HERITAGE PLACE

NAME OF PLACE: BALMORAL HERITAGE PRECINCT

ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE: Henty Highway BALMORAL

STUDY NUMBER: 408   **HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:**
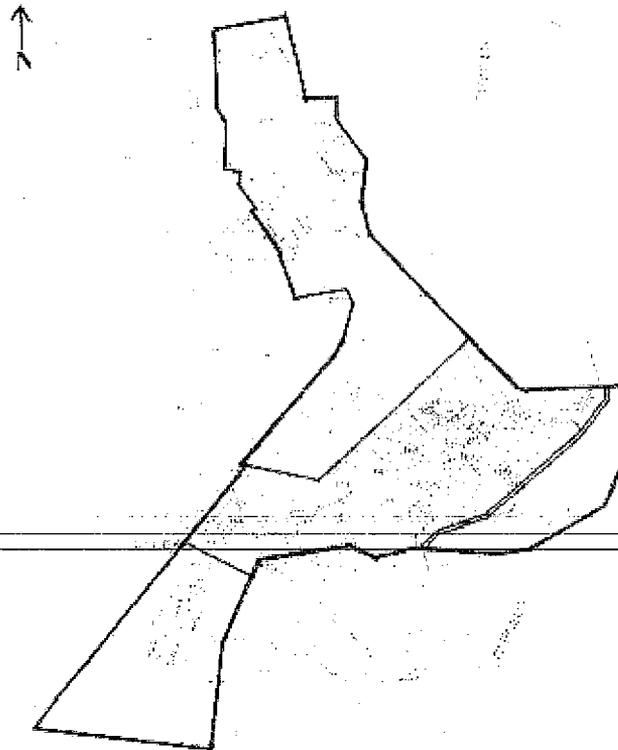
PRECINCT: Balmoral

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA: Southern Grampians Shire

ACCESS DESCRIPTION:
CFA 338J; VicRoads 227; located 310kms west of Melbourne and 55kms north-west of Hamilton on the Glenelg Highway, near the junction of Mather's Creek with the Glenelg River.

SIGNIFICANCE RATING: Local

Balmoral Precinct - Red = Heritage Overlay * Green = Significant Landscape Overlay

Image Date: 16/11/03

EXTENT OF LISTING:
To the extent of: 1. All the buildings and infrastructure constructed before 1954 including not only the buildings specifically identified as typical or outstanding examples of their type, but also those which contribute in a minor way. 2. All the land, both public and private, which is included within boundary of the precinct of the Township of Balmoral.

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PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

The grid of the township of Balmoral was aligned parallel with Mather's Creek and the Glenelg River, just below their junction, and is therefore set on the diagonal. There was a chain of water holes to the north-east and there is still a major waterhole, used for swimming, with surrounding wetlands on the south-east of the grid. The earliest formal subdivision of the township provided for town allotments in nine sections and suburban allotments beyond. The sections, for the most part, include ten standard allotments of 50,000 square feet or two roods (4,644 square metres). These allotments increase in size further from the town centre, ranging from little more than one acre (.407 hectares) to six acres (2.428 hectares). The main streets were to be Stirling Street and Bell Street with a market square provided at their intersection and the congruence of the road south-west to Coleraine and the road south to Hamilton. The road to the north-east still crosses the Glenelg River at the end of Sherret Street (still partly unformed) and that to the north is the continuation of Glendinning Street after it crosses Mather's Creek. There were reserves for the Presbyterian Church, the National School and a Pound. The practicalities of the plan can be traced back to the subdivision for towns in the colony of New South Wales promulgated by Governor Darling in the 1820s and adopted, more or less, by the colonial government of Victoria. The theory behind the plan can be traced back as far as the colonial towns and cities of the ancient Roman Empire.

