

HERITAGE PLACE

NAME OF PLACE: KANAWALLA HOMESTEAD COMPLEX

ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE: Henty Highway CAVENDISH

STUDY NUMBER: 132

HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:

OTHER NAME/S OF PLACE: KANOWALLA, KANONALLA, KANOALLA

PRECINCT: outside

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA: Southern Grampians Shire

ALLOTMENT: 3B 4B; **SECTION:** 10, 15 **PARISH:** PARISH OF JERRYWAROOK
1ABC & 11
PT5;
PT4A

ACCESS DESCRIPTION:

CFA 431 D20, VicRoads 73 B4; located on the east side of the Henty Highway 12.0kms north of Hamilton on Fern Hill Creek. [Note this does not coincide with the "HS" on the W Owen Map, 1868.]

SIGNIFICANCE RATING: Local



Kanawalla, Hamilton, original homestead

Image Date: 11/01/03

EXTENT OF LISTING:

To the extent of: 1. All the original stone hut, all of the woolsheds, and all of the timber railway huts.

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PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

What appears to be the first building on Kanawalla on the pre-emptive right and certainly the oldest surviving is a single storey random rubble stone structure. It has a steeply pitched hipped roof, ledge and brace doors and multi-paned casement windows. There are two spaces, one used as a kitchen and the other, possibly converted, used as a coach house. Internally a shingle roof can be seen and there are vestiges of a whitewash finish throughout. The remains of a timber floor survive in the kitchen. There is a large chimney and open hearth. The stone beam of the hearth is broken. The building is now covered in ivy. It is in poor condition. There are more modern meat houses near the stone structure.

The woolshed is conventionally T-shaped in plan built with a further addition in one corner. It is built in coursed rock-faced bluestone and corrugated iron gable roofs and with a smaller building, possibly earlier, to one side. The addition, which was used as an office, is of interest. It has a 12-pane double hung sash window but, internally, it is lined with timber slabs and there are two other, smaller 12-paned double hung sashes on either side of the central window. This space is decorated with a whitewash tinted pale blue possibly by the addition of copper sulphate. The woolshed has been extensively modernised in its working areas, including major changes to the floor.

Some distance from the woolshed there is a row of timber huts. These appear to be pre-fabricated railway huts, possibly recycled after the construction of the Hamilton to Natimuk railway line. There are three identical horizontal drop slab huts with bluestone chimneys, probably used as men's quarters, and kitchen, with gable roofs of corrugated iron and weatherboard infill. These huts are in good to fair condition and retain a high degree of integrity. There is also a mid-twentieth century men's quarters which is timber framed and clad in asbestos cement sheeting with a corrugated iron gable roof. Nearby there are similar outbuildings. These buildings are in fair condition and retain a high degree of integrity.

HISTORY:

The squatting licence for Kanawalla, No. 211 in the Portland Bay district and located on the Wannon River about 12 kms north of Hamilton, was first taken up by George Duncan Lockhart in 1843. At that time it comprised 55,615 acres, nearly four times the average size of runs in the district, and held 20,000 sheep (B&K, 97, 225). According to Don Garden, this represented the "last major stage of occupation of the Grange district" (Garden, 23). In 1846 it was held by Lockhart and William Mercer. In 1851, they subdivided the run into Kanawalla, Mooralla and Plains (later known as Skene). From 1851, Kanawalla was held by Mercer alone. Mercer was Major William Drummond Mercer of the 6th Lancers, who had arrived in Van Diemen's Land in 1838. He died in August 1871 (B&K, 114)

Mercer sold the licence immediately in 1851 to William Skene. Skene lived for a while at Kanawalla "but from about the middle of the decade was at Plains which he re-named Warrumbeeche. By 1857 he had so risen in status in the town and the district that he was described as "a gentleman who deservedly commands the esteem of all classes of the community" (Garden, 51). In 1858, Skene sold Kanawalla to Thomas McKellar (1819-1900) who "was the most important of the new pastoralists to arrive in the district in the 1850s. He had migrated from Argyllshire, Scotland, to Port Phillip in 1848 to join a cousin on a station in the Wimmera. In 1849 he purchased the Hyde Park Station near Cavendish and in 1855 the nearby Kenilworth North. In 1858 he sold both to buy Kanawalla, the first of a number of properties he was to buy around Hamilton" (Garden, 51). The licence was cancelled in 1870.

