

HERITAGE PLACE

NAME OF PLACE: MELVILLE FOREST HOMESTEAD COMPLEX

ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE: Cavendish-Coleraine Road MELVILLE FOREST

STUDY NUMBER: 366

HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:

PRECINCT: outside

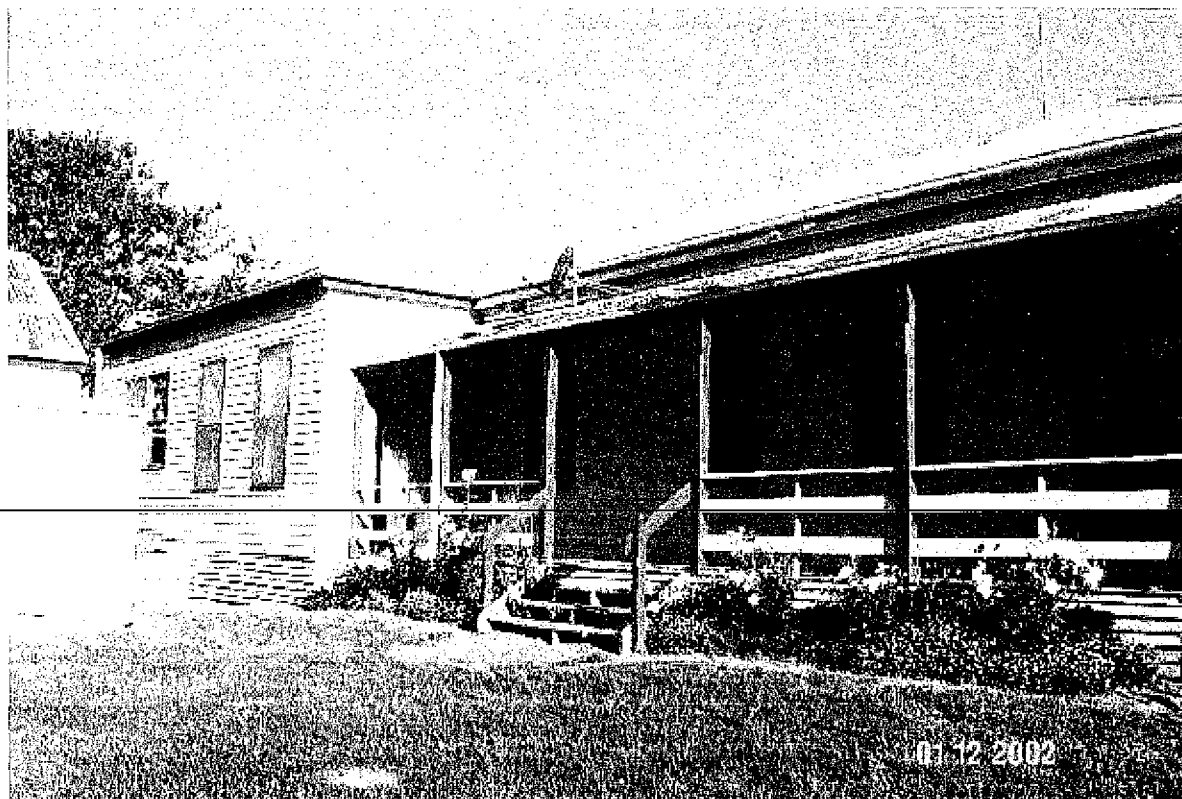
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA: Southern Grampians Shire

ALLOTMENT: 5 **SECTION:** XI (9) **PARISH:** PARISH OF CARRAK

ACCESS DESCRIPTION:

CFA 431A4; VicRoads 54E8; located north of the intersection of the Cavendish-Coleraine Road, overlooking the Hawkins Creek

SIGNIFICANCE RATING: Local



Melville Forest Homestead, Melville Forest, side elevation

Image Date: 1/12/2002

EXTENT OF LISTING:

To the extent of: 1. All the homestead but excluding its interiors, the stables, the blacksmith's shop, the woolshed, the men's quarters and the sheepwash, and an area of 10,000 square metres to include all the elements of the complex except the remote sheepwash.