The market never eventuated but the land was used for the erection of war memorials. The intersection of Glendinning and Stirling Streets became the major intersection because of its elevation, the easier crossing of Mather's Creek at one end of Glendinning Street and, later, the construction of the lock-up, police station and courthouse at the other. This is where the two early hotels were built and, in fact, the Western Inn already existed before subdivision and may have influenced the precise alignment of the streets. A police paddock is marked on the plan more or less on the north-east side of the Natimuk Road. Subsequently, a police reserve was gazetted which had been allotments 1, 2, 3 and 4 of section 3 and a water reserve of more than seven acres was gazetted on the south-east side of the grid.

The introduction of the Hamilton-East Natimuk railway line in the early twentieth century was a major intrusion on the western side of the township. A substantial area was allocated to the line, the station and "railway purposes". The station is now demolished. Allotments were subdivided about the same time on the north-east side of the Natimuk Road, north of the Harrow Road and south-west of Station Street. A large gravel reserve was gazetted south of the Harrow Road in 1937 and beside it, the new Show Grounds and Recreation Reserve in 1956.

The churches, and the residences associated with them, are all in the south-west side of the township with the Uniting and Catholic Churches backing onto Mather's Creek. (It is said that clay was dug from the creek banks to make bricks for their construction.) The Consolidated Primary School dominates this quarter of the town. The residential density of the township is very low in the centre and even lower on the outskirts on the Coleraine and Natimuk Roads. The few shops that survive are clustered around the post office. The banks of Mather's Creek have been beautified and have facilities for picnicking. The main road bridge across Mather's Creek dates from the 1960s.

Other Notable Houses
418-Railway Workers Cottage-Natimuk-Hamilton Road-Balmoral
248-Rocklands Reservoir Sawmill Hut-Rockland's Old Woodcutter's Track-
411-Railway Workers Cottages (x 2)-Natimuk-Hamilton Road-
413-Timber Cottage-Natimuk-Hamilton Road-
414-Timber Cottage-7 Stirling Street-
417-Timber House-Bell Street-
421-Bank (Former National, CBA, CBC)-Glendinning Street-

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422-Bakery (Former)-Coleraine-Balmoral Road-
425-Timber Cottage-Glendinning Street-
429-Timber House-8 Perth Street-
430-Timber Cottage-N cnr Cavendish Road & Perth Street-
435-Timber House-Coleraine Road-
441-Balmoral Angling Club-Coleraine Road-
437-Timber House-36 Coleraine Road-
434-Timber House-Coleraine Road-
439-Timber Cottage-Coleraine Road-

HISTORY:

Several factors combined to trigger the establishment of the service centre that became the township of Balmoral, formerly known as Black Swamp. Firstly, because Major Mitchell's comments on the area were favourable, when he passed through about 31st July 1836, there were large and eventually successful squatting runs in the immediate vicinity from the late 1830s. The land was considered to be ideal for grazing sheep with usually reliable water. Some of the first squatters and businessmen to arrive, such as Edward Bell and the Clapham brothers, had direct and substantial financial links with Melbourne, Portland and Port Fairy (Belfast). Secondly, there were useful crossings of the Glenelg River and Mather's Creek for traffic not only east and west between Melbourne and Adelaide but also for traffic north and south. This traffic, a "vortex" in the 1840s was enhanced by the discovery of gold in central Victoria (McGaffin, 57). Balmoral was an important point on the route between Ararat and Adelaide and also to Robe where many Chinese were landed. Thirdly, building materials were readily to hand, such as timber of different species suitable for different purposes, durable and easily worked stone, and clay for making bricks. Timber was also important for the ephemeral wattlebark industry. Balmoral developed as a service centre for its hinterland.

Davidson's Inn at what would become Balmoral is marked on a map of the Western District in 1842 (Lingham, after Best, 1842). This was called the Western Hotel, much altered and extended but still operating. A second hotel, the Squatter's Arms was soon built on the opposite corner. The earliest squatting runs included Englefield, Glendinning, Kongbool, Rocklands and Yat Nat and, just north of the modern Shire boundary, Fulham. These were each relatively close to the new township and influenced it directly. Labour was recruited from the town, shopkeepers and tradesmen provided goods and services, and some banks and the various churches were in the town. The squatters did not use all the services provided. Schools, for examples, although fostered by the squatters, were not necessarily used by them to educate their children.

