

# MOUNT RIDLEY HOMESTEAD



Mt Ridley homestead from south



Mt Ridley homestead from north east



Mt Ridley stable from south



Mt Ridley stable from north west



Mt Ridley stable interior



Mt Ridley homestead interior looking towards front door



Mt Ridley homestead entrance



Mt Ridley homestead grill in verandah floor to light cellar



Mt Ridley basement



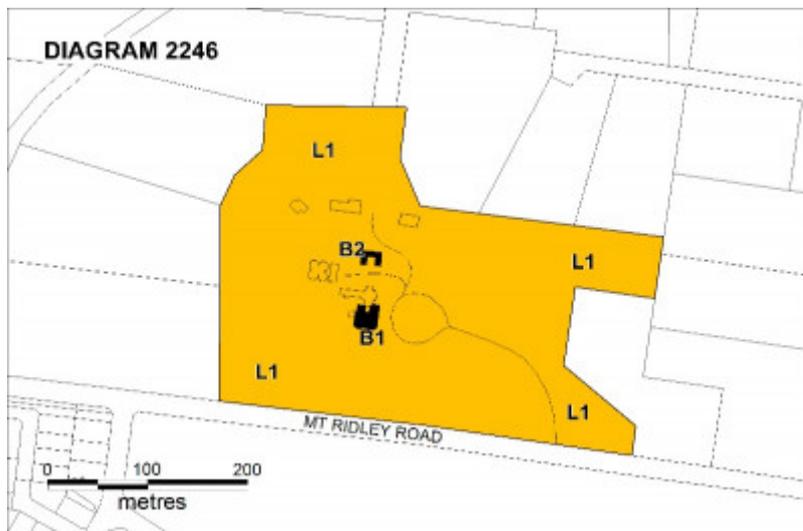
Mt Ridley basement



Mt Ridley basement



Ground floor from below



mt ridley plan.jpg

---

### Location

100 MT RIDLEY ROAD MICKLEHAM, HUME CITY

### Municipality

HUME CITY

### Level of significance

Registered

### Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2246

### Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO34

### VHR Registration

December 8, 2011

### Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

---

### Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

What is significant?

Mount Ridley homestead comprises an early bluestone house and an impressive stable building, located on an extinct volcano called Mount Ridley to the north of Melbourne. The house was built in 1848-50 by Captain James Pearson, who had leased the 640 acre property in 1842 while on a visit to the colony, and returned in 1847 with his wife and her cousin, Frederic Race Godfrey. He purchased more land surrounding Mount Ridley and also the land he had been leasing, and built an impressive homestead. The construction was documented in the diaries of Godfrey, who visited often on his way to his station in the Loddon district. The Pearsons lived in England from 1858 until 1875 and during that time the property was leased to Godfrey, who was a prominent member of numerous Melbourne associations and an MLA, and the house became a centre of society. In 1881 the property was sold to the grazier William Malpas, who in 1882 commissioned the architect Evander McIver to make extensive alterations to the house, including enlargement of the attic storey and the construction of an impressive brick stable and coach house. It subsequently had a number of owners before being acquired in the 1970s by developers with plans to subdivide and create a suburb, Mt Ridley New Town, but the rezoning caused a political scandal and the scheme was abandoned. The house became derelict and was restored in 1987 when extensive additions were made. The property was purchased in 2010 by the Melbourne Anglican Trust Corporation for use as the Hume Anglican Grammar School.

Mount Ridley homestead is a single-storey bluestone house with two polygonal bays on the front elevation facing towards Melbourne, with a hipped slate roof and verandahs around three sides. A notable feature is the six-room bluestone basement, which received natural light by windows opening into an open space below the verandah. This is likely to have contained service and storage areas and possibly staff accommodation. The house was originally built in a U-shape and had dormer windows in the roof, but the rear courtyard was covered and the dormers removed as part of the 1987 works. At that time substantial additions were also made: a large living, kitchen and dining room addition at the rear, and an indoor pool and a bathroom pavilion on the west side. The original room arrangements were also altered, the internal finishes and fittings substantially replaced, and the staircase to the attic storey removed. The stable is a two-storey red brick building with cream brick dressings around doors and windows and at the corners. It is a U-shaped building with a recessed stable court at the front and with gables inset with circular windows over each projecting wing. The interior has in part been converted to residential use, but some original features, including some brick paving (over part of the ground floor), remain on the ground floor.

This site is part of the traditional land of the Wurundjeri people.

How is it significant?

Mount Ridley homestead is of architectural and historical significance to the state of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

Mount Ridley homestead is of architectural significance as a fine example of a single-storey colonial homestead. A rare feature is the basement service area, which is unusual in Victoria, where detached service areas or attached service wings were preferred. The stable building is an outstanding example of its kind, and its scale and form reflect the importance of horses, and of stable buildings in which to house them, as a reflection of the wealth of their owners in nineteenth century society.

