

HERITAGE PLACE

NAME OF PLACE: ARDACHY HOMESTEAD COMPLEX

ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE: Dartmoor/Hamilton Rd BRANXHOLME

STUDY NUMBER: 116

HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:

OTHER NAME/S OF PLACE: SMOKY RIVER, NARRAWONG, MARRAWONG, YOLTO PONDS

PRECINCT: outside

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA: Southern Grampians Shire

PARISH: PARISH OF MURNDAL

ACCESS DESCRIPTION:

CFA 472 B8; VicRoads 72 E6; located on the south side of the Dartmoor/Hamilton Rd. 2.0kms west of the intersection with the Murndal Rd and about 8.0kms north-west of the township of Branxholme overlooking the headwaters of the Crawford River

SIGNIFICANCE RATING: Local



Ardachy Homestead Branxholme façade

Image Date: 09/04/02

EXTENT OF LISTING:

To the extent of: 1. All the ruins, garden, plantings and other works within the original homestead defined by the hawthorn hedge and along the drive, 2. the woolshed and associated works, and 3. the second house but excluding its interior and garden.

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PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

Ardachy, eight kilometres north-west of Branxholme, is located on the south-west side of the Dartmoor-Hamilton Road and approximately two kilometres west of its intersection with the Murchison Road. The homestead complex consists of the ruins of the original stone homestead with its cellar and a nearby underground tank, its immediate garden defined by the remnants of a hawthorn hedge, the drive which leads from the main gate, passes through the original homestead site and terminates at the second timber homestead and its associated structures. Beyond the latter there is a large timber woolshed, now clad with corrugated iron, with yards in a paddock at the top of the hill. The first house appears to have faced west, possibly over a body of water, with the orchard at the rear. The newer house, on the hill beyond the first faces north-east. There was a sheepwash associated with the swamp to the east of the homestead and across the Dartmoor-Hamilton Road and a sheep dip to the west but little if anything is said to survive of these works.

The original homestead was single storey with a cellar. Initially, it appears to have comprised four main rooms, two front rooms under a hipped roof and two under a skillion roof. The walls are built of coursed random rubble bluestone although some sections of wall also incorporate small hand-made bricks. The walls are plastered internally. The façade is asymmetrical in that the front door, while between two windows, is not central. The windows are surrounded by simple architraves. Brick chimneys may have been removed from the walls opposite the front windows. The walls have been whitewashed at some time. Wing walls indicate that there was a verandah across the façade. Footings suggest that the house was extended to the east, or rear, and to the south, or right side. Beyond the latter extension a domed and rendered brick access survives, in good condition, to an underground watertank. There is much collapsed building material and there are elm suckers in the ruins.

In what appears to be an orchard to the east of the original house, and probably at its rear, there are a walnut tree, a fig, two apples and three pears and a Pittosporum. Near the house, on either side of the drive are Robinias. Beyond the house there are a Norfolk Island Pine (*Aracaria heterophylla*), *Cupressus torulosa*, *Quercus robusta* and *Q. d.*, a bay laurel, and a peppercorn tree (*Schinus molle*).

The second house is a timber bungalow in form with weatherboard walls and half-timbered gables. The roof is corrugated iron. It has a typical early twentieth century plan with projecting rooms and an L-shaped verandah. The verandah is timber with simple timber brackets. The chimneys are pressed red brick with rendered and corniced tops. The windows are double-hung sashes. A new wide timber verandah, with detailing similar to the original, and a balustrade has been added at the side of the house, a side window has been enlarged and a chimney has been demolished. (An original bathroom window may also have been altered.) The interiors have not been inspected. The woolshed has not been inspected.

