

# HERITAGE PLACE

**NAME OF PLACE:** VIOLET CREEK HOMESTEAD COMPLEX

**ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE:** Hamilton-Dartmoor Road YULECART

**STUDY NUMBER:** 108

**HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:**

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**PRECINCT:** outside

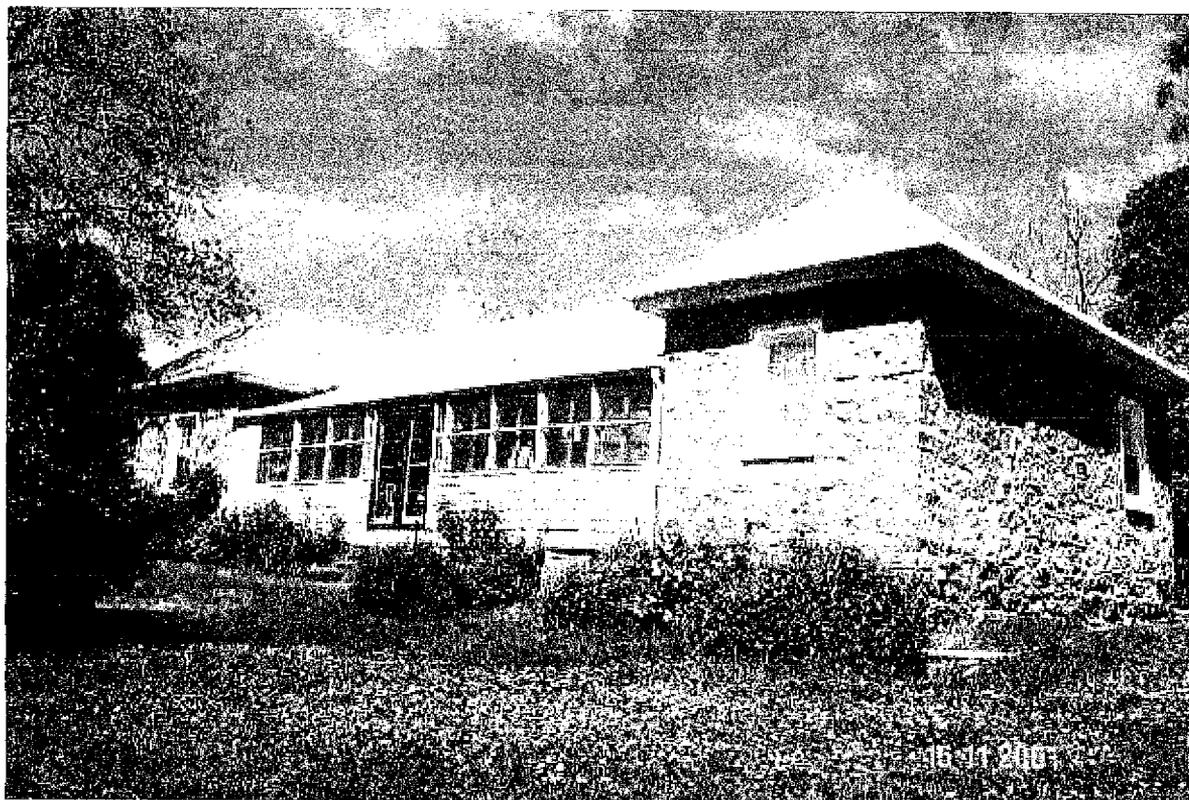
**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:** Southern Grampians Shire

**PARISH:** PARISH OF YULECART

**ACCESS DESCRIPTION:**

CFA 431F60; VicRoads 72 G5; located on the north side of the Hamilton-Dartmoor Road, overlooking Violet Creek, about 5kms west of Hamilton.

**SIGNIFICANCE RATING:** State



Violet Creek Homestead Complex, Hamilton - Dartmoor Road, Yulecart. Front elevation

**Image Date:** 15/11/01

**EXTENT OF LISTING:**

To the extent of: 1. All the buildings, including the interiors, and the garden and an area of 10,000sq metres centred on the house and bordered by Violet Creek.

