

CLIFTON HOMESTEAD COMPLEX



23196 Clifton Homestead
0314



23196 Clifton Homestead
0315



23196 Clifton Homestead
0316



23196 Clifton Homestead
0317



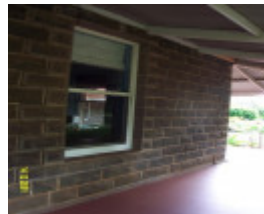
23196 Clifton Homestead old
pump 0323



23196 Clifton Homestead old
well 0322



23196 Clifton Homestead
original house 0312



23196 Clifton Homestead
original house 0313



23196 Clifton Homestead
original house 0326



23196 Clifton Homestead
outbuilding 0320



23196 Clifton Homestead
rear elevation 0321



23196 Clifton Homestead
rooms converted to garage
0324



23196 Clunie Homestead
front verandah 0270



23196 Clifton Homestead
smoke house 0318



23196 Clifton Homestead
smoke house 0319



23196 Clunie Homestead
front verandah 0271

Location

Clifton Road HAMILTON, Southern Grampians Shire

Municipality

SOUTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE

Level of significance

Stage 2 study complete

Heritage Listing

Southern Grampians Shire

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - November 22, 2003

What is Significant?

Clifton Homestead Complex is a large single storey bluestone house, located 10 kilometers west of Hamilton. The house consists of two wings, the first built between 1855-1865 and the later after 1896. The building is notable for its precisely detailed masonry construction and for the integration of the two stages of construction into a unified composition. The exterior and the interior of the later wing are fine examples of late Victorian architectural style and detailing. The attractive garden at Clifton is recent, but the several of the trees in the parkland beyond the garden may date from the turn of the century. The property has had two significant periods of ownership, firstly by the Mason family who ran a substantial pastoral property, and secondly, as the internationally recognised Clifton Shorthorn stud, associated with Archibald Simpson and his family. Two of the Simpson children went on to have distinguished careers associated with aviation, Thomas (Leigh) Simpson was the primary sponsor for Reg Ansett's Ansett Airways Pty. Ltd. in the late 1930s, and a long term director of that

company. George (Geordie) Simpson was a leading Collins Street Gynecologist as well as being one of the founding members of the Royal Flying Doctors Service in Australia. Clifton Homestead is in excellent condition. The homestead retains a good degree of integrity to the turn of the century.

How is it significant?

Clifton Homestead Complex is of architectural, historical and scientific significance to the State of Victoria and the Southern Grampians Shire.

Why is it significant?

Clifton Homestead Complex is of architectural significance as a fine example of a substantial bluestone homestead of the Western District. It shows a degree of architectural sophistication in the successful blending of the 1890s extension with the 1860s house, and in the elegant finishes to the masonry and decorative timberwork of the extension.

It is of historical significance for its links to the important Simpson family over two generations in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Archibald Simpson was a pioneer of the Shorthorn cattle and Shropshire sheep industries, and an exceptionally successful grazier. His wife, Mary, was a member of the important and influential local Robertson family, whose influence on the development of the Western District of Victoria is considerable. Through the Robertson connection, the Simpson's were associated with the earliest phase of development of aviation in Victoria. Clifton was the birthplace of Thomas (Leigh) Simpson, highly decorated in World War One as an aviator, instrumental in the shooting down of Baron von Richtofen, 'The Red Baron' in 1918 over Belgium, thus influencing the outcome of World War One. Leigh Simpson had a distinguished peacetime career, notably as a financial backer for Reg Ansett, and as a lifelong director of Ansett Airways Pty Ltd. Clifton has further historical significance as the birthplace of George (Geordie) Simpson, the third son of Archibald and Mary Simpson, who was associated for many years with Rev. John Flynn, and who was the medical officer on the first flight of the Royal Flying Doctors Service in 1927 from Cloncurry to Mount Isa. Dr. Simpson was awarded an OBE for his services to medicine, in particular for his work at the Royal Women's Hospital, Melbourne.

Clifton is of scientific significance as a pioneer stud for Shorthorn cattle, with the development of highly valued bloodlines, which ensured the success of the breed Australia wide. Archibald Simpson's skills as a stud master turned Clifton into one of the most important studs in Australia, with an international reputation for excellence.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Southern Grampians - Southern Grampians Shire Heritage Study, Timothy Hubbard P/L, Annabel Neylon, 2002;
Construction dates	1855,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Hermes Number	23196
Property Number	

Physical Conditions

The Homestead in excellent condition, although some of the interiors have been substantially altered in the later twentieth century.

Physical Description 1

Clifton is a large single storey bluestone house located about 10 kilometers west of Hamilton. The house appears to have been built in two stages, with two wings located at right angles to each other. The building is notable for its finely detailed composition. The earlier wing, built by James Mason after he purchased the land in 1854, is a typical four roomed house with a central passage, constructed of coursed rockface bluestone, with a corrugated

iron roof. The later wing was probably constructed after Archibald J. Simpson acquired the property in 1896. The later wing is also built of coursed rock bluestone, with a corrugated iron roof. An attached verandah of timber, roofed with corrugate iron extends from the front of the early wing along the side of that structure, and continues across the front of the second wing, to the front entrance, unifying both wings. The large billiard room terminates the second wing, with its projecting gable and bay window. The gable features timber decorations, including curvilinear carved brackets, which are typical of late Victorian architecture. At the rear of the house, various timber sections, including a modern kitchen and laundry have been added at later stages. No architect has been identified as designing either of the wings. The layout and detailing of the second wing suggests that an architect may have been involved. Through their prestigious social connections, the Simpson's would have been familiar with the designs of prominent architects working in the district around the turn of the 20th century.

The interiors of the main rooms of the second wing are characterised by the use of ornate fireplaces, decorative plaster work, timber paneling and a decorative timber ceiling in the drawing room. The billiard room, which contains an Italian marble fireplace has been divided into two smaller rooms during the latter part of the twentieth century.

Several timber outbuildings are located in the grounds beyond the house. These appear to date from the post World War Two period. Due to the recurrence of destructive bushfires, no outbuildings survive from the Mason or Simpson occupancies. A curious stone structure in the back garden may be the remains of a large tank stand damaged in the bushfires of 1901, which destroyed the gardens and farm buildings (HS 09/02/1901).

The beautifully laid out gardens at Clifton have been established by the present owners since the 1980s and contain many unusual exotic specimens. The front verandah of the earlier wing bears three large Wisteria (*Wisteria floribunda*) which are believed to be over 130 years old. The previous garden consisted mainly of trees and shrubs planted after World War Two. Beyond the garden fence, a parkland of exotic trees has been laid out, many mature trees within the parkland date from the Simpson period. photography taken in the early twentieth century indicate that Clifton had an extensive and highly aesthetic garden planted around the house, while juvenile European trees could be seen in the paddocks (Pastoral Homes of Australia, 1910).

Historical Australian Themes

Theme 3: Developing local, regional and national economies

3.5 Developing primary production

3.5.1 Grazing stock

3.5.2 Breeding animals

3.5.3 Developing agricultural industries

Theme 5: Working

5.8 working on the land

Usage/Former Usage

Continuing as a pastoral property

Integrity

Clifton homestead is retains a good degree of integrity

Physical Description 2

Mason Family

Archibald J. Simpson

Mary Simpson (nee Robertson)

George (Geordie) Simpson

Thomas (Leigh) Simpson

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/>