HISTORY:

SEE EXTRACT ON Ardachy FILE FROM THE Wimmera Mail Obituary of Walter Laidlaw

According to Billis and Kenyon, Ardachy, located eight kilometres north-west of Branxholme, was originally a 20,000 acres lease spanning the squatting runs Narrawong and Yolto Ponds, owned by James M. Clow and Charles C. Haslewood until 1845, and which was then sold to Duncan McIntyre (B&K, 1972, 166-7). However, in the 1972 edition, Kenyon's editors note some confusion over the tenure of C. C. Haslewood but with no change to the entry. There is also some typical confusion over the spelling of the name in official documents: as Narrawang, Warrowong, and Marrawong although only Narrawong and Yolto Ponds appear as a separate entries in Billis and Kenyon. Indeed, it seems that the original name for the run may have been Smoky River according to a licence dated 24th August 1843 naming Duncan McIntyre "of Ardachy ... upon the Crown Lands situate within the said District [of Portland Bay], and known as Smoky River". The ownership has also been challenged with the suggestion that the entry for Duncan McIntyre in Billis and Kenyon is, in fact, a composite of two people, and that James Maxwell Clow owned a property at Narrawong Swamp, near

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Dandenong, and not the Narrawong associated with Ardachy (HHC, Ardachy notes). James Maxwell Clow was the son of the Rev. James Clow who held the Corhanwarrabul run on Dandenong Creek (de Serville, 1991, 32 & 287). But, since the son was a Commissioner for Crown Lands in the Wimmera District which was largely settled from the Western District, it seems quite possible that he could hold land near Branhholme. Indeed, Duncan McIntyre worked for James Blair, Police Magistrate for Portland and Crown Land Commissioner for the Western District (B&K, 28).

Duncan McIntyre was born at Ardachy in Argyllshire, Scotland in 1814 and emigrated with a friend, arriving in Van Diemen's land in 1837 (HHC, Ardachy notes). Seeking opportunities in the Port Phillip District, he arrived at Geelong in 1840 and went to work for Thomas Rickett at Clunie, the run taken up by Blair. Rickett's insolvency, McIntyre's debt of back wages and an arrangement with another creditor, lead McIntyre to take up what became the Ardachy run, which he renamed after his birthplace. McIntyre was killed accidentally in a fall from his horse in 1854 leaving his wife, Miriam, nee Best, and five young children.

The Ardachy lease had been subdivided by Duncan McIntyre into two parts in September 1849, the eastern portion of 7,000 acres becoming known as Ardachy, carrying 7388 sheep. The western portion of 9 000 acres was known as Ardgarton or Yolto Ponds, carrying 6000 sheep. It is interesting to note that the run is not listed, or is incorrectly listed, in Ham's 'Map of Australia Felix' published in 1847 and 1849. While Yolto Ponds is noted as a place, but misspelled "Yo-ho" Pds, the only nearby numbers and names are for Thompson and Cameron at Arrandoovong (no. 61) and Wright and Montgomery (no. 62) who actually occupied Bamgamie (or Langi Willi) on the Mt. Emu Creek near Skipton.

In October 1853, George Coldham took over the pastoral lease of Ardachy. When he purchased Euremete in May 1856, he sold to Stephen G. Henty, who sold the property in May 1857 to John McKellar who, in turn, sold the property in January 1859 to George Urquhart. In January of 1860, John McKellar purchased back the leasehold of Ardachy, only to sell again to Henry James Neill in October 1862. In Bailliere's 1865 Gazetteer, Ardachy is described as 7,000 acres in area, able to graze 7,388 sheep, occupied by H. J. Neill, near the Arrandooyong Creek and one mile from Branhholme. In April 1870, the licence lapsed (B&K, 1974, 166-7). The Parish Plan published in 1880 gives J. McKellar as the holder of the Ardachy Pre-emptive Right of 320 acres who presumably was the owner at the time of cancellation.

Ardachy was put up for sale by auction in Melbourne in January 1871 but the auction notice does not say for whom. It does give a detailed description of the property which reads, in part, "The improvements on this property are of a very superior description, and comprise bluestone and brick house of 12 rooms, kitchen, sheds, stabling, coachhouse, large garden, tank (containing 25,000 gallons), woolshed, fitted with screw press; sheep wash, fitted with spouts, &c; in fact, all the requisites for a first class establishment" (HHC, Ardachy notes). It is not known if the sale proceeded but it may be when Angus Urquhart purchased Ardachy, supposedly for his two sons. And, although a woolshed is mentioned, the present woolshed may only date from the 1890s (Redfearn, pers. Comm., 12/8/02).

