

TOD PARK & PARKINSON PROPERTY

The Oaks

Place No. 246

ADDRESS	18 - 20 Hartley Rd, and 114-116 Jumping Creek Road Wonga Park	Last Update
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DESCRIPTION Former tourist complex containing: house, tearooms, office, cottage and oak trees, now on two residential allotments (Tod Park, 18-20 Hartley Rd contains the office and main house, and the Parkinson's property (114-116 Jumping Creek Road) contains the tea rooms, a cottage and oak trees).

The timber house was once a four-roomed dwelling, the step between the two gabled sections suggesting it may have been built in two stages. Internally it retains much of its timber-linings and dado. One internal wall and both fireplaces and chimneys have been removed. It has been extended at both ends.

The office is a small timber building, about 3m by 2.4m, with a gable roof. The door is approx. 600mm wide and is made of vertical boards; it bears a "462" number plate and a letter slot.

The tea rooms is a two-roomed building with a gabled, corrugated iron roof (originally thatched) and lined internally with timber panelling. One room appears to be a kitchen. A concrete block chimney and mantelpiece remains. Externally, the building is clad with ti-tree poles set as geometric panels, with the lower walls clad in brush. One side is clad with weatherboards.

Nearby is a timber and asbestos cement sheet cottage, one of two that housed the aunts of the Gambetta family.

Condition	Good	Integrity	Intact
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Threats	None apparent	Key elements	
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Designer

HISTORY An examination of Lilydale Shire rate records provides evidence of the late 1880s and turn of the century dates of construction of this complex of main house, tearooms, cottage and office. Meredith Hughes, a Melbourne monumental mason, was the first lessee in 1893 of a house and 26 and a half acres of land in Crown Allotment 9T (an Eight Hour Pioneer Settlement (EHPS) property), the site of The Oaks. The valuation was only four pounds, suggesting that the first dwelling was an extremely modest one.[1] The house is believed to date from 1889.[12]

Hughes association with the property gives some credence to the story that an office was moved from the city and used for weekend accommodation while a cottage was built.[2] Hughes leased the Wonga Park property from 1893 until 1904 and in 1901 was listed as a City monumental mason.[3] During the 1890s and later, some substantial brick and stone office buildings were constructed in Collins Street in the block between Williams and King Streets, including the Rialto and Olderfleet buildings. No 462 Collins Street opposite on the NW corner of Collins and William Street was the site in the 1890s of a substantial office building.[4] Further research is needed to confirm whether Hughes was working on Collins Street building projects at the time. MMBW drainage plans of the time indicate Hughes Monumental Works at 458 Bourke Street, east of Queen Street and not far from the Goldsbrough Mort bluestone stores

Building activity on the Wonga Park property during the late 1890s or the turn of the century is suggested by the doubling of its valuation by 1901.[5] The property remained in Hughes family ownership for some time. By 1905, following Meredith's death, his widow, Elizabeth, was rated as the owner of the house and 26 and a half acres in 9T. However, her address is given as 23 Waltham Street, Richmond.[6] This is the period when Florence Sharp (nee Hughes) reputedly operated tea rooms from the property and sold flowers and gum tips to day trippers from the city. The tea room was a green-house made from ti-tree.[7] There is no mention of tea rooms in the rate books but Mrs Elizabeth Hughes, widow, continued to live in Richmond.[8]

According to a 1989 account by Myrtle E. Slade the "old original home of Mrs Sharp up Hartley Road was called the "Hermitage" and after its sale, the front section of the property was called "The Oaks." [9] Rate records confirm the Slade account of the cutting up of the property "into four blocks of 7 acres each to Mrs Sharp, Miss Hughes, Tom Hughes and Mr W. Hughes after "the

passing of the old folk.” The 1920-21 rate records list the owners as Ethel Hughes, part of 9T; Thomas Hughes of North Carlton, owner of a cottage on 7 acres; Walter Hughes, Richmond Council employee, owner of part of 9T; and Florence Sharp, owner/occupier of a house on 6 acres of 9T. The first three portions were rated at six or seven pounds, while Florence’s house, presumably the main house, had a valuation of 12 pounds.[10] By 1924, the valuation of Thomas Hughes cottage and Florence Sharp’s house had increased in value to ten and 15 pounds.[11]

An examination of records of resort properties might add useful information about the tea room phase in the history of this property. Ethel Hughes, associated with the property in the 1920s was, according to the Slade manuscript, a proof reader for Robertson and Mullens book stores, but also “spent much time on stage in pantomimes.”

The present owner believes that the cottage was transported to Australia by ship. It is said to be unusual in its construction, having a stud-framed wall with no noggings but instead had 10-12" wide straps of cedar around .25" thick. A previous owner - Chivers - a race-horse owner, named the property Tod Park.(12)

SOURCES

Creation Date pre-1889

Change Dates

Associations

Local Themes

Meredith Hughes, Florence Sharp, Tom

3.01 - Travel sites

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This complex, once known as The Oaks - comprising main house, tea rooms, cottage and office, and its oak trees - has regional significance demonstrating the role of recreational activities and tourism within the district during the early twentieth century. The small office may have been moved from Collins Street by the first lessee of the property in 1893, Meredith Hughes, a Melbourne monumental mason. The Hughes family were associated with the property over a long period. Mrs Florence Sharp (nee Hughes) ran the tearooms there in the first decades of this century. (Criterion A4, B2, H1)

LEVEL

RECOMMENDATIONS

Heritage Register Listings

Register

Reference

Zoning

Status

None Specified

Extent

Heritage Schedule

External Paint Controls:

On VHR:

VHR Ref No:

Internal Alteration Controls:

Prohibited Uses:

Tree Controls:

Aboriginal Heritage Place:

Outbuildings or Fences:

Incorporated Plan:

Incorporated Plan Details

Description:

Conservation Management

Extra Research

BIBLIOGRAPHY