
OLD TIMBOON BURIAL PLACE AND CHARLES SIEVWRIGHT'S GRAVE

Location

83-93 DEPOT ROAD SKIBO, CORANGAMITE SHIRE

Municipality

CORANGAMITE SHIRE

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7521-0003

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO86

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Hermes Number 12224

Property Number

History

Contextual History:History of Place:

Heritage Inventory History of Site:

It appears from evidence that the inscription on the concrete slab has been incorrectly prepared as there is no record of the son of Charles Wightman Sievwright having an identical name. Although there are few contemporary records relating to Charles Sievwright, it appears from his father's own advice to the Colonial

Secretary at Sydney on 20 November 1838 that he did not have a middle name.

1852-1865: This is a composite plan based upon C 160 which has been progressively updated with survey and subdivision data from the time of the base plan in 1852. Of particular interest is the identification of a 'Burial Place' on the west bank of the Timboon Creek, in the area marked as a 'Water Reserve' and near to the homestead building. This annotation does not appear on any other survey plans of the Lake Timboon area prepared by R.D.Scott or his predecessors.

Ref: 'Plan of the Township of Camperdown, Parish of Colongulac, Mount Leura', Robert D. Scott, Assistant Surveyor, 1852, (updated to 1865), C 162, Central Plans Office Melbourne

1. Charles Sievwright (1830-1851)

Charles Sievwright was most probably born at the British military establishment at Malta in c.1828, the second son and third child of Charles Wightman Sievwright, an officer in the 7th Fusiliers, and his Scottish wife Christina. Their first son and second child, Marcus was born at Corfu in 1826. Charles Sievwright grew up at Malta apparently in reduced circumstances and as a neglected child.

As a boy of ten years of age, he came to Sydney with his parents, arriving in September 1838 aboard the Elizabeth. In January 1838 he travelled to Melbourne with his family and later went to Geelong, arriving in June 1839. Little is known of Sievwrights childhood life at Port Phillip. He spent some time at least with his father at the Protectorate Camp at Lake Keilambete and later at Mount Rouse. Assistant Protector Sievwright, who like most of the squatters, moved into the District without a family, recorded the unexpected joy shown by the Aborigines when his wife and seven children joined him at his camp at Lake Keilambete (Jan Critchett, "A distant field of murder", p27).

Charles Sievwright was employed by John and Peter Manifold for a number of years as a manager either at Purrumbete or on their Dairy Station at Mount Leura. Sievwright most probably joined the Manifold workforce after 1845, when his father left for England. His accidental death was recorded in the columns of the Melbourne Argus published on Tuesday 4 March 1851 and in local station journals and personal diaries.

04.03.1851 (Argus, Melbourne) Melancholy Accident: Last Tuesday (25 February) as Mr Charles Sievwright, who has been for several years managing for Messrs John and Peter Manifold, was riding a young horse, at Mount Lara [sic], the horse bucked him off, and kicked in his breastbone; he also had concussion of the brain. From which injuries he died in a few hours. Mr Sievwright was one of the finest young men in the colony, and a most dutiful son and brother. He was to have started on Saturday for Melbourne to see his mother and sisters, whom he had not seen for two years: Victoria Colonist.

1851: Mr Severight was killed by his horse bolting and dashing him against a tree at Clarke's diary (now known as Werna), on the north side of the cutting going into Camperdown. Mr Severight's grave is in Duncan McNicol's paddock just south of Old Timboon.

'John McKinnon's Journal 1850-1853' : An unmarked station journal and diary identified by Michael Stumfels of the CDHS as being prepared by John McKinnon, manager at John Hasties Punpundal pastoral run, now Leslie Manor. Diary entry for Wednesday 26 February 1851:

'Mr Hastie to Timboon came home at night bringing the melancholy news of Mr Seivewright's death by a fall from his horse yesterday at Mr Clarke's.

Diary entry for Thursday 27 February

'Mr Hastie and self [John McKinnon] to Mr Sievwright's funeral, home in the evening.'

The death of Charles Sievwright at Mount Leura is not recorded in the Victorian Pioneers Index 1838-1888 although details of some members of the Sievwright family are listed. His grave stands in an open paddock north of Craighburn, the former homestead of Duncan McNicol and in an area which was once enclosed as the Old Timboon Burial Place.