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## **PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:**

Violet Creek Homestead is a complex of pre-1850 vernacular buildings, situated on a prominent site overlooking Violet Creek and facing towards Mount Napier and located on the north side of the Hamilton-Dartmoor Road at Yulecart. The main house, consisting of six rooms is built of bluestone and has a low pitched, hipped corrugated iron roof originally covered with shingles which survive beneath the iron. The roof is distinctive for its deep eaves. The house is symmetrical about the central front door and passage with three rooms off either side, those beside the passage opening into the two front rooms. There is a front verandah, the roof of which is contiguous with the main roof, set between projecting rooms on either side. The front door was replaced and the verandah was enclosed after the Second World War but its structure is intact. The timber windows of this section are small, 12-paned double hung sashes.

The interior of the main house, although modernised and redecorated, retains a significant amount of its original joinery, such as skirtings, doors, etc. These are particularly fine, are possibly cedar, and may have been imported as pre-fabricated pieces rather than have been made on-site. Most of the mantelpieces have been replaced. There are no plaster details, as would be expected at this time.

The original detached staff quarters and possibly the kitchen, now used as a bunkroom, were off set to the south of the main wing. Interestingly, this structure is on ground which is higher than the main house. The present kitchen and a modern dining room are located between and link the two wings. Also at the rear but behind the main house there is a former bakery (possibly the original kitchen) and a laundry.

Some distance from the main house and beyond the staff quarters, there is another small stone cottage or hut of one room now used for storage. It has been described as the first house but this is unlikely. It is much more likely to have been more staff quarters. It has a central front door and two windows in the front elevation and a large chimney at the southern end. It has a simple hipped roof now covered in corrugated iron with shingles underneath. This vernacular structure also appears to date from the earliest times because the windows appear to have had shutters or casements rather than glazed sashes. The interior is only roughly finished.

Little appears to remain of the original garden although there are several mature trees, particularly cypresses and pines. It is clear that the house addressed the nearby creek which can be seen, on axis, past the gate in the garden fence. It may be that the creek was planted with exotics to improve this view. There are no other significant plantings.

## **HISTORY:**

The Violet Creek squatting run licence, No. 84 in the Portland Bay district, was taken up by Angus Cameron in 1843 (B&K, 295). At that time it comprised 9,600 acres, had 8,000 head of cattle and 4,000 sheep. It was located on the bank of Violet Creek, a tributary of the Grange Burn, about 5 miles [8 kilometres] west of Hamilton. In the later 1840s it was held as a partnership between Angus and Donald Cameron. From 1857, the executors of Donald Cameron held the licence. It was cancelled in 1871. It seems that from its scale, materials, forms and detailing that the homestead and its associated outbuildings all date from before 1857 and probably from before 1851. The Violet Creek pre-emptive right was issued to A. and D. Cameron.

Violet Creek is of interest historically because it represents the end of the first stage of squatting around Hamilton and was an important run belonging to the extensive and influential Cameron clan. Don Garden writes, "During 1843 the last major stage of occupation of the Grange district took place. It is possible that the new settlers, like some of their predecessors, crowded onto land which earlier stations had nominally occupied. The new runs in that year included Croxton (Donald Kennedy), Kanawalla (G. D. Lockhart), Narrawong (Rev J. M. Clow) and Violet Creek (Angus Cameron). In 1844 Gazette (William Hutton) was registered and in 1846 Lyne was taken up (G. W. Elms and A. D. Lang)" (Garden, 23). It seems likely that the homestead complex was built at this time.

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The Cameron families, which amalgamated into something of a clan in the Western District, are notoriously confusing. Paul de Serville states that Christina McGillvray who was born in Inverness about 1819 married Donald Cameron (de Serville, 463) but there is no registration of the marriage in Victoria. He states that she married a second time to Angus Cameron but, again, there is no registration of the marriage in Victoria. De Serville may have confused the wives of Archibald and Donald Cameron but there is other evidence. Donald Cameron (c1845-1875), "of Violet Creek and Arrandoovong", is buried in the Branxholme cemetery (VPI, Reg. No. 10050). He was the son of Donald Cameron and Christina, nee McGillvray, so his parents could have been married before reaching Melbourne or the Western District. Donald Cameron Senior had died in July, 1859 and was buried at Violet Creek (Garden, 68).

