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# ROXBURGH PARK HOMESTEAD COMPLEX SITE

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## Location

30 WHILTSHIRE DRIVE ROXBURGH PARK, HUME CITY

## Municipality

HUME CITY

## Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

## Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7822-0024

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO278

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - April 1, 2010

Data has been updated as a result of the Outer Western Metro Project, Context, March 2010.

### Historical Significance

The Roxburgh Park complex is of historical significance for its evidence of the early farming settlement of the area, new rural developments in the 1890s, and twentieth century farming in the district.

It is also significant for its role, albeit an aborted one, in the proposed development of the 'Hopetoun' model suburb.

Between the dwellings and the sheds a number of features are apparent which probably relate to the site's agricultural past. These include a slight depression running north south which may represent a boundary ditch or fenceline and the remains of a gravel trackway running from the north west corner of the granite building towards the sheds. Two platform features to the north west, one of brick and another of concrete, probably represent the sites of small agricultural sheds.

The site has been subject to a number of alterations during its history, not least during the recent refurbishment. Indeed, examination of the site in comparison with the 1989 HI site card reveals the removal of archaeological features including concrete foundations to the north west of the sheds and a domestic refuse dump to the south west. This also shows that the previous access track has been removed together with a band of exotic plantings around the south west of the homestead and around the granite building.

However, the survival of features and other original plantings suggests that these have not entailed significant ground disturbance. There is therefore a high potential for the preservation of sub-surface deposits across the site which could provide insight concerning the site's farming history, and this is particularly true within the footprint of the shed structures where deposits are likely to provide information regarding the date and use of these structures.

#### Interpretation of Site

The standing features of the site comprise two dwellings, a modern toilet block, a large agricultural shed, and mature exotic plantings. The creation of the Roxburgh Park estate is such that the homestead is now surrounded by modern development allong McPherson Boulevard, Whiltshire Drive and Crestview Close, and by Roxburgh Homestead Primary School to the north (a small corrugated metal pig shed which now lies within the south western corner of the school grounds may relate to the previous farmstead).

The earlier of the dwellings on the site is a small extant vernacular granite structure which may date back to 1848, which would make it one of the very earliest granite buildings in the State. The granite outcrop at the crest of the hill is the likely source of the building's material. Substantial modifications over its history include a new roof and probable conversion into stables when the new brick house to its south east was built. This prominently sited 1895 homestead is an example of the revival of red brick revival which began in the 1880s in Victoria.

A new toilet block was constructed to the west of the granite structure as part of the recent refurbishments. A new path system and landscaping have also been installed and substantial new gardens of native plants and shrubs have been assembled to the front and rear of the 1895 building. Some of the original trees appear to have been retained, notably the mature pine trees to the south, now flanking the access road, and the mature Canary Island Palm at the front of the property.

Other Names ROXBURGH PARK HOMESTEAD COMPLEX,

Hermes Number 8684

Property Number

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## History

Donald Cameron bought a lot of 324 acres in February 1848, although he may have occupied the land for some time prior to his obtaining the freehold. The property lay near to the original main route to northeast Victoria and Sydney from the late 1830s to the early 1850s, before the main Sydney road was re-routed through Coburg

rather than Pascoe Vale. However, the likely site of the early road is approximately 750 metres to the east of the site, removing the possibility that the building may have been an early roadside building, such as an inn or blacksmith. The property in the 1880s was described in an asset report as a freehold of 684 acres divided into paddocks by post and rail fence, stone wall and brush fence on which stood a 4-roomed dwelling-house, kitchen and servant room built with stone walls and partitions of brick, slate roof (Moloney 2003). There was also a two-roomed timber cottage with an iron roof, used 'for bedrooms', and a 'men's bedroom' of the same construction. Other timber outbuildings included a dairy, a stable and a cart shed.

In March 1888, Margaret Cameron, Donald's widow, undertook to sell the property to a David Munro, a prominent contractor and land boomer who assigned the contract for this and some adjoining plots to the Mercantile Finance Trustees and Agency Company of Australia Limited in June 1889. The property was mortgaged to the Bank of South Australia Limited in order to secure a loan for the proposed 'Somerton Park Estate', part of a planned model suburb called 'Hopetoun' to be developed around the newly created Somerton railway station. The developers of Hopetoun intended to develop a granite quarry within the development, and the remains of a quarry recorded in 1989 beyond the current site may be a relic of the Hopetoun proposal. However, in common with many such proposals formulated during the 1880s land boom, 'Hopetoun' was never put into effect. It is though considered very significant in the history of town planning in Australia as potentially the earliest, and most ambitious, precursor of the garden suburb. Munro went bankrupt in early 1890 and defaulted on the conditions of the contract, and ownership of the property reverted to the Cameron family.

The property was purchased in 1895 by Thomas Brunton, a prominent flour miller and holder of such public and community offices as the inaugural President of the Corn Trade Association, a Commissioner of the Melbourne Harbor Trust, President of the Royal Agricultural Society, and Member of the Legislative Council. It was almost certainly Brunton who named the property Roxburgh Park, after his birthplace on the river Tweed in Scotland. A month after the purchase, the architect Evander McIver called tenders for erection of the brick villa which now dominates the site. Brunton bred cattle, horses and Shropshire sheep on the Roxburgh Park property and may have used the property as a country estate.

Brunton sold the property in 1905 to the grazier Edmund Adolphus Porter, and in 1926 the property passed to Thomas Ellis Sylvester, who appears to have owned it for some years before it was acquired by the Commonwealth of Australia some time in the mid-forties. The property reverted to private ownership again between 1950 and 1988 when it was bought by the Urban Land Authority. The site passed into the control of the City of Hume Council and in 2000 the site was refurbished to become The Homestead Community and Learning Centre.

*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/>*