

## ***Barunah Plains Homestead, Outbuildings and Garden***

Hamilton Highway, Hesse, via Inverleigh,  
Wingeeel

**Lot No.**                      **Plan No.**

**Municipal Rate No.**

**Architectural Style**

**Designer(s)**

**Contractor(s)**



National Estate Register, 2003.

<b>Legislative Registers</b>		Nominated	Registered	<b>Other Registers</b>		Registered
Victorian Heritage Register No.	<input type="checkbox"/>			National Estate RNE - Database		15759
Heritage Inventory No.	<input type="checkbox"/>			RNE Legal Status		Registered
Precinct Heritage Overlay No.	<input type="checkbox"/>			National Trust (Vic.) File		G13123, B1126
Precinct Heritage Overlay Nam				Nat. Trust Classification		<input type="checkbox"/>
Individual Heritage Overlay No.	<input type="checkbox"/>		HO20			

## **Statement of Significance**

National Estate Register:

Barunah Plains is a late nineteenth century homestead development and is important for exhibiting a rich array of cultural features as follows: a collection of bluestone buildings including the homestead and outbuildings; and a homestead garden and parkland with a large attractively crafted timber gate, a timber pedestrian bridge, shrubberies, a sunken croquet lawn, a rose garden and mature trees (Criterion A.3).

Barunah Plains has a strong and long association with the grazing history of the western district, and thus with a major chapter of the history of Victoria (Criterion A.4).

The range of structures on the property, including bakery, laundry, cottages, implement shed, stables, coach house, woolshed and ram building, is important for the way it reflects a functioning western district sheep property founded in the nineteenth century. Additionally, the ram shed and the gate providing entry to the garden and park are unusual features. The garden is also important as an example of the Gardenesque design style, exhibiting the following style characteristics: a dominance of shrubberies with minimal lawn area; use of gravel paths; and use of trees with distinctive form as features (Criterion B.2).

Barunah Plains is important for technical and creative excellence exhibited in the evolved form of the bluestone house, the collection of substantial bluestone outbuildings, and in the 1890s garden design layout (Criterion F.1).

National Trust:

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

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Barunah Plains (formerly Long Water Holes), commenced as a pastoral run in the late 1830s, acquired by the Russell family in 1851, the homestead erected in 1866-67 and extended in 1886 with development of the garden presumed to relate to the 1860s-80s, and retained in Russell family ownership for almost 130 years, is of statewide cultural significance:

- historically, as a fine example of a nineteenth century homestead, exemplifying the transition from the earliest stone-built homesteads of the 1860s to the more grandiose homesteads of the 1870s-80s; major constituent elements include the homestead, conservatory, coach-house and stables, manager's residence, shearing shed, implement shed, bakehouse, ram shed and other outbuildings, entry drive, garden and dry stone walling;
- historically, for its integral links with the pioneering Russell family of the Western District; the family owned Barunah Plains for 127 years and the fabric of the property reflects all phases of their occupation; the family ownership also links the property with other Russell family properties such as Golfhill, Mawallock, Carngham and Wurrook and through early owner John Simson it is also linked with Trawalla - these links have a great ability to demonstrate traditional Scottish kinship loyalties and exemplify a major characteristic of the social and cultural history of the Western District;
- for its retention of design elements of a mid to late nineteenth century homestead garden; including elevated site overlooking a creek, drive and path layout, spatial arrangement of buildings and services, fencing and gates, a balance between productive, leisure and horticultural pursuits, and the contrast between homestead garden and open farmland;
- for its retention of planting from the mid nineteenth to early twentieth century, including specimen trees, shelter belt plantings and parkland, shrubberies, flower beds and lawn areas (both formal - as in the croquet lawn - and informal); and
- aesthetically, for the contrast between the open volcanic plains and the oasis of the garden around the homestead nestled into a bend in the Warrambine Creek, for the maturity of the garden landscaping, and as the setting for a fine mid-nineteenth century homestead.

[The architectural significance of Barunah Plains has not been re-assessed as part of this report.]

