

## GISBORNE MAINS HOMESTEAD SITE



h01889 1 gisborne mains site



h01889 gisborne mains  
artefacts cosmetic lid



h01889 gisborne mains  
artefacts lace



h01889 gisborne mains  
artefacts pottery



h01889 gisborne mains  
artefacts strainer spoon



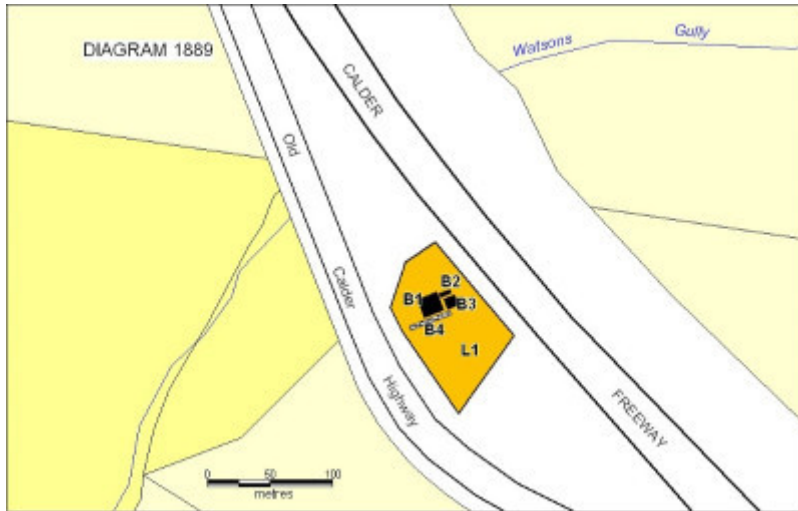
h01889 gisborne mains  
house cistern



h01889 gisborne mains  
house site



h01889 gisborne mains site2



h01889 gisborne mains plan

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### **Location**

CALDER FREEWAY GISBORNE, MACEDON RANGES SHIRE

### **Municipality**

MACEDON RANGES SHIRE

### **Level of significance**

Registered

### **Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number**

H1889

### **Heritage Overlay Numbers**

HO259

### **VHR Registration**

December 11, 2003

### **Heritage Listing**

Victorian Heritage Register

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### **Statement of Significance**

Last updated on - December 17, 2003

### **What is significant?**

The Gisborne Mains Homestead site is located on the Calder Freeway at the South Gisborne Rest Area. The original nine room residence, wash house, underground bluestone water tank, and garden and orchard was built between 1857-64 by Charles Hutton, a local Gisborne business identity. The property was purchased by Thomas and Agnes Watson in 1864 and under their management became a prosperous stud farm. The Gisborne Mains farm produced champion draught horses and sheep, and various farm products that won prestigious awards at the Royal Melbourne Show. The Watson family gained widespread respect and praise from the surrounding farming community. Thomas Watson died in 1891 and Agnes in 1907. Under the management of the next generation of the Watson family, the role of raising stud stock and selling draught horses declined in favour of sheep farming, cattle breeding and the production of fruits and dairy items. The residence remained virtually unaltered during the 100 years it belonged to the Watson family, except for the renovations to first create and then upgrade the kitchen. The existing garden with its English Hawthorn hedge rows, English Box hedges, two Chinese Windmill Palms, exotic trees and orchard dates from the turn-of-the-century. The buildings have been demolished by fire.

### **How is it significant?**

Gisborne Mains Homestead site is of historical, social and archaeological significance to the State of Victoria.

### **Why is it significant?**

Gisborne Mains Homestead site is historically significant as an important reminder of Victoria's late nineteenth century farming industry. From 1864, its owners, Thomas and Agnes Watson operated it as a prosperous stud farm making widely recognised contributions to the development of agricultural and animal husbandry practices.

Gisborne Mains Homestead Site is historically important because its intact garden and orchard contributes to a greater understanding of nineteenth century agricultural development and landscape design. Gisborne Mains is of landscape value for the survival of its formal garden and plantings including a pair of *Trachycarpus fortunei* (Chinese Windmill Palm) which framed the front entrance, *Cupressus torulosa* (Bhutan Cypress), *Cupressus macrocarpa* (Monterey Cypress) rows, *Pinus pinea* (Stone Pine) and *Crataegus monogyna* (English Hawthorn) hedges. North of the garden are remnants of the orchard comprising of a *Morus nigra* (Black Mulberry) and two *Pyrus communis* (Pear).

Gisborne Mains Homestead site is of archaeological significance to the State of Victoria owing to the integrity and intactness of the extensive below ground remains and relics associated with the operation of the place as a stud farm under the management of Thomas and Agnes Watson. Of significance is the known physical evidence of the residence, wash house or laundry, a rare water tank carved into the bluestone rock, and the potential for the area to contain undisturbed refuse deposits containing artefact assemblages associated with late nineteenth century domestic and farming activities of Thomas and Agnes Watson. The archaeological excavations recovered significant artefacts relating to the historical occupation of the site and demonstrated the site's value and potential to contain extensive and well preserved archaeological relics.

