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# SWAN INN

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## Location

4 HAMILTON HIGHWAY FYANSFORD, GREATER GEELONG CITY

## Municipality

GREATER GEELONG CITY

## Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

## Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7721-0461

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

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### Historical Significance

The place is historically and architecturally significant as the oldest known surviving early vernacular structure and hotel dating to the 1840s. It is important for its early connections to the rural township of Fyansford and Victoria. It has associations with the Fyans Ford crossing over the Moorabool River, which marked the track taken by the western-bound pastoralists and those heading to the gold rush from the 1830s.

The Swan Inn, is also important for its association with the notable Victorian architect and surveyor Alexander Skene and for values captured by artists George Alexander Gilbert in 1847 and by Samuel Calvert in 1862.

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|-----------------------------|--|
| Archaeological Significance | The archaeological significance of the place is currently unknown. Further archaeological assessment would be required including survey and subsurface testing to determine the nature and integrity of features and deposits in order to assess the archaeological significance. The archaeological sensitivity of the place has been assessed as high (Hewitt et.al 2014: 174).  |
| Interpretation of Site      | Place utilized as a domestic and commercial establishment from 1842. Archaeological features and deposits identified are associated with these functions. High potential for the identification of in situ subsurface footings relating to previous outbuildings. High possibility for sub floor deposits and subsurface deposits in the cellar. Scatter of cultural material relating to the occupation of the Inn and residence is visible in concentrations around the buildings and extends down the escarpment of the Moorabool River.<br>Swan Inn precinct requires a detailed archaeological and botanical survey for outbuilding remains, garden features, pathways, roadways fence lines, plantings. Artefact scatters are present in the immediate vicinity of the main building and the stable ruin and rubbish midden exposures were observed to the north, east and west of the complex. A bluestone footing was identified to the north of the inn building situated within a wire enclosure (This may be a remnant of the small cottage-like building shown to the north of the Swan Inn complex in contemporary images). |
| Other Names                 | Riverside House, Swan Hotel, Fyansford House, Fyanstown Inn,   |
| Hermes Number               | 197470   |
| Property Number             |  |

## History

The Swan Inn, located directly opposite Fyans' stone ford on the Moorabool River was built in 1842 by John Atkins, and was originally named Fyanstown Inn. It was built to the design of surveyor and architect Alexander John Skene who introduced the theodolite to the practice of surveying in Victoria and served as Surveyor-General of Victoria from 1857. Its opening in 1843 was unfortunately timed as it coincided with the depths of economic depression (Cannon 1973:20; Peel 1974:32-3, Shaw 1996:148-52) and it is understood to have failed soon afterwards and became a private house. The building then known as "Fyansford House" was occupied c. 1850 by the Mercer brothers as the headquarters of the Dryden Estate. The building was celebrated for its scenic value and was captured by artists such as George Alexander Gilbert in his 1847 sketch. By 1856, the building was again used as an inn, this time known as the 'Swan'. Tenders called for replacement of the shingle roof with slate and the installation of plumbing. The Mercers moved to "Tulchan" in Gherineghap (Brown 1967), by 1857. The Swan Hotel is depicted by Samuel Calvert in his 1862 wood engraving 'Fyan's Ford and Swan Hotel'. The Swan Inn found popular favour as a honeymoon retreat (Bottrell 1982) and was a common stopping place for those en route to the goldfields as a watering hole for stock and men alike. In 1844 the hotel was purchased by Abram Atkins but was closed the following year. A new license was not granted until 1855 to William Bohn. In later years, Bohn contracted local coachbuilder Wilks to collect visitors from Geelong. It's first trip on 24 December 1856 collected 17 passengers. A subsequent publican placed an article in the Argus advertising "a first-class hotel combined with the solid comforts and conveniences of a home" (The Argus 25/3/1858).

The later history and occupation of the place is unknown.

*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/>