

# HERITAGE PLACE

**NAME OF PLACE:** ROCKLANDS ROAD FORD

**ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE:** Rocklands Road BALMORAL

**STUDY NUMBER:** 176

**HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:**

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**OTHER NAME/S  
OF PLACE:** WOODLANDS FORD

**PRECINCT:** Balmoral

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:** Southern Grampians Shire

**ACCESS DESCRIPTION:**

CFA 338J C4; VicRoads 227 U3; located immediately south of the bridge over the Glenelg River where Rocklands Road becomes Stirling Street and aligned with the unmade Sherritt Street.

**SIGNIFICANCE RATING:** Local



The Rocklands Road Ford in the Glenelg River on the Rocklands Road near Woodlands Homestead.

**Image Date:** 09/01/02

**EXTENT OF LISTING:**

To the extent of: 1. All the ford wall and an area of 10,000sqm around it including the whole of the Water Reserve.

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## **PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:**

A shallow wall across the Glenelg River which dams the water to form a dam and footpath. Wooden Posts mark the wall, and a steel cable is strung through the posts to form a hand rail or guide. The dam is clogged with water weeds.

## **HISTORY:**

The natural ford across the Glenelg river at this point was used from the earliest times by Overlanders moving from Melbourne to Adelaide. The ford was as important for moving goods and people in the opposite direction particularly after the discovery of gold in 1851. From that time it was used by miners moving to the Stawell, Ararat and diggings beyond, including the Chinese people who were landed at Robe to avoid the Victorian poll tax. It was also used by the South Australian government for the transport of gold back to Adelaide.

The first made ford was a track between waterholes with wooden poles to be used as guides during flood times. After a Mr. Sharkey from Hamilton almost drowned in September 1887, public agitation resulted in having a ford constructed. A gravel ford was constructed in 1888, and a safety fence of wooden posts and wire cable spanning the whole ford installed in 1891 after a prominent local James Cuzens drove his horse over the edge of the ford.

The wood and cable fence became the pedestrian crossing, while those not wishing to cross in this manner during flood time were able to be ferried across in a boat from Woodlands. The proximity of the Woodland's establishment to the ford and its access to Yat Nat and Rocklands was to its advantage. It may be that the Thomas Heape who started what became Woodlands may be the Heape of Heape, Grice & Sumner, the partnership which owned Yat Nat and Rocklands. In any case, the woolscour and fellmongery on the both banks of the river was well located to receive wool and sheepskins from the squatting runs on that far side from Balmoral. There was a wooden sheep bridge between Woodlands and the opposite bank.

The ford is aligned with the unmade street, Sherritt [sic] Street and the north east boundary of the water reserve included in the plan of the 'Township of Balmoral'.

The ford today is much altered, being a masonry structure which dams the water and still provides a crossing. The first road bridge nearby was not constructed until 1943.

## **THEMATIC CONTEXT:**

- 3. Developing local, regional and national economies
- 3.8 Moving goods and people
- 3.8.4 Making economic use of inland waterways
- 3.8.5 Moving goods and people on land
- 3.11 Altering the Environment
- 3.1.11 Regulating waterways
- 3.1.1.5 Establishing water supplies

Theme 4: Building settlements, towns and cities

Supplying urban services (power, transport, fire prevention, roads, water, light and sewerage)

## **CONDITION:**

poor

## **INTEGRITY:**

Fair degree of integrity, although much altered

## **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:**

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## What is significant?

The Rocklands Road ford is located across the Glenelg River below the Woodlands Homestead, on what was previously the main road between Adelaide and Melbourne, via Horsham. It is a low wall which has been constructed with masonry, and several wooden posts with metal cabling stretched through them to provide a guide across the river when it is in flood. The ford has been used since the late 1830s or early 1840s, and was often used by the 'Overlanders' travelling between Melbourne and Adelaide. The ford has close associations with the nearby homestead Woodlands, and the earlier trading station started by Thomas Heape. The Ford is in fair condition, and retains a fair degree of integrity.

## How is it significant?

The Rocklands Road Ford across the Glenelg River is of historic significance to the township of Balmoral and the Southern Grampians Shire.

## Why is it significant?

The Rocklands Road Ford across the Glenelg River on what was previously the main Adelaide-Melbourne Road is of historical significance for its associations with a number of important periods in the history of Balmoral and Victoria. The ford was used by the Overlanders between Adelaide and Melbourne in the earliest times of Victorian Pioneer exploration, and continued to be used by the people of Balmoral and surrounding areas until the 1940s when the current road bridge was built. It is of further significance for its associations with nearby Woodlands woolscour and homestead, and the Wood family. It is of further historical importance as it demonstrates a way of life and a mode of transport which no longer exists. The ford has been responsible for many events which are considered to be important and have been recorded in the folklore of Balmoral, such as the near death of Mr. Sharkey and James Cuzens at the ford in the 1880s and a number of 'incidents' which have occurred at the Ford in the past 160 years. It also represents the social pressures which were exerted on the local government of the day to improve road and transport in the district.

## COMPARISON:

No comparative examples in the study area

**ASSESSED BY:** TFH

**ASSESSMENT DATE:** 09-Jan-2202

## 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	
Lyell Harris with the Balmoral Historical Society	Welcome Back to Balmoral	1975	18