

# HERITAGE PLACE

**NAME OF PLACE:** TIMBER KILN AND SAWMILL SITE (FORMER)

**ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE:** Railway Street BALMORAL

**STUDY NUMBER:** 172

**HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:**

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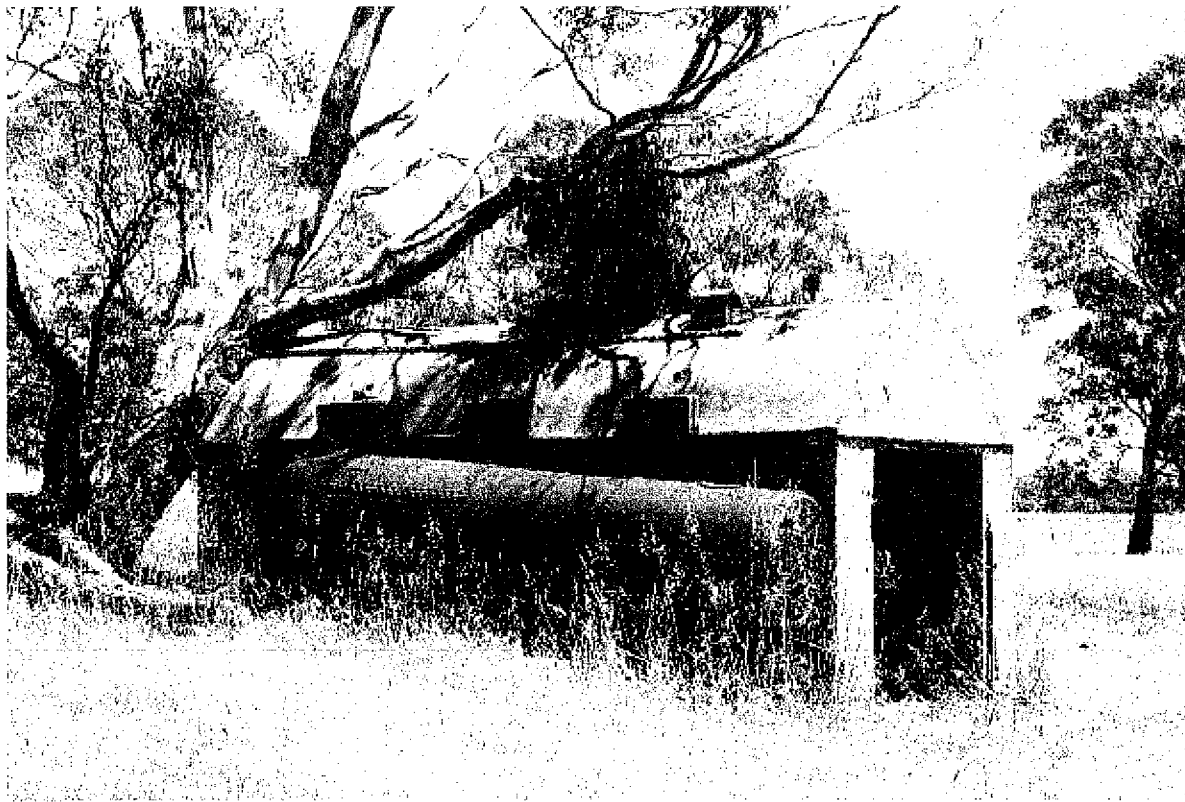
**PRECINCT:** Balmoral

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:** Southern Grampians Shire

**ACCESS DESCRIPTION:**

CFA388JB2; VicRoads 227S1; located in the railway reserve, on the west side of the railway line (now removed) to the south-east of the station (now demolished)

**SIGNIFICANCE RATING:** Local



Timber Kiln and Boiler, Railway Street, Balmoral

**Image Date:** 30/11/02

**EXTENT OF LISTING:**

To the extent of: 1. All the kiln, the boiler, the water [if surviving], the concrete footings and an area of 1000 sq. metres around the works.

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## **PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:**

The kiln is a mass concrete structure approximately 3.0m by 10.0m in plan with a segmental arched roof. The concrete betrays the 12 inch shuttering used in construction. It is not certain if the concrete was poured in beds. The front has a large opening for doors, now missing, the lintel of which is timber. There are vents in the roof and other openings. The side walls extend as three blocks on either side, with bolts cast into the concrete, but their purpose is not certain.

The boiler is made from riveted sheet metal and is typical in its horizontal form.

There are concrete footings, possibly for a tank stand, immediately in front of the kiln and at some distance there is a concrete trough.

## **HISTORY:**

Timber getting was an important industry from the earliest times in the northern parts of the Shire of Southern Grampians. Split and pit sawn timber soon gave way to machine saws driven first by steam, then diesel and petrol, and finally by electricity. The red gum of the forests was particularly prized for its durability but difficult to process.