## EXISTING DESIGNATIONS

National Trust of Australia (Victoria)

9 June 1960: Barunah Plains Homestead classified (level 'D') [FN1126]

1980: Peter Watts, 'Historic Gardens in Victoria', Barunah Plains ranked 'of state significance' and 'Category 1'

Barunah Plains - classified 2/12/96

Australian Heritage Commission

Not assessed for the Register of the National Estate

Heritage Victoria

Not assessed for the Victorian Heritage Register

Shire of Golden Plains

Not assessed for possible scheduling in the planning scheme

National Trust (Homestead):

Some places were classified by the National Trust in the early years without a citation being prepared. These are being gradually reviewed and citations are being prepared. Please contact the National Trust for more information regarding the significance of this place.

Class: Local

## Description

National Estate Register:

Barunah Plains on the Hamilton Highway at Wingeel was established in the 1840s. Philip Russell, with John Simson and Thomas Russell, took over the property in 1851 and from 1856 Thomas, with other Russell family members, had the property. Barunah Plains remained in Russell family hands until 1978.

The oldest section of the homestead (which contains main rooms) dates from 1866 and was designed by architects, Davidson and Henderson, who designed a number of homesteads and other buildings in this part of Victoria. Additions were made later in the nineteenth century and major additions and alterations date from the 1900s to the 1910s. These early twentieth century works included the western wing with its polygonal window, filling in of the central courtyard to create an enormous lantern lit room with two fireplaces and refitting of parts of the older house, such as leadlights in the front door surround. The dates of the various outbuildings are unknown. In 1904 it was stated that the Barunah Plains Merino flock was 'the most noted in the western district', comprising 50,000 sheep on the 51,000 acres. The ram building is one unusual manifestation of this once very large sheep property, evidently the largest in Victoria when it was subdivided for soldier settlement in 1946.

Barunah Plains homestead is a large, single storey bluestone residence, comprising two main sections forming a U-shape around the rear courtyard, infilled in the 1900s to the 1910s. The eastern section of the

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building was built in 1866 to Davidson and Henderson's design. This eastern section is asymmetrically composed with a cast iron verandah at the north-east corner. The present front door faces east and is beside a projecting bay window and sheltered by a stone porch; this section may well be an addition. The north side elevation has a projecting bay windowed room with a higher roof crowned by cast iron cresting. Further west is the 1900s to the 1910s wing, comprising principal bedrooms and intact bathrooms. On the western side of the old courtyard is a bluestone section reputed to be the oldest part and a timber section.

Immediately south of the rear of the house is the bluestone bakehouse and laundry. Further south again are the bluestone and timber station buildings, stables, coach house and implement shed, arranged to form a large courtyard. The garden encloses the homestead on the south, east, north and part of the west sides. Separating the garden and station outbuildings is a picket fence, which is the last surviving section of this fencing which was more extensive.

The garden has a layout dating from at least the 1890s and has much mature planting. The garden originally extended to the other side of the Warrambine Creek, but became badly overgrown in recent times.

Warrambine Creek runs along the north side of the garden, and a sunken croquet lawn is just north-east of the house. The garden has 2ha of informal area and parkland, and 3ha of formal garden which includes a rose garden, orchard, kitchen garden, various shrubberies with small trees, a variety of shrubs and perennials, and mature pines, monkey puzzle trees, and cypresses. The garden has an approach through an attractive old style timber gate, and also across a timber pedestrian bridge, spanning the creek.

The T-shaped bluestone woolshed is on the other side of the creek, on a rise; its south wall is concealed by corrugated iron additions. There are two bluestone houses east of the woolshed, on the other side of the creek. The coursed bluestone ram shed has a slatted floor, with subfloor access doors below.

## Condition and Integrity:

Barunah Plains homestead, garden, outbuildings, woolshed, adjacent houses and ram shed are in generally good condition and intact. (May 1988)

## National Trust:

Extra Location Info: Section A (Long Water Hole pre-emptive right) and Section 1 (the woolshed block), Parish of Hesse, County of Grenville

## EXTENT OF CLASSIFICATION

Land bounded by the Warrambine Creek and taking in the 640 acres of the Long Water Holes pre-emptive right and the adjacent 80 acres containing the woolshed (Section 1).

## DESCRIPTION

Barunah Plains is approached from the Hamilton Highway by a long tree-lined drive. This and other tree plantings around the homestead protect the garden from strong winds which sweep across the undulating plains surrounding the property. The homestead is sited east of Warrambine Creek at a point where it bends through the rocky volcanic ground. The focal point for this garden, with its meandering walks, tennis court, sunken croquet lawns, kitchen garden, shrubberies and orchard is the basalt residence erected in 1866 and apparently extended in 1886. Attached to the homestead is a small conservatory.

