

BACCHUS MARSH HERITAGE STUDY.

Ref: 363

Richard Peterson Architect & Conservation Consultant. Daniel Catrice Historian 1994.

NAME: Morven.			
ADDRESS: Lerderderg Gorge Road.			
TITLE DETAILS:			
USE: Farmhouse.			
CONSTRUCTION DATE: 1896		SOURCE: 1	
DESIGNER: D.A. Little	BUILDER: Murphy & Wynne	SOURCE: 1	
CRITERIA: H1; Ar1,3.	HISTORIC THEME: Agricultural		
DESCRIPTION:	STYLE: Italiante	STORIES: 1	DETACHED.
MATERIALS:	WALLS: Brick	ROOF: Iron	STRUCTURE: Lb
CONDITION: Good?	INTACTNESS: Very good.		THREATS:
SIGNIFICANT INTACT ELEMENTS:			
FORM. VERANDAH. USE.			
CHIMNEYS.			
FENCES.			
GARDEN. PLANTING FORMATION. CONTEXT: 364			
SIGNIFICANCE:			
TYPE: HISTORICAL. ARCHITECTURAL.			
LEVEL: LOCAL.			
DESIGNATION EXISTING: Nil			
RECOMMENDED CONTROL/NOMINATION: HBR. RNE. PLANNING SCHEME.			
INTEREST. AREA.			
MAP NO: R2.04	SURVEY: RP & GW	DATE: 11.4.94	NEGS: 30.11-14



HISTORY: Built in 1896 for James Kerr, Morven (Gaelic for big hill), attracted favourable attention in the local press, for its picturesque setting and the 'elegant' and 'substantial' manner of its construction. 'Many a castle in Scotland (had) less favourable natural surroundings of wooded and lake effects' observed the *Bacchus Marsh Express*.¹ The homestead was finished 'in the best Toorak manner':

built of brick, all tuck-pointed, with Waurn Ponds freestone quoins and string courses, also a pediment with the word Morven cut in sunk letters, gilded. An oriel window gives an elegance to the outline, which is also broken by angles. A verandah all round, with light iron columns (cement filled), with ornamental caps, improves the general appearance as well as affording shade to the house.²

Designed by D.A. Little, the homestead was erected by contractors, Murphy and Wynne, using bricks burnt on the property.³

James Kerr was born in Bacchus Marsh in 1851 to Robert Blythe Kerr and his wife, Catherine (nee Hamilton). Raised on the family's farm at Parwan, Kerr later purchased Morven from Frank Petty. As *Australian Farm and Home* observed in the 1940s:

(the) wisdom of this decision has been shown in the great success achieved by the stud for some 50 years and in the prosperity enjoyed by his family, who still conduct it in the name of Kerr Bros.⁴

Kerr achieved considerable success as a breeder of Dairy Shorthorn cattle. He was the foundation president of the Dairy Shorthorn Association of Australia from 1921 to his death in 1928.⁵ Sons, Robert and Grant Kerr, managed the property after their father's death.

VISUAL DESCRIPTION: A late nineteenth century substantial brick house overlooking the Lerderderg River. It has a hip-roof with a verandah in front. The four (visible) chimneys are rendered with Classical mouldings. There is a good length of three-rail post and rail fence on the road boundary.

Landscape. The front garden to Morven has been laid out with the central path from the gate, broken with a circular lawn area edged with rocks, and two splay paths leading to the east and west of the house. The driveway along the north boundary and the west side of the house is lined with Peppercorn trees providing shade to the outlying farm buildings. To the south of the house there is a windbreak of heavily planted large trees which have some storm damage. The cottage garden to the front is in need of maintenance as many shrubs

¹ *Bacchus Marsh Express* 31 October 1896.

² Ibid..

³ Moore & Oomes, *Bacchus Marsh: A Pictorial Chronicle* p.66; National Trust of Australia (Victoria), Building File No. 4293.

⁴ ??

⁵ Ibid..

have been pruned to ground level, and shrubberies to the east are overgrown. Fencing around the garden is new steel mesh, and native species have been planted along the northern boundary, with the lawns left open. A rose garden is located on the east side of the house.

Plant species include:

<i>Cupressus macrocarpa</i>	Monterey Cypress
<i>Schinus molle</i>	Peppercorn Tree
<i>Pinus radiata</i>	Monterey Pine
<i>Cupressus sp.</i>	Cypress
<i>Brachychiton populneus</i>	Kurrajong
<i>Nerium oleander</i>	Oleander
<i>Lagerstroemia indica</i>	Crepe Myrtle
<i>Eriobotrya japonica</i>	Loquat
<i>Koelreuteria paniculata</i>	Golden Rain Tree
<i>Prunus hybrid</i>	Cherry Plum
Fruit Trees	
<i>Punica granatum</i>	Pomegranate
<i>Geranium sp.</i>	Geraniums
<i>Rosa sp.</i>	Roses
<i>Acacia baileyana</i>	Cootamundra Wattle
<i>Agapanthus orientalis</i>	Agapanthus.