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PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

The homestead complex includes the usual range of domestic and working structures. The single-storey weatherboard homestead appears to date from after 1858. It has been altered and extended including a major brick service wing, which dates from the late nineteenth century. A separate timber wing, probably an extension and said to include accommodation for staff, was demolished. There is a simple timber verandah on three sides. A cement rendered brick well or rainwater tank survives immediately adjacent to the house. The interiors of the house mostly date from the Interwar period.

The single storey stables and the nearby blacksmith's "shop" are timber framed and clad with corrugated iron. They survive substantially intact with their original fittings including horse stalls, tack shelves and saddle racks in the stables and the forge and bellows in the shop. Of special interest is the room at the back of the shop, occupied by a Chinese gardener, which is confirmed by old graffiti on the back of the door. The small room has a brick chimney but little else to provide any comfort.

The woolshed is clearly built in stages. The oldest section is constructed from timber in the round and adzed posts. Other timber members are pit sawn. The walls and roof are clad with corrugated iron. Part of the original timber shingle roof is exposed under the later, higher roof.

The timber men's quarters appear to date from the early twentieth century and are in two sections. The larger section includes a range of small rooms, the dining area and the kitchen. Another section includes separate rooms. The men's quarters have been converted into holiday accommodation, although with little alteration required.

Some distance from the homestead, on the south bank of the creek there is a sheep wash. The ruins strongly suggest that it was a hot-water wash and it probably dates from the 1870s.

HISTORY:

The squatting run, Melville Forest was subdivided from the earlier run, Konongwootong in October 1849 (B&K, 229). The Whyte brothers who were amongst the founders of the Coleraine district had owned the lease. W. Whyte held the licence to Melville Forest from October 1849 with James Whyte acting as "administrator" and from May 1850 it was held by John Whyte (B&K, 229). In March 1852, it passed to the partnership of Monro Cruickshank and in April 1858 to S. P. Hawkins (ibid). Hawkins was to be an important owner. He may have been the first to occupy the present site of the homestead, the earlier site being on the edge of the cliff, across a creek and overlooking the present complex.

The Carrak Parish Plan shows that S. P. Hawkins purchased allotment 5 of section 9 comprising 276 acres 0 roods and 25 perches but gives no date. Surrounding land was sold in 1862, in 1869, and in 1872. Since the creek, which flows through the property, is named Hawkins Creek it seems reasonable to presume that Hawkins was already in some form of occupation when the land was surveyed and subdivided. It was one of the largest allotments sold anywhere in the parish, the largest three being sold to Macpherson and Hawkins in 1872, Mars Buckley in 1874, D. Robertson in 1876. Other allotments, totalling 2,863 acres, were sold to Macpherson and Hawkins mostly in 1869 and some in 1872.

Samuel Proudfoot Hawkins was a surveyor who worked with Robert Russell, the first surveyor of Melbourne (B&K, 80). Garryowen notes in his memoirs that Hawkins had arrived in Port Phillip by 1841 (Finn, Vol 2, 890). The 1847 'Port Phillip Almanac and Directory' lists him as a publican probably when he ran the Porcupine Inn at Harcourt. His first squatting lease was Cashmere, on the Wando River, from 1849 to 1851. He acquired the lease to Melville Forest in April 1858 and held it until 1877. He obtained the lease of Wilderness, nearby, in the same year and held that until 1864. He also briefly held Spring Bank, originally part of Mary Vale, north of Harrow and Wando Vale B, to the west of Melville Forest.

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While Billis and Kenyon cite S. P. Hawkins as the final owner under his entry in Pastoral Pioneers of Port Phillip, under the entry for Melville Forest as a subdivision of Konongwootong (or Koonong Wootong) they cite "Buckley and Compton John Murray" from November 1877, and from November 1882, Walter Laidlaw. The Carrak Parish Plan shows that an M. Buckley, presumably Mars Buckley, purchased 320 acres just east of Melville Forest Homestead in 1874 and "Mars Buckley and Crumpton J. Nunn" purchased 270 acres just west. Mars Buckley was later connected with Narrapumelap at Wickliffe and the mansion that later became St Catherine's School, Toorak. The names of Buckley and Nunn were famous for the emporium, which the families had established during the gold rush years in Melbourne. It seems safe to presume that Melville Forest was only an investment for the men. No substantial developments at Melville Forest, except perhaps the extension of the woolshed, can be dated to their occupation.

