

HERITAGE PLACE

NAME OF PLACE: YAT NAT HOMESTEAD COMPLEX

ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE: Yat Nat Road BALMORAL

STUDY NUMBER: 144

HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:

**OTHER NAME/S
OF PLACE:** YATNOT

PRECINCT: outside

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA: Southern Grampians Shire

PARISH: PARISH OF BALMORAL

ACCESS DESCRIPTION:

CFA 388 A3a; VicRoads 54 F5; located on the south side of the Yat Nat Road, about 3.5kms north-east of the township of Balmoral on the northern bank and overlooking the Glenelg River.

SIGNIFICANCE RATING: State



3642 Yat Nat Homestead Balmoral facade.jpg

Image Date: 1/12/02

EXTENT OF LISTING:

To the extent of: 1. All the homestead complex including the front wing of the homestead (but excluding the interiors), the stables, the other outbuildings and the woolshed, and an area of land around the homestead of 10,000 sq m.

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PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

The present Yat Nat homestead is perched on the top of a steep precipice looking east over the Glenelg River and state forest towards the Victoria Ranges. (The river was the boundary of the pre-emptive right of Yat Nat.) It is a large symmetrical single storey dwelling raised on a podium with a verandah on three sides. It is built of brick with a hipped roof covered in corrugated iron, originally slate, which was replaced in the 1930s. The small red bricks, which must have been fired on or near the site, are particularly fine and even. They are laid in alternating courses of headers and stretchers. Six brick steps lead from the garden to the central front door, which is conventional. There has been a fanlight, now replaced, above the front door. The front windows are typical twelve-paned double hung sashes. Flat arches in slightly contrasting brick top the windows and there are also shutter, possibly modern. The timber verandah is very plain, has lining boards under the roof and has an entrance to a cellar on the northern side in the hardwood floor.

The plan of the front section of the house is conventional with a central hall and four main rooms. The rear of the house has been extensively remodelled and extended with wings on either side in the 1970s to create a new entrance and living areas. A verandah very runs across the whole rear elevation. There is a modern tennis court at the southern end, possibly on the site of an earlier court. The house is set within a substantial and mature garden, mostly dating from the twentieth century.

At the rear of the homestead there are various outbuildings. The most significant are the stables and the woolshed, which appear to date from the earliest period of occupation. The former, a long building in two sections, is built of board and batten timbers with lattice above the lower front wall. The southern end, which is wider, may have been used as a coach house or buggy shed. The gables are filled in with weatherboard [split?] and corrugated iron. The stables retain much of the original stalls and other fittings. The stables have floors of red gum cobbles. There is a large corrugated iron shed behind the stables. The other outbuilding at the northern end of the main house is a late Victorian weatherboard structure, part of which was used as a laundry, with two entrances, a plain gabled roof and small windows. Also significant is the large drop slab woolshed comparable to that at Kout Narien, Harrow. It is fourteen bays or approximately 120 metres long. It has a main gabled roof covered by corrugated iron with contiguous skillions, which make its plan effectively square.

HISTORY:

According to Billis and Kenyon, Charles Sherratt (Sherrat or Sherret) and Alfred Betts took up the Yat Nat or Rocklands squatting run, No. 144 in the Portland Bay district, in July 1843 (B&K, 306). At the time it comprised 64,000 acres and ran 15,000 sheep and it was also called Rocklands. It was described as being on the Glenelg River adjoining Balmoral. Charles Sherratt had first come to the Glenelg with Norman Simson who took up the station Glenisla earlier in 1842. From July 1847 the partnership Heape, Grice and Sumner managed Yat Nat for Charles Sherratt. The surviving stables and woolshed almost certainly date from this early, pre-1851 period.

Notes compiled by Adam G. Turnbull, the son of Adam Turnbull the owner of Rocklands, apparently in 1936 or 1941, give some interesting background information about Sherratt. "When Charles Sherratt took up Rocklands its area was 64 000 acres, 26 000 sheep being the highest number recorded as being shorn on it. Sherratt was described as one of the most friendly and gentlemanly settlers. Glendinning folks were his especial friends. He brought a boat on to the river. This oak copper riveted boat was sunk in 1916 and not recovered. On one occasion, in the early fifties, a sports meeting was held at Rocklands (then Yat Nat). Horseracing, running, shooting and boating were the order of the day. In the evening some of the folk became very 'merry'. Mr. Sherratt was outing the boat with two ladies and some young fellows at the oars. These fellows got out of hand and rocked the boat, upsetting it. Mr. Sherratt did his best to get the ladies to land. Someone threw an oar out with the idea it would help him, but it struck him on the arm, breaking it. The ladies were saved but there was no doctor available and the arm was just roughly set. Mr. Sherratt rode to Melbourne and got it reset, but on returning to Rocklands the arm troubled him badly and he sold the station to Robert Officer. Mr. Sherratt

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went to Melbourne but his arm did not improve, so he sailed to England. The best medical aid available in the "Old Country" was obtained but all to no avail and he died as a result of the accident. So the first sports meeting in the district ended in tragedy" (Rogers, 4).

