
DOUGLAS HOUSE SITE

Location

85 GIPPS STREET PORT FAIRY, MOYNE SHIRE

Municipality

MOYNE SHIRE

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7321-0072

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO13

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Interpretation of Site

The 19th century buildings that front Gipps Street appear to be on the natural ground level. Behind the northern 19th century building, a new structure (atrium) has been built on a raised platform with a driveway leading down to the Moyne River. The structures constructed behind and eastwards of the southern 19th century building appear to have been erected on recently benched ground, which would have severely impacted any earlier remains. The current river wall may be based on the original feature associated with the property.

Archaeological Significance	<p>The archaeological significance of the site lies in the potential to provide information on the variety of uses and functions that took place on the property throughout the latter half of the 19th century. Underfloor deposits within the extant 19th century buildings could provide information on activities related to the dispensing of medicines, postal services and haberdashery in the middle years of the 19th century during the transition of Port Fairy from a frontier settlement to an established regional centre. The archaeological remains of the flour mill could provide information on the workings of the enterprise, in particular the arrangement of ancillary structures associated with the industry especially the steam engine. Such information would provide some insights on the efficiency and scale of the operation over time.</p> <p>Apart from the likelihood of underfloor deposits within the buildings, external features such as earlier building extensions, hard surfaces, drains, post holes from fencing are likely to be present. The remains of yard features, refuse pits, external water closets and ancillary buildings such as the later steam flour mill, are likely to be present behind the 19th century building. Pile stumps of early wharves and accumulated cultural deposits within the river sediments close to the seawall are likely to be present.</p>
Historical Significance	<p>The site was for a period the post office for Port Fairy, an important civic focal point in the 19th century. Around this time a number of commercial activities took place within the property that reflects the vitality and variety as well as possibly the ephemeral nature of commercial opportunities in the town during the middle years of the 19th century. That the property was converted into a steam flour mill in the 1870s indicates the new commercial opportunities that arose once the Moyne River was opened to vessel traffic after the construction of the Training Walls. The site was originally owned by Dr A W Hume, who held a number of influential positions - coroner, postmaster and clerk of the courts - within Port Fairy.</p>
Other Names	CHALLACOMBE AND BISHOP, BELFAST POST OFFICE, BEAVER AND STEVENS, SIMPSON AND ALNUTT WESTERN STEAM FLOUR MILLS,
Hermes Number	154832
Property Number	

History

Douglas House was built by Dr Andrew Wilson Hume Esq. (previously Clerk of Courts) on his waterfront property along the western bank of the Moyne River in 1852. By mid 1852, Douglas House, described as a two-storey building with ten rooms situated in the northern portion of Hume's allotment, was completed and separate rooms and portions of the property were occupied for various purposes. Hume occupied several rooms, serving as a doctor's consulting rooms and dispensary, selling "drugs, chemicals, scents and sponges". Other rooms served as the Belfast Post Office during Hume's term as postmaster in 1852. Mr William Fuller also operated a drapery store and Melbourne merchants William Bell & Co. are also noted as leasing part of the site.

In 1853, Hume sold the property to Mr John Cowtan, who subsequently mortgaged the southern frontage with Hume. Later that year, the merchant firm Beaver and Stevens purchased the property, using it for storing merchandise unloaded from lighters at the river wharf built on the site. It appears that Beaver and Stevens constructed additional buildings in the southern portion of the site, including a large iron warehouse near the waterfront.

In 1854, the site was sold to Dr T H Braim, who leased a portion of the property to milling company Simpson and Alnutt. By 1858, the southern portion of the site now including a five-roomed building, was let to James Bulstrode, who used the property as a store and residence.

In 1868 Mr Charles Ruffle purchased the site and established a steam flour mill - Western Steam Flour Mills - on the site in a large basalt walled, iron roofed shed. The site was sold again in 1878 and a variety of businesses continued to occupy various parts of the site. The site was divided into two parts in 1901. Douglas House was purchased by Mr John Wright who converted it to a boarding house. It was classified by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) in 1959.

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/>