A gravel driveway sweeps up to the front of the house and continues on to the stables. A large lawn bordered with eucalypts and pines on its eastern boundary lies to the east of the drive and is the site of a tennis court surrounded by climbing plants and various trees including a palm, elms and the stump of a tamarisk tree. Between the southern end of this lawn and the stables is a second smaller lawn which was planted by the Russell family in the 1950s.

To the northern end of the homestead a group of steps leads down to the croquet lawn. This area is sheltered mainly by cypresses, although other species, namely *Phillyrea angustifolia* (Jasmine-box), *Phillyrea latifolia* and *Corynocarpus laevigatus* (Karaka) are also present. Remnants of a basalt wall said to be part of a shepherd's hut of the 1850s are located near an *Araucaria bidwillii* (Bunya Bunya Pine) and *Cedrus atlantica* f. *glauca* (Blue Atlas Cedar) on the south-west of this lawn which was once used for croquet. A path leads from the croquet lawn west through a gardenesque style area edged with basalt boulders and much overgrown with assorted wattles, roses, philadelphus and pomegranates, to a newly established rockery and on to a privet-lined pathway leading to the orchard and vegetable garden.

Between the orchard and the house is a small area of lawn bordered with modern roses on the southern side and shrubs on the western end. This is also the site of a windmill covered with wisteria and a tank stand covered with *Rosa fortuneana* and *Rosa laevigata*. Rainfall in this area is very low and water is frequently drawn from the creek for both the house and the garden. A third tank covered with *Rosa banksia* stands adjacent to the house. Another path leads past the modern rose bed and toward the kitchen garden. This path is lined with privet on one side and trees on the other, including two rare specimens of *Teucrium betonica* and *Danaea racemosa*.

Outside this more formal area is approximately two hectares of parkland. The path leading northwards beyond the croquet lawn and over the bridge crossing the creek (in which platypus are sometimes sighted) is one such

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area. Parkland is also to be found on the spur beyond the gardenesque area and to the south-eastern end of the croquet lawn. The parkland area beyond the croquet lawn was once a zoo with kangaroos, peacocks and the like, apparently created by the Russell family in the 1920s-30s. This area is now mainly covered with eucalypts.

Recent work in the garden by Graham Mills (owner since 1978) has included:

- planting trees such as Golden Ash and Silver Birch along one side of the drive;
- rebuilding the entrance gates;
- restoration and painting of the picket fence surrounding the garden;
- planting flowers and shrubs including some camellias along the front of the homestead;
- clearing up part of the parkland adjacent to the footbridge.

## History

National Estate Register: Not Available.

National Trust:

### HISTORY

1837: Run originally known as Warracbarunah Plains, part of Warrambine, which extended from the Warracbarunah or Long Water Hole, now Lough Calvert, to the Leigh River, taken up in 1837 by Prentice and Smythe. The partnership dissolved, Prentice taking Warrambine and Smythe Smythes Creek. A.M. Allen, who had a run near Winchelsea, occupied the southern portion of Warrambine as well, and in 1851 sold to Jas. Austin. [Billis and Kenyon, *Pastoral Pioneers of Port Phillip*, p.173, quoted in Gladys Seaton, *Gold Reef and Silver Tussock: A History of the Shire of Leigh*, 1988, p.6.]

1839: Log homestead constructed. [Letter from William Russell (Golffhill) to his relatives in Scotland, 28 August 1839, in Clyde Company Papers, vol.2, p.244, quoted in David Jones, 'A quest for landscape meaning in the Western District, Victoria, Australia', 1993, p.442.]

1848: James Austin (1810-1896) of 'Long Waterhole' in the Portland Bay District applies for a 'Lease of Waste Lands of the Crown beyond the Settled Districts in the Colony of New South Wales', 16 March 1848, having been held the land under licensed occupation for at least 12 months previous to 'Her Majesty's Order-in-Council of 7 October 1847'; the lease was for approximately 52,200 acres and an estimated grazing capability of 16,000 sheep; application approved 23 February 1849; an undated plan on the run file appears to correspond with this application and this shows the 'Home Station'. [Application on run file for 'Long Waterhole', Central Plan Office; Note on Register of Runs, vol.1, Central Plan Office; P.L. Brown, 'Austin, James (1810-1896) and Thomas (1815-1871)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol.1, pp.43-44]

1850: James Austin requests that his Long Water Holes run be subdivided, 22 August 1850 (plan mentioned in letter but now missing, Surveyor-General states on 22 March 1860 that he does not have the plan). [Letter on run file for 'Long Waterhole', Central Plan Office.]

