

# HERITAGE PLACE

**NAME OF PLACE:** MOKANGER HOMESTEAD COMPLEX

**ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE:** Mokanger Road CAVENDISH

**STUDY NUMBER:** 418

**HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:**

**OTHER NAME/S  
OF PLACE:** MARKANGAR

**PRECINCT:** outside

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:** Southern Grampians Shire

**PARISH:** PARISH OF MOKANGER

**ACCESS DESCRIPTION:**

CFA 432 A17; VicRoads 73 D2; located on the north side of Mokanger Road about 8.0kms east of the township of Cavendish and overlooking the Wannon River.

**SIGNIFICANCE RATING:** Local



Mokanger Homestead, Mokanger Road, Cavendish, c1910 section.

**Image Date:** 11/03/2003

**EXTENT OF LISTING:**

To the extent of: 1. All the homestead but excluding its interiors and all the stables and an area of 1,000 square metres sufficient to include both buildings as a curtilage.

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## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

The homestead appears to survive in two main sections, the earlier section being brick and the later timber. Both are single-storey and both have shallow pitched corrugated iron roofs. The painted brick section, which presumably was symmetrical about a central hall, has French doors opening onto a simple timber side verandah. This may have continued across the original façade. Its chimneys may have been rebuilt. The 1910 weatherboard addition is symmetrical about the front door. It has small polygonal bay windows under conventional projecting gables. The gables are half timbered with roughcast infill. The timber verandah is on three sides and repeats the outline of the bay windows in plan. The valance comprises simple segmental arches with vertical square-sectioned timber.

The stables are symmetrical and rectangular in plan with a simple hipped roof and a skillion extension at the rear. The bluestone masonry, although coursed, is relatively crude. The roof is now clad with corrugated iron although internally, the original shingles are clearly visible. The joinery of the stables is vernacular but fine, including hand-forge hinges, latches, etc. One internal ledge and brace door is particularly notable.

## HISTORY:

Edward Barnett took up the Mokanger run (then called Markanger), as Portland Bay No. 69 in 1841 when it comprised 44,000 acres, 500 cattle and 12,000 sheep (B&K, 244). "It has been said that Barnett came up the Wannan River by boat, exploring the river and swamps on the way, and finally decided to settle at 'Mokanger'—the name being taken from an aboriginal word meaning 'where the river runs into the swamp'" (MR&DHS, notes). Although the Port Phillip Directory of 1847 lists Barnett as a settler at "Grampians", Thomas and Andrew Chirnside, who were not listed anywhere, had purchased the lease from him in October 1846. They held it until 1876 when it was forfeited, an unusually long time for a lease to be in one ownership.

Thomas and Andrew Chirnside were two of the earliest, most important and most successful squatters in Victoria. "The name of Chirnside is one well-known throughout Australia as having been intimately connected with the pastoral interests of Victoria since the earliest days of settlement at Port Phillip, and that of Mr. Andrew Chirnside, of Werribee Park, Wyndham, stands in the foremost rank among the landed proprietors of the colony" (Sutherland, Vol 2, 171). ~~Before purchasing the Mokanger run they acquired Mount William and then Mount William Plains.~~ These three became the core of many known as "the Wannan runs" (B&K, 45). "Just before the gold rushes the brothers began acquiring land at Wyndham (Werribee). There Thomas settled, building a bluestone mansion and gaining freehold of 80,000 acres in the 1850s. Andrew made his base on 50,000 acres at Carranballac, near Skipton" (Hone, ADB, 3, 391). The second mansion built at Wyndham between 1873 to 1878 became known as Werribee Park, perhaps the grandest squatter's mansion in the colony. Although Mokanger was often visited, both brothers and Andrew's family lived permanently at Werribee Park from the early 1870s. A resident manager supervised Mokanger, which was a common practice.

The Chirnsides were notable for their employment of Aborigines. Thomas is said to be the first to employ Aborigines in the Wannan district (Hone, ADB, 3, 391). When few were seen at Mokanger, a special effort was made through intermediaries brought from Mount William. "They contacted about one dozen, whom Thomas treated as he had those at Mount William, and within a month there were twenty or so assisting at sheep washing" (MR&DHS, notes).

The first house to be built at Mokanger was a typical two-roomed cottage built by immigrant Scottish stonemasons. "In the 1840s Thomas Chirnside was a member of the Geelong and Portland Bay Immigration Society Committee" and, presumably, he could choose the best workers who arrived (Hone, ADB, 3, 392). Behind the cottage was a large detached bluestone kitchen with a scullery and storeroom, a cook's room and an outside dairy (MR&DHS, notes). The stone for the buildings was quarried on the site. Presumably the first woolshed was built at this early time. It has been suggested that the stables also date from the 1840s but may have been built in the 1850s. The Chirnsides were known to be excellent horsemen, importers and judges of

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stud stock (Kiddle, 87, 320). "In the latter 1840s they had a stallion 'Sir Peter', at stud at 'Mokanger', and it seems reasonable to suppose that the bluestone stables were built at the same time as the first house" (MR&DHS, notes). Thomas Chirnside won the Melbourne Cup with Haricot in 1870 (Sutherland, 171). As members of the Acclimatization Society they were also responsible for the introduction of exotic animals but there is no evidence that any were released at Mokanger (Kiddle, 87, 320).

