

Victorian Heritage Database Report

KONONGWOOTONG CREEK HOMESTEAD



Location:

Coleraine/Balmoral Road, COLERAINE VIC 3315 - Property No 159

Heritage Status / Level of Significance:

Stage 2 Heritage Study Complete

Statement of Significance:

What is significant?

Konongwootong Creek Homestead site is a large ten acre site on the side of Red Bluff Hill, four kilometers north of the township of Coleraine. The site is roughly circular. There are several different plantings throughout the garden, including an unusually large and diverse conifer collection. Many of the plantings are mature or senescent, and in very poor condition. There is a large amount of dead plant material which is important as a record of species, type and density of planting. The footings of an extremely large homestead and servant's quarters are located in the eastern section of the garden. The ruins of smaller service buildings are located outside the garden perimeter to the north. A rare, gravity fed irrigation system survives throughout the garden, with associated dams, channels, pipes, cisterns and wells. The archaeological remains of a primitive gasworks are located a short distance west from the homestead footings.

How is it significant?

Konongwootong Creek Homestead site is of historical, scientific, aesthetic, and archaeological significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it Significant.

Konongwootong Creek Homestead site is of historical significance to the State of Victoria as a representation of the rise and fall of the Western District pastoral aristocracy and the decline of pastoral dominance.

Historically, it is important for its association with the Whyte Brothers, one of the earliest pioneering squatters in the area, and as a small part of the much larger run Konongwootong. It is of historical significance because of its close associations with the important McConochie family, particularly John McConochie who was heavily involved in the development of Coleraine as a township, and a Justice of the Peace.

Konongwootong Creek is of scientific significance to the State of Victoria for its rare examples of adaptation to harsh climates and remote locations. The development of gravity fed irrigation system complete with reservoirs, channels, cisterns, wells and pipes to adequately water a very large garden is highly innovative and scientifically significant. The archaeological remains of the gasworks are of scientific significance as they are a rare example of a primitive gasworks located on a pastoral homestead site.

Also of scientific significance is the botanical collection which the garden at Konongwootong Creek represents. Such a large and diverse collection is very rare for the period and remote location of the garden. The use of Australian specimen plants within the garden is also uncommon. All of the plant material (surviving or destroyed) within the garden is of scientific significance to the State of Victoria. Rather than representing a typical nineteenth century pleasure garden, the overall shape is unusually circular, and the plantings are in loose genus based groups, indicating an informed, sophisticated and possibly professional approach to plant collection.

Konongwootong Creek Homestead site is of aesthetic significance, as the former homestead was placed within the landscape to see and be seen, creating a prominent landmark, which is accentuated by the circular design of the garden, located on an otherwise bare steeply sloping hill. Also of aesthetic significance for its rarity in nineteenth century gardens is the carriage-way, which encircles the garden.

Konongwootong Creek Homestead is of archaeological significance to the State of Victoria for its important archaeological remains. These remains include the homestead, the kitchen, the servants quarters and courtyard, the outbuildings, the tennis court, the gasworks, the conservatory, the hothouse and all other structures which are either ruinous or demolished. The homestead itself is particularly important as one of the largest, most architecturally important homestead in the Western District. Also of archaeological significance are the ruinous stables and other outbuildings to the north of the garden perimeter.

Description

Physical condition is poor but a significant potential remains for archaeological research.

Konongwootong Creek Homestead site and gardens is located four kilometers north of Coleraine. The gardens, encompassing 10 acres, are laid out on the slope of a steep hill to the east of the Coleraine-Balmoral Road, above the Konongwootong Creek. The garden survives as a substantial but abandoned collection of predominantly European trees laid out around the ruined foundations of a large homestead.