Storekeepers were also critical for the beginning of the town. Thomas Heap (or Heape) is known as the first white person to settle on the River at Balmoral (Wood, 12). Apparently, he had crossed the Glenelg River while on the 'Overland Road' on his way from Sydney to Portland at some time prior to 1840. In 1841, he established a general store to service the large pastoral properties surrounding the Black Swamp, the store trading in household goods and merchandise on the site where the Woodlands Homestead now stands (Wood, 22). Gradually, a settlement began to develop, and the store then served as general merchant to the growing township. Heap is said to have had an association with the English textile industry, in the mid 1840s began a wool scouring business on the banks of the Glenelg River, a few hundred metres downstream from his store and residence.

Official communication came through the Post Office. The first official postmaster was Basil Lyon, appointed from 1st January 1856. Lyon had already acted unofficially from his store on the same site from November 1855 although he may have operated from 7 Glendinning Street for several years (Harris, 13) "At that time the mail was carried once a week between Hamilton and Apsley, via Cavendish, Balmoral Harrow and Edenhope" (ibid.). In 1875, the service was expanded to include telegraph facilities and in 1878 a post office Savings Bank was opened. The current building, designed by the Victorian Public Works Department, was completed in 1890 (Trethowan). Although altered and modernised, the Post Office continues to provide its original service.

The Police were the other official presence in the township. A police camp had been established at Balmoral "to halt the Chinese invasion" of Chinese walking from Robe at Guichen Bay to Ararat, trying to avoid the Victoria poll tax, during the mid-1850s (McGaffin, 57). The land on which the former lock-up, police residence and police station and former court house stand is now described on Township Maps as a 'Police Reserve' indicating that the Police Reserve was not created until after 1860, probably at the same time as the first Policeman was appointed (Department of Lands and Survey, 1958). It is possible that this was Isaac Gelston Gray, a police officer who was appointed to Balmoral in February 1860.

The Court House dates from the late 1870s, but it is likely that the bluestone lock up dates from earlier than this. The lock up was certainly built by 1864, when Balmoral held the hosted the first Wimmera and Upper Glenelg Pastoral Association Show. John Shanks Jenkins who wrote an article reporting on the show noted that "To the credit of the Balmoralites be it stated it was patronised by few other than loafers and Blackfellows...The cowardly and unmanly attempt on the part of more than one white fellow to have a fight with the poor drunken aborigines was not more distasteful to them than the other of their colour who were urging them on. The police, in the end, stopped these proceedings to a considerable extent by taking some of the Blackfellows off to the lock up" (Jenkins, in Rogers, 42). Other identical lock up buildings in Cavendish and Dunkeld were built in the mid-1860s.

The first courthouse at Balmoral, of which no trace survives, was described by the Hamilton Spectator as 'a miserable tumbledown shed' (Challinger, 36). Most of the cases heard were for drunkenness. The present courthouse was designed by Alfred T. Snow and built by the Public Works Department. Work started in January 1877 and it was ready for use by July. The Balmoral courthouse is one of two known surviving identical courthouses built in timber. The other is at Edenhope. Another at Harrow has been altered since its sale. The courthouse was closed in November 1981 and the courthouse is now home to the Balmoral Historical Society.

By 1865 the official Government Gazetteer, produced by F. F. Bailliere, described Balmoral as "a postal village in the parish of Balmoral, and electoral district of Dundas and Follett. It is under the control of the Dundas road board, and is situated at the junction of Mather's creek with the Glenelg river, and about 12 miles from the Dundas ranges; there is a fellmongery establishment in the district, which is an undulating pastoral one. ... There is communication by mail coach with Hamilton, Cavendish, Harrow, and Apsley; and by mail coach with Ballaarat for Melbourne, the distance being 202 miles" (Bailliere, 25). It advised that the population was 160 persons. Balmoral showed little population growth; a population of about 200 in 1890 (McGaffin, 58) had reached only 300 in the early 20th century and, by the end of the century, the population had dropped to 250 (Victorian Municipal Directory, 1992, 880).

