

# HERITAGE PLACE

**NAME OF PLACE:** ARRANDOOVONG HOMESTEAD COMPLEX

**ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE:** Chrome Road BRANXHOLME

**STUDY NUMBER:** 115

**HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:**

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**PRECINCT:** outside

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:** Southern Grampians Shire

**PARISH:** PARISH OF BRANXHOLME

**ACCESS DESCRIPTION:**

CFA 473 A-30; VicRoads 72 G6; Located in Chrome Road on the north side of the Henty Highway, approximately 11.5km north east of the township of Branxholme.

**SIGNIFICANCE RATING:** State



Arrandoovong Homestead Complex, Branxholme. Front Wing of Homestead.

**Image Date:** 26/03/03

**EXTENT OF LISTING:**

To the extent of: 1. All the buildings including the main house and its rear extension, the stables, the meathouse, the drive, the front and side garden and an area of 10,000 square metres generally around the main house.

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## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

Arrandoovong Homestead is a substantial two storey bluestone home built in the Italianate style. It is thought that the homestead was designed on the lines of Mrs. Angus Cameron's family home on the Isle of Arran off the coast of Scotland but it's form and planning are relatively conventional for the period, and can be compared directly with Skene Homestead, built about the same time. The scale of both these houses is rare, however, in the western District at this time. An early visitor (author unknown) described Arrandoovong as "the homestead, a large two storied bluestone structure stands on the crest of a grassy hill overlooking the Arrandoovong Creek and the main road from Hamilton to Branhholme" (Sharp, no date).

The homestead is built on a substantial plinth which acts as a sub-basement in one corner. It currently has a cast iron verandah, typical of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, especially of the 1880s. Almost certainly this replaced an earlier two storey timber verandah, again probably similar to that which existed at Skene. The walls are rock faced and set in 12" courses with white tuck pointing. The front door has been replaced, probably in the 1920s and is now varnished timber framed around three equal panels and neo-Georgian in style. It has a narrow sidelight of coloured and textured glass with a stylised floral motif. The front windows of the principal rooms on the ground floor are the original French doors. The side windows are six-paned double hung sashes. The main roof is M-shaped with a transverse main hip. The roofing material is slate. The chimneys of the main wing are red brick rather than bluestone.

Behind the main house, there is a single-storey timber service wing. From its Edwardian materials, detailing and roof form, this appears to date from about 1900. The most distinctive feature is the heavily corbelled red brick chimney. It was built as a kitchen wing, replacing an earlier structure. A late nineteenth century glazed timber vestibule still links the two wings. It has been substantially modernised internally.

To the far side of the kitchen wing there is a small weatherboard meat house. Beyond the kitchen garden there is a paved service yard enclosed on two sides by timber buildings. The one at the rear is a stable, coach house and groom's room. The one on the side is a machinery shed, store and barn. Both are weatherboard with corrugated iron gable roofs and also appear to date from about 1900.

The garden has retained some of the original 1850s plantings. These include the remnants of a *Crataegus* sp. (Hawthorn) hedge and specimens plantings of *Pinus pinea* (Stone Pine), *Pinus radiata* (Radiata Pine), *Quercus robur* (English Oak), *Ulmus procera* (English Elm), *Populus nigra* (Black or Lombardy Poplar), *Cupressus macrocarpa* (Monterey Cypress) and some fruit trees from 1850s orchard. These mature and in some cases senescent trees form the skeleton of the garden, around which later plantings have been added. The garden has been added to at various times, although the main plantings which are evident are those dating from the 1850s, the alterations and plantings done in the 1920-30s, and the majority of what we see in the garden today which has been planted by the Sharp family since their ownership in 1952.

