

Blue Mountains Heritage Register Review

SHI Number
1173086
Study Number
Various SHI

Heritage Inventory - 2016 Heritage Review

Item Name: **Sassafras Creek Reserves and Walking Tracks**

Location: **20 Sassafras Gully Road; 69-77 Yondell Avenue; National**

Address: 20 Sassafras Gully Road; 69-77 Yondell Avenue; National Park DUAP Region: Sydney West

Suburb / Nearest Town: Springwood 2777

Historic region: Sydney

Local Govt Area: Blue Mountains

Parish: Magdala

State: NSW

County: Cook

Other/Former Names: Sassafras Gully Reserve, Flying Fox Gully

Area/Group/Complex:

Group ID:

Aboriginal Area:

Curtilage/Boundary:

Item Type: Landscape

Group: Landscape - Cultural

Category: Other - Landscape - C

Owner: Local Government

Admin Codes:

Code 2:

Code 3:

Current Use: Recreation.

Former Uses: Recreation.

Assessed Significance: **Local**

Endorsed Significance:

Statement of Significance: Gundungurra Indigenous Land Use Agreement (Aboriginal heritage statement):

This land is listed under Schedule G of the Gundungurra Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA). The ILUA recognises the particular importance of certain land within the Blue Mountains Local Government Area to the Gundungurra Traditional Owners, and is a 10 year, legally binding agreement under the Native Title Act 1993. The information in this inventory sheet does not include the significance of this site to the Gundungurra Traditional Owners, and therefore does not represent a complete history, or represent the views of the Gundungurra ILUA Consultative Committee or the values they attribute to the land. The inventory sheet should be read as the European history only, and it is recognised that this history may have impacted on the Aboriginal cultural significance of the site.

Statement of significance:

The Sassafras Creek Reserves and their associated walking tracks and lookouts have historical value at the local level as they represent the energetic efforts of local trustees (in the late 19th and early 20th century) to preserve a large natural area close to the town and provide it with facilities, including over 12km of walking tracks, to attract tourists to Springwood. They are typical of tourist development for the era in the central and lower Blue Mountains. The reserves, tracks and named features have significance at the local level for their association with Sir Henry Parkes and local reserve trustees. The natural vegetation and environments within the reserves have aesthetic significance at the local level as typical examples of their type.

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Historical Notes or Provenance: Sassafras Creek drains the south side of Springwood and Faulconbridge. It is the upper section of Glenbrook Creek. The Blue Mountains Walking Track Heritage Study of 1998 identified 8 track segments, constructed between 1878 and the 1960s, that were designed to access parts of Sassafras Creek and its tributaries. These are:

1. Wiggins Track to the Lagoon (NPWS SHI 3900021) - Constructed between 1879-1882. This track is not mentioned in the 1879 Railway Guide but is shown on the Springwood map in the 1882 Russell guide. Sassafras Gully was originally known as Flying Fox Gully. The track was described as 'sadly out of repair' in 1890. The flying foxes were said in 1900 to have 'fled at the approach of man'. The track originally started at the junction of Bee Farm Road and Yondell Avenue but was relocated to the present location, probably in late 1906 - early 1907. In December 1906 the Springwood trustees called for tenders for 'repairing and altering the old path in the gully'. It appears to have been their intention to upgrade this section as part of the round trip that included the new Magdala Gully track.

It has been stated in the local cemetery study series that 'During the 1940s, James Joseph (Wiggins) and his brother Jack built a track into Upper Glenbrook Creek'. However, the track is already labelled 'Wiggins Track' on Melville's 1938 map. The Wiggins brothers (born 1879 and 1895 respectively) could have been involved in the 1907 reconstruction or their name could have become associated with the track if they were involved with a later reconstruction or ongoing maintenance of the track.

2. Victory Track to Clarinda Falls (NPWS SHI 3900034) - Constructed between 1878-1887. Sir Henry Parkes selected land at (later) Faulconbridge in 1875/76, built a cottage on the land in 1877 and 'Faulconbridge' house in 1878. It is presumed that Sir Henry's landscaping activities took place between 1878 and 1887, when he moved away from the area. It has been stated that Sir Henry employed 14 gardeners. The head gardener was Charles Champion. While these gardeners carried out the actual garden and track construction, Sir Henry is known to have supervised the work. Early descriptions of the garden and tracks are in the 1887 and 1917 subdivision brochures and in Lyne 1897.