The next major owner seems to have been a Thomas Austin but there is some confusion about exactly who and when this was. On the one hand, Bailliere's Victorian Gazetteer published in 1865, which promises "the most recent and accurate information" states that it was still owned by T. McKellar and as having 19,400 acres and running 19,400 sheep (Bailliere, 199). This information is repeated exactly in the 'Map of the County of Dundas' published by Hiscock in 1874 but that appears to have been borrowed from Bailliere. On the other

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hand Garden states that McKellar had disposed of the Kanawalla run to the Austin family soon after purchasing the old Grange Run from John Moffatt in 1860 (Garden, 71). Whether this was the great Thomas Austin of Barwon Park who died in 1871 or Thomas James Austin, his third child and first son, who was born in 1850 is not certain (VPI, Reg. No. 7769, 22320). Yet another source states that it was Thomas Austin's nephew, Albert Austin who "bought the Kanawalla estate from Thomas McKellar in 1862 in partnership with his brother Benjamin" (Caldwell, 62). Kanawalla can only have been a speculation for Albert Austin who held many other properties. "His most important and famous property was Wanganella, 46,000 acres twenty-five miles north-west of Deniliquin" (Caldwell, 62).

It was occupied under a ten-year lease by Reuben Crossley from 1874 and, from 1880, by his brother Edward Crossley. Reuben Glover Crossley was married to Mary Williamson in 1854 and they had a daughter Sarah Elizabeth, born in 1857 (VPI, Reg. No. 3620, 304). Edward and his wife Elizabeth Ann, nee Best, had two sons while living at Kanawalla in 1878 and 1880 (VPI, Reg. No. 7749, 21312). The lease was due to expire at the beginning of December 1883. It may be that because the owner was not permanently resident, the earlier homestead buildings were not replaced or substantially improved at this time of relative prosperity.

It seems to have been Thomas Austin Junior, perhaps acting as agent, who offered Kanawalla for sale in 1883 when the property was described as an eight roomed dwelling house, surrounded by garden with detached outhouses, substantial T-shaped woolshed with iron roof, hot water sheepwash, and a never failing supply of soft water (WA, 07/07/1883, 8). William Cockburn Messer, who was one of the largest non-resident proprietors of land in the Hamilton area, purchased Kanawalla at 3 pounds 10 shillings per acre (WA, 04/08/1883). The family, based in Perthshire, Scotland changed its name from Mercer to Messer and, in 1892, reverted to Mercer (de Serville, 526).

William Cockburn Messer was born in Edinburgh, the son of Adam Messer and Jane, nee Cockburn (de Serville, 480). De Serville does not link W. C. Messer (or Mercer) to the earlier owner, Major William Drummond Mercer. He had married Mary Stewart Anderson, the daughter of Alexander Anderson MD, some time before 1869 but the marriage was not registered in Victoria. They had four children, two girls and then two boys, whose births were registered at Hamilton between 1869 and 1873 (VPI, Reg. No. 22647, 9443, 9351 and 24385). There were at least three other children, one boy and two girls (de Serville, 480). It seems likely that they made their home at Bongmire or Springwood, rather than Nigretta or Kanawalla, since the latter homesteads were inferior in size and construction. A Mr. Barber, formerly of Golf Hill at Shelford, was the manager for W. C. Mercer and lived at Kanawalla.

In its 1888 notice to shearers, the Western District Sheepfarmers Association lists both Kanawalla and Springwood as occupied by Donald McLellan. There was a total of 40,000 sheep to be shorn and McLellan was offering the standard rate of 13 shillings per 100 sheep. Donald McLellan, a founding member of the Association, managed to find sufficient non-union shearers to complete the work (Garden, 146). He was a prominent pastoralist and race horse owner, one of the founders of the Hamilton Club, and a member of the Hamilton Council. According to Don Garden, he only leased Kanawalla from W. C. Messer (Garden, 120, 142).

A diary survives at Springwood, which was kept by Alexander Anderson Messer (or Mercer). The son of William Cockburn Messer and Mary Stewart Anderson, he was born at Hamilton in 1872 (VPI, Reg. No. 9351). The diary lists the roses in the garden at Kanawalla in 1899. At the "North Gate" they included: Grace Stirling, Souvenir de Eliza Vardon, Adam, Marie Van Hougette, A. K. Williams, Laffrano, Maman Cochet, Lord Tarquin, Niphistos, Madame Lombard, Homer, Prince Camil de Rohany, Belle Lebricht, Ma Capucine, and Lord Raglan. In the "Corner" and "In front of house" they were Crimson Rambler and Weroniensis. At the "South Gate" they included: Captain Christy, Coquette de blanche, Duke of Edinburgh, W. A. Richardson, Red Mason, Lungeot, Mrs. John Land, and The Bride. It may be that Alexander Mercer and his wife Marie, nee Ramsden, were living at Kanawalla and managing the property for W. C. Mercer's trustees.