In June 1854, Robert Officer Jr. purchased the run. This is confirmed in the 1855 'Portland Bay District Stock Assessment Roll', which lists him at Vat Nat (sic) (Fawcett). Robert Officer was the son of Sir Robert Officer who had arrived at Port Phillip in 1842. With his brothers, Charles Myles and Suetonius, he managed Mount Talbot and Lingmer runs in their father's name. Mount Talbot, at Toolondo, was the focus of the family's extensive holdings, which eventually included properties in the Riverina. Mount Talbot is still owned and occupied by the Officer family, one of the few pastoral properties in Victoria to be in its original ownership.

Billis and Kenyon state that Robert Officer sold Yat Nat to James McColl in 1860 but McColl is not listed by them under his own name (B&K, 306). What appears to have happened is that the run was divided, roughly into one third and two thirds. Jack Rogers states that Sherratt "sold the portion now known as Rocklands to Robert Officer [and] James McColl purchased the balance now known as Yat Nat Station ... Originally Rocklands was known as Yat Nat, a head station. Robert Officer changed the name to Rocklands. He lived there until 1865, having previously sold Mount Talbot run to Charles Officer" (Rogers, 3). Curiously, McColl's brief posthumous entry in 'Victoria and Its Metropolis' states that he "was born in Scotland, and arrived in Victoria in the early days. He was manager for a time at Hexham Park, and in 1837 bought and settled on Yatnot [sic] station, where he lived until the time of his death in 1876" (Sutherland, Vol. 2, 66). However, he is not listed as the occupant of Yat Nat even in the 1847 Port Phillip Almanac. This is an extraordinary claim for its extremely early date and must be a mistake. It may be that James McColl was a manager on the southern section of the run. The next entry is for John Sutherland McColl, "son of the above". His is "the present proprietor of Yatnot, which is the place of his birth, was born in 1857, and has resided on the estate all his life, with the exception of about three years spent at the Hamilton College. The property consists of some 6700 acres of freehold and 1500 acres of leasehold. He owns 4600 sheep besides other stock" (ibid.) This is also curious because no son of that name or of that date is registered as born to James and Christina McColl and no son called John is included in their offspring on their gravestones in the Balmoral cemetery.

James McColl was born in Argyle, Scotland. The McColl family date back to Robert 6th Duke of Albany 1403 (Rogers, 3). He had married Christina Sutherland of Hexham in 1856 (VPI, Reg. No. 638). They had at least four daughters and two sons other than John Sutherland McColl. Sadly these two sons, both called James Allen, one born in 1863 and the other in 1867, died at the age of three and eleven in 1865 and 1879 respectively (VPI, Reg. No. 643 & 12935; 8149 & 3719). James Miles Riddell McColl died in 1876 at Yat Nat, Balmoral aged 52 (VPI, Reg. No., 11033). In the same year he was registered for taxation purposes as holding 4,686 acres in the County of Dundas (de Serville, 499). Christina McColl died at Balmoral in 1907 aged 83. Both James and Christina are buried in the Balmoral cemetery and their gravestones mention their children, Thomas, James, William, James and Christina but not John.

The Balmoral Parish plans of 1863 and 1865 shows the Yat Nat pre-emptive right going to James McColl by 1863. The plans show existing post and wire and brush fences with the smallest yards close to the Glenelg River. Apart from an area named as "Black Swamp" immediately to the north of the township of Balmoral and a smaller area of unnamed swamp north of that, the land is described as "Level country well grassed and lightly timbered". Bailliere's Gazetteer of 1868 gives two entries for Yat Nat. Firstly "Yatnat Home Station (Co. Dundas), on the Glenelg river, 2 miles N. of Balmoral; occupier, McColl, Jas.; area, 11,000 acres; grazing capability, 9625 sheep" (Bailliere, 440). Secondly "Yat-Nat Station (Wimmera District); occupier, Officer, R. J.; area, 41,000 acres; grazing capability, 35,875; is situated on the Glenelg river, near the township of Balmoral" (ibid.). This second property appears to be the major part of the sub-division of the original by 1860. Hiscock's Map of the County of Dundas, dated 1874, states that Yat Nat comprises 11,000 acres with 9,625 sheep and names James McColl as the owner. The present site appears not to have been a main homestead but rather an out-station for Rocklands (Harris, 2).

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From its scale, form, materials and detailing, it seems likely that the surviving brick section of the homestead dates from the McColl period and it is said to date from 1870 if not before (Seymour, pers. comm., 1/12/02). It is most likely to date from the purchase of the pre-emptive right and the security of tenure which it brought. No architect or builder has been associated with its design and construction although the quality of the work suggests that at least a very good builder was involved. It can be compared with another larger house, Stanmore on the outskirts of Balmoral, which was built some time after 1863.