The 1879 Railway Guide listed these attractions 'much admired by visitors' in the neighbourhood of Sir Henry Parkes' residence: The Terraced Gardens, the Rocklily Glen and the Rocklily Cave. These attractions are listed in the other tourist guides through the 1880s. The 1889 Railway Guide said that these attractions were 'much frequented by visitors'. This implies that there was public access to this private garden. The 1917 Allen Estate auction brochure contains a photograph of 'The Rugged Steps' at the top of Sir Henry's Track as it was labelled on the 1917 auction poster. (This photograph by Harry Phillips also appears in his Views of the Far Famed Blue Mountains (1917)). In 1919 negotiations were carried out between the Faulconbridge Progress Association, Blue Mountains Shire Council and the Trustees of the Allen Estate, resulting in 190 acres of Portion 19, containing Sir Henry Parkes' track being acquired as a recreation reserve. By this time Parkes' track had been connected to the Sassafras Gully tracks.

Faulconbridge first appears as a destination in the 1920 edition of the Mountaineer Guide where only the attraction of the 1880s Rocklily Glen and Cave and the Terraced Gardens are listed as sights. The location is given as 'Faulconbridge Gully'. Parkes' track may have

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been in poor order in 1932 when Ron Brown and Ian Greville 'spent much time preparing the track'. The first printed reference to the Victory track is on Melville's 1939 map. Detailed descriptions of walking the Victory track in the late 1930s and early 1940s were published by 'Sassafras' and Russell. SF15, the 'lookout loop', which provides the link between Sir Henry's garden terraces and the Victory track may contain the Rocklily Cave. No map of this section of Parkes' tracks appeared until Smith's in 1986.

The original relationships between Parkes' houses, garden landscaping and bushwalking tracks remain intact and provide a rare opportunity to study an example of landscape architecture from the late 1870s - early 1880s that reflects the aspirations and personality of an important figure in Australian political history.

3. Sassafras Gully Road to Wiggins Track (NPWS SHI 3900022) - Constructed 1890. The Nepean Times of 9 August, 1890 contains a description of this then new track which was built with the intentions of both providing an entrance into Sassafras Gully closer to the township and making a round trip with the Wiggins Track. However, due to the poor condition of the latter, one party became lost a few months later trying to do the round trip.

4. Eastern Track from Martins Lookout to Glenbrook Creek (NPWS SHI 3900023) - Constructed 1902.

It was announced in November 1900 that a reserve of over 200 acres had been created at this lookout and a trust appointed. In October 1902, 14 local residents cleared the road to the lookout. In November a second working bee of six cut the track to Glenbrook Creek.

5. Magdala Gully Track and sidetracks (NPWS SHI 3900024) - Constructed between 1905-1907.

Made between 1905 and 1907 as part of the track network to improve access from Springwood into Sassafras Gully this track has representative historical significance at a regional level and representative social value at a local/regional level.

6. Fels Pass (NPWS SHI 3900025) - Constructed between 1905-1909.

A Mr Fels is mentioned in 1902 as trustee of Martin's lookout reserve. This was possibly Frederick Fels, husband of Dora Fels. The Fels built a house 'Fels Ridge', later called 'Beverley Hall' which burned down in 1968. 'Blue Gum Lodge' was built on the site. In 1905 Fels was referred to as 'a great enthusiast' for track building in Springwood (Magdala) Gully. He had spent 'a good amount of money' in track building there. Either during the building of the Magdala Gully track or soon after Fels constructed a side track from the site of 'Fels Ridge' to the Magdala Gully track. It included a rock walled dam to create a swimming pool. A postcard in the author's possession, post-marked 16/3/1909 shows this 'Fels Pass'.

Although privately constructed, the track must have been used by the general public for it appeared on this commercially produced postcard. The track was relocated and mapped in the late 1980s by Christine Davies.

7. Sassafras Gully to Clarinda Falls (NPWS SHI 3900026) - Constructed between 1890-1917.

The link track between Clarinda Falls and Sassafras Gully could have been made at any time after the 1890 construction of the track from Sassafras Gully Road and before 1917 when the auction poster for the Allen Estate subdivision showed 'Sir Henry Parkes' Walk'

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and 'Made track down gully to Springwood'. It is more likely that construction took place after the huge project of making the Magdala Gully tracks that preoccupied the trustees between 1905 and 1907. It is possible that the trustees would have been aware of community efforts from 1917 to secure parts of Sir Henry Parkes' old estate, including 'Sir Henry Parkes' Walk' (later Victory Track) for a public reserve and made the connection early that year. The first written reference located to the track is from 1925.