'A railway linking the Wimmera with Portland was first proposed in 1889 but nothing was done for many years. Work was started on a line in 1912 from Hamilton to Cavendish to serve an area of Closer Settlement. After much investigation and political maneuvering it was decided to link the two lines through Balmoral. The extension to Balmoral was opened in 1919, but it was not until 19th November 1920 that the line was completed (Harris, 17).'

When the railway did arrive, there was both a great demand for sleepers in their construction and an easier method of transport for processed timber. Red gum blocks were also used for paving in Melbourne, particularly around tram tracks. Consequently, mills were closely associated with railway stations and sidings.

The first timber saw mill in the Balmoral township was near the pump hole on the Glenelg River. This was run for John Walter by Borsh and Evans. With the coming of the railway the saw mill was moved to the railway yards where it was operated by Messrs Pitts and Gordon for John 'Andy' Walter

According to local historian, Jack Rogers, Borsh and Evans started the first mill in Balmoral for John Walter at the Pump Hole in the Glenelg River during the early 1900s. Frasers cut timber on the same site near the railway line west of the railway stock yards. John Walter set up a second mill near the Vasey railway siding sometime between the opening of the railway in 1912 and 1914. Borsh and Evans later opened and operated a mill of their own at the Englefield railway siding. For many years a mill cut timber at the Gatum railway siding. Telangatuk East, Pigeon Ponds, Melville Forest, Tarrayoukyan, Mountain Dam, Glenisla, Mooralla and Cavendish all had mills at various times, in fact the whole district was dotted with mills (Rogers, 49).'

Messrs. Pitts and Gordon operated the Balmoral mill for John 'Andy' Walter at its new site. It was powered by a steam engine called 'The Lieutenant' originally owned by the Chaffey brothers of Mildura. It arrived in Balmoral as part of Frank Botterill's train of carriages behind 'Big Lizzie', the giant pedarail locomotive, now located at Red Cliffs. The Lieutenant's shrill whistle was a time signal for Balmoral residents for over thirty years. Jack Rowe purchased the saw mill business in 1952 at which time The Lieutenant was no longer used. A 120hp General Motors diesel engine replaced it. The kiln was used to dry precisely cut red gum sleepers for railway construction and blocks for paving roads in Melbourne. Andy Walters was one of the leading townsmen of Balmoral in the mid twentieth century. Jack Rowe kept the Balmoral mill going until 1965. Its closing marked the end of an era and the end of millable timber in the area.

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## THEMATIC CONTEXT:

Theme 3: Developing local, regional and national economies

3.4 Making forests into a saleable resource

3.8 Moving goods and people

3.8.5 Moving goods and people on land

3.8.6 Building and maintaining railways

3.8.7 Building and maintaining roads

3.11 Clearing vegetation

## CONDITION:

Both the kiln and the boiler are in fair condition.

## INTEGRITY:

poor integrity for kiln and boiler

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

What is significant?

The timber kiln located in the railway reserve near Station Street, Balmoral is a mass concrete structure approximately 3.0m by 10.0m in plan with a segmental arched roof. The boiler known as 'The Lieutenant' was originally owned by the Chaffey brothers of Mildura, and was hauled to Balmoral by 'Big Lizzie' a rail traction engine. The boiler is made from riveted sheet metal and is typical in its horizontal form. There are concrete footings, possibly for a tank stand, immediately in front of the kiln and at some distance there is a concrete trough. The plant was used to prepare precisely cut railway sleepers and blocks of red gum for use in Melbourne.

How is it significant?

The Balmoral timber kiln and sawmill are of historical significance to the township of Balmoral and to the Southern Grampians Shire.

Why is it significant?

The Balmoral timber kiln and sawmill are of historical significance as one of the few tangible sites remaining, for their association with a failed red gum drying experiment, for demonstrating aspects of a past and largely unsuccessful technology, and for connections with important local sawmillers and their workforce.

## COMPARISON:

226 Englefield Sawmill Hut (and School Site (Former)), Coleraine-Balmoral Road, Balmoral

314 Hynes Woolshed and Outbuildings, Hynes Road, Glenisla

323 Green Creek Road, Sawmill, Green Creek Road and Glenelg River Road, Victoria Valley

454 Rowe's Sawmill site, off Mill Lane, Whoolpoor

**ASSESSED BY:** tfh

**ASSESSMENT DATE:**

26-Jan-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
G McGaffin	The Wannon Shire Centenary 1872-1972 : A Brief History of the Shire of Wannon	1972	57

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Land Conservation Council

Historic Places Special Investigation South Western Victoria, Final 1997 83  
recommendations

Lyall Harris with the Balmoral  
Historical Society

Welcome Back to Balmoral

1975 var.