Major works carried out between 1920-1930 are clearly evident within the garden. One of the alterations in this period was the re-alignment of the driveway from the Hamilton - Branhholme Road to its current location on Chrome Road. This driveway was direct-seed planted with *Eucalyptus cladocalyx* (Sugargum) which still line either side of the existing drive. The turning circle at the front of the house was also altered during this time and the four rectangular beds of roses laid out. It appears that several specimen trees were planted close to the homestead this time. An *Araucaria bidwillii* (Bunya Bunya Pine) to the south west of the homestead, *Cedrus atlantica* 'forma glauca' (Blue Cedar), *Quercus robur* (English Oak) to the immediate south of the homestead and to the far south west of the garden, and a variety of specimens of *Cupressus* and *Chamecyparis* to the south west of the garden all appear to date from this period.

A turning circle is located to the immediate front of the homestead, the centre of this is planted out in four equal rectangular beds of roses with a sundial in the centre. This is a modern planting which has been re-

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instated to the 1920s design.

To the east of the homestead two very large mature surviving poplars which probably date from the 1850s. Beyond these to the north east are three poplars planted on a row, possibly dating from the turn of the Century. To the south east of these are five Robinia pseudoacacia which have been planted at the termination of the hawthorn hedge which once provided the shape for the much larger carriage way and turning circle which came over the creek from the Hamilton - Branxholme Road. There are also two very large Cupressus macrocarpa (Monterey Cypress) which act as sentinels on either side of the entrance to the garden proper, these date from the mid to late nineteenth century.

Very few of the fruit trees from the 1850s orchard survive to the east of the homestead. Due to their age they are in poor condition. There is also a much later orchard containing a variety of modern and old fashioned standard fruit trees.

Beyond the Arrandoovong Creek there are few remaining Ulmus procera which lined the original driveway. To the north west of the homestead is a modern 'cottage style' garden which has been laid out to emulate an Edwardian flower garden. This has been enclosed with wooden fencing. A pair of macrocarpa stand at entrance to the garden from the 1930s driveway.

## **HISTORY:**

According to Billis and Kenyon, the squatting licence for Arrandoovong (or Arrandoorong), Portland Bay No. 162, was first taken up in August 1844 by Patrick Lynch (B&K, 167-8). It comprised 6,400 acres with 100 head of cattle and 500 sheep, a comparatively small run. It was held by Thomas Best from April 1851 to June 1853, at which time it passed to Angus Cameron.

Billis and Kenyon describe Patrick Lynch as a "carrier and squatter, Grange, 1845" but it is not clear if this means the original township of Hamilton or the squatting run The Grange or Upper Grange (B&K, 98). Interestingly, the licence number for The Grange is 163, the number preceding that of Arrandoovong. The Port Phillip Gazette of 1847 describes him as "carrier and squatter, Arrandorrong, Lower Grange, Portland" (Mouritz, 107). Lynch is not associated with any other run. Supposedly, he met his death on the road to Hamilton, near Paddy Lynch's Creek, an area reputed to be haunted by Paddy Lynch's ghost (Walter, 41).

Thomas Best, according to Billis and Kenyon, arrived in the colony at the end of 1834, an extremely early date, and was a blacksmith for the Henty family at Portland (B&K, 26). From there he went to Branxholme to be the publican the Traveller's Rest Inn from 1844 to 1845. It had been established in 1843 by Abraham Ward who left "when his young daughter was kidnapped by some Aborigines and was never returned" (Marriott, 148). Edward Bell, in his letter to Lt. Governor La Trobe in the early 1850s, states that had occupied Burchett's run near Penshurst (Bride, 298). In 1847 he is described as a settler at Arandouny, Portland (Mouritz, 61). No such place is listed in Billis and Kenyon and it is probably the same place as Arrandoovong, although this puts Best there four years before he is named as the licence holder by Billis and Kenyon. The confusion in dates may be the result of a swindle perpetrated by the infamous "Doctor" Kent who advertised in the Portland Gazette and the Belfast Advertiser that he had "purchased" the Traveller's Rest from Best with "accommodation for the most fastidious travellers" in June 1848 (Marriott, 149). It seems Best got his pub back but lost money and most of its contents. Kent was never caught.

