



# HERITAGE PLACE

**NAME OF PLACE:** BROOKSDALE HOMESTEAD COMPLEX

**ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE:** C. Fry's Road VICTORIA VALLEY

**STUDY NUMBER:** 320

**HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:**

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## **PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:**

The old homestead complex at Brooksdale is a six roomed timber house, with corrugated iron roof and brick chimneys, all in a ruinous condition.

Approximately 200 metres north of the homestead is a woolshed and workshop complex, in reasonably sound condition.

Adjacent to the woolshed is a circular depression in the ground, about 2 metres wide, which was the site of the homestead's homemade wool press.

Approximately 300 metres to the east of the old homestead is a substantial modern brick house, built in 1952-53, and designed by Warrnambool architects Walter and Aughty.

## **HISTORY:**

The land on which Brooksdale stands was first taken up as a part of the Victoria Valley Run. After the land was thrown open for selection in the nineteenth century, M. C. McIntyre selected the portion on which Brooksdale stands, and built the first homestead. The homestead is believed to be the first ordinary dwelling built in the Victoria Valley and, for many years, the local post office operated from a room in the house before it shifted to Old Sierra Park, the original Victoria Valley homestead (Pers. Comm., Fry, 2002). M. C. McIntyre was badly affected by liver fluke, which was prevalent throughout the Valley around the turn of the century. Elise Claburn states "Fluke was a great problem and caused the death of thousands of sheep. Some selectors left, defeated by it and farmers who had sheep to sell would not admit they were from the Valley or no one would put in a bid" (Claburn, 33). McIntyre was one of those who left; he went broke around 1900 due to liver fluke decimating his flock. The property was sold several times, until, in 1917, it was purchased by Charles Fry, the son of important pastoralists Peter and Annie (nee McNeill) Fry who selected Sierra Park in 1872 (Fry, pers. comm., 2002).

Betty Wooldridge, provides a detailed genealogy of the family of Peter and Annie Fry as follows: "Daniel and Sarah Fry arrived in Port Phillip from Bath, England, on 13 December 1850 with their 5 children, including Peter, aged 6. The family moved to the Geelong region for a few years, and Daniel eventually went to Narranderra in 1880 to take up land. He and his sons drove bullock teams to the Grampians." (Wooldridge, notes, 1986) Roderick and Ann McNeill arrived at Port Adelaide from the Isle of Skye on 12 September 1855, with their 6 children, including Annie, aged 6. The family lived at Robe, then Naracoorte for several years, before travelling to the Victoria Valley. Roderick found work on Mt Sturgeon station, and took up land when it was opened for selection. Initially they lived at Moora Moora at the head of the valley. Roderick died on 27th June 1871, and was buried on the land he selected in the Victoria Valley (Wooldridge, notes, 1986, but not in VPI).

Wooldridge states that Peter Fry (1844-1919) married Annie McNeill (1851-1926) on St Patrick's Day, 17th March 1870 but the marriage is register in 1874 (Wooldridge, notes, 1986, VPI, Reg. No. 870). They had 10 children, and lived at Sierra Park (now Old Sierra Park). Peter settled land at Victoria Valley in 1868, at which time the valley was bounded by Mt Sturgeon run to the south, Robertsons' Barra Head and Moora Moora in the north, Carter's at Glenisla in the west, and Yarram Yarram in the east. Peter was a staunch member of the Valley Presbyterian Church for many years. After Peter's death in 1919, Sierra Park was sold. Annie Fry moved into Dunkeld, and lived there with one of her daughters until she died in 1926.

Charles Henry Fry was the sixth child born to Peter and Annie Fry, in 1877. After leaving school he worked as a station hand on Mt Sturgeon and Devon Park stations. He married Helen Grace Sheehan in 1917, and

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then bought Brooksdale. It is the only property in Victoria Valley to remain in Fry hands".

Charles served on the Board of Management of the Presbyterian Church at Panyyabyr. He took a deep interest in church and family affairs, and was a successful primary producer. The new Brooksdale homestead was built in 1952-53, probably as a result of the wool boom, and was designed by Warrnambool architects, Walter and Aughty. Helen (Nellie) Fry died in 1973 aged 88, and Charles died in 1974 aged 96. Brooksdale is owned and operated by their son Bruce and his wife Verna.

## **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

## **CONDITION:**

The old homestead is in a ruinous condition.

The woolshed complex is in reasonable sound condition.

## **INTEGRITY:**

Old Brooksdale Homestead has high degree of integrity, although in ruinous condition. The newer Walter and Aughty Brooksdale Homestead has a high degree of integrity.

## **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:**

What is significant?

The Brooksdale homestead complex has two homesteads, the older timber homestead, dating from prior to 1890, and a newer homestead, which dates from 1952, and was designed by Warrnambool architects, Walter and Aughty. The old homestead was taken up as a selection by M. C. McIntyre, who built the homestead, and sold out in 1900 after disastrous losses of stock from Liver Fluke, a prevalent problem in sheep in the Victoria Valley around the turn of the century. The property eventually passed into the hands of Charles Fry, the son of important pastoral selectors, Peter and Annie Fry of nearby Sierra Park. It is said that the first Victoria Valley Post Office operated from the old homestead. Charles Fry and his descendants have had continuous ownership of the property since 1917. The old homestead is in ruinous condition, although retains a high degree of integrity.

How is it significant?

The old homestead complex at Brooksdale is of historical significance to the district of Victoria Valley as a Heritage Inventory Site.

Why is it significant?

The Brooksdale Homestead complex has historical significance for a variety of different reasons. It is of significance for the association with the important local pastoral family, the Fry's, who have been continual land owners in Victoria Valley since 1872, when Peter and Annie Fry selected Sierra Park. Of further historical significance is the changing fortunes of pastoralists in the 1950s following the wool boom, which allowed people to build larger, more substantial homes, often designed by architects, as is the new homestead at Brooksdale, designed by important local architects from Warrnambool, Walter and Aughty. The two

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homesteads should be viewed together as they illustrate a changing attitude and way of life. The homesteads both allow us to understand a previous way of life, and how many of the early selectors in this area lived (as shown in the old homestead).

**COMPARISON:**

322 Rosebank, Neates Road, Victoria Valley

**ASSESSED BY:** TFH

**ASSESSMENT DATE:** 7/06/2002

**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
Betty Wooldridge	The Peter and Annie Fry Family	1986	
Bruce Fry	Personal Communication 05 July, 2002	2002	