1851: James Austin disposes of all his 'right title and interest in and to the stock, and station known as "Long Water Holes", in the Portland Bay District to Messrs Philip Russell, John Simson, and Thomas Russell', 15 January 1851. [Letter on run file for 'Long Waterhole', Central Plan Office; hereafter, the spelling of 'Long Water Holes' is widely adopted.] Geelong historian P.L. Brown records that John Simson and Philip Russell soon withdrew, but the three British-based Russell brothers became constituents of Thomas Russell & Co. [P.L. Brown, 'Russell, Philip (1822?-1892) and Thomas (1828-1920)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 6, p.77.] Thomas Russell was apparently living at Long Water Holes from this time and

1851: Long Water Hole run subdivided into three separate runs - Long Water Hole, Allan's Home and Mount Rebecca, 26 January 1851. [Note in Register of Runs, vol.1, Central Plan Office]

1851: Letter from George Russell (having just arrived in London from Port Phillip) to his nephew William Lewis (then managing Golffhill station at Shelford for the Clyde Company), 28 May 1851: 'Have you had plenty of fruit this year? did those Shrubs grow that I had so much trouble with, or were you & Tom [Russell] more successful with those towards the Store? There will be plenty of room for planting on the Long-water-holes. I am glad they are settled so near the Leigh [River]. I think they have given a high price for the station, but probably better to do so than remain idle. Does Tom make as triumphant appeals to the Penny Cyclopaedia as ever? They must change the name of the Station. 'Flea-Hall wd be better than any description of water-holes.' [Clyde Company Papers, vol.5, pp.71-72.] In *Pastoral Homes Of Australia* it is recorded (without attribution) that once the property had been purchased by Thomas Russell and Company they 'at once set about the task of evolving the most valuable type of Merino to suit the district, using for their foundation the sheep introduced to the run by the previous owner, and appointing Mr Kininmonth, a keen judge of sheep and an expert stud master, as resident manager. At this time [but presumably a little later, given the continuing usage by the family of the name Long Water Holes] the name was changed to Barunah Plains.' [Barunah Plains, Hesse,

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Victoria. The Property of the Executors of the late James Russell', Pastoral Homes Of Australia, Vol. 2, new series, 1930.]

1853: Letter from Alexander Russell (of Mahwallock) to William Lewis (manager of Golfhill), 27 May 1853: 'I got a complete drenching that day I left the Plains [i.e. Long Water Holes later renamed Barunah Plains] for Carrngam & Tom [Russell] - the confounded fellow - would not let me away until I saw his garden, so that it was eleven O'Clock before I got started ... Can you tell me, Willie, where the garden at the Plains is situated? - while Tom was sowing his Paddock he told me to take a look at his garden. I walked good three miles about the place, but feint head I saw deserving the name of one; however, Tom says he is famed for two things - that is, for giving the best dinner & best bed with any in Port Philip: it certainly is a Cheerie place, the Plains; what with the Master singing below & the overseer keeping time aloft it is one of the liveliest places I have been at for sometime.' [Clyde Company Papers, vol.5, p.474.]

1853: Letter from Thomas Russell to William Lewis, The Plains, 12 October 1853: 'I wish the Governor [referring to his uncle, George Russell, at that date in Britain], as he is quite au fait in these matters, would order out from home a large bundle of tree seeds, for himself and his neighbours on the Plains; his talking about growing fir trees has led me to make this proposal.' [Clyde Company Papers, vol.5, p.533.]

1854: Plan of 'Mr Russell's Section at "The Long Water Hole"', drawn by Charles Bond, Temporary Assistant Surveyor, 12 December 1854; checked by A.J. Skene, District Surveyor, Geelong, 28 December 1854; this is the 640 acre pre-emptive right presumably purchased by Russell, Simson and Russell at this time [there is a pencilled note 13.2.55 on the plan, perhaps the date of purchase. i.e. 1855] and the plan shows the home station, woolshed (on adjoining land) and several huts clustered along the Warrambine Creek. [PR L12, Central Plan Office]

1854: Summary of asset and liabilities of Barunah Plains station prepared by George Russell, 31 December 1854, at that date the property consisted of '26,000 sheep, 80 cattle, 18 horses and 640 acres of purchased land, with stores, implements, &c.' [Transcript of statement in Clyde Company Papers, vol.6, p.210.]