Don Garden, citing the Camerons' Lands Department run files, contemporary newspapers, Henderson's Early Families and Billis and Kenyon, writes "Donald Cameron held Violet Creek, Narrawong and Arrandoovong with Angus Cameron for the first half of the 1850s. He died in 1856, and the runs passed into the hands of his executors. These were his wife Christina (c1819-1881), who in fact held and ran them, and (just to confuse matters) two other men named Donald Cameron. To make matters even more confusing, Christina later married Archibald Cameron, one of the Morgiana Camerons. ... Donald Cameron moved to Morgiana, late 1840s until 1860, continued to hold an interest in Mt Sturgeon Plains. (There are four different Donald Camerons.) Archibald Cameron who was one of the Morgiana Camerons married Christina Cameron who was one of the Violet Creek, Narrawong and Arrandoovong Camerons" (Garden, 51-2).

Under the Land Act of 1862, the Camerons bought up Violet Creek, large parts of the Yulecart area and on the Western side of the Wannon River (Garden, 101). But they ran into trouble, financially. "Another family which ran into serious trouble was that of Christina Cameron, who held the Violet Creek, Narrawong and Arrandoovong runs. Mrs Cameron lived at Arrandoovong near Branxholme, and with her sons, notably John, ran the properties. They were severely hit by the 1862 and 1865 [Land] Acts. Virtually all their land was thrown open and Mrs Cameron widely used dummies. Within a few years, the family had purchased 148 allotments, regaining 15,161 acres out of 16,420 acres which they formerly held under lease. They now held 16,441 acres of freehold. However, the debt was a huge one, and in 1877, they were forced to sell off their stock and lease the properties. The Bank of Victoria took over control of their affairs, and when Mrs Cameron died in 1881 it took over the runs and sold everything off" (Garden, 104).

An inventory of Christina Cameron's property at the time of her death at Arrandoovong in 1881 describes the Violet Creek complex. It states that "the buildings and improvements on the Violet Creek Estate comprise a stone house of six rooms with iron roof, a stone kitchen and servants room detached, having an iron roof, a laundry built of stone with iron roof, mens hut also built of stone with shingle roof, a slab hut with iron roof, a three stall stable and loose box built of hardwood with shingle roof, a buggy shed of hardwood with iron roof, a calf shed, yard, sheepwash, dams, waterholes and fencing of top rail post and five wires, post and three rails and log and brush" (HHC, research notes). This is, for the most part, exactly what survives at Violet Creek today.

After the death of Christina Cameron, Violet Creek went through several hands and the typical process of subdivision began. In 1882, it was sold to James Trangmar, a Portland based businessman and pastoralist who had owned Bochara since the 1870s (Garden, 143). He died in 1888 and, in 1897, his widow subdivided Violet Creek, sold 2,000 acres as small dairying and agricultural blocks of 40 to 400 acres and offered the rest as pastoral country (Garden, 143). William Philip purchased 2,500 acres in 1898 (Halmarick, 212). "He sold "Violet Creek" 12 months later in August, 1899" (Horwood). "In 1907, 1,500 acres of Violet Creek were offered in blocks but were bought as a whole by J. A. Laidlaw of Caroon, Branxholme, and F. W. Stewart of Hamilton. What happened thereafter is not clear, but by 1912, the old homestead and 220 acres had been separated from the main run and were acquired by A. J. Simpson of Clifton. However, by the early 1920s the property known as Violet Creek contained 2,765 acres" (Garden, 162). About 1919, another member of the large Philip/Robertson clan, Thomas Robertson Philip purchased the property holding it until the late 1920s

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when he sold it for soldier settlement. He was the third child of the early pioneers, Thomas and Margaret Philip (Halmarick, 205). He lived at Violet Creek and never married. In 1940, Mr. L. J. S. McKellar purchased the homestead block together with 242 acres from the Estate of A. J. Simpson of "Clifton". His son Donald K. McKellar later repaired the old homestead and went to live there in 1949 where he and his family continue to reside" (Horwood). Donald McKellar was the Liberal member for Portland in the State Parliament for many decades.