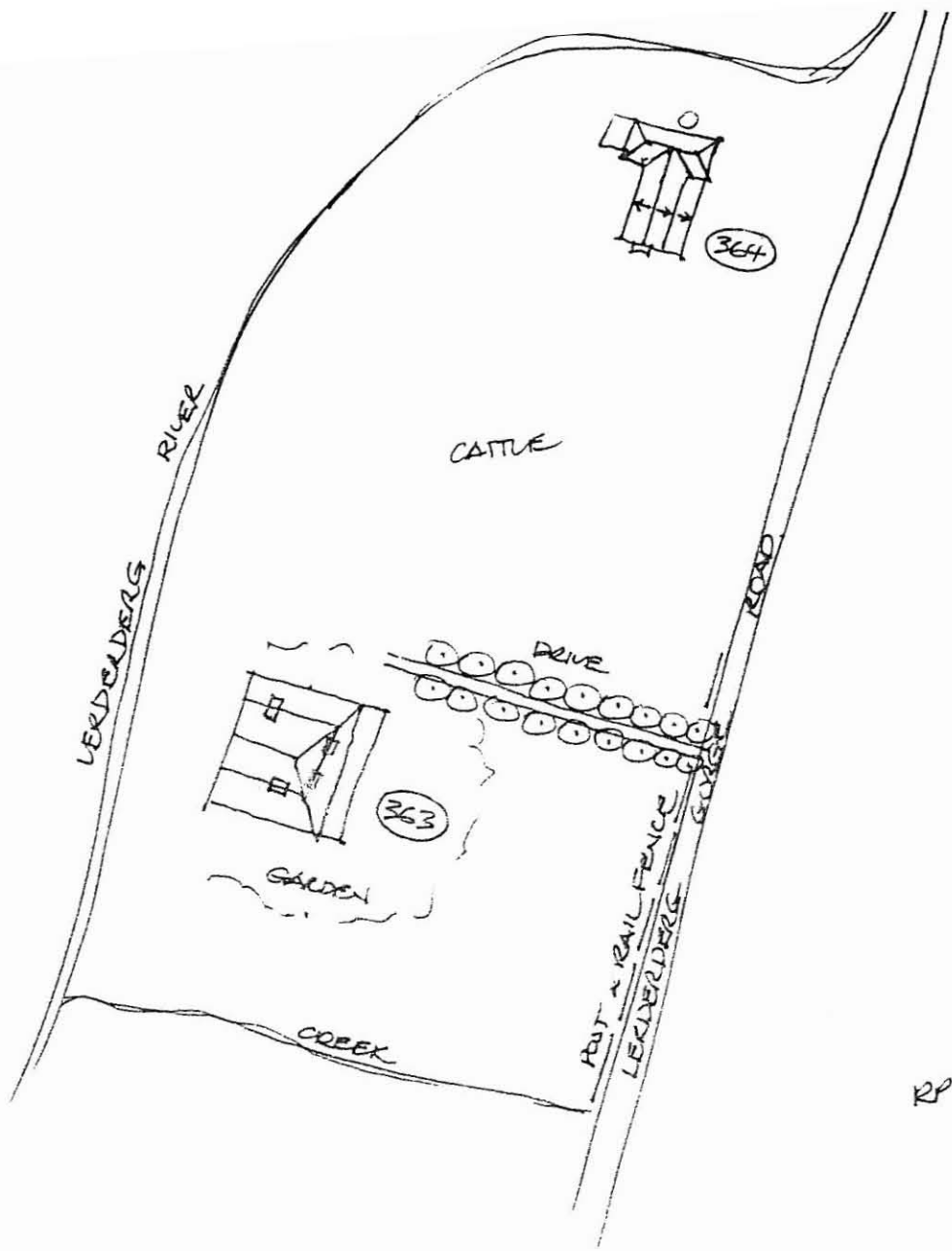
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: The layout of the garden is similar to 42 Lerderberg Street, Bacchus Marsh.

SIGNIFICANCE: A late nineteenth century relatively intact farmhouse complex built in 1896 to the design of D. A. Little, Shire Engineer and located in a beautiful river valley setting. It has a rare Victorian garden layout and other contextual elements, including the driveway and cypress avenue, a windbreak and post and rail fence on the road boundary.

The complex is of local historical significance as an embodiment of a way of life, its social values and an agricultural practice. It has architectural significance locally as a representative intact surviving example of an Italianate farmhouse and its setting. The garden layout is individually significant at regional level as a rare relatively intact surviving late nineteenth century example.

INTACTNESS: Not known

CONDITIONS & THREATS: Apparently good.



RP 11.4.94 NTS.