8. Western Trail from Martins Lookout to Glenbrook Creek (NPWS SHI 3900028) - Constructed 1960s.

This track is not shown on the 1950's Blue Mountains City Council walking track maps by V. Coleman and no documentation on its construction has been located. It seems to be in existence by the time of Forshaw's guide of 1969.

Tracks 2 and 6 were originally privately constructed.

This track network does not demonstrate the high standards of construction, eg., in the use of stone work that characterises the tracks in the upper Blue Mountains reserves. However, the trustees for this area achieved much with their limited funds, including the longest section of creekside tourist track in the Blue Mountains region: over 6km of track beside Sassafras Creek from Faulconbridge to a point southeast of Martins Lookout. In addition there are over 6km of access tracks to the creek from parts of Springwood.

Named features / attractions accessed by the tracks include:

- Waterholes: The Blue Pool and Perch Ponds.
- Waterfalls: Magdala, Clarinda and Martins.
- Lookouts: Martins and Lawsons.

Some local naming themes:

- Natural features: The Perch, a native freshwater fish; Sassafras, a rainforest tree and Flying Fox gully.
- Local trustees and identities: Wiggins, Fels, Martin, Lawson and Clarinda (Parkes).
- Wartime: 'Victory' commemorates the allied victory in WWI and Magdala the site of a British Empire battle in Africa.

A significant event in the history of these reserves was the arrival of Percy Thomas in Springwood in 1978 (Anon., 1994). Thomas began one of the most remarkable episodes of volunteer track restoration in Blue Mountains history. He was appointed an Honorary Ranger in 1988 and was the 1994 Blue Mountains Australia Day Citizen of the Year award. His work included restoration in Sassafras and Magdala Gullies and production of a new brochure for the South Springwood tracks. Flood damage to the Sassafras Gully track in August 1990 and November 1992 was repaired using grants from the State Government including \$7,000 in January 1993 (Anon., 1992, 1993). Discussions have taken place in recent years about moving the boundary of the Blue Mountains National Park northwards to include all or part of these reserves and tracks.

Around 2000 Percy Thomas had to retire from his volunteer activities due to ill health.

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A debate occurred in letters to the editor of the Blue Mountains Gazette in 2006/2007 about the condition of the South Springwood tracks, in particular the lack of signage and the number of fallen trees blocking the tracks. (Levy:2006; Chinn:2006, Hyslop:2006, Smith:2007). Blue Mountains City Council replaced the bridges and repaired a number of steps during 2006 and 2007 (Mortensen:2006).

Ian Jack & Associates contributed these notes related to nomenclature.

Wiggins track

This was first made at the end of the 1870s but was reconstructed in 1907. The Wiggins family lived nearby: Elisha Wiggins, born in 1847, and three siblings, Jack, Elisha Walter and Frances, born between 1882 and 1895, gave their name to the track (Woods, Yellow Rock to Green Gully, 171). The present access road off Bee Farm Road, was named Yondell Avenue only in 1951, perhaps as a reference to yon dell down the track. (Woods, Street Whys, 115)

Themes:	National Theme	State Theme	Local Theme
	1. Environment	Environment - naturally evo	(none)
	3. Economy	Environment - cultural land	(none)
	8. Culture	Leisure	(none)

Designer: Local Trustees and Sir Henry Parkes.

Maker / Builder:

Year Started: 1878 **Year Completed:** 1969 **Circa:** No

Physical Description: 1. Wiggins Track to the Lagoon (NPWS SHI 3900021)
This track was built at some time between 1879 and 1882. From Yondell Avenue, the track zig zags down the hillside to follow an unnamed side creek of Sassafras Gully Creek, then down Sassafras Gully Creek to the pool 'The Lagoon' at the junction with Glenbrook Creek.

This description dated 20 September 2004 contributed by Ian Jack and Associates:

The Wiggins Track is reached via Bee Farm Road and then along Yondell Road. It is a well-made track, going south-west down to Sassafras Creek, where it meets Victory Track from Faulconbridge. The best route for a round trip is to start at Faulconbridge and to emerge up Wiggins Track in Springwood.

The vegetation along the track is creekside scrub and forest that includes *Callicoma serratifolia*, *Angophora costata*, *Tristaniopsis laurina* and ferns (*Blechnum* sp.) The forest in 2004 has been recently burned with regrowth vegetation but forms an attractive backdrop for

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a walk with stone steps, rock overhangs and a new steel and wooden bridge over an unnamed creek.