1856: Letter from Thomas Russell, John Simson and Philip Russell to the Chief Commissioner of Crown Lands, 25 April 1856, advising that 'Having some time since transferred our rights to the Runs named in the margin ['Allans-home', 'Mt Rebecca' and 'Long Water-holes'] to Messrs Thos. Russell & Co., we have to request you will be good enough to issue the Licenses in their name in future'; requisite fees paid 28 April and 4 June 1856; transfer formalised 10 June 1856. [Letters on run file for 'Long Waterhole', Central Plan Office; note in Register of Runs, vol.1, Central Plan Office.]

1856: Purchase of 80 acres west of Warrambine Creek (contiguous with the pre-emptive right purchased) by Thomas Russell, 12 May 1856; this land contained the Long Water Holes woolshed. [Pencilled note on PR L12, Central Plan Office.]

1857-58: Visit by Thomas Russell to Britain, via Venice, Gratz, Styria (Austria), Vienna, Prague, Dresden, Berlin and Brussels, the journey described in a letter from Thomas Russell to George Russell, dated Kirkaldy, 10 June 1857. [Clyde Company Papers, vol.6, pp.444-445.]

1857: Thomas Russell acquired the adjoining Ponds or Wurrook station, which became his headquarters. [P.L. Brown, 'Russell, Philip (1822?-1892) and Thomas (1828-1920)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, vol. 6, p.77.]

1858: Letter from Thomas Russell to George Russell, dated London, 14 May 1858: 'I have sold my interest in the Plains to the extent of a fifth to my brothers, who at the same time give up all interest in the Ponds station. I think they have given me a very fair price, considerably beyond W. Lewis's valuation ...'. [Clyde Company Papers, vol.6, pp.530-531.]

1858: Letter from Thomas Russell to George Russell, dated Kincaid, 21 October 1858: 'W. Lewis writes that there is some intention of He, yourself, Gibbs R. & Co., and Kininmonth buying Mt Bute, the latter [James Kininmonth] to be manager. I would have thought J.K. would not have gone from the Plains during my absence, nor entered into an agreement with others: if such are the partners, and the station is brought, I think he has acted unadvisedly.' [Clyde Company Papers, vol.6, pp.566-567.]

1859: James Kininmonth, manager of the Plains, purchases a one-eleventh share in the property; the ownership of the property during this period is extraordinarily complex, but Thomas Russell maintained executive power (through his interest in the company Thomas Russell and Co.). [Clyde Company Papers, vol.7, p.xxvi.]

1859: '[Plan of] Country Lots, Parish of Hesse, County of Grenville', lithographed 6 September 1859, shows the entire Parish of Hesse (except for the pre-emptive purchase of the Russell's, the block across the creek purchased in 1856 and a reserve on the Warrambine Creek south of the pre-emptive section) subdivided into 106 allotments each of approximately 120 acres ready for sale; along Warrambine Creek the land is marked 'Very stony land'; adjacent to the creek three sheep yards and one stone cottage are plotted. [State Library of Victoria, 820 BJE 1837 - HESSE 1859.]

1859-60: Letters re land sold on the Long Water Holes run and requests for consequent reduction in license fee. [Letters on run file for 'Long Waterhole', Central Plan Office; Clyde Company Papers, vol.7, p.35-36, 177.]

1860: Letter from James Kininmonth to Clement Hodgkinson, Deputy Surveyor-General, 28 July 1860,

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advising 'that although a partner in the firm of Thos. Russell & Co., I still sign merely as an agent any transactions which I negotiate for the firm ... all monies received by the firm pass through my hands'. [Letter on run file for 'Long Waterhole', Central Plan Office.]

1860: Thomas Russell, of Wurrook and Barunah Plains, married to Anna Louisa Parsons, at Berriedale (Tasmania), 23 August 1860 [Clyde Company Papers, vol.6, p.618.]