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W. C. Mercer died in Scotland in 1889 but his executors continued to lease his runs, including Kanawalla, Nigretta and Springwood, during the 1890s. "In 1904 they had subdivided 2,000 acres of Kanawalla, reducing it to 14,500 acres and in 1907 they decided to sell all three properties" (Garden, 162). Kanawalla seemed ideal for closer settlement but according to the Hamilton Spectator, the government representatives allowed themselves to be outbid at the auction for what was thought to be a low price. Kanawalla station was acquired by the Hamilton auctioneer, John G. Stewart and his brother James. Part of the station was used to run sheep and about 2,000 acres was leased in small farms. Over the next few years they also sold off small portions.

In 1910, John Butler of Horsham purchased Kanawalla. Formerly residing of Glenisla, he then purchased land near Horsham, but sold that land to come to Hamilton to educate his family. He is said to have made substantial improvements to the property.

It is not known when the homestead at Kanawalla was begun. A large, rambling building, it has recently been demolished. Its detached stone kitchen, a vernacular building, does survive and, this may indeed be the original homestead. Its form, scale, materials, detailing and primitive construction strongly indicate a date before the early 1850s. Part of the structure was converted into a garage and an old buggy remains inside. The woolshed is of a later date and appears to have been built in the 1860s, possibly in stages. It is said to have been built by Stephens Brothers, builders. The most intriguing structures are what appear to be portable timber railway huts, re-used as men's quarters and as a cookhouse. These are located some distance from the woolshed. Their age is not certain but, if they are temporary railway structures, they may date from the construction of the Hamilton to Natimuk railway in the early twentieth century. There are also more modern structures, possibly from the Interwar period or, more likely, from immediately after the Second World War. They may have been built to accommodate shearers during the wool boom associated with the Korean War.

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 original stone building is in poor condition. The woolshed is in good to excellent condition. The wooden huts are in good to fair condition. The asbestos cement buildings are in fair condition.

INTEGRITY:

various

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

What is significant?

The Kanawalla squatting run, located on the Wannon River about 12 kms north of Hamilton, was taken up by George Duncan Lockhart in 1843 and was one of the largest in the Hamilton area. He formed a partnership with Major William Drummond Mercer and, in 1851, they subdivided it into the three great runs: Kanawalla, Mooralla and Plains (later known as Skene). The original stone hut which survives, appears to pre-date the subdivision. Mercer, an Overstraiter, kept the Kanawalla homestead section but sold immediately to William Skene, the first of a series of major pastoralists to own the property. In turn, he sold to Thomas McKellar who

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appears to have built the bluestone woolshed. It is large, T-shaped in plan and typical of the post-Selection period. Then Kanawalla was taken up by Austins connected with Thomas Austin of Barwon Park. The property was leased to the Crossley family for ten years until 1883. William Cockburn Messer (later Mercer), one of the largest landholders in the district, was the next owner. Messer lived at nearby Springwood, a more substantial house than at Kanawalla. At first managed for him by an employee, "Mr. Barber of Golf Hill", it seems that his son Alexander Mercer later lived at and managed Kanawalla. Early in the twentieth century, portable timber railway huts were relocated to Kanawalla to be used as men's quarters and a cookhouse. These were supplemented by new facilities after the Second World War. The homestead was demolished in 2001 but the original stone hut remains intact and in poor condition. It is a rare pre-1851 survivor and can be compared with the stone hut at Mount Napier homestead, the timber slab cottage at Kongbool homestead and the pisé section of Spring Vale homestead. The woolshed retains a good degree of integrity and is in excellent condition. The timber huts are substantially intact, with their adaptive alterations, and are in fair condition. No substantial plantings or gardens survive.

How is it significant?

Kanawalla Homestead Complex is of historical and architectural significance to the Southern Grampians Shire.

Why is it significant?

Kanawalla Homestead Complex is of historical significance for its very early date, its associations with several important pastoral families and especially for its association with William Cockburn Messer and his family. It is representative of pastoral properties managed for absentee landowners, where. It is of architectural significance for the surviving stone hut, a rare pre-1851 homestead building, its woolshed which is typical of the 1860s, and for the two types of men's quarters both representing expediency at times of pastoral prosperity.

COMPARISON:

050 Kongbool Homestead Complex, Coleraine-Balmoral Road, Balmoral 055 Mount Napier Homestead Complex, Harmans Road, Gazette

084 Spring Vale Homestead Complex, Hillview Road, Coojar

126 Springwood Homestead Complex, Brung Brungle Road, Wannon

131 Kenilworth Homestead Complex, Cavendish-Coleraine Road, Cavendish

ASSESSED BY: aen & tfh

ASSESSMENT DATE:

09-Dec-03

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	var.
Don Garden	Hamilton, A Western District History	1984	var.
F. F. Bailliere	Bailliere's Victorian Gazetteer and Road Guide	1865	199
Margaret Caldwell, in Douglas Pike, ed,	'Austin, Albert (1834-1916), Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol. 3	1979	61-2
R V Billis and A S Kenyon	Pastoral Pioneers of Port Phillip	1974	var.