## **Permit Exemptions**

### **General Exemptions:**

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

Places of worship: In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must **notify** the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

Subdivision/consolidation: Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

### **Specific Exemptions:**

General Conditions: 1. All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object. General Conditions: 2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of alterations that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such alteration shall cease and the Executive Director shall be notified as soon as possible. General Conditions: 3. If there is a conservation policy and plan approved by the Executive Director, all works shall be in accordance with it. General Conditions: 4. Nothing in this declaration prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions. General Conditions: 5. Nothing in this declaration exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authority where applicable.

### **STANDARD EXEMPTIONS FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL PLACES:**

#### **Regular Site Maintenance**

The following site maintenance works are permit exempt under section 66 of the *Heritage Act 1995*,

Regular site maintenance provided the works do not involve the removal or destruction of any significant above-ground features or sub-surface archaeological artefacts or deposits; the maintenance of an item to retain its conditions or operation without the removal of or damage to the existing fabric or the introduction of new materials; cleaning including the removal of surface deposits, organic growths, or graffiti by the use of low pressure water and natural detergents and mild brushing and scrubbing; repairs, conservation and maintenance to plaques, memorials, roads and paths, fences and gates and drainage and irrigation. The replacement of existing services such as cabling, plumbing, wiring and fire services that uses existing routes, conduits or voids, and does not involve damage to or the removal of significant fabric.

Note: Surface patina which has developed on the fabric may be an important part of the item's significance and if so needs to be preserved during maintenance and cleaning.

Note: Any new materials used for repair must not exacerbate the decay of existing fabric due to chemical incompatibility, obscure existing fabric or limit access to existing fabric for future maintenance. Repair must maximise protection and retention of fabric and include the conservation of existing details or elements.

#### **Fire Suppression Duties**

The following fire suppression duties are permit exempt under section 66 of the *Heritage Act 1995*,

Fire suppression and fire fighting duties provided the works do not involve the removal or destruction of any significant above-ground features or sub-surface archaeological artefacts or deposits; Fire suppression activities such as fuel reduction burns, and fire control line construction, provided all significant historical and archaeological features are appropriately recognised and protected;

Note: Fire management authorities should be aware of the location, extent and significance of historical and archaeological places when developing fire suppression and fire fighting strategies. The importance of places listed in the Heritage Register must be considered when strategies for fire suppression and management are being developed.

#### **Weed and Vermin Control**

The following weed and vermin control activities are permit exempt under section 66 of the *Heritage Act 1995*,

Weed and vermin control activities provided the works do not involve the removal or destruction of any significant above-ground features or sub-surface archaeological artefacts or deposits;

Note: Particular care must be taken with weed and vermin control works where such activities may have a detrimental affect on the significant fabric of a place. Such works may include the removal of ivy, moss or lichen from an historic structure or feature, or the removal of burrows from a site that has archaeological values.

### **Landscape Maintenance**

The following landscape maintenance works are permit exempt under section 66 of the *Heritage Act* 1995,

Landscape maintenance works provided the activities do not involve the removal or destruction of any significant above-ground features or sub-surface archaeological artefacts or deposits; Watering, mowing, mulching, plant protection and pruning necessary for the continued health of plants, Works that avoid damage or major alterations to layout, contours, and loss of plant species or other significant landscape features; Removal of diseased, dead or dangerous plants and replacement planting; Tree surgery by a qualified arborist necessary for the health of those plants.

### **Public Safety and Security**

The following public safety and security activities are permit exempt under section 66 of the *Heritage Act* 1995,

Public safety and security activities provided the works do not involve the removal or destruction of any significant above-ground structures or sub-surface archaeological artefacts or deposits; The erection of temporary security fencing, scaffolding, hoardings or surveillance systems to prevent unauthorised access or secure public safety which will not adversely affect significant fabric of the place including archaeological features; Development including emergency stabilisation necessary to secure safety where a site feature has been irreparably damaged or destabilised and represents a safety risk to its users or the public.

Note: Urgent or emergency site works are to be undertaken by an appropriately qualified specialist such as a structural engineer, or other heritage professional.

### **Signage and Site Interpretation**

The following Signage and Site Interpretation activities are permit exempt under section 66 of the *Heritage Act* 1995,

Signage and site interpretation activities provided the works do not involve the removal or destruction of any significant above-ground structures or sub-surface archaeological artefacts or deposits; The erection of non-illuminated signage for the purpose of ensuring public safety or to assist in the interpretation of the heritage significance of the place or object and which will not adversely affect significant fabric including landscape or archaeological features of the place or obstruct significant views of and from heritage values or items; Signage and site interpretation products must be located and be of a suitable size so as not to obscure or damage significant fabric of the place; Signage and site interpretation products must be able to be later removed without causing damage to the significant fabric of the place;

Note: The development of signage and site interpretation products must be consistent in the use of format, text, logos, themes and other display materials.

Note: Where possible, the signage and interpretation material should be consistent with other schemes developed on similar or associated sites. It may be necessary to consult with land managers and other stakeholders concerning existing schemes and strategies for signage and site interpretation.