1860: '[Plan of] Suburban Allotments, Parish of Hesse, County Grenville', lithographed September 1860, shows six lots each of approximately five acres on the Geelong-Cressy Road, south of the Long Water Holes pre-emptive section; one lot near the Warrambine Creek (later sold to David Low Laing) shows an inn, kitchen, stable and stock yard. [State Library of Victoria, 820 BJE 1837 - HESSE 1860; SALE 693, Central Plan Office.]

1861: Letter from Lawrie & Tracey to George Russell, dated Geelong, 7 February 1861: 'We beg leave to enform you that our men is going of tomorrow to Slate your Brother's new house ...'; Historian and editor P.L. Brown adds a note: 'Russell's "Brother's new house" was probably the Wurrook homestead, or that at the Plains, soon to be known as Barunah.' [Clyde Company Papers, vol.7, p.119.]

1862: Letter from Thomas Russell to George Russell, dated Wurrook, 17 September 1862: '...as Kininmonth appears to have the full confidence of the partners, I think that the better way is to appoint him without reference to me or any other, only limiting (as some of the partners are extremely anxious for a dividend) his desire for extravagant outlay on improvements.' [Clyde Company Papers, vol.7, p.191.]

1866: 'Plan of the Parish of Wingeel, Grenville', lithographed 13 October 1866, shows the entire parish bordering the north of the Long Water Holes pre-emptive section subdivided into 107 allotments each of approximately 150 acres ready for sale; along Warrambine Creek the land is marked 'Good soil on banks of creek very stony', while to the east the land is marked 'Stiff clay soil wet in winter'. [State Library of Victoria, 820 BJE 1837 - WINGEEL 1866.]

1866: Substantial land purchases on the Long Water Holes run made by Thomas Russell, 6 November 1866. [State Library of Victoria, 820 BJE 1837 - HESSE 1880, WINGEEL 1919.]

1866-67: Homestead constructed to the design of architects Davidson and Henderson [Watts, p.127]

1867: Long Water Hole run declared forfeited, 18 June 1867; forfeiture revoked 2 August 1867 and re-forfeited 8 August 1873. [Note in Register of Runs, vol.1, with dates from Victoria Government Gazette.]

1871: First known use of the name Barunah Plains by George Russell. [Clyde Company Papers, vol.7, p.436]

1871: 1 1/2 acre reserve for a Presbyterian Church set aside south of the Barunah Plains station. [SALE 693, Central Plan Office; Victoria Government Gazette, 1871, p.703.]

1873: Thomas Russell of Wurrook abroad until approximately 1887. [Letter from P.L. Brown to National Trust, 29 July 1974, on NT file 3425.]

1873: Letter from William Lewis to Rev. Robert Russell, dated Mawallok, 5 August 1873: "You are aware that [Robert] Armstrong managed the Plains station very well when Kininmonth was absent for a year.' [Clyde Company Papers, vol.7, p.481]

1877: James Russell (1859-1912) arrives in Victoria from Scotland. [James Smith (ed), Cyclopaedia of Victoria, Melbourne, vol.2, 1904, p.469.] This is slightly contradicted by a later account that James Russell (son of George Russell of Golfhill) arrived in the early 1870s; it is further recorded that he eventually bought out the other partners and ran Barunah Plains until his death in 1912. [Reminiscence of his grandson, Geordie Russell, Geelong Advertiser, 26 September 1978, p.9.] In The House that Wool Built (1969, p.8) is an unsourced reference to George Russell (nephew of Thomas Russell) arriving in 1876 to manage Barunah Plains - perhaps this is a mistake for James Russell.

1882: Letter from Mrs Robert Simson (Kate Officer) to Mrs Williams, Leura, Toorak, 11 January 1882: 'Mr Kininmont[h] of the plains station is to bring Annie's niece, Phem(m)jie Carstairs, out as his wife.' [Clyde Company Papers, vol.7, p.518]

1886: Homestead extended upon the return of James Russell from abroad [unsourced information on NT garden file]

1888: 'Thomas Russell, J.P. ... George [Russell] being one of the earliest settlers; he was followed by his two cousins, first Philip and then Thomas, the latter arriving in Port Phillip Bay in 1850. In partnership with Mr John Simson, another Fife [Scotland] man, a short time after they landed, he purchased from Mr James Austin, the original settler, a station known as Long Water Holes (now Barunah Plains, of sheep-breeding reputation), situated between Inverleigh and Cressy, with 30,000 sheep at 12s a head ... Long Water Holes, like many other stations was cut up into allotments of from 100 to 300 acres, and offered at auction at £1 per acre upset price ... About 1857 Mr T. Russell purchased from Mr Compton Ferrers a station taken up by that gentleman called The Ponds, near Rokewood, and now known as Wurrook ... [Barunah Plains] is now all freehold and contains 50,000 acres.' Alexander Sutherland (ed), Victoria and its Metropolis, vol. 2, 1888, pp.206-207.]