Particular individuals emerged as leaders of the community, working hard and long for its advancement. Not surprisingly, some of these individuals were the owners of the squatting runs. Mather's Creek was named after the first occupants of Kongbool, David and John Mather, whose homestead is one of the oldest and best surviving homesteads from the 1840s. Robert Officer Junior, owner of Yat Nat from 1854 until 1860, "was one of the founders of the Balmoral Presbyterian Church, the Balmoral and Upper Glenelg Pastoral Society and was Guarantor of the first school" (Rogers, 3). He engaged the same architect, John Shanks Jenkins to design the Presbyterian Manse as he did for his new homestead at Mount Talbot. The first the Balmoral Pastoral and Agricultural Society show was held on the 6th August 1887. Mr. Thomas Robertson of Kongbool was the President of the society for twenty-five years. Thomas Robertson was a son of the great Thomas Robertson, founder of one of the largest, most successful and enduring pastoral dynasties in the Western District. The Secretary was Mr. Hayman of Lake Wallace South.

Townspeople also worked hard for the community. Charles Wood owner of the Woodlands wool scouring business was a founder of but died the day before the first P&A show and was buried the day after. James

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Cuzens, who had taken over the general store in 1882 and added a pre-fabricated iron shed in 1887, provided it to house the produce classes for the show. The shed, imported from Scotland was officially opened by launching the Queen Victoria Jubilee Celebrations inside it, where a dance from dusk to dawn took place that evening (Rogers, 63). More regular entertainment and recreation had been provided from the 1870s through the Mechanics Institute and Library, another institution supported by the squatters and the townspeople. Mr. C Wood was appointed President, and Mr. James Cuzens Secretary and Treasurer (ibid. 21/06/1877, 6).

The Presbyterian Minister, Rev. James Henderson, was appointed Vice-President. He was inducted to the Balmoral Charge on June 14th and retired from his ministry on January 8th 1907 after 42 years of service to the district. The foundation of the various churches was an important step in the 'civilisation' of the area. Land was reserved for the major denominations and each strived to build a church as quickly and as well as possible. St Andrews Presbyterian Church, built in 1865, was the first. St. Mary's Anglican Church was constructed in 1894. Mrs. Armytage from Fulham Station laid the foundation stone and the Armytage family donated a large stained glass window. Until the church was built, Anglican services were held in the Presbyterian Church. The oldest part of St Patrick's was built in 1895, although Catholicism was active in the township well before that time. Balmoral, unlike Penshurst with the Catholic Twomey family and Coleraine with the Anglo-Irish Winter-Cooke family, appears to have had the standard division between a Presbyterian upper class and a Catholic working class.

The establishment of a school was one of the first objectives of everyone in the town. The first school was a one-roomed slab hut said to have been constructed on land owned by Dr James Galbraith on the banks of Mather's Creek. "On June 28th, 1856, from the surrounding stations men rode in to the public meeting held at the [Western] hotel, a gaunt unlovely stone structure" (Educational Magazine, 170). Discussion on the merits and demerits finally resulted in a decision for a National School. This was a liberal decision because in 1856 more than 80% of state aided schools were denominational. Robert Officer in a letter to the National Board criticised a proposal made at the public meeting to use an old building on a site some 100 yards from the hotel. He supported the view of Mr. Inspector Glenn, who came to Balmoral to investigate the request for a school, which was that local demand called for a new school building on a site elsewhere. He was not only guarantor for the first school but is also said to have donated the site for it. By late 1858 the materials were available and a teacher's cottage had been bought. The Board dispatched Abraham Lauder who had been teaching at Woodford to take up duties as head teacher at Balmoral. In 1859 14 boys and 11 girls were enrolled and the National School at Balmoral had started. After the passing of the Common Schools Act in 1862, the building was known as Common School No. 29. This was soon considered to be unsuitable and other land was reserved for a new school in 1864. A single classroom was built of bricks with a gallery in one corner. Some time later a wooden room for infants was built at the rear and a stone residence was attached to the school. In 1960 the entire structure formed the head teacher's residence but it was demolished in 1968.

