

# HERITAGE PLACE

**NAME OF PLACE:** GASH'S DRIED FRUIT FARM

**ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE:** Moree-Culla Road MOOREE

**STUDY NUMBER:** 161

**HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:**

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**PRECINCT:** outside

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:** Southern Grampians Shire

**ALLOTMENT:** 23A &  
23B

**PARISH:** PARISH OF MOOREE

**ACCESS DESCRIPTION:**

CFA 346 F22; VicRoads 54 A5; located off the south side of the Mooree-Culla Road about 2.0km east of the intersection with the Coleraine-Moree Road and 10.0km south-west of the township of Harrow.

**SIGNIFICANCE RATING:** Local



Gash's Dried Fruit Farm, Moree - Culla Road, Harrow. Fruit Packing Sheds

**Image Date:** 10/01/2002

**EXTENT OF LISTING:**

To the extent of: 1. All the buildings including the farmhouse, the fruit sheds, and the dehumidifier, the house garden and orchard, the main orchard area and the first farmhouse site.

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## **PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:**

Gash's Dried Fruit Farm is located 500 metres south of the Moree-Culla Road, about 2 kilometres east of the Moree Bridge. The complex comprises a timber framed, weatherboard and cement sheet single storeyed asymmetrical farm house; its garden and orchard at the front; various sheds involved in preparing (sorting and cleaning), drying, packing and storing fruit; the remnants of the commercial orchard and an earlier abandoned house site. Some equipment survives including the plant used for drying the fruit and the tracks used to guide the trays laden with fruit. The site also includes windbreaks and stands of mature Monterey Pine, *Pinus radiata*.

## **HISTORY:**

The land on which Gash's Dried Fruit Farm was established was originally part of the Clunie run (or possibly Mooree, later called Pigeon Ponds), with the site close to the 'post and wire fence' noted on the 1864 survey 'Special and Country Lands Parish of Mooree, County of Dundas'. The land (allotments 23A and 23B) was selected by Matthew Daly in November 1880 and March 1884. Catherine Daly, presumably Matthew Daly's wife, selected allotment 24 immediately to the west in May 1882.

According to Victoria & Riverina (115) the Gash family arrived in Victoria from London in 1851. Thomas Gash was a wheelwright and shortly after his arrival went to work in Portland. Then he worked on the property Ettrick. Leaving his wife and young son William there, he tried his hand unsuccessfully at the diggings. He opened his own business in Koroit and then, in 1863, the family moved to Harrow where he was in partnership with a Mr. Digney. Later he worked on the Clunie run, and then returned to his own business in Harrow. The Gash family selected land in the Harrow district and William Gash became a grazier, breeding sheep and growing wool. It was the next generation which established the dried fruit orchard and drying processing plant. The only other commercial orchard which has been identified in the Study area, is the Freeman nursery and orchard, Wannon Lea at Wannon which began in 1910. The Albert family who had a very large orchard on their property west of Penshurst may have operated on a commercial basis in the 1860s.

Maggie Gash was a daughter of the Gibsons of Sugarloaf, the selection immediately to the south of the Gash property. The house is approximately 70 years old. Mrs. Gash died about 4 years ago, in her 90s. The property is 317 acres now (McLure, pers. comm.). The remnants of an earlier house on the site are visible, overlooking the Glenelg valley. Only a few handmade bricks survive there.

The date of construction of the house is not certain but, from its form, detailing and materials it appears to date from the 1930s. Presumably the garden and house orchard were established at the same time. The sheds also appear to date from the same period with alterations and improvements undertaken in the 1960s, the dehumidifier being constructed of post WW2 cream bricks and with asbestos sheet lining. The linear disposition of the buildings and surviving equipment clearly demonstrate the process for drying fruit.

When it operated, the dried fruit farm had 17 acres of apricots and plums, which were dried on site. It lasted for at least 20 years, into the 1960s. Apricots were the principal fruit being processed, but other fruits and nuts were produced in smaller quantities. The farm operated for up to thirty years. It is said to have closed after competition from the irrigated Mildura region made it uncompetitive (McLure, pers. comm. 2002).

The fruit was delivered from the orchard by horse drawn cart to the preparation shed. From there it went in trays on a tram track to the drying shed, which was wood fired, and still retains its furnace, fan and pipes. After drying, the trays were conveyed by another tram track to the packing shed, in preparation for dispatch.

## **THEMATIC CONTEXT:**

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Theme 3: Developing local, regional and national economies

3.5 Developing primary production

3.5.3 Developing agricultural industries

3.9 farming for commercial profit

3.10 Integrating people into the cash economy

3.10.3 Encouraging fringe and alternative businesses

3.12 Feeding people

3.12.4 Preserving food and beverages

3.17 Inventing devices

Theme 5: Working

5.8 Working on the land

## **CONDITION:**

The farmhouse and sheds are in fair condition. Much of the processing equipment appears to have been removed although the dehumidifier and sections of tram track survive.

## **INTEGRITY:**

Good degree of integrity for the buildings and equipment but most of the commercial orchard has been pulled out.

## **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:**

What is significant?

Gash's Dried Fruit Farm at Moree is a complex consisting of a 1930s homestead, with house garden and orchard, the remains of a once extensive commercial orchard, an early house site, and a group of buildings associated with the commercial processing of dried fruit, including the preparation, drying, packing and storage sheds. The homestead and house surrounds are simple and representative of homestead complexes of the period. The fruit processing complex is unusual, being the only known example in the Southern Grampians Shire. The buildings appear to have been developed in situ to accommodate the drying process. While much equipment has been removed, a dehumidifier and sections of tram track remain intact.

How is it significant?

Gash's Dried Fruit Farm is of historical and scientific significance to the community of Harrow and the Southern Grampians Shire.

Why is it significant?

Gash's Dried Fruit Farm is of historical significance as an example of alternative agricultural production in the Shire, prior to the emergence of the Sunraysia district as the dominant producer of dried fruits in Victoria. It is of scientific significance for the ingenuity it demonstrates in its simple but effective processing system.

## **COMPARISON:**

006 Wannan Lea, Morgiana Road, Wannan (orchard)

245 Albert Homestead Complex, Springfield Lane, Penshurst

No other examples of such a fruit drying process at this scale have been identified in the Shire. The farm could perhaps be compared with other peripheral agricultural industries such as flax farming around Strathkellar.

**ASSESSED BY:** tfh & mgt

**ASSESSMENT DATE:**

10/01/2002

**EXISTING LISTINGS:**

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## HERITAGE STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS:

**Include in VHR**  **Include in RNE**  **Include in Local Planning Scheme**

**No Recommendations for Inclusions**

## REFERENCES:

Author	Title	Year	Page
Philip McClure	Victoria and Riverina, a Biographical Record	1933	115
	Personal Communication	2002	