### **Minor Works**

Note: Any Minor Works that in the opinion of the Executive Director will not adversely affect the heritage significance of the place may be exempt from the permit requirements of the *Heritage Act*. A person proposing to undertake minor works may submit a proposal to the Executive Director. If the Executive Director is satisfied that the proposed works will not adversely affect the heritage values of the site, the applicant may be exempted from the requirement to obtain a heritage permit.

If an applicant is uncertain whether a heritage permit is required, it is recommended that the permits co-ordinator be contacted.

Construction dates      1857,

Heritage Act Categories	Registered place, Registered archaeological place, Registered object integral to a registered place,
Hermes Number	12835
Property Number	

## History

The Gisborne Mains Homestead was purchased in 1864 by two Scottish born immigrants, Thomas Watson and Agnes Cunningham. They were very hard workers who achieved a level of affluence uncommon to farmers in the Gisborne district at the time. Thomas Watson's skills in breeding draught horses caught the attention of horsemen and breeders across the district whose livelihood depended on expert animal knowledge. He even brought stud stock from as far away as New Zealand to improve the quality of his teams.

Thomas Watson died in 1891. His funeral procession was reported as being one of the largest to pass through Gisborne, with mourners travelling great distances to pay their respects. A newspaper obituary described Thomas Watson as 'one of the oldest and most prosperous farmers in the district' and another correspondent wrote that 'there were few better farmers or judges of stock (particularly draught horses), being himself at one time a large breeder of this class of stock ...'.

With the settlement of probate, Agnes assumed control of Gisborne Mains farm and continued to live on the farm until her death in 1907. Margret Watson then inherited the estate from her mother and, together with her spinster sisters, Christina and Elizabeth, worked the farm as the sole occupants for the duration of their lives using hired help as required. The role of raising stud stock and selling draught horses appears to have declined under their ownership in favour of sheep farming, cattle, and the production of fruits and dairy items. In about 1965, ill health forced the 95 year old Christina Watson to abandon the only home she had known. Unoccupied, the homestead became prey to vandals. Left vacant for many years, the homestead burnt down in the early 1980s. The house and the wash house was razed to the ground and the fire fighters were forced to demolish the chimneys for safety reasons.

The construction of the Calder Freeway (Millet Road to Gisborne Station) resulted in the destruction of many elements including the stables, machinery shed, cow shed, shearing shed, stone and timber fences and bull pen.

### Assessment Against Criteria

A. The historical importance, association with or relationship to Victoria's history of the place or object.

Gisborne Mains Homestead Site is historically significant as a place associated with a period when expert animal knowledge on the breeding of draught horses was a critical aspect of Victoria's farming industry.

C. The place or object's potential to educate, illustrate or provide further scientific investigation in relation to Victoria's cultural heritage.

Gisborne Mains Homestead Site is archaeologically significant due to the integrity and intactness of relics associated with the operation of the place as a stud farm for draught horses under the management of Thomas and Agnes Watson. Of crucial importance is the known physical evidence of the residence, laundry, underground cistern and the potential for the area to contain undisturbed refuse pits and deposits containing artefact assemblages associated with late nineteenth century domestic and farming activities of Thomas and Agnes Watson.

D. The importance of a place or object in exhibiting the principal characteristics or the representative nature of a place or object as part of a class or type of places or objects.

Contributing to the significance of the place are early twentieth century garden and orchard features which are tangible evidence in the shift in agricultural and animal husbandry practices by the second generation of the Watson family.

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## Extent of Registration

### NOTICE OF REGISTRATION

As Executive Director for the purpose of the **Heritage Act 1995**, I give notice under section 46 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended by including the Heritage Register Number 1889 in the category described as a Heritage Place/Archaeological Place:

Gisborne Mains Homestead Site, Calder Freeway, Gisborne, Macedon Ranges Shire Council.

### EXTENT:

1. All the land marked L1 on the Diagram 1889 held by the Executive Director.
2. All of the buildings and structures marked as follows on Diagram 1889 held by the Executive Director:

B1 Homestead  
B2 Wash House  
B3 Underground Water Tank  
B4 Cobbled Driveway

3. All the plantings within the land marked L1 on Diagram 1889 held by the Executive Director including:

*Amaryllis belladonna*

(*Belladonna Lily*)

*Arbutus unedo* (Irish Strawberry Tree)

*Brachychiton discolor* (Lacebark)

*Brachychiton populnea* (Kurrajong) x2

*Buxus sempervirens* (English Box) hedge

*Crataegus monogyna* (English Hawthorn) hedge

*Cupressus macrocarpa* (Monterey Cypress) rows

*Cupressus torulosa* (Bhutan Cypress)

*Nerium oleander* (Oleander)

*Pinus pinea* (Stone Pine)

*Schinus areira* (Pepper Tree)

*Trachycarpus fortunei* (Chinese Windmill Palm) x2.

Dated 11 December 2003

RAY TONKIN  
Executive Director

[Victoria Government Gazette G 50 11 December 2003 3129-3130]

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*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.*

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>*