By the late 1920s it became obvious that the school did not meet the educational needs of the district. Between the school and the centre of the town lay the showgrounds where the Pastoral and Agricultural Society had started in 1887. The Education Department acquired a portion of this area early in 1930. A new two-roomed school building was constructed. In the mid-twentieth century there were moves towards the consolidation of primary schools in the area. In 1950-51, the school buildings of Brit Brit, Kanagulk, Gringegalgona and Pigeon Ponds were moved to Balmoral to create a group school with about 130 pupils, (McGaffin, 59). In September 1952, it became the state's newest group school. The Gritjurk school building was also moved but not that at Gritjurk South, Vasey and Telangatuk East. By 1955 the enrolment was over 200 with pupils bused in from the expanding soldier settlement areas (McGaffin, 59). The school continues today to provide education to the children of the township and surrounding areas. The Balmoral High School opened in 1968 with 89 students, at first in the Consolidated School, but then on a new site north-west of the township beyond the Showgrounds.

The eventual arrival of the railway in 1919 was the first major advance for Balmoral in the twentieth century.

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"A railway linking the Wimmera with Portland was first proposed in 1889 but nothing was done for many years. Work was started on a line in 1912 from Hamilton to Cavendish to serve an area of Closer Settlement. After much investigation and political manoeuvring it was decided to link the two lines through Balmoral. The extension to Balmoral was opened in 1919, but it was not until 19th November 1920 that the line was completed" (Harris, 17).

When the railway did arrive, there was a great demand for sleepers in their construction and an easier method of transport for processed timber. Red gum blocks were also used for paving in Melbourne, particularly around tram tracks. Consequently, sawmills were closely associated with railway stations and sidings. One was established south of Balmoral at Englefield siding, for example. The first timber saw mill in the Balmoral township had been near the pump hole on the Glenelg River. Borsh and Evans ran this for John 'Andy' Walter. With the coming of the railway the sawmill was moved to the railway yards where Messrs Pitts and Gordon operated it for Walter. The line was used to transport wheat to Portland for just ten years before it proved to be inadequate (McGaffin, 59). The railway station is demolished but a kiln survives and there are several houses surviving nearby which were associated directly or indirectly with the railway.

The construction of the Rocklands Reservoir during the mid-twentieth century provided a tremendous boost to Balmoral. Damming the Glenelg had been proposed in the later nineteenth century, not just by enthusiastic and well-informed locals but also by bureaucrats in Melbourne. A Mr. Ferguson, Government Geologist, spent a long time making a geological survey of all the country along the Glenelg about 1892-3. Nothing much happened for decades until the late 1930s. The Minister for Water Supply visited the site in 1940 and promised great things for the Wimmera-Mallee. He forecast that the concrete dam would begin harvesting the water in 1945. In fact, World War Two interrupted construction of the reservoir soon after it began. During the five years up to 1945, the construction camp site became an Air Force recruit training depot. Balmoral received a tremendous boost from the influx of hundreds of workers who occupied the temporary township of Rocklands during the construction of the reservoir and from the No. 5 Air Force Recruiting Depot. The reservoir was constructed in two stages, the first being the construction of a diversion weir incorporated in the main weir. The second stage involved the construction of "the main weir of 16,371 feet of which 600 feet formed the spillway and overflow section" according to memorial plaques at the site. Rocklands Dam was officially opened by the Hon. C.P. Stoneham, MLC Minister of Water Supply in 1953. As well as providing water, it is also a major recreational facility.