2. Victory Track to Clarinda Falls (NPWS SHI 3900034)
This track was built at some time between 1878 and 1887. Stone steps from near railway level crossing to Clarinda Falls.

3. Sassafras Gully Road to Wiggins Track (NPWS SHI 3900022) - Constructed 1890.
From the end of Sassafras Gully Road, the track follows the unnamed tributary of Sassafras Gully Creek north west of Bee Farm Road to its junction with Sassafras Gully Creek which it follows downstream to the southern end of the Wiggins track.

4. Eastern Track from Martins Lookout to Glenbrook Creek (NPWS SHI 3900023) - Constructed 1902.
From Martins Lookout the track descends to Glenbrook Creek.

5. Magdala Gully Track and sidetracks (NPWS SHI 3900024)
This track was built at some time between 1905 and 1907. A track following Magdala Creek downstream to Glenbrook Creek, with connections to Picnic Point, Lawson's Lookout, a 'dead end' track upstream of Magdala Falls, the Wiggins track, Martins Lookout tracks and Fels Pass.

6. Fels Pass (NPWS SHI 3900025)
This track was built at some time between 1905 and 1909. From the site of Blue Gum Lodge a track winds down to a swimming pool on an unnamed tributary of Magdala Creek, heads north west to another tributary and then follows the Creek below Lawson's Lookout to link with the main Magdala Creek track.

7. Sassafras Gully to Clarinda Falls (NPWS SHI 3900026)
This track was built at some time between 1890 and 1917. A track following Sassafras Creek from Clarinda Falls to the end of Wiggins Track.

8. Western Trail from Martins Lookout to Glenbrook Creek (NPWS SHI 3900028)
This track was built at some time between 1960 and 1969. The track heads westwards from Martins Lookout making a round trip with the 1902 eastern track from the lookout.

East and west of Raymond Road there appears to be minor intrusions of tracks on to 8 private properties.

Physical Condition: Variable. Some sections overgrown, eroded and poorly sign posted, other sections upgraded in recent years.

Modification Dates:

Recommended Management: List on Blue Mountains Local Environment Plan 2015.

Clarify management responsibilities of Blue Mountains City Council and Department, Environment, Climate Change and Water.

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Management:

Further Comments:

- Criteria a)** The Sassafras Creek Reserves represent a significant effort by a central Blue Mountains community to preserve a large area of natural bushland close to a township and provide it with a lengthy track network (over 12km) to attract tourists who might otherwise have spent their holidays in the more famous upper Blue Mountains towns.
- Criteria b)** The reserves have historical associations at the local level because of their association with Sir Henry Parkes and local reserve trustees and identities.
- Criteria c)** Constructed features within the reserves are utilitarian rather than designed to high aesthetic standards. The varied environments within the reserves, including rainforest, open forest and riparian habitats have representative aesthetic significance as typical examples of their type.
- Criteria d)** The reserves experience little use by tourists, their social significance lies mainly in the reserves' values to the central Blue Mountains community.
- Criteria e)**
- Criteria f)**
- Criteria g)** The tracks and tourist infrastructure within the reserves are typical of those built in the central and lower Blue Mountains in the late 19th and early 20th century to provide attractions to tourists to the area.

Integrity / Intactness: Fair.

References:	Author	Title	Year
	A. Martin	Henry Parkes, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.	1980
	A. Russell	Bush Ways, Australasian Publishing Company, Sydney.	1944
	A. Searle	Faulconbridge, Springwood Historical Society, Springwood.	1977
	Anon.,	Railway Guide of NSW.	1879
	Anon.,	Australia Day Awards, Blue Mountains Gazette (2 February 1994).	1994
	Anon.,	\$7000 for Storm Damage, Blue Mountains Gazette (November 1993).	1993
	Anon.,	Funds for Flood Damage, Blue Mountains Gazette (1 January 1992).	1992
	Anon.,	Martins View, Springwood, Mountaineer (23 November 1900).	1900
	Anon.,	Springwood, Nepean Times (31 October 1902).	1902
	Anon.,	Springwood, Nepean Times (22 November 1902).	1902
	Anon.,	"Sassafras", Rambling around Springwood, Blue Mountains Daily (17 March 1939).	1939

