
WATTLE PARK HOMESTEAD

Location

85-87 SEWELLS ROAD, TARNEIT VIC 3029

Municipality

WYNDHAM CITY

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7822-2396

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - November 10, 2020

The property now known as Wattle Park (85-87 Sewells Road, Tarneit), was first occupied by Europeans in c.1838, when Scottish immigrants Andrew and William Forlonge established a pastoral run on the Werribee River. The Forlonge's constructed a home station and outstation huts on their pastoral run – including a structure on land currently encompassed by this property. By 1867, Wattle Park is recorded as including a bluestone house, stables, workers huts, and a cistern; and it seems likely that the house recorded as present in 1867, is the same structure/or a modified version of the structure dating to the Forlonge's occupation. Wattle Park functioned as a mixed-used farm (grazing and cropping) throughout the nineteenth century and has strong associations with the early development of the farming industry in the local region. The property is more broadly associated with the development of the Merino sheep industry in Victoria; due to its association with the Forlonge family who played a significant role in the development of this sheep breed.

From 1899 to 2020, the land has been occupied as a mixed-use farm (cropping and sheep grazing) by members of the Sewell family, and as such the site is historically significant at a local level as representative of land continually occupied for farming purposes. In c.1911, the Sewell family constructed a new timber house on land immediately adjacent to the former bluestone dwelling. This timber house is currently preserved at the site and has undergone only minor modifications since its original construction date. The c.1911 house is significant at a local level due to its historical associations with the Sewell family, and as a representative example of architectural form and interior decoration of early twentieth century farm dwellings.

Structures associated with the nineteenth century occupation of the site are partially preserved at Wattle Park; including, a dwelling (brick and bluestone) and a cistern (brick and bluestone). These structures hold architectural and archaeological significance as representative of nineteenth century construction methods and architectural styles. There is 'moderate to high potential' for archaeological features and deposits to be preserved within/and in the vicinity of these partially preserved structures. Any preserved archaeological features and/or deposits will likely be associated with the nineteenth to early-twentieth century occupation of the site for farming purposes, and are likely to be in a condition that could contribute to an understanding of the site's historic occupation.

The site has been assessed as having 'moderate' archaeological potential, and 'moderate to high' heritage significance at a local level.

Interpretation of Site

N.B. This site was inspected as part of a larger heritage survey undertaken during the assessment phase of a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for the property at 85-87 Sewells Road Tarneit. The CMP is currently in preparation; once completed a copy of the document will be provided to Heritage Victoria. A summary of the site inspection, including photographs of the site, has been provided as Attachment 1, Maps and Figures have been provided as Attachment 2. Analysis of site (interpretation) As a result of the site inspection and background research, the nominated site has been assessed as having 'moderate to high' archaeological potential; and as holding a 'moderate to high' local heritage significance; as detailed below: Threshold A (archaeology) Background research and the site inspection indicate that: • There is 'moderate to high potential' for archaeological features and deposits to be preserved within the nominated site boundaries; and • Any preserved archaeological features and/or deposits will be associated with the nineteenth to early twentieth century occupation of the site for 'farming purposes', and are likely to be in a condition that could contribute to an understanding of the sites historic occupation. All portions of the property (Wattle Park, 85-87 Sewells Road, Tarneit); subject to a heritage survey (15-25/10/2020) and assessed as having more than 'low archaeological potential' have been recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Inventory (see Attachments 1-2). The nominated site extent includes: • The visible footprint of a nineteenth century homestead/dwelling (bluestone and brick), that was potential occupied from as early as 1838; and was definitely occupied from c.1867-1911; • A nineteenth cistern (bluestone and brick); and • A curtilage of land surrounding the above structures that potentially includes additional features and or deposits associated with the c.1838 to 1911 occupation of the site. A timber house (dating to c.1911) is also located within the nominated site boundaries. This structure in itself does not have 'archaeological potential' – and is not recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Inventory. However, there is potential for earlier structural features and/or archaeological deposits to be preserved beneath this dwelling – this structure is built on its original timber stumps and has not been subject to twentieth/twenty-first century modification that could potentially have resulted in significant ground disturbance. Threshold B (place history) Background research indicates that: • The property is clearly associated with the 1838-c.1845 occupation of the site by the Forlonge brothers; and has ongoing nineteenth to twentieth century historic associations with: the development of the farming industry in the region, and with significant local individuals including the Chirnside and Sewell families.