Billis and Kenyon state that the Yat Nat licence transferred to Thomas Skene, MHR (1845-1910) and John McKellar (1850-1900) in May 1878 (B&K, 306). Both these men had significant connections with Western District pioneer squatters. Thomas Skene was the son of William Skene, of Kanawalla, later MLC (de Serville, 336-7). John McKellar was the son of Thomas McKellar, of Hyde Park, later MLC (de Serville, 315). In 1850, Thomas McKellar married Catherine McColl (1822-1904), a sister of James McColl, at the Presbyterian Church in Geelong (VPI, Reg. No. 2315). They had emigrated on the same ship, the Martin Luther (McKellar, in Forth, 105). Thomas and Christina named their son, born in 1865 Thomas McKellar McColl who died aged ten months.

Parts of the original Yat Nat run were purchased by the state government and subdivided for Soldier Settlement after the Second World War, apparently successfully (Harris, 9). The Seymour family purchased Yat Nat, comprising 9,363 acres, in 1907 for 22,500 pounds borrowed from the British and African Trust and Loan Co. Ltd.. Australian Farms Pty Ltd, a rather precarious company which had been set up by some Victorian pastoralists in 1913, with the purpose of settling Indian Army Officers on the land' also had an interest in Yat Nat (Halmarick, 139). Twenty-five Indian Army Officers were settled on blocks averaging 1,000 acres each. The system failed with only a quarter of the officers remaining on their blocks into the 1930s. The Seymour family still occupies Yat Nat.

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 main house including its extensions is in excellent condition.

The stables and woolshed are fair condition. The other outbuildings are in good condition.

INTEGRITY:

The stables and woolshed are significantly intact

The homestead is substantially intact to the extent of the main wing.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

What is significant?

Charles Sherratt (Sherratt or Sherret) and Alfred Betts took up the very large Yat Nat or Rocklands squatting run in July 1843. Its southern end was on the Glenelg River adjacent to Balmoral. From July 1847 the partnership Heape, Grice and Sumner managed Yat Nat for Charles Sherratt. The surviving board and batten stables and the drop slab woolshed almost certainly date from this early, pre-1851 period and are comparable with other such structures in the further Western District and southern Wimmera. In June 1854, Robert Officer Jr. purchased the run and eventually subdivided it, calling the northern two-thirds Rocklands and the southern third Yat Nat, the homestead possibly based around an existing out station overlooking the Glenelg. Robert Officer sold Yat

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Nat to James McColl in 1860 who may have managed the southern section of the run. James McColl had claimed the Yat Nat Pre-emptive Right by 1863 and it seems likely that the front wing of the present homestead was built about this time. It is a simple, conventional house with fine red brick masonry and the conventional three-sided verandah. It is positioned to take advantage of a splendid view across the Glenelg River. The house was much altered at the rear in 1970 but the front wing survives with a good degree of integrity and in excellent condition.

How is it significant?

Yat Nat Homestead Complex is of historical and architectural significance to the community of Balmoral, the Southern Grampians Shire and to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

Yat Nat Homestead Complex is of historical significance for its sequence of owners and as an example of a modest squatting run dating from the early period of settlement. It is of interest for its links with the significant Officer family and of special interest for its long ownership by the McColl family who, although modest, were well connected with other major families. The Complex is of architectural significance as an ensemble of traditional buildings sited in a cultural landscape but especially because of the very rare vernacular drop slab woolshed and the board and batten stables. The homestead, although altered and extended at the rear, contributes to this significance because it represents the position and aspirations of the McColl family after the turbulent period of the Land Selection Acts. The long term ownership of the Seymour family is also notable.

COMPARISON:

131 Kenilworth Homestead Outbuildings, Cavendish-Coleraine Road, Cavendish
142 Hyde Park, Hyde Park Road, Gatum
181 Stanmore, Harrow Road, Balmoral
132 Kanawalla Homestead Complex, Henty Highway, Cavendish
H307 Kout Norien Estate (woolshed), Harrow

ASSESSED BY: tfh

ASSESSMENT DATE:

10-Dec-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
Alexander Sutherland, ed.	Victoria and Its Metropolis, Vol. 2A	1888	66
Ian Mackellar, in Gordon Forth, gen. ed.	The Biographical Dictionary of the Western District of Victoria	1998	105
Jean G Kristiansen	Brother Officers on the Sheep's Back	1993	var.
Lyll Harris with the Balmoral Historical Society	Welcome Back to Balmoral	1975	var.
Paul de Serville	Pounds and Pedigrees	1991	484
R V Billis and A S Kenyon	Pastoral Pioneers of Port Phillip	1974	var.
Robert Seymour	personal communication	2002	
W. J. (Jack) Rogers	Balmoral	1967	5, 35