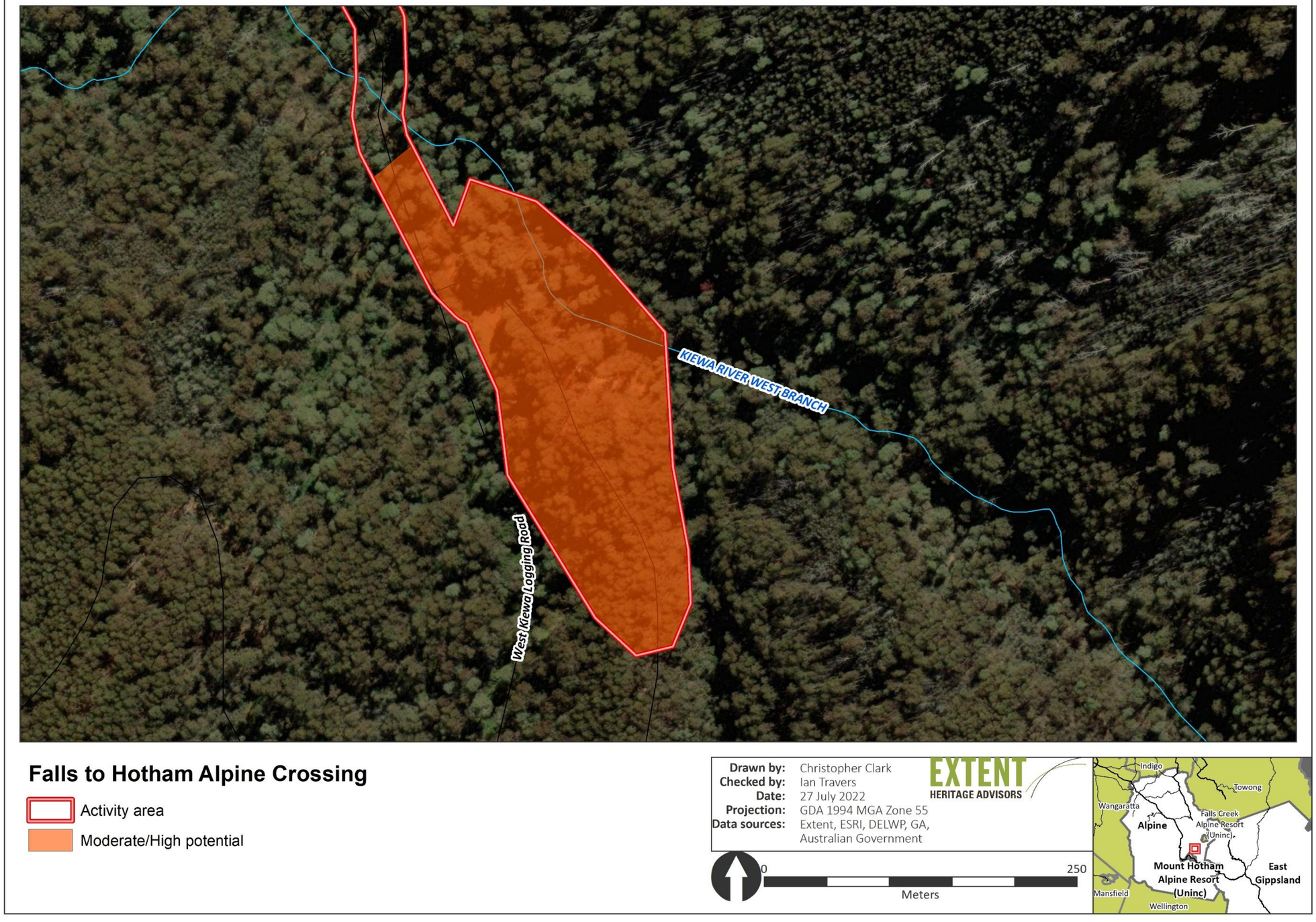

Figure 19: Red Robin Mine and Battery showing moderate to high historical archaeological potential. *N.B. locations outside of this part of the activity area have low potential to contain significant historical archaeology.*

5. Historical archaeological significance

Archaeological significance refers to the heritage significance of known or potential archaeological remains. While they remain an integral component of the overall significance of a place, it is necessary to assess the archaeological resources of a site independently from above-ground heritage elements. Assessment of archaeological significance is more challenging as the extent and nature of the archaeological features is often unknown and judgment is usually made on the basis of anticipated or potential attributes.