Hermes Number 206956

Property Number

History

Place History: c.1838-1852 Historic records indicate that the farming property now known as Wattle Park (85-87 Sewells Road, Tarneit) falls within the boundaries of a squatting run established in c.1838 by brothers Andrew

and William Forlonge. In the early 1830s, the Forlonge brothers had immigrated from Scotland to Tasmania with their parents John and Eliza - the family has strong associations with the development of the Merino sheep breed in Australia (Adams 1966; Tasmanian Archives 1800-1900). Andrew and William travelled to Port Phillip in 1838 and by 1839 were advertising sheep for sale from their station on the Werribee River. It appears that the Forlonge's 'Werribee River' run remained under Andrew Forlonge's management until c.1845; however, droughts and the ensuing depression in the 1840s led to the Forlonges financial (Adams 1966; Geelong Advertiser, 20 Sep. 1841, p. 2 & 24 Oct. 1842, p. 1; Port Phillip Government Gazette, 22 Apr. 1840, p. 2 & 16 Apr. 1844, p. 63). Andrew left the country in 1845 bound for England; William would recover from his financial losses and go on to develop successful pastoral holdings in northeast Victoria (Adams 1966). While the precise boundaries of the Forlonge's 'Werribee River' run are uncertain, William Wedge Darke undertook a survey of the region in 1839, and the resultant plan marks the location of pastoral stations and outstations (Darke 1839). Three structures are marked as part of the Forlonge run; the central structure, a station homestead or outstation, is located on land that falls within the boundaries of the present-day property at 85-87 Sewells Road, Tarneit. Although squatters holding leases for land in the region, including the Chirnside brothers, likely used the land for grazing purposes during the period 1845 to 1852, it may not have been occupied under a formal pastoral lease at this time. Place History: 1852-1910 Wattle Park is encompassed by Crown Section 16, Parish of Tarneit. This land was progressively sold as series of crown allotments (CA) during crown land sales of the 1850s; purchases include: Phillip Donohue (1852), Robert Hepburn (1853), and P. Murphy (1856) (Land title records (Landata 2020)). A preliminary search of historic records suggests that both Donohue and Murphy established farms that encompassed at least part of the property, and that they retained ownership of their land until at least 1864. The land was likely used for grazing of stock (cattle and sheep) during this period (The Age; 1 Sep. 1864, p.2). No records dating 1854-1866, have been identified specifically relating to the occupation of the allotments (CA E & CA EF) purchased by Robert Hepburn in 1853; and it is possible that Hepburn purchased the property on a speculative basis. It is worth noting that the bluestone dwelling currently extant at Wattle Park, is located on this allotment. While it is not possible to definitively exclude Hepburn from having occupied the land, it seems likely that construction of this dwelling pre-dates, or potentially post-dates, Hepburn's ownership period. By 1867, the entirety of the study area had been consolidated into a single farming property under the ownership and occupation of Alexander Bruce – the property from this point appears in historic records as Wattle Park (The Argus 22 Oct. 1867, p. 4). Bruce was residing at Wattle Park with his wife in October 1867, when she gave birth to a son, and in 1871 when Bruce advertised the farm to let it is recorded as including 1,700 acres of land, a bluestone house, man's hut, stables and water tank (Australasian 4 Mar. 1871, p. 3). In 1871, John Commelin Simpson and Robert Dawbin took out a five year lease on Bruce's property. Dawbin resided at Wattle Park with his wife from 1871 to 1876. The property primarily functioned as a sheep farm during this period; with Dawbin breeding and grazing wool producing sheep, including Romney Marshes and Merinos (The Argus 13 Mar. 1873, p. 3; Geelong Advertiser 27 Dec. 1873, p. 2; Australasian 7 Oct. 1876, p. 27). Alexander Bruce sold the property to Thomas Chirnside in 1875 – at which time Robert Dawbin was still occupying the land as a lessee. Members of the Chirnside family – Thomas, his brother Andrew; and Andrew's sons, George Thomas and John Percy – maintained ownership of the property until 1911 and continued to operate 'Wattle Park' as part of their large pastoral holdings (The Leader, 02/07/1887: 30; Wills & Probate (PROV 2020)). By 1899, much of the Chirnsides' estate had been sold or was held under lease as smaller farms, and in that year 'Wattle Park' was offered for lease as advertised below: FARM TO LET. FARM known as Wattle Park, containing 215 acres cultivation land, to let for five years. About 100 acres unbroken land adjoining can be taken in. Stone house, Underground Tank, Stable, Yards, and frontage to Werribee river. Apply to PERCY CHIRNSIDE, Werribee. Bacchus March Express, 08 Apr. 1899, p. 2 In 1899 Donald Sewell took out a lease on 'Wattle Park'. Donald and his wife Mary (nee Cowie) appear to have been residing on the property from that year – occupying the existing bluestone house (The Ballarat Star, 30 Sep. 1899, p. 6). A review of market records indicates that Sewell grazed Merino sheep on his property and was producing wool from his stock during his lease term 1899-1911 (Leader, 06 Jan. 1900, p. 13; Weekly Times, 21 Dec. 1907, p. 33 & 09 Apr. 1910, p. 34; Land title records (Landata 2020)). Place History: 1910-2020 In 1911, Donald Sewell purchased Wattle Park farm, and shortly after gaining ownership of the land constructed a new timber dwelling – the weatherboard house currently extant within the property. Members of the Sewell family resided in this timber house until the 1980s; and continued to use the land for farming purposes – primarily cropping and sheep crazing – until the present day (2020). The nineteenth century bluestone homestead remained in use as accommodation for farm employees during the early twentieth century until it was abandoned due to structural instability (Land title records (Landata 2020); pers. comm. Sylvia Sewell, September 2020).

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/>