
Prefabricated Iron Cottage



Source: Victorian Heritage Register

Location

Off Weatherboard Road INVERLEIGH, Golden Plains Shire

Municipality

GOLDEN PLAINS SHIRE

Level of significance

Registered

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H0880

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO8

Heritage Listing

Golden Plains Shire

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

Source: Victorian Heritage Register -

The portable iron cottage built of galvanised corrugated iron on a panelised wrought iron frame stands in ruins

on the north side of the Barwon River near the McCallum property, Argyle, Inverleigh on the site of the old weatherboard pre-emptive right homestead block in section No. 1, parish of Murdedake. It is typical of the portable and prefabricated housing manufactured in the mid-nineteenth century in Great Britain, to meet the needs of the Australian colonies during the gold rushes.

This iron house is one of the few known surviving works of the manufactory of John Walker of Millwall, Poplar in London. It is of paramount importance to the industrial history of the nineteenth century. The structure was moved to its present location at an unknown date for use as a farm building. From the late 1830's the weatherboard station pastoral run, which was owned by the famous Derwent Company, was located on both sides of the Barwon river near Inverleigh. In 1854 it was subdivided into Weatherboard No.1 on the north side of the river and Weatherboard No.2 on the south side. Weatherboard No.1 became the property in 1856 of William Berthon, the son of Benjamin Berthon (1784-1854) JP, of Woodlands, Cross Marsh, Tasmania. The Berthon family purchased other land in the vicinity of Inverleigh, which they later sold, the McCallum family the purchasing part of the old weatherboard No.1 site. Shire of Bannockburn rate books shown Alexander McCallum, Scottish Settler, at Weatherboard for the first time in 1876. The prefabricated iron cottage which now stands near the north bank of the Barwon River on McCallum family property is believed to have been moved there from another site at some undetermined date. Dr. Miles Lewis has summed up its significance in his paper on the 'Diagnosis of prefabricated buildings'. He describes it as 'the shell of a house', which probably had a central passage and two rooms on either side and with two cast iron plates which identify it as the work of the manufactory of John Walker. Correspondence dated 1852 shows that in that year John Walker was making 36 iron houses 'for the residence of emigrants

sent out by the government to Australia'. Some were used as homes for government employees but a number were auctioned off at later dates. It seems likely, according to Lewis that one of these found its way to Inverleigh and was put up as a shed probably without lining, flooring or partitions, which might explain why there is no trace of them today.

The portable iron cottage has both architectural and historical significance, therefore, a number of reasons:

1. The four room house, built of galvanised corrugated iron on a panelised wrought iron frame, is typical of portable and prefabricated housing manufactured in the mid-nineteenth century in Great Britain to meet the exigencies of the Australian colonies during the gold rushes.
2. This iron house is one of the few known surviving works of the manufactory of John Walker of Millwall, Poplar in London.
3. The manufacture of portable iron houses in Britain for export to the colonies is of paramount importance in the history of the nineteenth century industrial processes in the western world, and of particular importance to the history of settlement in Victoria.
4. The cottage has historical associations with early pastoral settlement in the Geelong region, located as it is on part of the old weatherboard pastoral run established in the late 1830's by the Derwent Company and taken up by George Mercer (1772-1853), a notable early pastoralist.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Golden Plains - Golden Plains Shire Heritage Study Phase 1, Lorraine Huddle P/L, 2003;
Construction dates	1850,
Architect/Designer	Walker, John,
Hermes Number	23593
Property Number	

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.

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