The Melville Forest licence passed to Walter Laidlaw in 1882 (B&K, 229). The 1888 Notice to Shearers published by the Western District Sheepfarmers Association names Laidlaw Brothers as the occupants of the property. They are said to have 32,000 sheep for shearing and they are offering 13 shillings per hundred sheep shorn. The extensive Laidlaw family, with Walter Laidlaw at its head, was prominent in the business and social affairs of the Western District. As Laidlaw Brothers, they also owned Ardachy homestead to the west of Branxholme, which was a principal residence. James Gordon Laidlaw and his brothers undertook the management of a number of runs further north of Ardachy, including Skene, Wootong Vale and Melville Forest, which they leased from their father, Walter Laidlaw (De Serville, 407-8, 476). As with Buckley and Nunn, the Laidlaw family does not seem to have used Melville Forest as a principal residence although a substantial service wing appears to date from their occupation and the homestead may have been altered about the same time. They still owned Melville Forest in 1912 when the holding was listed as 18,000 acres (Fawcett, 2003).

The present owners are the Dufty family, formerly of Inverary, south-east of Branxholme.

THEMATIC CONTEXT:

Theme 3: Developing local, regional and national economies

3.5 Developing primary production

3.5.1 Grazing stock

Theme 5: Working

5.8 Working on the land

CONDITION:

Limited archaeological potential at the site of the original homestead and more at the site of the sheepwash. The extant buildings are all in good condition.

INTEGRITY:

Fair degree of integrity

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

What is significant?

Melville Forest Homestead complex is located north of the intersection of the Cavendish-Coleraine Road, overlooking Hawkins Creek. An early subdivision off the great Koonong Wootong run, its licence was first held by the members of the Whyte family, who were amongst the pioneers of the Coleraine area, and then by the partnership of Monro and Cruickshank. The first substantial permanent occupant was Samuel Proudfoot Hawkins from 1858 to 1877 who probably changed the homestead's position from the opposite cliff top to its present site across the creek near the woolshed and men's quarters. Melville Forest was one of several runs he

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held and probably the most important to him. The single storey timber homestead is unremarkable and has been altered and extended several times including in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The woolshed dates from the earliest period but has also been progressively extended and altered. The stables and blacksmith's shop probably date from the same period as the homestead. At the rear of the blacksmith's shop there is a room, which was occupied by a Chinese gardener, but little of the early, landscaping and garden survives. Some distance from the homestead complex, there are the remains of a hot-water sheep wash associated with the creek. Later owners, who appear to have held the property as an investment along with their other runs, include the famous partnership of Melbourne merchants, Buckley and Nunn from 1877 until 1882, and then the Laidlaw family until at least the First World War. The complex, which is in good condition, is now of relatively low integrity.

How is it significant?

Melville Forest Homestead complex is of historical and architectural significance to the Southern Grampians Shire.

Why is it significant?

Melville Forest Homestead complex is of historical significance for its early associations, especially with Samuel Proudfoot Hawkins, one of the earliest surveyors of Melbourne and a colleague of Robert Russell. In this sense it can be compared with The Grange run, occupied by the Wedge brothers and subsequently Capt. William Lonsdale, and in that sense represents the investment and retirement of early public officials. It has further important associations with the famous partnership of Buckley and Nunn then the influential Laidlaw family. The Melville Forest homestead complex is of architectural significance as a collection of traditional buildings with certain aspects of particular interest, including parts of the woolshed and the Chinese gardener's room.

COMPARISON:

116 Ardachy, Dartmoor-Hamilton Road, Branhholme
123 Balochile, Balochile Road, Konongwootong
034 Wilderness Homestead (original site), Wilderness Road, Gritjurk

ASSESSED BY: AEN & TEH

ASSESSMENT DATE:

01-Dec-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
Edmund Finn ("Garryowen")	The Chronicles of Early Melbourne	1888	890
J J Mouritz	Port Phillip Almanac and Directory for 1847	1847	93
James Smith, ed	The Cyclopaedia of Victoria	1905	546
Jenny Fawcett	1912 Western District (Large) Land Owners Index	2003	
R V Billis and A S Kenyon	Pastoral Pioneers of Port Phillip	1974	80, 229, 242