Nor is it known when, in this complicated chain of ownership, the homestead was built. Its small scale and simple detailing suggest that it was early, possibly as early as the 1840s and probably in 1849 when the Ardachy run was created, and that it was not enlarged because the ownership was remote and so transitory. In the later 19th century, Ardachy was owned and managed by members of the Laidlaw family, who were prominent in the business and social affairs of the Western District. In 1879, Walter Laidlaw was named in the Government Gazette as the owner and the land was described as 9,942 acres (de Serville, 1991, 477; Sutherland, 1888, Vol. II, 53). James Gordon Laidlaw and his brothers undertook the management of a number of runs further north, including Wootong Vale and Melville Forest which they leased from their father, Walter Laidlaw. In 1903 Ardachy was described as having a carrying capacity of about 12,300 sheep and 200 head of cattle (CofV, 546). The second house appears to have been built in 1910 during the ownership of the Laidlaw family.

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Like many large estates, Ardachy was further subdivided into 15 farms for Soldier Settlement after the Second World War. The subdivision in 1947 was the first in the Hamilton district and was considered a success, perhaps the most successful, because "the estate was divided up before the wool boom, which meant that each block was larger than those allotted in the 1950s. Also most of the men selected for settlements had lived in the district previously, most of them on farms" (HHC, Ardachy notes). The homestead block was allotted to Ann and Walter Redfean who owned it for forty years. Walter Redfean recalls that the original homestead was already in ruins in the 1940s and that stone was salvaged from it for other purposes (Redfean, pers. Comm., 12/8/02).

THEMATIC CONTEXT:

Theme 2: Peopling Australia
2.5 Promoting settlement

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 original stone house is in ruins but retains a high archaeological potential with many surviving early plantings. The later house is in good condition although recently altered by the addition of a verandah, the demolition of a chimney and some changed fenestration.

INTEGRITY:

The original homestead and garden are derelict and abandoned but retain a high degree of archaeological potential. The second house retains a good degree of integrity although altered and extended in 2001.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

What is significant?

The Ardachy Homestead Complex, eight kilometres north-west of Branxholme on the Dartmoor/Hamilton Road, consists of the ruins of the original homestead, its garden and associated works, a woolshed, and the second house. Ardachy has a complicated history of ownership but the most important early owner of the squatting lease was the Scottish immigrant, Duncan McIntyre who named the property after his birthplace when it was subdivided in 1849. He probably built the simple first portion of the original homestead in stone and brick, possibly in 1849 and established the garden. It is not known when and by whom the first house was extended but, in 1871, it was described as having twelve rooms and a large garden. The homestead is now in ruins but much planting survives from the original garden and along the drive. It retains a high degree of archaeological potential. There is a woolshed of uncertain date on top of the hill to south-west and a second house, built in 1910, to the south-east. No architect has been associated with the design of the first or second houses nor the woolshed. Important subsequent owners were John McKellar, who may have extended the first house and then the Laidlaw family who built the second house in 1910. Ardachy was the first estate to be sold in the Hamilton area after WW2 under the Soldier Settlement Scheme when the homestead block was allocated to Walter and Ann Redfean. The second house is in good condition and retains a reasonable degree of integrity.

How is it significant?

Ardachy Homestead Complex is of historical significance to the community of Branxholme and to the Southern Grampians Shire.

Why is it significant?

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Ardachy Homestead Complex is of historical significance firstly as one of the early squatting runs in the Shire, with surviving evidence in its ruins, garden and other works, and its woolshed and secondly as the first and probably most successful Soldier Settlement subdivision after the Second World War.

COMPARISON:

113 Audley Homestead, Branhholme-Byaduk Road, Branhholme
332 Mount Koroite Homestead, Glenelg Highway, Coleraine
042 Hilgay Homestead (Former), Cnr of Top & Middle Hilgay Road, Coleraine

ASSESSED BY: AEN & TFH

ASSESSMENT DATE:

09-Apr-02

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
Agnes V. Walter	Branholme 1843 - 1973	1973	41
Alexander Sutherland	Victoria and Its Metropolis, Vol IIA	1888	52
Hamilton History Centre	Ardachy Research Notes, including press clippings	various	
James Smith, ed	The Cyclopaedia of Victoria	1905	546
Paul de Serville	Pounds and Pedigrees	1991	various
R V Billis and A S Kenyon	Pastoral Pioneers of Port Phillip	1974	var.