Ref: Camperdown and District Historical Society. "Grave at Craighburn", typescript by R.A. McAlpine of information from the Manifold Papers, N.D.

2. Charles Wightman Sievwright : Assistant Protector of Aborigines for the Geelong District and the Sievwright Family.

A search of the International Genealogical Index (British Isles, Southern Europe, Malta) has not identified any relevant biographical information. Apparently born c.1851 as his age was given as 36 years in a December 1837 communication from Sir George Arthur to Lord Glenelg recommending his appointment as an Assistant Protector of Aborigines at Port Phillip in the Colony of New South Wales. 'Mr Sievwright is 36 years of age has served 20

years in the army, last in the Fusiliers ; was selected to be military secretary to Sir Frederick Ponsonby at Malta; has a wife and family ; describes himself to enjoy good health, and to be able to undergo much fatigue, and states that he should take an interest in the civilisation of the Aborigines and in their religious instruction.' A.S.Kenyon records that C.W.Siewwright enlisted in the British Army as an ensign on 18 January 1816, was on half pay between 25 December 1817 and 25 December 1818, was transferred as an ensign in the 55th Regiment on 23 December 1824 and was appointed as a 2nd lieutenant in the 7th Royal or Foot Fusiliers on 8 April 1829.

Siewwright was later appointed as the Military Secretary to the Lieutenant-Governor of Malta and held this position of influence for a period of 5 years, after which he returned to England, leaving his wife and young family at Malta without financial support and near destitute. In 1837, Siewwright was selected for one of the four posts of Assistant Protector of the Aborigines at Port Phillip. Although he was highly recommended by his immediate superiors, his appointment was marked with controversy as it was alleged that he was a gambler and had amassed substantial debts.

The four Assistant Protectors with their respective families, left England in the Elizabeth on 29 April 1838, arriving in Sydney on 29 September. The officers remained in Sydney for three months, finally reaching Melbourne on 3 January 1839. Charles Siewwright recorded the membership of his family party in official correspondence to the Colonial Secretary at Sydney on 20 November 1838. "In reference to your letter of yesterday's date, addressed to 'The Assistant Protectors of Aborigines', I have now the honour to forward a return of my family who proceed with me to Port Phillip. Mr & Mrs Siewwright. Children: Francis Ann [sic] aged 16 years (born c. 1822), Marcus aged 12 years (born c. 1826), Charles aged 10 years (born c. 1828), Fredrica aged 8 years (born c.1830), Melita aged 8 years (born c. 1830), Georgina aged 5 years (born c.1833), Falkland aged 4 years (born c.1834)."

After transferring to Port Phillip, Siewwright went with his family to Geelong arriving at this primitive settlement in June 1839. Charles Wightman Siewwright's administration of his Protectorate was marked by incompetence and scandal. He spent considerable time at Geelong sitting on the Magistrate's Bench as a Justice of the Peace instead of investigating allegations of atrocities committed by squatters and their servants in Portland Bay District as well as attending to the needs of his displaced aboriginal charges. He eventually moved to set up a camp at Lake Keilambete in March 1841, and after long protestations from the squatter John Thomson, Siewwright was instructed to move his camp to Mount Rouse and a site selected for him by the Chief Protector G.A. Robinson in February 1842.

On 3 June 1842, Siewwright was suspended on a charge of misappropriating government stores, a charge which was seen to be clouded by the issue of his reported immorality. In August 1842, Superintendent Charles La Trobe confirmed rumours that Siewwright had an affair with the wife of one of his colleagues, had attempted to seduce his daughter, had behaved brutally to his wife and neglected his family. Siewwright left for England aboard the Cygnet on 26 May 1845 to take up the matter of his dismissal with the Colonial Office in London. He was unsuccessful in his efforts to clear his name and it is not known if he returned to Australia. There is certainly no mention of him being in Melbourne at the time of the accidental death of his second son at Mount Leura.

Of the Siewwright children, it is recorded that Marcus commenced practice as a solicitor in Melbourne in September 1850, married Sophia Cornelia La Rose, formerly of Brussels, on 21 February 1852, and died at St Kilda on 10 September 1905. Francis Anna Siewwright married the Rev. Arthur Davenport on 3 February 1848.