Violet Creek is of interest architecturally because it is relatively little altered from its earliest condition. The fact that Christina Cameron and her family lived in the grander house, Arrandoovong, and that the family was stretched financially from the mid-1860s meant that little happened to Violet Creek before 1882. James Trangmar purchased the property as an investment, it seems, rather than as his principal residence and had died by 1888. His wife soon disposed of the land and the homestead block was much reduced to 242 acres, avoiding a major reconstruction during the Edwardian period. In the twentieth century, the sequence of short-term ownerships, decreasing (and yet increasing) land, and the fact that Thomas Robertson was not married, meant very little change to the original homestead complex. It may be that the detached kitchen wing was linked to the house quite early. The main changes appear to have been completed after the Second World War when a new kitchen was installed adjacent to the main wing, the verandah was enclosed and other modernisations occurred. The continuing McKellar period of ownership must be seen as the most important after the original Cameron period.

## **THEMATIC CONTEXT:**

Theme 3: Developing local, regional and national economies

3.5 Developing primary production

3.5.1 Grazing stock

Theme 5: Working

5.8 Working on the land

## **CONDITION:**

The condition of the main house is very good, with the only major change being the enclosure of the front verandah in the mid-20th century. There is some cracking in the stone walls, which requires attention.

## **INTEGRITY:**

The main house has a high degree of integrity although sections at the rear have been altered and a new section was added after WW2.

## **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:**

What is significant?

The Violet Creek Homestead Complex, Hamilton-Dartmoor Road, Yulecart, dates from 1843 when it was taken up by Angus Cameron. He was in partnership with a Donald Cameron in the later 1840s and the pre-emptive right was issued to them. The licence passed to the latter and was held by him until his death in 1857. His executors, principally his widow, Christina Cameron who lived nearby at Arrandoovong, owned and ran the property until her death in 1881. The Camerons were a large and significant 'clan' in the further Western District. It is very likely that the complex was constructed before 1851 and that it has changed very little since then. The main house is stone, symmetrically planned and vernacular in its construction. Although simple, it is substantial for the period. The house was clearly sited and constructed to take advantage of its setting. It retains all of its original form, planning and details and much of its original detail which is particularly fine. The only changes, and these are superficial apart from the introduction of a new dining room and kitchen, were undertaken by the McKellar family after the Second World War. This period is of interest because it was the home for the State member for Portland, Donald McKellar for many decades and it remains in that family's ownership. The house is in good condition. The various outbuildings retain less integrity and are in fair

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condition.

How is it significant?

The Violet Creek Homestead Complex is of historical, architectural significance to the State of Victoria and to the Southern Grampians Shire.

Why is it significant?

The Violet Creek Homestead Complex is of historical significance for its connections with the Cameron family, and for its later association with Donald McKellar MP. It is of architectural significance as a little altered and representative example of an 1840s squatting homestead complex.

## COMPARISON:

047 Winninburn, Hennen-Ferrier Road, Tarrenlea  
050 Kongbool Homestead Complex, Coleraine-Balmoral Road, Balmoral  
055 Mount Napier Homestead Complex, Harman's Road, Peshurst  
107 Morgiana Homestead Complex, Morgiana Road, Morgiana  
132 Kanawalla Homestead Complex, Henty Highway, Cavendish

**ASSESSED BY:** tfh & mgt

**ASSESSMENT DATE:**

15-Nov-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
Diana M Halmarick, comp.	Thos. Robertson & Sons "Mainstays of Our Earliest Days"	2000	205, 212
Don Garden	Hamilton: a Western District History	1984	var.
Lyell Horwood, ed.	From Ship to Sheep, the Philip family of Miga Lake and their descendants	1984	
Macbeth Genealogical Services	Pioneer Index Victoria 1836 - 1888	1998	
Paul de Serville	Pounds and Pedigrees	1991	463
R V Billis and A S Kenyon	Pastoral Pioneers of Port Phillip	1974	var.