

HERITAGE PLACE

NAME OF PLACE: WANNON LEA GARDEN & ORCHARD

ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE: RMB 8720 Morgiana Road WANNON

STUDY NUMBER: 006

HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:

PRECINCT: Wannon

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA: Southern Grampians Shire

ALLOTMENT: 1 & 2 **SECTION:** VIII (8) **PARISH:** PARISH OF BOCHARA

ACCESS DESCRIPTION:

CFA 431E8; Vicroads 72 F4; located on the west side of the Morgiana Road about 1.2kms south of its intersection with the Glenelg Highway and adjacent to the Wannon Falls Reserve.

SIGNIFICANCE RATING: Local



Wannonlea, Morgiana Rd, Wannon

Image Date: 10/04/02

EXTENT OF LISTING:

To the extent of: 1. All of the garden, the orchard and the house (excluding the interiors) and all of the plantings in the garden and the orchard, including all of the land in allotments 1 and 2 of section VIII (8) in the Parish of Bochara, now known as Wannon Lea.

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PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

Wannon Lea garden and orchard surrounds a typical late 19th century vernacular weatherboard farmhouse. The house is sited towards the road, turning its back to any views to the valley of the Wannon River. The garden and orchard, while overgrown, are excellent examples of domestic landscaping. The house is approached picturesquely by a curved drive, with a turning circle enclosing a bed in front of the house. Along the drive are massed exotic shrubs, including privet, agapanthus, cotoneaster, with strategically placed larger garden specimens such as Canary Island palm. Separated from the drive by a post and wire fence with triangular rail cap, is a small park of conifers, including *Araucaria* sp, *Cupressus macrocarpa* and *Cupressus macrocarpa aurea*. Perennial herbaceous borders with ornamental shrubs including camellia varieties flank the house on the south side. Paths and gates are marked by specimens of *Cupressus sempervirens* 'stricta'. The rear garden is flanked by a coprosma hedge and buckthorn on the south side. The rear garden contains many fruit trees, which provides continuity with the extensive orchard laid out on the north side of the house block. At the end of the garden stand a large olive tree and peppercorn, with a Tagasaste and prickly pear nearby. In the home paddock to the south of the homestead stand a number of sheds, with the whole protected by a windbreak of *Pinus radiata*. The orchard is laid out in a practical grid with the trees approximately 4.0m apart. The orchard retains many significant fruit trees including some relatively rare specimens such as a blood orange, two persimmons, pomegranates, and an osage orange. The substantial number and range of more common fruit varieties is also significant.

A timber and iron wool shed is located approximately 750 metres to the north, adjacent to the Thomas Clark viewing area, overlooking the Wannon Falls. It is in fair condition.

HISTORY:

When Lindsay Clark prepared his preliminary survey of the Parish of Bochara in the early 1850s, he noted that the land which would become Wannon Lea was "open land of good quality" and he noted a track from the road between Hamilton and Coleraine leading south to the Morgiana crossing of the Grange Burn just before it joins the Wannon River. The track passed over the site of the present house. The land was originally purchased by John Quigley of the Wannon Inn, on 27 June 1860. It may have been purchased subsequently by William Learmonth and Stephen G Henty who owned the adjacent Bongmire run from July 1857 and who purchased many of the surrounding allotments. However, it is more likely that the land formed part of nearby Bochara. The woolshed in the north-east corner of allotment 1 of Section 8 was associated with the Bochara run which was owned from March 1859 by George Younger (B&K, 176-7; Clayton, pers. comm., 20/11/02). In 1900 Bochara was owned by the Trangmar family which proceeded to sub-divide it, the sale being "the first sign of the flood of subdivisions [which] was the beginning of the break-up" of the great pastoral estates around Hamilton (Garden, 159). The present owner, who grew up in the house, recalls that Wannon Lea was one of the last blocks to be sold and was not purchased by the Freeman family until 1910 (Clayton, pers. comm. 20/11/02). One of the Bochara woolsheds survives at the north-eastern corner of the property and is important because the integrity of the other, larger woolshed close to the Bochara homestead has since been lost. It is presumed that the Freeman family continued to use the wool shed as did the Clayton family subsequently.

The Freemans ran both a mail-order nursery business which specialised in pelargoniums and geraniums and a commercial orchard (Clayton, pers. comm. 20/11.02). Their fruit was sold at a stall on the Glenelg Highway and possibly directly in Hamilton. At its height, the orchard extended from the Morgiana Road to the edge of the valley of the Wannon River. No other example of a mail order nursery business at this time is known in Victoria (Cuffley, pers. comm. 17/7/03). It was made possible by the construction of the railway and a station at Wannon in the late 1800s. The Freemans sold to the Claytons, a neighbouring family present in the Wannon area at least since Thomas Clayton purchased the land now known as on Stony Point

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on the west side of the Morgiana Road immediately above the Morgiana crossing of the Grange Burn.