Reference: Public Records Office Laverton, Victoria. Correspondance from the Office of Assistant Protector of Aborigines in Western District.

Reference: State Library of Victoria; La Trobe Collection. A.S. Kenyon Card Index. Entries for Charles Wightman Siewwright, John Siewwright and Marcus Siewwright.

Reference: Barry Bridges, 'G.[sic] W. Siewwright and the Geelong District of the Aborigines Protectorate', in Geelong Historical Society, Investigator Volume 7 No.1, March 1972, pp 21-28 and No. 2, June 1972, pp 54-59.

Reference: M. Cannon (ed): Historical Records of Victoria Volume 2A, The Aborigines of Port Phillip 1838-1839, Melbourne 1982 pp31-33. Includes details of C.W. Siewwright's qualifications, testimonials and military experience.

Historical Records of Victoria Volume 2B, Aborigines and Protectors 1838-1839, Melbourne 1983, includes specific correspondence relating to: Siewwright's appointment as an Assistant Protector of Aborigines; allegations that Siewwright left his wife and children in Malta destitute and dependent on charity for nearly two years and a further claim that Siewwright gambled all his wife's money away; Siewwright's explanation of his financial difficulties and the need to sell his commission as a means of overcoming pressing debts; Chapter 23 'C.W.Siewwright and the Western District' deals specifically with Siewwright's administration of his Protectorate

from 12 February 1839 until 22 January 1840.

Who Killed the Koories? Port Melbourne 1990 pp 23-28; gives information on Siewright's personal relationships with his eldest daughter Frances Anna, and the attempted resolution of the allegations of immoral behaviour made against Siewright as well as details of Siewright's career as an Assistant Protector in Western Victoria.

Reference: P.L. Brown (ed), Fyans Memoirs, Geelong, 1986 pp 235-236.

Reference: Jan Crichton, A Distant Field of Murder: Western District Frontiers, 1834-1848. MUP Melbourne 1990.

Reference: A.G.L. Shaw (ed) Gipps-La Trobe Correspondance 1839-1846, MUP 1989

Newspaper Sources

Geelong Advertiser:

04.10.1841: Article concerning C.W.Siewright's failings as an Assitant Protector of Aborigines in the Geelong district.

06.12.1841: Siewright castigated by Geelong Judge.

02.01.1845: Report that Siewright has been suspended.

01.02.1845: Article on the Aboriginal Protectorate

28.05.1845: Report that Siewright departed for England aboard the Cygnet on 26 May 1845.

22.02.1848: Report of marriage of Francis Ann Siewright to the Rev. Arthur Davenport on 3 February 1848.

Argus (Melbourne)

14.09.1905: Death notice of Marcus Siewright.

Agnes Thomson (d. 1868) and Mary Agnes Manifold (1859-1865)

At least two other graves were once located in the Old Timboon Burial Ground, these were identified in the Manifold family history as follows:

Reference: W.G. Manifold "The Wish-For-Land" Newtown 1984, p138. 'The following year [1865] Marion May [Manifold] was born, but sadly little Mary Agnes died. Two more years and James Chester was born. Agnes Thomson had now joined her daughter at Purrumbete, and on 20th February '68 she died. At that time the Camperdown cemetery was down on the flat ground near the Skibo road and here Agnes was first laid to rest. Not long afterwards it was decided to move the cemetery to its present site overlooking Lake Gnotuk. Agnes' body, and little Agnes Mary's [sic] were duly taken to Purrumbete, one of a very different style being substituted at the new grave.'

The Camperdown Cemetery

The Cemetery Reserve at Camperdown was certainly in use by 1857 when James Bonwick visited the district and observed that 'The Cemetery beside the Basin Banks and thirteen tombs'. (See James Bonwick, "Western Victoria, Its Geography, Geology and Social Condition." Geelong, 1858, reprinted 1970, p29).

Robert Scott prepared a 'Plan of the Cemetery at Camperdown' dated 18 March 1858, with the layout in the 8 acre reserve being approved by the Governor-in-Council on 6 April 1858. The Camperdown Cemetery was finally established as an 8 acre reserve by proclamation in the Victorian Government Gazette for 1863 (p2274). A 4 acre extension was subsequently gazetted in 1872.

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