This desktop assessment follows principles established by the Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance ('The Burra Charter', 2013) on understanding what is significant about a place as an essential precursor to managing any change that may impact on that cultural significance.

It is accepted best practice that the assessment of an archaeological site's significance be gradually refined through successive stages of investigation, should these be necessary – see below.

5.1 Statement of significance

The following preliminary statement of significance for the activity area's potential archaeological resource is presented in accordance with the Victorian Heritage Council significance assessment guidelines.

Parts of the statement below which refer to the Red Robin Mine and Battery have been taken from its Victorian Heritage Database listing.

What is significant?

Archaeological remains of early gold mining, exploration (such as explorer's huts) and pastoralism would be significant to the state of Victoria.

The Red Robin Mine and Battery (H1881) is a registered archaeological place, recognising that the historical archaeological deposits present at the site are significant to the State of Victoria.

How is it significant?

Evidence of European gold mining, exploration and pastoralism is archaeologically and historically significant to the state of Victoria.

The Red Robin Mine at Mount Hotham is of historic, scientific (technological and archaeological), and social significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

Historically

Archaeological remains associated with exploration, pioneering, gold mining and pastoralism of the Alpine region are historically significant as they are tangible links to early colonial activities

in some of Victoria's most inhospitable environments. Early European exploration of the Alpine region is an intrinsic part of Victoria's history, and any archaeological remains associated with this colonial frontier would be important historical connections to the early pioneers.

The Red Robin Gold Mine is historically important due to its association with what is still Victoria's last discovered goldfield and subsequent rush. William Spargo has gained folkloric status due to his association with this event. The Red Robin Gold Mine is also important as a rare and functional example of a once plentiful type. With its working battery, the mine is a unique representative of the traditional type of mining operation that dominated the Victorian Alps from the 1860s to 1950s.

Archaeologically

Remains associated with colonial development of the Alpine region within the activity area would be archaeologically significant as they contain information that may provide unique insight into how Europeans dealt with Victoria's extreme climate. Analysis of these remains may yield information unavailable from other sources, particularly regarding frontier life and pioneering technology.

Technologically

The Red Robin Gold Mine is of scientific (technological) significant as a palimpsest of mine workings, operational and redundant mining equipment and huts. The significance of the Red Robin Gold Mine is increased by its continued use since 1940 essentially with 'traditional-type' mining technology and techniques. The retention of all the existing elements at the mine from original to current (and future) use is crucial to the significance of the place. These elements combine to document the evolution of mining operations on the site and underscore the engineering ingenuity and human spirit that enables successful gold mining in one of the most remote and hostile environments in Australia. Of particular importance are the remains of the vertical boiler next to the battery house. The boiler, used to heat water to facilitate plate amalgamation of gold in sub-zero conditions, evinces the first (and so far only) attempt to operate the battery over winter.

Socially

The Red Robin Gold Mine is socially significant to local communities in the Alps for whom it has the potential to educate in a truly authentic environment and to illustrate the special difficulties of working in Victoria's harsh alpine environment.

6. Impact assessment

6.1 Proposed development

The FHAC is being redeveloped and extended to provide a renown and iconic five-day walking experience across a section of the Australian Alps. The project integrates the formalisation of 52km of existing walking trails, 18km of 4WD access tracks, the construction of camping platforms and hut accommodations at four overnight nodes, and the development of signage and trailheads within the Alpine National Park.

6.2 Impact assessment

The proposed development will result in harm to historical archaeological resources that may be present within the activity area primarily through excavation and grading. However, as stated above, there is a low potential for significant historical archaeology within the majority of the activity area. The most likely form of historical archaeology which would be harmed by the proposed development is isolated artefacts created or deposited by early European pioneers traversing and exploring the landscape. There is no documentary evidence to suggest that the proposed trail intercepts any historical huts, although several are located nearby.

There may, however, be undocumented sites of historical significance throughout the activity area. Any evidence of these would be documented as part of a site survey, a recommendation included in part 7 of this report.

There is moderate to high potential for significant historical archaeology to be present in proximity to the Red Robin Mine and Battery. Here, the Falls to Hotham Alpine crossing project proposes the construction of an overnight node. This is described as follows:

> Four overnight nodes on the trail will offer accommodation options to suit a diverse range of walker profiles.
>
> Separated from existing popular dispersed camp areas that will remain to operate as usual, new Hiker Camps will offer environmentally sound and more convenient platform tent-based camping, including new shelters to enable weather- protected social engagement after the day's walk, while the proposal of low-impact Operated Huts are tailored for those who desire an added level of comfort. Guided tours, education groups and private and public operators will be encouraged to tap into this existing and additional camping and hut-based accommodation to provide a range of curated experiences and tourism products.

