

WHITE LODGE

Forest Gate

Place No. 244

ADDRESS 391 Yarra Road (former 9046)
Wonga Park

Last Update

DESCRIPTION Timber house, complex in form reflecting the stages in its development and rebuilding. The main section is late Victorian with a high-pitched roof (once with a widow's walk). A gabled entry and a gabled section to the south have been removed.

The garden (part now located on the adjoining property) features several large trees: Italian Cypress and Oaks.

Condition Good **Integrity** Altered - major alterations

Threats None apparent **Key elements**

Designer

HISTORY This late Victorian house was located on 13 acres of the property of George Launder, carpenter and builder, and eight hours pioneer, who leased 9F (an Eight Hour Pioneer Settlement (EHPS) property) from 1893.[1] Launder was the Secretary of the Eight Hours Pioneers Association in 1896. A planned subdivision of his 51 acres (an unusually large EHPS property) into 8 lots was included in correspondence from Launder to the Lands Department in November 1893. Launder requested that George Bade, a 'son-in-law of one of the Eight Hour Pioneers' should be given Lot 7, seven acres in his subdivision.

The present site of White Lodge (known earlier as Forest Gate) was located in Lot 2 of Launder's 1893 subdivision. This was bounded on the north by Jumping Creek Road and on the east by Yarra Road. Launder's own home (now 8 Launders Avenue) was in Lot 1, south of Lot 2, bounded on the east by Yarra Road and on the south by Launders Avenue.[3]

It is thought that the earliest dwelling on the Forest Gate site was constructed in 1894 for William Webb, a professional singer, and husband of Launder's niece, Emma, a theatrical costume dresser.[4]

Confirmation of the Webbs occupancy of the site is provided in a report of June 1899 made by the Police Crown Bailiff at Warrandyte. He reported that Launder is 'at present working in Melbourne and his sister Mrs Wills is looking after his land for him A Mr. William Webb is in occupation of 13 acres of this land. I do not know what arrangements Launder and Webb have come to in respect to this matter but I believe the Department is aware of the fact and circumstances. I therefore send a valuation of all improvements effected in the holding irrespective of who paid for them'.

Two dwellings are listed in the returns. One is a weatherboard and iron house of five rooms valued at 120 pounds (presumably Launder's own home). The other is a 3-roomed brick, iron and bark dwelling valued at 15 pounds.[5] This was most probably the earliest dwelling at Forest Gate.

According to one account, the original oak trees on the Forest Gate property were, like those at 10 Launders Avenue, grown from some acorns brought from England by Launder. The Webbs reputedly ran a guest house at their Wonga Park property for theatrical friends. A coachman, Billy Farran, 'drove regularly to Croydon to pick up the guests'. [6]

Shire of Lillydale rate records confirm the occupancy of the Webbs of a house on 13 acres, at least from 1895 when it has a valuation of 13 pounds. William Webb, farmer, is recorded as the owner of the property for the first time in 1898.[7] At the turn of the century, Emma Webb, widow, became the owner/occupier of the house and 13 acres in 9F, still with the same valuation.[8] Her former husband was accidentally killed one night when returning from the city.[9]

In 1908, it is said, part of the house was 'rebuilt because of white ants and at that time the front door was facing north'. [10] Shire of Lillydale rate records confirm that in the 1907-8 rating period the valuation of the property dropped to only nine pounds.[11] The year before, Emma was living at Highgate House in Canterbury Road, Canterbury, and Forest Gate was tenanted by T.W. Lloyd. However, by 1908-9, when the valuation rose to 20 pounds, probably as a result of

the rebuilding, Emma moved back.[12] She was there still in 1913-14.[13]

The Webb family continued to be well-known Wonga Park residents. Miss T.Webb was shown among those attending the 1912 opening of Wonga Park State School.[14] She was known as “Twee-tie Webb” and was a part-time sewing teacher at the school.[15] Some of her memories were included in James recent history of the district. By that time she was a 'senior citizen'. She recalled riding into the bush to pick gum tips for sale to city florists. Later, Forest Gate was purchased by Miss Winifred Roland, a friend of the Slade family, who 'after re-modelling it, re-named it "White Lodge"'. [16]

SOURCES

- [1] Land File No.11548/44.
- [2] Murphy.
- [3] Land File No.11548/44.
- [4] Border Country, p.44.
- [5] Land File No.11548/44.
- [6] Discover Wonga Park, Place No.13.
- [7] Shire of Lillydale RB 1895 No.1527; 1898 No.1496.
- [8] Shire of Lillydale RB 1900-1901 No.1766.
- [9] Border Country, p.40.
- [10] Discover Wonga Park.
- [11] Shire of Lillydale Rate Book 1907-08 No.2009.
- [12] ibid 1905-06 No.1978; 1908-09 No.2164.
- [13] ibid 1913-14 No.2838.
- [14] Border Country, p.43.
- [15] Slade MSS.
- [16] Slade MSS.

Creation Date 1894

Change Dates

Associations

Local Themes

Emma Webb and William Webb

3.01 - Travel sites

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The former Forest Gate is of local significance as a surviving guest house of the 1890s with turn of the century additions, demonstrating the importance of tourism even at this early date. It has important historical associations with Emma Webb, a theatrical dresser, niece of George Launder, carpenter and builder, and eight hour pioneer, who played a major role in the establishment in the early 1890s of Wonga Park’s village settlement. The Webb’s guest house run by Emma and her husband, William, a professional singer, was located on 13 acres, part of an 1893 subdivision of Launder’s Wonga Park farm. (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

BIBLIOGRAPHY