

Victorian Heritage Database Report
LONGERENONG HOMESTEAD

**Location:**

897 BURNT CLAY ROAD LONGERENONG, YARRIAMBIACK SHIRE

Heritage Status / Level of Significance:

Registered

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number: H0290

Listing Authority: VHR

Heritage Overlay Number: HO35

Statement of Significance:

What is significant?

Longerenong homestead is located on the Yarriambiack Creek near the junction with the Wimmera River at Horsham. The land had been first taken up by squatters William Taylor and Dougall McPherson in 1844. Unlike the more fertile country of the south-western district of Victoria, the Wimmera was less easily adapted as profitable grazing country.

The Wilson brothers had immigrated to Victoria from County Antrim, Ireland, and took up the Longerenong pastoral lease in 1856. Sir Samuel Wilson (1832-1895) established himself as a pastoralist and vigneron, and by 1871 had bought out his brothers' interests in the property. Samuel Wilson was a man of innovation and ingenuity. Drawing on the nearby creek, he devised a system of irrigation and drainage channels in the 1850s and 1860s that benefitted his agricultural pursuits. Elements of this system survive.

Samuel Wilson was also a leading proponent of the acclimatisation movement in Victoria in the 1860s, and for a period acclimatised the camels for the Burke and Wills expedition. Wilson pursued his interest in acclimatisation at the property Ercildoune [H313], near Ballarat, which he later purchased. In 1875 he was elected a Member of the Legislative Council for the Western Province. He was also a major philanthropist, who provided funds for building the original Wilson Hall at Melbourne University. In 1886 he was elected a member of the British House of Commons.

The Wilson brothers commissioned the Melbourne firm of Crouch and Wilson to build the axially planned, double-storey brick homestead villa in 1862. The Picturesque Gothic design was adapted from one illustrated in an American pattern-book of Andrew Jackson Downing. However, while the facade of Longerenong is very similar to that of the American model, the interior planning was altered significantly. Rather than the open planning of the American house (based on Continental custom) the architects of Longerenong reverted to closed British corridor planning, which was more acceptable locally, and was a reflection of the British mindset of the settlers in Victoria. Distinctive elements include the decorative timber fretwork, balcony verandah, slate roof and elaborate stained-glass entrance panels. Internal features include a divided staircase; marble floor tiles; cedar doors, architraves, and other fittings; and consistent use of trefoils as decoration to doors, balustrade and some of the fireplace surrounds.

The once extensive park-like homestead garden includes Moreton Bay Figs, Osage Oranges, Bunya Bunya Pines, Stone Pines and Norfolk Island Pines as well as a remnant garden wall. Several outbuildings survive, including the shearing shed and a slab hut claimed to be the original hut on the property which may date from the 1840s. An area set aside for burials on the north bank of the creek includes the grave of Samuel and Jeannie Wilson's first child, as well as graves of members of the McLean and Gregory families.

How is it significant?

Longerenong homestead is of architectural, historical and scientific (horticultural) significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

Longerenong homestead complex is of historical significance for its association with the early European settlement of Victoria through its role as a pastoral leasehold from 1844, and its subsequent development as an extensive homestead complex that played an important part in the development of the Wimmera district.

Longerenong homestead is also historically significant for its association with the enterprising pioneer settler, Samuel Wilson, and for its demonstration of Wilson's ambition, energy and broad range of talents.

Longerenong homestead is architecturally significant as an important example of the work of the celebrated Melbourne firm Crouch and Wilson. It is one of the finest Picturesque Gothic style villas in Victoria, demonstrating particularly fine design and workmanship. It is also architecturally significant as a rare example of the use of an American pattern book design for a grand house in Victoria. Its rejection of the open planning which was common in America at the time is also historically significant as a reflection of the British mindset of the wealthy settlers in Victoria in the nineteenth century.

The Longerenong homestead garden is of scientific (horticultural) significance for its rich and diverse collection of species, including a very large Moreton Bay Fig (*Ficus macrophylla*) next to the house, Osage Oranges (*Maclura pomifera*), Bunya Bunya Pines (*Araucaria bidwillii*), Stone Pines (*Pinus pinea*), Norfolk Island Pines (*Araucaria heterophylla*), two rare *Schotia latifolia*, and an unknown *Rhus* sp..

Of associated scientific (technological) significance on the wider property is surviving evidence of earthen embankments and the foundations of an irrigation scheme created in the 1850s and 1860s.

[Data Upgrade Project 2004]

Heritage Study / Consultant	
Construction Date Range	1862 -
Architect / Designer	Crouch & Wilson
Municipality	YARRIAMBIACK SHIRE
Other names	
Hermes number	597
Property number	

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