Thomas Best had married Alice McGuire at the Presbyterian Church, Portland in 1844 (VPI, Reg. No. 3938). They had four daughters, Mary Ann (1845), Catherine (1849), Miriam (1851) and Hannah (1855) (VPI, Reg. No. 30665; 45897; 30838; 2135). Interestingly, the first and third births were registered at St Stephen's Anglican Church, and the second was registered at the Catholic Church. Thomas Best died in Branxholme, aged 70 in 1888, in which case he was about 16 when he arrived at Portland (VPI, Reg. No. 12289).

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Angus Cameron, who acquired the licence for Arrandoovong in 1853, also held the licence for Violet Creek from 1843 and Narrawong from 1848 (B&K, 38). Angus is said to have died in 1858 and it is generally accepted that his widow, Christina Cameron kept the properties going, in conjunction with her sons, notably John, but this is not confirmed by official records of births, deaths and marriages. The only possible death of an Angus Cameron which is registered in Victoria occurs in 1859 (VPI, Reg. No. 1944). No son with a given name John is registered as born to an Angus Cameron until 1859 and he was born at sea, although very early records may be missing (VPI, Reg. No. 6043). A John Hugh Cameron was born at Redruth to an Angus and Ann Cameron, nee Stevenson, possibly one of the Morgiana or Bochara Cameron families (VPI, Reg. No. 20717). Paul de Serville states that Donald Cameron married Christina McGillvray who was born in Inverness about 1819 (de Serville, 463). He states that she married a second time to Angus Cameron but de Serville seems to have confused the wives of Archibald and Donald Cameron. He writes "Under the instructions in Mrs. Cameron's will that Morgiana be disposed of when her eldest child came of age and the proceeds be distributed among her family, Morgiana was also sold in 1885. At first it was arranged to sell the run to H. N. Thornley, MLC and pastoralist. The deal collapsed and Morgiana also was then acquired by James Trangmar. Donald and Christina Cameron's youngest child came of age in 1868 before his father died.

Notwithstanding the notorious confusion of Camerons, the Arrandoovong Camerons were severely affected by the Land Acts of the 1860s, with virtually all of their land thrown open for selection. By the extensive use of dummies, Mrs. Cameron purchased most of the acreage which had been lost, but incurred a massive debt in doing so. In 1877, Mrs. Cameron leased her various properties, except for the Violet Creek homestead. Thomas Skene, owner of Bassett, took the lease of Arrandoovong at 3/6 per acre. His brothers David and William managed Arrandoovong, which was 9,740 acres at the time. When Christina Cameron died in 1881, it was sold to the Skene brothers, then in 1885 to A. S. Robertson, who re-sold it to Alexander Armstrong of Hexham in 1888. It seems likely that the original front verandah was replaced with the existing cast iron verandah between 1882 and 1889. It may have been prompted by the recent construction of Monivae, owned by the Thompson family, which was connected with the Skene and Robertson families. There is an Alexander Armstrong buried at Branxholme cemetery, the husband of Maggie Christina Armstrong, but since he was born about 1873, it seems unlikely that he was the owner of Arrandoovong.

During the Armstrongs' ownership, Arrandoovong was 10,430 acres. By the time the Sharps took over in 1952, the land had been reduced to 2,030 acres. Further subdivision has reduced the homestead portion to 1,200 acres, with the original woolshed now in separate ownership. Herbert T. Austin bought the homestead portion of Arrandoovong in 1923, and later sold it to E. G. Kiddle. In 1953 it was sold to J. W. Sharp, in whose family the property has remained since then.

The bluestone homestead was built by Angus Cameron soon after he acquired the licence in 1853. According to the Sharp family, the homestead was designed by Christina Cameron along the lines of her family's home on the Isle of Arran, off the west coast of Scotland. An inventory of Christina's property at the time of her death in 1881 lists Arrandoovong as 'a stone house of twelve rooms with slate roof, detached kitchen, servants room, pantry and cellar, a carriage house of hardwood with iron roof, a six stall stable of hardwood with iron roof, men's hut built of hardwood with iron roof, a woolshed for twelve shearers also built of hardwood with iron roof, a sheepwash, dams, waterholes and fencing of log brush, post and rail, post rail and wire, and post and wire.'

