

HERITAGE PLACE

NAME OF PLACE: VICTORIA LAGOON GRAVES

ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE: Oakley's Road MOORALLA

STUDY NUMBER: 319

HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

The remains of the Victoria Lagoon homestead are located in a paddock about 200 metres south of Oakley's Road, and can be identified by the large, mature *Pinus radiata* trees which mark the site. The stone footings of the house and an outbuilding are clearly visible in the grass, together with fence posts and the outline of a driveway or track. The remnant garden consists of the *Pinus* trees, two *Populus* trees, and several patches of spring bulbs.

The graves are located about 250 metres north-east of the homestead, across a creek gully. They are sited within an enclosure approximately 3 metres square, bounded by a fence of galvanised tubular steel pipe. Within this fence, the concrete pillars of an earlier fence remain intact, although the railing has disappeared. A bronze plaque, erected in 1984, mounted on a large stone records the names of the deceased: Catherine Philip, born 1852; died 1854 Jane Philip, born 1851; died 1853.

HISTORY:

Peter Purton took up the original Victoria Lagoon squatting licence, Portland Bay No. 225 in 1845 when it comprised 20,000 acres and had 4,000 sheep. The exact site of his homestead is not known but there is no reason to suggest it was other than the present, now abandoned, site beside the creek. It is not included in the map of Australia Felix published by Thomas Ham in 1843 and republished in 1847.

By 1849 John Philip held the licence. He had married Margaret Robinson, a member of what was to become the large and influential pastoral partnership, Thomas Robertson and Sons. The Robertson-Philip family, with its various branches, became one of the most important and enduring dynasties in the Western District. John and Margaret had several children at Victoria Lagoon.

Two of the Philip children, Jane (1851-53) and Catherine (1852-54) died there and the graves survive across the creek from the homestead site. The position of the graves, at a distance from the homestead and across a stream of water yet still visible, may have had an allegorical significance beyond the obviously practical solution. The rugged Grampian ranges form a sublime backdrop. These simple graves can be compared with more sophisticated and deliberately picturesque examples of the siting of lone graves and small, private cemeteries. ~~The stream symbolises not only the River Styx but also crossing the River Jordan and rebirth.~~ The sublime aspects of the picturesque aesthetic were important for the way the Victorians dealt with death. The graves have been protected by six generations of the same family, i.e. the Bryants, Shilcocks, Oakleys and Todds. In the early 1980s the descendants of John and Margaret Philip put a stone marker on the graves.

John and Margaret Philip left Victoria Lagoon in 1859. The next licence John Philip held was for Miga Lake, from June 1867 onwards. From September 1872 he held the Spring Bank licence and, from September 1872 until 1880 he held the St Mary's Lake licence (B&K, 125). The family continued to have interests in the Cavendish area however. The son of John and Margaret Philip, John Philip who was born at 'Dundas' in 1855, i.e. while the family was at Victoria Lagoon, purchased Englefield (and Lower Crawford on the Crawford River) about 1901 (VPI, Reg. No. 2128; Halmarick, 209).

In January 1859, the licence passed to Thomas and Andrew Chirnside, who were the owners of the nearby Mokanger run, where there is a lone grave, and of many others. It seems likely that they installed a manager who would have occupied the old homestead. The land was not thrown open for selection until relatively late and its subdivision belongs more to the period of Closer Settlement.

The Parish of Woolhpooper Plan shows that allotment 20 (no section) comprising 320 acres with a link with

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the Victoria Lagoon water supply reserve was purchased by R. (Richard) Bryant in January 1894. He also purchased allotments 30 and 31, both about 320 acres, on the west side of the Henty Highway. Richard Bryant had married Margaret Nolan (or Nowlen) in 1867 (VPI, Reg. No. 1466). He may have been a Chirnside manager. They had four children when they lived in the Cavendish area, possibly at Victoria Lagoon: Richard Jonathan born in 1868; William Laurence, born in 1871; Mary, born 1874; and Ann, born in 1876 (PI, Reg. No. 14936, 22089, 1197, 1397). Mary died at the age of five (VPI, Reg. No. 7325). Their son, W L (William Lawrence) Bryant purchased the adjacent allotment 20D in 1914. The later history of the homestead is not known nor its date of demolition.

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

Theme 9: Marking the phases of life

9.7 Dying

9.7.1 Dealing with human remains

9.7.3 Remembering the dead

CONDITION:

The physical condition of the grave site is very good. The archaeological potential for the homestead site is very good.

INTEGRITY:

The homestead is an archaeological site with few above ground remains and some mature but senescent trees. The graves are intact and the modern gravestones and surrounding works are in good condition.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

What is significant?

The Victoria Lagoon squatting run, located approximately 20kms north-east of Cavendish on the edge of a natural water feature, was taken up by Peter Parton in 1845. It was then taken over by John and Margaret Philip, nee Robertson, members of a very large, important and enduring dynasty in the Western District. Two of their four children born at Victoria Lagoon, Jane (1851-53) and Catherine (1852-54) died there and the graves survive across the creek from the homestead site. The siting of the graves across a stream, distant and yet visible from the homestead, with the mountains as a backdrop is typical of the earliest pioneer period and was probably influenced by the picturesque aesthetic of which the parents would have been aware. Peter and Margaret Philip moved on to other larger properties in the families' ownership. Their son, John Philip Junior, returned to the area purchasing Englefield in 1901, which he expanded substantially. Managers probably occupied the Victoria Lagoon homestead for the new owners, Thomas and Andrew Chirnside, the owners of nearby Mokanger from 1859. The property was subdivided relatively late in the nineteenth century when Richard Bryant purchased it. It is not known when the homestead was abandoned or demolished. It is now an archaeological site.

How is it significant?

Victoria Lagoon is of historical significance to the Southern Grampians Shire.

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Why is it significant?

Victoria Lagoon is of historical significance for its associations with the important Philip and Robertson families and, later, with the Chirnside family. It is of particular historical significance as an example of the way the earliest pioneers dealt with death, especially the death of their children.

COMPARISON:

021 Mount Koroite Cemetery, Heffernan Lane off Cavendish-Coleraine Rd, Coleraine

078 Gringegalgona, Gringe Dip Road, Gringegalgona

327 Brie Brie Homestead Complex, Bundoran Road, Glenthompson

418 Mokanger (lone grave), Mokanger Road, Cavendish

427 Bushy Creek Cemetery, Bushy Creek Lane, Glenthompson

439 Lone Graves, Old Tannery Road, Cavendish

ASSESSED BY: TFH

ASSESSMENT DATE: 19/01/2004

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	48, 187- 201, 203, 205, 208, 211, 217, 251
Macbeth Genealogical Services	Pioneer Index Victoria 1836 - 1888	1998	
R V Billis and A S Kenyon	Pastoral Pioneers of Port Phillip	1974	45, 125, 127, 294