

HERITAGE PLACE

NAME OF PLACE: GRINGEGALGONA

ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE: Gringe Dip Road GRINGEGALGONA

STUDY NUMBER: 078

HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:

PRECINCT: outside

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA: Southern Grampians Shire

ALLOTMENT: Pt C/A **SECTION:** Gringe **PARISH:** PARISH OF GRINGEGALGONA
4 Estate

ACCESS DESCRIPTION:

CFA 388 E3; VicRoads 54 E8; Gringe Dip Road, near the intersection with Watts Road and the Melville Forest-Vasey Road about twenty kilometres south of Balmoral.

SIGNIFICANCE RATING: State



Gringegalgon Homestead, façade

Image Date: 2/12/02

EXTENT OF LISTING:

To the extent of: 1. All the house and outbuildings, the remains of the original homestead, Simon Cadden's grave, the works and major plantings of the garden and all of the land within the circular garden.

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PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

The homestead is a large two storey symmetrical sandstone house with a single storey timber verandah on three sides incorporating a simple scalloped timber valence. The bays windows at ground floor level at the front which are treated as balconies at the first floor. There are projecting wings on either side. The hall is large with engaged columns forming a screen behind which the main staircase rises. There is extensive early and restored decoration in the hall and principle rooms. The stone for the house is a type of hard, light pink sandstone quarried from Mount Melville in the Dundas Range nearby.

There have been modern extensions at the rear to create a new kitchen. Behind the house there is a detached wing, possibly a former kitchen/laundry, and beyond at some distance, a stables and coach house. All the buildings are aligned along a central axis, which is the diameter of a great circle enclosing the formal garden and yards. Gringegalgonna is an intriguing example of a homestead placed in a circular garden and related to the broader landscape. The overall park is bounded by a circular fence and, partly, by mature conifer plantings which act as a backdrop to the house. A curving drive rises from a creek crossing (now disused) and terminates in front of the house as a turning circle with three circular beds. The symmetrical house is on axis with Mount Melville, the source of the stone used in its construction. Key plantings reinforce this axis. The area to the front and side of the house included fruit trees. Behind the house, outbuildings are arranged along the same axis. That house and garden were to be seen as one is demonstrated by the oeil-de-boeuf detail in the gable over the front door. An oversize keystone represents the house within the circle—the villa in its landscape.

This is the most sophisticated of designs and yet its author is unknown. The quality and content of the Gringegalgonna garden plan suggest the hand of a professional designer, possibly Edward La Trobe Bateman, who had been active in the Western District in the previous few years. Most of the plantings at Gringegalgonna are typical of Bateman's work but they are also typical of the period generally. So too is the use of a terrace for siting a house. No connection has been discovered between Bateman and the owner, Robertson or the architect, W. T. Gore. It is the masterful use of geometry, both axes and shapes, which suggests Bateman so strongly at Gringegalgonna.

The remains of the original homestead and the grave of Simon Cadden are in the grounds, some distance from the house.

HISTORY:

Simeon Cadden first took up the Gringegalgonna squatting run, Portland Bay No. 59, in 1843 (also spelt Simon Caddon) when it consisted of nearly 60,000 acres and ran 16,000 sheep (Billis & Kenyon, 218). The original homestead survives as an archaeological site within the grounds of the present homestead. Cadden, who died in 1852, is buried near the present house. In 1854 the run passed to William Lewis and in April 1857 it was subdivided into Gringegalgonna and Moorlang, Lewis retaining Gringegalgonna until 1860. From 1860 William Hern Lewis and John Alfred Lewis owned it in partnership until 1862, when the run passed to Duncan Robertson, one of a large family of local squatters. It seems that it was he who engaged the Naracoorte, SA architect A. W. Gore to design the new homestead. Gore also designed the Robertson mansion Struan, at Naracoorte with which there are many similarities in the detailing. The foundation stone of the house states that Miss May Robertson laid it on 25 January 1873. There may have been some delay between the design of the house and its construction. There is a possibility that the sophisticated landscaping, which complements the house, may have been designed professionally and by Edward La Trobe Bateman, although he had left the colony by the end of the 1860s.

After World War One, much of the property was subdivided for soldier settlement. The land by this time was poor, and infested with rabbits, and those who settled there had difficulty making ends meet. Many soldiers who had taken up land had young families, who stayed in the townships of Balmoral and Coleraine until suitable accommodation was built on the blocks.