1904: 'James Russell of Barunah Plains Estate, Inverleigh, was born in Scotland in the year 1859, and arrived

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in Victoria in 1877. The estate was founded by Mr A. Hopkins, who afterwards exchanged it with Mr Jas. Austin by whom it was sold to Messrs Russell and Simson, the estate passing successively through the hands of T. Russell and Co., G. Russell and Sons, and J. and A. Russell to its present. The present Russell family originally came from Fifeshire, in Scotland. Barunah Plains comprise something over 51,000 acres of grazing land, and carrying up to 50,000 merino sheep and 200 head of pure shorthorn cattle. This flock is the most noted in the Western district, and innumerable are the prizes they have taken, principally in the grass-fed sections. Mr Russell also took the first prize for wool at the International Exhibition, London, in 1899 ... The homestead on the estate is a magnificent residence, situate about thirty miles from Geelong, and erected entirely of bluestone. A portion of the land is well supplied with water, and with the exception of one year, when the whole of the run was burnt out, has been particularly free from fires. Mr Russell has been a member of the Leigh Shire Council since 1880, and is now president.' [James Smith (ed), Cyclopaedia of Victoria, Melbourne, vol.2, 1904, pp.469-470.]

1906: Barunah Plains homestead pictured in News of the Week, 15 November 1906. [Reproduced in Seaton, A History of the Shire of Leigh, 1988, p.36.]

1910: 'Barunah Plains is one of the finest wool growing estates in Western Victoria. The area is 51,000 acres, made up of volcanic stony rises and hard plains. There are also some swampy lands on the property, which as a whole is practically devoid of natural timber ... The next owners [after James Austin] were Messrs T. Russell and Co., and since then it has never passed out of the hands of that family. They sold to Messrs G. Russell and Sons, from whom it afterwards passed to Messrs J. and A. Russell, and finally to Mr James Russell, who is now the sole proprietor. The estate has been subdivided into ninety-five paddocks, and in other ways greatly improved. The homestead and its environs are among the most comfortable to be found anywhere in Victoria. The house itself is a bluestone structure built of rock quarried on the estate. Part of it was put up in the forties, and it has from time to time been added to, and now forms a most commodious dwelling. The garden has been tastefully laid out, and is well kept. An electric plant has been installed ... The quarters are seweraged on the septic tank principle ... Plantations have been established in many parts of the property, but the trees are very slow in coming to maturity ... Sugar gums and wattles are the varieties which have been most used ... Mr James Russell, the present proprietor of Barunah Plains, was born in 1859 in Fifeshire, Scotland, and was educated at Collegiate College, in Charlotte-square, Edinburgh. He came to Victoria in 1877, and went straight to Barunah. After working there for three years, he accepted the position of manager, and ultimately became owner. He married in 1880, and has five sons and one daughter.' Article accompanied by 16 photographs of the estate, including several of the garden which show a mixture of earlier tree plantings (mainly pines) with more recent shrub plantings and some 'sub-tropical' foliage plantings (e.g. Canary Island Palms and cordylines). 'The Barunah Plains Estate. The Property of Mr James Russell', Pastoral Homes of Australia, 1910, Section 18, pp.201-212.]

1912: Death of James Russell [Geelong Advertiser, 26 September 1978]

1915-78: Owner of Barunah plains - Estate of James Russell [unsourced information on NT garden file, probably from R. Spreadborough and H. Anderson, Victorian Squatters, Red Rooster Press, Ascot Vale, 1983]

1915-21: Property run by Annie Florence Russell (1858?-1950, widow of James Russell) with the aid of an overseer [GA, 26 Sept 1978]

1930: 'Barunah Plains, Hesse, Victoria. The Property of the Executors of the late James Russell ... The property and stock were acquired subsequently [from Thomas Russell and Co.] by Messrs George Russell and Sons (the late Mr Thomas Russell being the youngest brother of the late Mr George Russell), and in due course Messrs J. and A. Russell became the proprietors, these partners being the sons of George Russell. Finally Barunah Plains passed into the sole head of the family ... There are over 100 paddocks on the property, all practically free from rabbits, and fenced in a creditable manner, especially so with regard to the vermin-proof stone walls which stretch across the country for miles.' [Pastoral Homes Of Australia, Vol. 2, new series, 1930, pp.1-12.]