The grounds are circular, the perimeter defined by an encircling carriage track and the remains of a *Crataegus laevegata* (hawthorn) hedge. The southern boundary also has a double row of *Cupressus semprevirens* (Italian cypress) planted inside the hawthorn hedge. The northern section of the garden has been laid out as an arboretum dominated by Pine and Cypress species. A park has been set out in the south-eastern part of the garden, with specimen trees planted on a grassy slope down towards the creek. Around the foundations of the house are the remains of flower beds and shrubberies. Some of the remnant plants in this area include *Coprosma repens* (Shiny leaf bush), *Oleander* sp., *Pittosporum undulata* (Sweet Pittosporum), *Quercus ilex* (Holly Oak) and unusually, *Lagunaria patersonia* (Norfolk Island Hibiscus). Although this area is now overgrown and dominated by many juvenile suckers of *Ailanthus altissima* (Tree of Heaven), the *Phoenix canariensis* (Canary Island Palm) which was the central focus of a circular bed survives. Other European trees planted around the homestead foundations include *Quercus robur* (English Oak) *Quercus canariensis* (Canary Oak), and *Shinus molle* (Peppercorn) .

The botanical specimens within the garden are mainly coniferous and in fair to poor condition. There is an unusual and very diverse collection of *Pinus* species including *Pinus canariensis* (Canary Islands Pine), *P. radiata* (Radiata Pine), *Pinus pinaster* (Maritime Pine), *P. butea* (Beauty Pine), *P. pinea* (Stone Pine) and *P. halapensis* (Aleppo Pine). A large number of *Cupressus*, *Chamaecyparis* and *X Cupressocyparis* species have been planted within the garden, some of those best represented include *Cupressus macrocarpa* (Monterey Cypress), *C. sempervirens* (Italian Cypress), *C. torulosa* (Bhutan Cypress) and *X Cupressocyparis leylandii* (Leyland Cypress), *Chamaecyparis lawsonia* (Lawson Cypress) and *Chamaecyparis funebris* (Funeral Cypress).

Unusually for that period, Australian native plants have been used as ornamental specimens within the garden. There are individual specimens of *Araucaria bidwillii* (Bunya Bunya), *A. heterophylla* (Hoop pine), and *A. araucana* (Chilean Monkey Puzzle) within the conifer arboretum. There are also random specimen plantings of native plants such as *Corymbia ficifolia* (red flowering gum) and *Eucalyptus citradoria* (lemon scented gum).

An early sub-soil irrigation system survives within the garden with intact elements of: dams, copper pipes, channels, brick cisterns and wells. Round brick fresh water tanks and wells survive around the homestead footings. The irrigation system appears to have had a main dam located on a rise to the south-east of the homestead. Water flowed into a smaller dam, and then into a well, or cistern, to be distributed throughout the garden by copper pipes using a gravity fed pressure system. It is not known to what extent the physical fabric is intact below the surface of the garden.

There are also a number of important archaeological sites within the garden. These include the servant's quarters, built around an asphalt courtyard at the rear of the homestead, the gasworks site, located some distance down the slope which may still contain some fabric, the Tennis Court, located to the west of the homestead site, a number of smaller outbuildings, including the ruins of the stables and other small outbuildings beyond the northern extreme of the garden.

Theme 3: Developing local, regional and national economies

3.5 Developing primary production

3.5.1 Grazing stock

3.5.2 Breeding animals

3.5.3 Developing agricultural industries

Theme 5: Working

5.8 working on the land

Continuing as a pastoral property

The garden survives relatively intact. The buildings are mostly in ruins down to the foundations. Various hydraulic works survive leading up from the garden to dams and a spring on the hillside above the garden.

William and John McConochie, first and only leaseholders

Mrs. Frances Sarah Stanley, owner from 1891 and builder of the second house

Heritage Study / Consultant	Southern Grampians - Southern Grampians Shire Heritage Study, Timothy Hubbard P/L, Annabel Neylon, 2002
Construction Date Range	1850 - 1891
Architect / Designer	Kennedy, Phillip
Municipality	SOUTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE
Other names	

Hermes number	23197
Property number	159

This place/object may also be State heritage listed. Check the Victorian Heritage Database. For further details, contact the local Council or go to Planning Schemes Online