It is anticipated that development of the overnight node will require some excavation works that have the potential to impact significant historical archaeology associated with the Red Robin Mine and Battery. As this site is included on the Victorian Heritage Register, a permit will be required from Heritage Victoria prior to works commencing.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

The majority of the activity area has been assessed as having low historical archaeological potential. However, there is moderate-high potential for significant archaeological remains in proximity to the Red Robin Mine and Battery (see Figure 19)

The following recommendations have been made to assist with refining areas of potential and as guidance through the required Heritage Victoria approvals process.

Recommendation 1 – Site Survey

It is recommended that archaeologists undertake a survey of the activity area to ground truth the results of this desktop assessment. There is some potential for currently un-registered and un-recorded sites to be present throughout the Alpine region, and the aim of this survey would be to identify any parts of the proposed trail alignment that have potential to cause harm to sites not immediately apparent through desktop research.

This survey would enable a more robust assessment of archaeological potential and would assist in refining areas for further investigation, and possibly allowing more disturbed parts of the study area to be discounted from further examination. Any currently un-registered historical archaeological sites identified in this way may need to be recorded on a statutory register, with appropriate approvals sought prior to commencement of the proposed works.

The survey of the Red Robin Mine and Battey (H1881) would allow for a detailed recording of the site that would include GPS plotting of extant or visible remains of the mine and battery. The accurate mapping of these remains would then inform a minimal impact design, reducing the likelihood of harm occurring from the proposed development.

A historical archaeological survey report will be prepared following the survey. This would detail the results of the survey and identify whether any additional areas of potential were identified during the fieldwork. All fieldwork and reporting would be in accordance with relevant guidelines, and the subsequent report would be submitted as per Heritage Victoria requirements.

Recommendation 2 – Liaison with Heritage Victoria

It is recommended that a meeting with Heritage Victoria be arranged to discuss the results of this assessment and the proposed management of historical archaeology during the study area's development.

This would also clarify what is required in the permit process (see recommendation below).

Recommendation 3 – Application for a Heritage Victoria permit

Works within the boundary of the Red Robin Mine and Battery may require a heritage permit or permit exemption from Heritage Victoria under the Heritage Act 2017 (Vic), unless the works are considered exempt under the site-specific exemptions which include:

- Emergency and general maintenance repairs to all structures and equipment which do not involve demolition or removal.

- Installation of new equipment required for operational purposes where no substantial removal of significant fabric is required.
- Repairs to buildings which replace like with like.
- Installation of any safety equipment or earthworks required for the safe operation of the mine or to leave abandoned sections of the mine in a safe condition.
- Undertaking of safety and access works to restrict vehicular access to the site and minimise foot traffic near foundations.
- Installation of information signage for interpretation and public risk purposes.
- On-site works confined to those to protect and stabilise buildings and structures.
- Preliminary mineral exploration involving geological, geophysical, and geochemical surveys.

The intent of the above site-specific exemptions is described on the VHR citation for the Red Robin Mine and Battery as follows:

> Through the registration of the Red Robin Gold Mine it is desired to retain the essential character of the place but to allow continued operation. The intent of the permit exemptions is to allow the normal day to day running and maintenance of the Red Robin Gold Mine as an operational, gold-producing facility. The permit exemptions recognise the remoteness of the place, the significance attached to the mine's continuing operation, and that prompt repair or replacement of failed equipment is of the highest priority and should be as the discretion of the owners. But this is based on the understanding that the replaced equipment will not be unnecessarily removed from the site.
>
> As a working mine, the Red Robin is subject to Occupational Health and Safety considerations and these are seen as important in the continued operation of the mine.
>
> The site's continued use also requires that from time to time machinery undergoes repair and this may require the dismantling of buildings to remove and/or repair large items of equipment. This should be allowed on the basis that reinstatement occurs in a manner that respects the heritage values of the place.

It is recommended that prior to the permit application the site survey and subsequent report are completed. Moreover, the recommended meeting with Heritage Victoria will also need to have occurred, as a related reference number is required for the application. Both the survey and the meeting will provide clarity around expectations for management of the site during the proposed works.

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