A second house was built at Mokanger even before the purchase of the pre-emptive right of 640 acres. This may have been because the brothers stayed often and for long periods at Mokanger as their 'home station'. Then "Thomas arranged for weatherboard extensions to the house adding three large rooms and verandahs for Andrew and his wife and baby daughter to return to" (MR&DHS, notes). Andrew had gone back to Scotland in 1850, married and returned to Victoria by 1853. From 1855 the resident manager occupied the main house and the Chirnsides made Carranballac their home station. The scale, form and details of the brick section of the house suggest a very early date and it seems likely that much of the existing homestead dates from the earliest period (Gardner, pers. comm). The fate of the kitchen wing and the timber extensions is not known.

The original woolshed burnt down in the early 1860s and a new woolshed, now on the subdivided property South Mokanger, was built in 1864. It is similar to those on other Chirnside properties. During the 1860s the brothers purchased the pre-emptive rights to Mokanger and Kenilworth South along with much of the surrounding land opened up for selection. Eventually they held over 31,000 acres of freehold in the district. In 1885, Alexander McEdward, an absentee landlord, purchased Mokanger and Kenilworth South. Thomas's health was failing and he died at Werribee in 1887. Andrew died there in 1890. McEdward himself died at Kew in 1894 but his wife, Alexandrina owned the Mokanger property until 1900 when she died. "The AML&F Company took over the freehold land and continued to pay the rates. During that time parts of Mokanger and all of Kenilworth South were sold" (MR&DHS, notes).

John William and Alice Gardner purchased Mokanger in 1910 along with 6,200 acres, including the pre-emptive right, as land on both sides of the Mokanger Road. They extended the house again adding a bathroom, pantry, entrance hall, dining room and bay window (MR&DHS, notes). John Gardner died in 1941 and his three sons, Andrew, Hartley and Douglas formed a partnership until 1947 when Douglas sold his interest to his brothers. Hartley married in 1948 and built a new brick house across the road south of the homestead and, after subdivision, this became known as South Mokanger. This remains in the Gardner family. In 1976, Andrew sold the remaining portion of Mokanger to Anthony Baillieu, who further renovated and extended the house. He also rented the South Mokanger woolshed, the second woolshed on the property, which had been built in 1864. In 1983 Baillieu sold to Robert Webb who built a new woolshed on the Mokanger property, which was sold again in 1992 to the present owners.

## **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

Theme 5: Working

5.8 Working on the land

## **CONDITION:**

The two buildings are in excellent condition.

## **INTEGRITY:**

The house is much altered, especially internally but the stables survive with a very high degree of integrity.

## **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:**

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## What is significant?

The Mokanger Homestead complex, comprising the homestead and the stables, is located on the north side of Mokanger Road about 8.0kms east of the township of Cavendish and opposite the continuing South Mokanger property where the woolshed complex is located. Edward Barnett had taken up the Mokanger run in the early 1840s. Thomas and Andrew Chirnside obtained the squatting licence in 1846 and held it until 1876. The core of the present homestead may date from the mid-1840s based on its scale, form and detailing. The substantial bluestone stables appear to date from the same time but may have been built in the 1850s. The Chirnside family was based at Werribee Park, Wyndham but visited Mokanger and used it to raise thoroughbreds as well as to grow wool. Their famous stallion, 'Sir Peter' was at stud at Mokanger in the 1840s. Mokanger, Mount William and Mount William Plains were known as their Wannon runs. In 1885, Alexander McEdward, another absentee landlord, purchased Mokanger. When his widow Alexandrina died in 1900, the AML&F Company took over the freehold land. In 1910, John William and Alice Gardner purchased Mokanger. The original house was extended at that time with a new weatherboard wing built across the front. The homestead block was sold in 1976. The two buildings retain a high degree of integrity and are in excellent condition.

## How is it significant?

The Mokanger Homestead complex is of historical and architectural significance to the Southern Grampians Shire.

## Why is it significant?

The Mokanger Homestead complex is of historical significance for its direct associations with Thomas and Andrew Chirnside, two of the most important pastoralists in Victoria and particularly for demonstrating their interest in thoroughbred racing. The homestead complex is of architectural significance because it retains early building fabric within the present house as well as several later layers, each reflecting the values, interests and capacities of the Chirnsides notwithstanding their absentee landlord status and of the later owners, the Gardner family, owners for seventy-five years.

## COMPARISON:

~~420 South Mokanger Woolshed, Mokanger Road, Cavendish~~  
~~051-Englefield Homestead Complex, Natimuk-Hamilton Road, Balmoral~~

**ASSESSED BY:** TFH & MGT

## 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
Alexander Sutherland, ed.	'Mokanger' and 'South Mokanger' Woolshed	1997	1 & 2
J Ann Hone, in Douglas Pike, ed.	Victoria and Its Metropolis, Past and Present, Vol 2	1888	171
Margaret Gardner	'Chirnside, Thomas and Andrew Spencer', ADB, Vol. 3	1978	391-2
Paul de Serville	personal communication, 13/3/2003	2003	
	Pounds and Pedigrees	1991	165, 170, 234, 285, 381, 464

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R V Billis and A S Kenyon

Pastoral Pioneers of Port Phillip

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