No architect or builder has yet been connected with the homestead yet a professional designer and a competent contractor must have been involved. Few houses of such sophistication were built at this early time since squatters rarely held much land as freehold. The most direct comparison is with William Skene's homestead, The Plains now known as Skene. No architect or builder has been connected with it, either.

A description of Arrandoovong in 1886 refers to an extensive garden laid out as a shrubbery with plantations of English and ornamental trees, an avenue of elms along the driveway and an orchard. The garden had fallen into

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disrepair by the mid 20th century. The cypress trees along Chrome Road, and the sugar gums along the present driveway were planted in the 1930s. When the Sharps arrived in 1952, several of old trees survived, and formed the basis of the present garden design.

## **THEMATIC CONTEXT:**

Theme 3: Developing local, regional and national economies

3.5 Developing primary production

3.5.1 Grazing stock

Theme 5: Working

5.8 Working on the land

## **CONDITION:**

Good

## **INTEGRITY:**

Excellent degree of integrity

## **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:**

What is significant?

The squatting run Arrandoovong dates from the earliest times, being taken up by Patrick Lynch in 1844. It's next owner was Thomas Best, a blacksmith in the service of the Henty family at Portland. He subsequently became a publican in Branhholme and sold Arrandoovong in 1853. It was the third owner, Angus Cameron who built the very large two storey bluestone homestead. In the further Western District at that time, Arrandoovong is comparable only with The Plains homestead (later known as Skene) and one of the key homesteads of the Robertson-Skene dynasty. They were later owners of Arrandoovong and were probably responsible for the replacement of the original front verandah with the existing. The conservative homestead is particularly fine. It is symmetrical, its plan is conventional, and the chaste detailing is in a refined classical style. No architect or builder has yet been connected with the design and construction. Several local architects, such as James Henry Fox, could have been responsible. A new kitchen wing was built around 1900. Various standard outbuildings complete the complex. The homestead was set within an extensively landscaped garden and park with an orchard and other special gardens. The homestead retains an excellent degree of integrity, with only minor changes during the Interwar period and the modernisation of the kitchen wing. The other buildings are also intact. All the buildings, the garden and the drive are in excellent condition.

How is it significant?

Arrandoovong Homestead Complex is of historical and architectural significance to the state of Victoria and the Southern Grampians Shire.

Why is it significant?

Arrandoovong Homestead complex is of historical significance for its direct associations with leading pastoral families over its first hundred years including the Camerons, Skene's, Robertsons, Armstrongs, Austins and Kiddles. Indirectly, it was connected with the Henty family, the founders of Victoria. Arrandoovong is of architectural significance as one of the earliest large homestead complexes in the Western District and, with additions and alterations which are significant their own right, as one of the most intact. Its garden and park setting reinforces and enhances that significance.

## **COMPARISON:**

345 Skene Homestead Complex, Skene Homestead Road, Strathkellar

009 Monivae Homestead Complex, Hamilton-Port Fairy Road, South Hamilton

369 Wando Dale Homestead Complex, Wando Dale Road, Wando Heights

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ASSESSED BY: AEN & TFH

ASSESSMENT DATE:

25-Nov-03

EXISTING LISTINGS:

HERITAGE STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Include in VHR  Include in RNE  Include in Local Planning Scheme

No Recommendations for Inclusions

REFERENCES:

Author	Title	Year	Page
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Don Garden	Hamilton: A Western District History	1984	104
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Thomas Francis Bride, C. E. Sayers, ed.	Letters from Victorian Pioneers	1969	298
William (Bill) Sharp	Arrandoovong information brochure		n.d.