Mount Ridley homestead is historically significant for its basement service areas which reflect the often poor living and working conditions of servants in the early colonial period, conditions which tended to be improved later partly due to the difficulty of obtaining and keeping good servants. The homestead is also of historical significance for its association with the early settlement of Victoria, with its builder Captain James Pearson and with Frederic Race Godfrey, the squatter, businessman and Member of Parliament, who lived in the house for seventeen years.

## **Permit Exemptions**

### **General Exemptions:**

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which

don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

Places of worship: In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must **notify** the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

Subdivision/consolidation: Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

### **Specific Exemptions:**

General Conditions: 1. All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object. General Conditions: 2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of works that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such works shall cease and Heritage Victoria shall be notified as soon as possible. General Conditions: 3. If there is a conservation policy and plan all works shall be in accordance with it. Note: A Conservation Management Plan or a Heritage Action Plan provides guidance for the management of the heritage values associated with the site. It may not be necessary to obtain a heritage permit for certain works specified in the management plan. General Conditions: 4. Nothing in this determination prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions. General Conditions: 5. Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authorities where applicable. Minor Works : Note: Any Minor Works that in the opinion of the Executive Director will not adversely affect the heritage significance of the place may be exempt from the permit requirements of the Heritage Act. A person proposing to undertake minor works must submit a proposal to the Executive Director. If the Executive Director is satisfied that the proposed works will not adversely affect the heritage values of the site, the applicant may be exempted from the requirement to obtain a heritage permit. If an applicant is uncertain whether a heritage permit is required, it is recommended that the permits co-ordinator be contacted. Interior: Internal alterations to the 1987 additions to the homestead are exempt from permit.

The Homestead and Stables:

Interior:

Internal alterations to the 1987 additions to the homestead are exempt from permit. Interior alterations to the refurbished ground floor of the original homestead building that do not include changes to the arrangement of rooms are exempt from permit. Minor changes to wall, floor and ceiling finishes such as removal or introduction of carpet, repainting of painted surfaces, rewiring where new wiring is chased into plaster walls or set within the floor structure, and polishing of floors are exempt from permit. New light and electrical fittings are exempt from permit.

Internal changes to the refurbished areas of the stables that do not include changes to the disposition of rooms are exempt from permit. Minor changes to wall, floor and ceiling finishes such as removal or introduction of carpet, repainting of painted surfaces, rewiring where new wiring is chased into plaster walls or set within the floor structure, and polishing of floors are exempt from permit. New light and electrical fittings are exempt from permit.

New buildings:

Development in accordance with those drawings referred to on page 2 of the Hume Planning Scheme, Hume Anglican School, 100 Mt Ridley Road, Mickleham, April 2010 Incorporated Document, is exempt from permit.

Other new buildings and works to be undertaken on land located to the west of a north-south line drawn at a distance of 10 metres from the west side of the house, more than 10 metres north or east of the stables, and more than 5 metres north of the driveway, provided that they are two-storey or less in height, are permit exempt.

Landscaping:

Landscaping works are exempt from permit providing they are at a distance of 10 metres or greater from any external wall of the original homestead structure or the stables. Tree removal, tree lopping and planting of trees are exempt from permit providing they are at a distance of 10 metres or greater from any external wall of the original homestead structure or the stables. Minor landscaping works within 10 metres of the registered buildings that do not introduce new garden beds or watering systems near the registered structures and do not result in the removal of original bluestone cobblestones between the house and the stables are exempt from permit.

## Theme

2. Peopling Victoria's places and landscapes 4. Transforming and managing the land

Construction dates	1850,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Other Names	Mt Ridley,
Hermes Number	3321
Property Number	

---

## History

### CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

#### Basement Offices

Basement offices were common in British houses in the eighteenth century, but by the nineteenth century were considered unhealthy, and in Victoria they were unusual, though not unknown. The service areas (offices) of nineteenth century houses in Victoria were at first most often located in a detached building, and later were in an attached service wing. The best example of basement offices is at Rippon Lea (1868-9), where a large amount of soil had to be cleared from around the basement so that the rooms could receive adequate natural light. Some houses, such as Mandeville Hall, had semi-basement service areas, and they seem to have sometimes been used on sloping sites, such as at Carranballac, where they were not completely underground. Basement areas were more often used simply for storage.

Frederic Race Godfrey (1828-1910)

[Margaret Gravell, 'Godfrey, Frederic Race (1828 - 1910)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 4, Melbourne University Press, 1972, pp 257-258.]

