

HERITAGE PLACE

NAME OF PLACE: SYMONS' HOMESTEAD COMPLEX

ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE: off Billywing Track GLENISLA

STUDY NUMBER: 449

HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:

PRECINCT: outside

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA: Southern Grampians Shire

ALLOTMENT: 5 **SECTION:** no **PARISH:** PARISH OF BILLIMINAH
section

ACCESS DESCRIPTION:

CFA 389 B; VicRoads 55 D7; located off the Billywing Track near a Shire gravel pit about 4.5kms east of Glenisla homestead.

SIGNIFICANCE RATING: Local



- Pooley-Symons Homestead, off Billywing Track, Glenisla

Image Date: 3/04/2003

EXTENT OF LISTING:

To the extent of: 1. All the homestead building, all the outbuildings, the dam and the bridge, the remnant trees and an area of 10,000sqm around the homestead complex.

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PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

The homestead complex is situated beside a small creek which has been dammed for domestic and irrigation purposes. The complex is approached by a log bridge below the dam. The house is a rude timber-framed building of mixed materials including board and batten, weatherboard and corrugated iron. There is a range of linings including hessian and paper, lining boards and, where the structure was extended, weather boards. It appears to have been built in three main parts: the kitchen, the living room and two bedrooms, and the third bedroom. All of its parts are roofed with simple skillions. There is a simple timber verandah along the high side of the bedroom wing. The joinery is simple throughout with various small-paned windows and ledge and brace doors. One door has particularly wide boards which suggest a very early date, possibly the 1850s. The chimneys are corrugated iron lined with bricks and stones. An basic enamelled cast iron stove, dating from the early twentieth century, survives in what appears to have been the kitchen. There is an interesting corner cupboard in the first bedroom. The house is in ruinous condition.

The outbuildings include an early stables and machinery shed and a structure now collapsed of later date. The stables and shed are both built with rude timber frames, using the forks in tree trunks to support timber-in-the-round beams. A light sawn frame sits above these to form the roofs. Both structures are partially demolished and are now roofless. A substantial amount of rusted machinery stands within the shed, however.

There is one Cupressus sempervirens planted adjacent to the house, several fruit trees downstream from the dam and senescent Radiata Pines. The house is surrounded by Elm suckers.

HISTORY:

This homestead was established by John Symons and Eleanor Symons, nee Pooley. A ship's carpenter, John Symons is said to have jumped ship at Portland and gone to the remote squatting run, Glenisla where he was taken in by the Carter family. His skills as a carpenter were used around the property (Pers. Comm., Rob Barber, 2/04/03). Records show that the Symons had a daughter, Elizabeth Jane in 1855 whose birth was registered at "Dundas" (PI, Reg. No. 2138). She was the first of twelve children, seven girls and five boys, of whom three died in infancy. It was John Pooley, the third child and first boy who took over the homestead after his parents (Rob Barber, Pers. Comm. 3/04/03). ~~The land on which the homestead complex stands, allotment 5~~ (no section) of the Parish of Billiminah was purchased in 1898 in the name of "E Symons" which could have been Eleanor or her second daughter Eleanor. Her first daughter, Elizabeth Jane Symons had married Phillip Francis Howser in 1876 (PI, Reg. No. 4738). Her third and fourth daughters, whose names also started with "E", had died in infancy.

From documentary and physical evidence, the homestead appears to date from the mid 1850s. In which case it is significantly earlier than the sale of land under the Lands Selections Acts of the 1860s which were late to be implemented in the Glenisla area. In which case the Symons' homestead complex represents a 'tenant' farmer relationship with Glenisla before the later, and sometimes divisive, squatter-selector relationship. The simplicity of the construction and the rudeness of the materials suggest a very humble struggle to survive. The homestead continued to be occupied up to the Second World War.

A "T H Symons" was a councillor for the Shire of Dundas from 1920-1922 (Dundas, 35).

THEMATIC CONTEXT:

Theme 2 Peopling Australia
2.4 Migrating
2.4.3 Migrating to seek opportunity

Theme 3: Developing local, regional and national economies
3.5 Developing primary production

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3.5.1 Grazing stock

3.5.2 Breeding animals

3.5.3 Developing agricultural industries

3.16 Struggling with remoteness, hardship and failure

Theme 5: Working

5.8 Working on the land

CONDITION:

The house, outbuildings, dam, bridge and garden are in ruinous condition.

INTEGRITY:

High degree of integrity

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

What is significant?

The Symon's Homestead complex is located off the Billywing Track about 4.5kms to the west of Glenisla homestead. It was developed by the large Symons and Pooley families, who appear to have acted as tenant farmers to the Carters of Glenisla before becoming selectors and land owners in their own right. The complex is situated beside a small creek which has been dammed for domestic and irrigation purposes. The house is a rude timber-framed building of mixed materials including board and batten, weatherboard and corrugated iron. There is a range of linings including hessian and paper, lining boards and, where the structure was extended, weather boards. All of its parts are roofed with simple skillions. There is a simple timber verandah along the high side of the bedroom wing. The house is in a ruinous condition but retains an excellent archaeological potential. The outbuildings include an early stables and machinery shed and a structure now collapsed of later date. The stables and shed are both built with rude timber frames, using the forks in tree trunks to support timber-in-the-round beams. A light sawn frame sits above these to form the roofs. Both structures are partially demolished and are now roofless. There is one Cupressus sempervirens planted adjacent to the house, several fruit trees downstream from the dam and senescent Radiata Pines. The house is surrounded by Elm suckers.

How is it significant?

The Symon's Homestead complex is of historical and archeological significance to the Southern Grampians Shire.

Why is it significant?

The Symons Homestead complex is of historical significance for its primitive rude construction technique and materials reflecting both the living conditions and resourcefulness of early settlers. It is of further historical significance for its association with the Symons and Polley families, who were early small scale farmers operating in the Glenisla area from about the 1850s. The homestead complex has the potential to assist us to understand how people lived in the second phase of European land occupation in this remote area through archaeology.

COMPARISON:

320 Old Brooksdale Homestead, Brooksdale, Victoria Valley

322 Rosebank, Neate's Road, Victoria Valley

017 Ruined House and outbuilding, Mirranatwa School Road, Mirranatwa

ASSESSED BY: tfh, mgt & aen

ASSESSMENT DATE:

09-Apr-03

EXISTING LISTINGS:

HERITAGE STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS:

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Include in VHR **Include in RNE** **Include in Local Planning Scheme**

No Recommendations for Inclusions

REFERENCES:

Author	Title	Year	Page
	Dundas Shire History, 1863-1963	1963	35
Department of Justice	Pioneer Index Victoria 1836 - 1888 (reg. No. 1505)	1998	
Robert Barber	Personal Communication	2003	