
MCDONALD'S FARM SITE

Location

38 FISHERS ROAD SCOTSBURN, MOORABOOL SHIRE

Municipality

MOORABOOL SHIRE

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7622-0457

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Other Names West McDonald's Property,

Hermes Number 201053

Property Number

History

Narmbool was taken up and established as a squatter's estate in 1838-9 by Glasgow Merchant Hugh Niven. The estate remained a going concern for grazing of cattle and sheep until portions were offered up for selection in 1866. The Narmbool homestead includes elements dating to the early 1850s with the main, extant, homestead dating to the 1880s built by the Austin Family (of Barwon Park). Land adjacent and to the west of Williamson Creek was portioned into selections after the Grant and Selection Act in 1870s and taken up over the next 20 years. Progressively this land was cleared and settled by a number of families. Some of these land selections were subsequently returned to the Narmbool estate during the 20th Century and the land resumed to pastoral usage. In 2000 Narmbool became the custodial property to Sovereign Hill Museum and is currently run by the

Museum Trust as a working farm and educational centre.

The historic landscape of the Williamson Creek valley represents approximately 140 years of agricultural land use that highlights the various changes in management, tenure and ownership of Victorian land since settlement. While the landscape has always been used to graze animals or raise crops the archaeological sites show activities including, land clearance, construction of domestic and agricultural buildings, boundaries, roads and pathways.

D. McDonald is indicated in the 1915 Parish plan for Clarendon as having acquired just over 80 acres of land on 35J on 26 June 1886 (see attached plan). The property is on Fishers Road and one of the close neighbours is Henry Bowers, the homestead of which has been listed on Heritage Victoria's Heritage Inventory as H7622-0456. While D. McDonald is listed as acquiring this portion of land in 1886 the Buninyong and District Newsletter mentions a Donald McDonald as having arrived at Durham Lead (which is very close to the Narmbool estate) in the 1860s which could indicate a longer association with the district. However, it is not confirmed whether this is the same individual who took up the land at the Narmbool estate, a relative or is an entirely different settler.

Physical evidence of squatting and the Closer Settlement policies are present throughout the Narmbool estate. It is likely that the McDonalds Farm site includes a rare survival of a collection of archaeological sites and deposits (with apparently good integrity) that represent important changes in agricultural practice and land tenure in Victoria in the latter quarter of the 19th Century and first quarter of the 20th Century.

The settlement of the Victorian countryside through squatting and pre-emptive selection as well as the protracted and damaging attempts by the Crown to wrest ownership through various land acts is a paramount contributor to the pattern of land use, ownership and agrarian economy seen today. The foundations of rural communities, land laws and attitude to the countryside are provided by this history. The challenges faced by farmers on small selections such as Bowers, caused privations that contributed to the pioneer legend and in some cases promoted innovation in agricultural practices. The eventual failure of selection and soldier settlement is an important component of 20th Century Victorian history.

The archaeological and historical landscape at the McDonald's farm has the ability to yield physical evidence important under the headings of historical, scientific and social significance.

Today the landscape has considerable aesthetic significance as a rare, intact historical landscape with picturesque vistas to Mount Buninyong, and ruins and remnant gardens contributing to an understanding of a rural life not seen for almost a century.

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/>