Godfrey, the squatter and businessman, was born in India, was educated at Exeter Grammar School and at 19 migrated to Port Phillip to become the partner of his brother Henry who in 1846 had taken up Boort station, 64,000 acres (25,900 ha) in the Loddon district, where he was the first white settler. In 1850, by converting a swamp into Lake Boort, Frederic became a pioneer of irrigation. He had close contact with the local Aborigines, one of whom described him as 'the Loddon blacks' best friend'. Later as vice-chairman of the Aborigines Protection Board and as a commissioner reporting on the Aborigines in 1877 he defended them as intelligent, industrious and honest. While at Boort he sold much stock to the Bendigo goldfields. On 29 April 1854 at St Kilda he married Margaret Lilius, daughter of David Chambers; they had five sons and four daughters.

In 1863 Godfrey sold Boort, moved to Mount Ridley, Craigieburn, and also bought Pevensey station near Hay in New South Wales. He lived at Mount Ridley for seventeen years, sending stock to the Melbourne markets. He was also active in local government as president of the Merriang Shire Council and member of the Broadmeadows council. In 1874-77 he represented East Bourke in the Legislative Assembly. Godfrey moved to St Kilda in 1880 and became a founding director of the Trustees, Executors and Agency Co. Ltd, Melbourne, serving as chairman in 1895-1909. In 1890 he was appointed an honorary commissioner of the Savings Bank. An aspect of his agricultural interest was his original membership of the old Port Phillip Farmers' Association which merged into the Royal Agricultural Society. A prominent Anglican, he was a member of the Church of England Association; he had been appointed the first lay canon of St Paul's Cathedral in 1869 and held other church offices. He showed varied interests as a member of the Melbourne Club for fifty-eight years and its president in 1887, as a justice of the peace, president of the Melbourne Hospital Committee in 1887-1904, commissioner of the State Savings Bank from 1890, member of the committee of the Felton Bequest in 1904-09, founder and vice-president of the Philatelic Society of Victoria in 1892 and a member of the royal commission on charitable institutions in 1890-91. Interested in natural history, he became a member of the Acclimatisation Society of Victoria in 1863 and served as its elected president for several years.

The architect: Evander McIver

Evander McIver was the Broadmeadows Board and then Shire Secretary, Surveyor and Engineer for thirty-seven years. He also held concurrently during part of this time the positions of surveyor for the Boroughs of Brunswick, Flemington and Kensington, and also practised privately as an architect. In the Broadmeadows area he designed the Greenvale Methodist Church (1868-9) and Roxburgh Park homestead (1895). He designed numerous Presbyterian churches, including those at North Melbourne (1879, VHR H7), Brunswick (1884), Brighton (1889), Kew (1887) with its manse (1890), Camperdown (1901) and Kerang (1892), as well as churches for other denominations. He also designed the town halls at Brunswick (first stage, 1876) and Flemington & Kensington (1892) and had many residential and commercial commissions, including the Commercial Bank of Australasia, 192 Sydney Road, Brunswick (1887).

## HISTORY OF PLACE

[Information from David Moloney & Vicki Johnson, 'City of Hume: Heritage Study of the former Shire of Bulla District', 1998.]

The land on which the Mount Ridley station was established was originally part of a pastoral run leased by John Sinclair, and was later taken over (possibly in the late 1830s) by his overseer, James Malcolm. In the Crown Land sales of April 1840 the land on the hill, then known as Kinlochewe, 640 acres of Section 12 of the Parish of Kalkallo, was purchased for £1312 (41/- an acre) by Duncan Cameron. There was at that time a 'wood' dwelling on the property, probably part of a small complex of buildings accommodating the seven 'free persons', including gardeners and agricultural workers, mentioned in the 1841 census. In December 1842 Captain James Pearson signed an agreement with Cameron to lease the 640 acres for five years at £70 per year.

Pearson was born in Scotland in 1799, ran away to sea as an adolescent, had become a captain by age 29, and in 1829 captained a vessel chartered by the British Government to deliver female prisoners to Hobart. In 1835 he met and married a Sydney woman, who died in Perth, during one of Pearson's voyages, in 1839. Pearson saw the potential of the new colony, and eventually accumulated sufficient capital to establish himself as a grazier in the newly opened up Port Phillip district. After making the lease agreement with Cameron, Pearson continued in his seafaring activities, but after returning to England in 1846 and marrying his second wife, Augusta Godfrey, he sailed to Port Phillip with his wife and her 18 year old cousin, Frederic Race Godfrey, arriving in March 1847.

At the Government land sales in 1847, Pearson bought four separate but adjoining sections of land, altogether 1447 acres, in the southern part of the Parish of Yuroke. He also purchased the property he had been leasing from Cameron, then known as Kinloch Hill, as well as other adjacent land in the next few years. Pearson renamed the hill, an extinct volcano, Mount Ridley, which was the name of a rocky outcrop in Dartmouth, Devonshire, behind Augusta's family home.