THEMATIC CONTEXT:

Theme 3 Developing Local, Regional and National Economies

3.5 Developing primary production

3.9 Farming for commercial profit

3.12 Feeding People

3.12.2 Developing sources of fresh local produce

Theme 8 Developing Australia's Cultural Life

8.12 Living in and around Australian homes

8.14 Living in the country and rural settlements

CONDITION:

The garden is overgrown, but retains many fine specimens of early 20th century plantings. If the whole of the paddock was not planted out, it appears that most of the orchard trees have survived although many are in poor condition. The woolshed is in fair condition.

INTEGRITY:

fair degree of inactness

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

What is significant?

The garden and orchard of Wannon Lea surround a typical early late nineteenth or early twentieth century weatherboard farmhouse. The garden is sited adjacent to the Morgiana Road, approximately 1.2km from the Glenelg Highway at Wannon. The garden and orchard are as unusual as the farmstead is vernacular. While overgrown, both garden and orchard are excellent examples of domestic landscaping. The house is approached by a curved drive, with a turning circle enclosing a bed in front of the house. Along the drive are massed exotic shrubs, including privet, agapanthus, cotoneaster, with strategically placed larger garden specimens such as Canary Island palm. Separated from the drive by a post and wire fence with triangular rail cap, is a small park of conifers, including *Araucaria bidwillii*, *Cupressus macrocarpa 'horizontalis'*, *Cupressus sempervirens* and *Cupressus macrocarpa aurea*. Perennial herbaceous borders with ornamental shrubs including camellias and roses flank the house on the south side. Paths and gates are marked by specimens of *Cupressus sempervirens 'stricta'*. The rear garden is flanked by a coprosma hedge and buckthorn on the south side. The rear garden contains many fruit trees, which provides continuity with the extensive orchard laid out on the north side of the house block. At the end of the garden stand a large olive tree and peppercorn, with a Tagasaste and prickly pear nearby. In the home paddock to the south of the homestead stand a number of sheds, with the whole protected by a windbreak of senescent *Pinus radiata*. The orchard is laid out in a practical grid with the trees approximately 4.0m apart. The orchard retains many significant fruit trees including some relatively rare specimens such as a blood orange, two persimmons, pomegranates, and an osage orange. The Freeman family established the property in 1910 and operated a mail-order nursery specialising in pelargoniums and geraniums as well as selling fruit from the orchard at a stall on the Glenelg Highway. The garden around the house has many unusual varieties of geranium and pelargonium planted throughout. The nursery and garden workings, presumably ephemeral, have since disappeared. The house, which has been altered, is of only complementary significance.

How is it significant?

Wannon Lea garden and orchard is of aesthetic and historical significance to the district of Wannon and the Southern Grampians Shire.

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Why is it significant?

The garden and orchard at Wannon Lea are of aesthetic significance because they represent an unusual example of large scale 'grand' landscape design applied to a modest domestic and commercial setting. The relationship of the garden design to the grand designs of many Western District mansions is evident in the picturesque curved drive, the use of massed plantings and exotic specimen plants, the conifer park, and the use of hedges to create separate zones, albeit on a piece of land not much larger than a suburban allotment. The traditionally pragmatic grid layout of the orchard provides another contrast.

The garden and orchard are of historical significance for their association with the Freeman family, as one of the few commercial orchards in the shire at any time, and for the early use of the mail order system. No other example of a mail order nursery business at this time is known in Victoria. It was made possible by the construction of the railway and a station at Wannon in the late 1800s. Of further historical significance is the collection of early, rare and highly unusual fruit trees and varieties of the more common fruit trees. The Osage oranges, Blood oranges, persimon and pomegranate are rare and suggest highly educated and successful plantmen and women.

COMPARISON:

161 Gash's Dried Fruit Farm, Mooree-Culla Road, Harrow
205 Albert Homestead Complex, Springfield Lane, Peshurst
227 Timber Cottage and Orchard (Former), Henty and Elliot Streets, Branxholme
232 Prestonholme, Strathkellar Road, Strathkellar

ASSESSED BY: tfh & aen

ASSESSMENT DATE: 20/11/2002

EXISTING LISTINGS:

HERITAGE STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Include in VHR Include in RNE Include in Local Planning Scheme

No Recommendations for Inclusions

REFERENCES:

Author	Title	Year	Page
Donald Garden	Hamilton, a Western District History	1984	var.
Norman Clayton	Personal Communication	20/11/02	2002
R V Billis and A S Kenyon	Pastoral Pioneers of Port Phillip	1974	var.