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Anon.,	Faulconbridge, Gibbs Shallard & Co., Sydney, N.D. [1887]	
Anon.,	Railway Guide of NSW, Volume 2.	1889
Anon.,	Mountaineer Guide.	1920
Anon.,	Our Pleasure Resorts, Mountaineer (23 March 1900).	1900
Anon.,	New Mountain Road, Nepean Times (14 November 1925).	1925
Anon.,	Martins View, Springwood, Nepean Times (23 November 1900).	1900
Anon.,	Springwood, Nepean Times (9 September 1905).	1905
Anon.,	"Sassafras", Rambling around Springwood, Blue Mountains Daily (24 March 1939).	1939
Anon.,	Hazelbrook, Methodist Church, Nepean Times (17 September 1932).	1932
Anon.,	Springwood, Nepean Times (19 January 1907).	1907
Anon.,	Allen Estate (Brochure & Auction Poster), Richardson & Wrench, J.T. Walls & co., Marshall & Dempster, Sydney.	1917
Anon.,	Springwood, Nepean Times (1 September 1906; 8 December 1906).	1906
Anon.,	Lost in Sassafras Gully, Nepean Times (23 August 1890).	1890
Anon.,	The Sassafras Gully, Springwood, Nepean Times (9 August 1890).	1890
Anon.,	Our Past Blue Mountaineers, Volume 8, Blue Mountains Family History Society, Springwood.	1992
B. Forshaw	A Guide to Bushwalking, Cosmorama Press, Sydney.	1969
C. Lyne	Life of Sir Henry Parkes, T. Fisher Unwin, London.	1897
C. Woods	Street Whys, Melaleuca Productions, Katoomba.	1997
C. Woods	Yellow Rock to Green Gully	1999
D. Levy	Tracks Need Work, Blue Mountains Gazette (3 May 2006).	2006
D. Moore & R. Hall	Australia, Image of a Nation, Collins, Sydney.	1983
Helen Halliwell	Notes on Rothesay Farm, unpublished, Blue Mountains City Council, Local History Collection [N.D.]	
J. Russell	The Pictorial Guide to the Blue Mountains of NSW, Gibbs Shallard & Co.	1882
J. Smith	Wonderful Tracks, Blue Mountains Gazette (17 October 2007).	2007
J. Smith	How to See the Blue Mountains, 2nd edition.	1986
Noel Selway	Personal Communication (September 1997).	1997
P. Chinn	Blue Mountains Gazette (15 March 2006)	2006
R. Hyslop	New Bridge, Blue Mountains Gazette (5 July 2006).	2006
S. Mortensen	Letter to Jim Smith (22 October 2007).	2007

Studies:	Author	Title	Number	Year
	Jim Smith	Walking Track Heritage Study, NPWS	Various	1998

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Blue Mountains City Council	LEP 2015 Heritage Review	2016
Jim Smith	LEP 1991 Consultant Review	2010

Parcels:	Parcel Code	LotNumber	Section	Plan Code	Plan Number
	LOT	1		DP	1190909
	LOT	50		DP	751654

Latitude:

Longitude:

Location validity:

Spatial Accuracy:

Map Name:

Map Scale:

AMG Zone:

Easting:

Northing:

Listings:	Name:	Title:	Number:	Date:
	Potential Heritage Item	LEP 2015 Am5	SP069	

Local Instrument: LEP 2015

Local Identifier: SP069

Draft Instrument:

Technical Comment:

Update Notes: (i) New listing. Supercedes SHI 1170995 Blue Pool; SHI1170994 Magdala Falls; SHI1170993 Martins Falls; SHI 1170992 Martins Lookout; SHI1170942 Victory Track; SHI 1170627 Wiggins Track. Jim Smith 2010.
(ii) Heritage Review 2016 - address updated, Aboriginal statement added (SR/Oct2016)

Aboriginal Heritage: The Blue Mountains Local Government Area is within the Country of the Darug and Gundungurra peoples and Blue Mountains City Council respects their cultural heritage and deep ongoing connection to this Country.
This inventory sheet documents the European occupation of the site only, and the heritage significance of the place in this context (assessed against the heritage criteria set by the NSW Heritage Council).
This does not therefore, represent a complete history of the place, or represent the perspectives of Darug and Gundungurra Traditional Owners in relation to the colonial impacts on this site. Consultation with Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal stakeholders is required, before Aboriginal Cultural Heritage that may be associated with this place, can be recorded.

Data Entry: Date First Entered: 04/09/2010 Date Updated: 15/02/2017 Status: Basic

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