The Pearsons moved to Mount Ridley station, at first living in a house on land west of the present homestead block. During 1848-1850 Pearson built a homestead on top of the hill. The siting on the crater of the extinct volcano facilitated the creation of a huge six-room cellar. The house was constructed of bluestone taken from a quarry on the north-eastern slope of the hill. This has now been filled with stone taken from old dry-stone walls. References to the construction of the house are included in the diaries of Frederic Race Godfrey, who visited

often on his way to and from Boort, his station in the Loddon district, while the house was under construction. On 13 June 1850, he notes that 'We strolled around the garden and over the new house . which is now plastered and the windows in and the floor laid down'. On 15 November 1850 he 'found the Pearsons settled in their big new house', which he noted had over twenty rooms, including a large drawing room. The Pearson entertained at Mt Ridley and had good connections with Port Phillip society.

In 1858 the Pearsons returned to England, probably for the education of their children, and Godfrey took up residence at Mt Ridley, leasing it from Pearson from 1858-1875 and using the land as a depot for sheep from his property, Pevensey, on the Murrumbidgee near Hay, and properties of other members of the Godfrey family.

During the years he leased Mt Ridley, Godfrey took an active and prominent role in local government. His friends included Sir William A'Beckett and Sir William Stawell and Bishops Perry and Le Souef, and during his tenancy Mt Ridley became a centre of Melbourne society. When the family returned from England in 1875, Godfrey moved to Melbourne. Pearson's sons, the oldest, James Godfrey Pearson, and another brother took over the running of Mt Ridley

In March 1875 the architect Evander Mclver called for tenders for extensive repairs to a villa at Mickleham.

By 1881-82 the property was owned by William John Malpas, a grazier. In July 1882 the prominent architect Evander Mclver called tenders for extensive alterations and repairs to the homestead and for the construction of the two-storey brick stables and coach house at Mount Ridley. On stylistic grounds it appears that the alterations included the addition of an attic storey and dormer windows, possibly the external rendering of the house, and the addition of the cast iron verandah.

Malpas only owned the property for about five years, after which it had a number of owners, and some of the land was sold off. Owners included James Gibb of Berwick, a successful stud breeder, George Howat, a former Newmarket auctioneer, and later his son, George, a sheep breeder. The Howats sold it in 1961.

The property was subsequently acquired by developers, the T&G Mutual Life Society, who in 1976 developed plans to subdivide and create a mini-suburb, Mt Ridley New Town, the largest single residential development in Australia with a population of 120,000. However land was in a green belt and the developers succeeded in having it rezoned for urban development, creating a scandal amongst politicians and planners. The development did not proceed.

The house became a well-known bohemian squat-cum-artists' colony during the hippy period, and by 1986, when it was sold, it was stripped and derelict. It was restored in 1987, and extensive additions made to the rear. The stables were restored in the late 1980s and converted into a residence. 1220 acres of land remain.

The property is said to have been used as a set for a number of period films, including the original Mad Max, Squizzy Taylor and Blue Ribbon lady.

In 2010 the property was purchased by the Melbourne Anglican Trust Corporation for use as part of the Hume Anglican Grammar School.

## **Assessment Against Criteria**

a. Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history

Mount Ridley homestead is historically significant for its association with the early settlement of Victoria. It is a fine example of the gentlemen's residences which were built on farming estates in the countryside around Melbourne in the pre-gold period. The basement service areas are of historical significance as a reflection of the poor living and working conditions of servants in the early colonial period, conditions which were later improved due to the difficulties of obtaining and keeping good servants.

b. Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history.

c. Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Victoria's cultural history.

d. Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places or environments.

Mount Ridley homestead is a fine example of a single-storey colonial homestead, notable for the basement service area. Basement service areas were unusual in Victoria, and detached service areas or attached service wings were preferred. The stable building is an outstanding example of its kind, and its scale and form reflect the importance of horses and of stable buildings as a reflection of the wealth and status of their owners in nineteenth century society.

e. Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.

f. Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.

g. Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions.

h. Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Victoria's history.

Mount Ridley homestead is historically significant for its association with its builder, Captain James Pearson, and with Frederic Race Godfrey, the squatter, businessman and Member of Parliament, who lived in the house for seventeen years.

## **Plaque Citation**

Mount Ridley Homestead was built in 1848-50 and extensive additions designed by the architect Evander McIver, including the impressive stables, were made in 1882. The house is notable for the rare basement service area.

## **Extent of Registration**

1. All the land marked L1 on Diagram 2246 held by the Executive Director, being all of Lot 12 on Plan of Subdivision 412510

2. All the buildings and structures B1-2 on Diagram 2246 held by the Executive Director.

B1 Homestead

B2 Stable

---

*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/>*