The township consolidated rather than grew after the Second World War. A bowling club was established beside the Mechanics' Institute in 1964, made possible by the reticulation of town water from the Rocklands reservoir. In 1956, the Institute's corrugated iron supper room was replaced with a brick structure dedicated as a memorial hall in 1957 (McGaffin, 59). Conventional war memorials are located in Stirling Street. The Squatter's Arms, which was delicensed in 1920, burnt down in 1962 and the land was developed as Apex Park. The expansion of the Balmoral Consolidated School triggered the relocation of the Showgrounds to a 26 acre reserve across the river and north-west of the town but still within the town boundaries. The sports oval was begun there in 1961. One of the most innovative houses in the whole of the shire of Southern Grampians was built in Balmoral in 1985. Called a "terra-dome", its semi-subterranean method of construction was a response to the oil crisis of the early 1970s and the subsequent rise in energy prices. It was only the second of about forty to be built in Victoria.

The tradition of service to the community continues with descendants of the earliest families, such as the present owners of Englefield as well as those who arrived as post-World War Two Soldier Settlers, such as the present owners of Fulham. The Officer family of Mount Talbot, one of the very few places in Victoria still in its original ownership, still looks to Balmoral as a service centre for its hinterland.

THEMATIC CONTEXT:

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Theme 2 Peopling Australia
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

Theme 6 Educating
6.2 Establishing schools
6.5 Educating people in remote places

Theme 8 Developing Australia's cultural life
8.12 Living in and around Australian homes
8.14 Living in the country and rural settlements

CONDITION:

Good

INTEGRITY:

good

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

What is significant?
The township of Balmoral, to the extent of its official boundaries, unchanged since its survey in the early 1860s, was an important settlement serving the pastoral interests of the surrounding squatting runs, some limited agricultural development, and subsequent efforts at closer settlement. It is located 55kms north-east of the provincial centre of Hamilton. The town developed at the road crossings of the Glenelg River and Mathers Creek particularly for traffic between Adelaide, Melbourne and the southern ports of Belfast (now Port Fairy) and Portland. The first buildings were hotels and stores. One early industry was the woolscour and fellmongery on the Glenelg River which operated intermittently until the end of the nineteenth century. The town could boast substantial public buildings such as a National School and the courthouse, police station and lock-up by the mid-1860s and the Presbyterian Church, representing the dominant Christian denomination in the area. Catholic and Anglican churches soon followed. The township serviced the surrounding squatting runs not only in a commercial and mercantile sense, but also for social purposes. This is clear from the annual Balmoral show which continues today. The arrival of the railway was relatively late and less than successful in the promotion of the town. It did support other industries such as saw milling. The town has been influenced by the breaking up of large estates, at the end of the nineteenth century and after the two World Wars. The construction of the Rocklands Reservoir, the fifth largest in the state, was an important infrastructure development with local and regional ramifications. Balmoral was chosen to be the focus of a consolidated primary school and the construction of a high school in the 1960s. However, the town's population has declined in parallel with a reduction in other local services. This is a general trend across the state and is due to a combination of factors, not least the decline of the wool industry and an increased mobility.

How is it significant?
The township of Balmoral is of historical, social and architectural significance to the community of Balmoral and the Shire of Southern Grampians

Why is it significant?

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The township of Balmoral is of historical significance as one of the oldest permanent urban settlements in the Shire, of social significance as the focus for the community in the Balmoral area, and of architectural significance as a planned town including a typical range of buildings including public facilities and utilities, churches, commercial buildings and private residences.

COMPARISON:

402 Branxholme heritage precinct Henty Highway Branxholme
409 Byaduk heritage precinct Hamilton-Port Fairy Road Byaduk
407 Cavendish heritage precinct Henty Highway Cavendish
401 Coleraine heritage precinct Glenelg Highway Coleraine
406 Dunkeld heritage precinct Glenelg Highway Dunkeld
405 Glenthompson heritage precinct Glenelg Highway Glenthompson
403 Penshurst heritage precinct Hamilton Highway Penshurst
404 Tarrington heritage precinct Hamilton Highway Tarrington

ASSESSED BY: TFH & AEN   **ASSESSMENT DATE:**   08-Apr-04

EXISTING LISTINGS:

HERITAGE STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Include in VHR ☐ Include in RNE ☑ Include in Local Planning Scheme ☑

No Recommendations for Inclusions ☐

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STUDY NUMBER: 408   **HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:**

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