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The Robertson family sold to Mr C. C. L. Gaussen and The Lady Mary Gaussen in 1938. The house and garden, although further reduced by subdivision remain in that family's ownership today.

THEMATIC CONTEXT:

Theme 3: Developing local, regional and national economies

3.5 Developing primary production

3.5.1 Grazing stock

3.5.2 Breeding animals

3.5.3 Developing agricultural industries

Theme 5: Working

5.8 working on the land

CONDITION:

The house is in excellent condition and retain a high degree of integrity which has been complemented by recent restoration and redecoration. The outbuildings are in good or fair condition and also retain a high degree of integrity. The garden is in good condition but much of the planting has been lost through senescence and low water conditions.

The archaeological remains of the first homestead survive in the grounds. The grave of Simon Cadden is to the north of the house.

INTEGRITY:

Very high degree of intactness for house, outbuildings and garden

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

What is significant?

The present Gringegalgona homestead was built for Duncan Robertson, a successful Western District pastoralist who acquired the Gringegalgona pastoral run with about 40,000 acres in c1861. The house was built to replace the original homestead, the archaeological remains of which survive in the grounds. Simon Cadden, who is buried near the house established the run. The villa was the grand centrepiece of a squatting run, which even by the early twentieth century still comprised 28,000 acres of open woodland country, watered by dams, tanks and waterholes, and was stocked with 25,000 merino sheep. The grounds today comprise a small fraction of this area.

The house is a two-storey mansion built of sandstone quarried locally from the Dundas Range. It is the only large house known to have been built using this stone. It was begun in 1873 and the design has been attributed to a South Australian architect, W T Gore. The house is a vigorously formal expression of the Italianate style. It is raised up on a terrace and visually dominates the site. The formality of the house is one part of the overall axial design for the landscape and garden. Behind the house, the stables are also arranged along the same axis.

The overall park of Gringegalgona homestead is bounded by a circular fence and partly by mature conifer plantings that act as a backdrop to the house. The curving drive terminates in front of the house as a turning circle comprising of three circular beds. The house is on an axis with Mount Melville in the Dundas Range, visible in the distance. A Monterey Pine (*Pinus radiata*) the two Deodar Cedars, *Cedrus deodara* and a fine Hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*) reinforces this axis. The area to the front and side of the house once included fruit trees and some citrus survive.

The designer of the garden is not known. However, the house and garden were clearly to be seen as one, as

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demonstrated by the bulls eye detail in the gable over the front door. An oversize keystone possibly represents a house within a circle, arguably the Gringegalgon villa in its landscape.

The main hallway of the house has a comprehensive faux marble decorative scheme. The walls and columns have contrasting finishes, and the scheme has been restored to a high standard. The artist's name, W Robbic, is scratched into the plaster at the base of one of the columns.

To the south of the house is the site and archaeological remains of the original homestead, possibly built in the 1840s.

How is it significant?

Gringegalgon homestead is of architectural and aesthetic significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

Gringegalgon homestead is architecturally significant as an unusual expression of a Western District pastoralist's homestead. The design, a very formal and symmetrical expression of the Italianate style, is in contrast to the prevailing picturesque, asymmetrical Italianate homesteads of the Western District such as Wooriwyrite, or the picturesque Gothic style such as Narrapumelap. The use of the light coloured sandstone is very unusual, contrasting to the conventional bluestone used for the construction of large houses in the Western District. The heroic, romantic siting of the house, seeking to dominate the surrounding landscape with its strong axial layout, is in contrast to the picturesque siting and arrangement of homesteads like Caranballac or Kolor.

Gringegalgon homestead is aesthetically significant for its intact interior, particularly the main entrance hallway. The faux marbling decorative scheme is amongst the most extensive surviving schemes in Victoria. Survival of these schemes on any scale is rare. It is testimony to the artistry and skills of Victorian interior decorators, and to the value placed on aesthetic finishes, such as marbling and wood graining, to Victorian interior taste.

COMPARISON:

0151 Glenisla Homestead, Henty Highway, Glenisla

ASSESSED BY: tfh

ASSESSMENT DATE: 27-Oct-01

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
James Smith, ed	The Cyclopaedia of Victoria	1905	550
Lyll Harris with the Balmoral Historical Society	Welcome Back to Balmoral	1975	28
Pam Jellie	Gringegalgon Garden Conservation Management Plan	2002	
Peter Leake	Homesteads of Australia Felix	1973	88-92
R. V. Billis and A. S. Kenyon	Pastoral Pioneers of Port Phillip	1974	var.