1942: Geordie Russell married and lives on the property as overseer, taking over as manager c.1963. [Geelong Advertiser, 28 September 1978.]

Late 1940s: 23 soldier settlement farms established on approximately 20,000 acres of the Barunah Plains property [The House that Wool Built, 1969, p.8; Seaton, A History of the Shire of Leigh, 1988, p.151.]

1978: Barunah Plains sold by Mr and Mrs Geordie Russell to Graham Mills.

## ANALYSIS

Major phases of development of the property

In summary, the Barunah Plains property has seen the following major phases of ownership and development.

Late 1830s to late 1840s: Earliest European occupation of this land by squatters

Late 1840s: Brothers James and Thomas Austin buildings up contiguous runs centred on Winchelsea, first known as Austin's Ford. Thomas marries Elizabeth Harding, sister of one of two partners in a neighbouring run, she endows the Austin Hospital in Melbourne and the Austin Homes in Geelong

1851-55: Philip Russell, John Simson, and Thomas Russell purchase the lease of Long Water Holes run from James Austin in 1851 but the first two soon withdraw; Thomas Russell apparently resides on the run.

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1855-56: First freehold purchases of land on the run, firstly the 640 acre pre-emptive right containing the home station and a year later 80 acres west of the Warrambine Creek containing the woolshed; transfer of lease to Thomas Russell and Co. formalised.

1857: Neighbouring property The Ponds (or Wurrook) purchased by Thomas Russell (who travelled abroad in 1857-58, and married in 1860), new homestead at Wurrook apparently constructed 1861 and Thomas Russell and family presumably live at Wurrook.

1866: Substantial purchases of land on the Plains run made by Thomas Russell; construction of homestead to the design of architects Davidson and Henderson on the site of the earlier 'home station', occupant of the new residence uncertain.

1877: Arrival of James Russell, who apparently lived at Barunah Plains and extension of the homestead to the west (1886)

1912: Death of James Russell, property subsequently run by his widow Annie until 1921.

late 1940s: Soldier Settlement farms established on Barunah Plains property.

1978: Sale of Barunah Plains to Graham Mills, ending the unbroken chain of Russell ownership since 1851. The plan of 1854 (surveyed for alienation of Russell's pre-emptive right) is the only known early plan to show the position of buildings. From this, it appears that the 'home station' was of two disconnected wings located on the site of the present house and part of the croquet lawn, running parallel with that part of the creek running to the east of the present bridge. Given the construction of the basalt residence (1866-67) and the security of freehold tenure which doubtless prompted this improvement, it could be concluded that at least in part, the present garden dates from the post-1866 improvements. The coincident siting of the early and later residences and their roughly similar orientation also means, however, that parts of the garden could date to the pre-1866 period. The Pastoral Homes reference from 1910 (presumably based on the recollection of James Russell - who arrived in 1877) that part of the 1840s house is incorporated into the current homestead has not been confirmed. Therefore a date of the garden is difficult to establish without further detailed research, but 1860s and certainly late 1880s (when the house was extended) are the most likely. The earliest known photographs of the homestead and garden (1906, 1910 and 1930) show the property very much as it remains today.

## Western District homesteads

In his doctoral thesis 'A Quest for landscape meaning in the Western District, Victoria, Australia', landscape architect David Jones identifies three major phases in the development of Western District homesteads.

These are as follows:

First Period (1830s-40s): Primitive structures fulfilled basic shelter objectives during this period, sited on large runs held under lease by squatters, comparable in size to peerage Duchys. Huts brought together the resources of bark, timber, reeds and mud in the erection of vernacular structures, susceptible to fire and symptomatic of a highly mobile and insecure land tenure. Almost no examples of buildings from this first period survive and it is highly unlikely that any gardens survive from this period, save for a few very early tree plantings and the general siting of many homestead garden complexes.

Second Period (late 1840s-1870): From the 1850s, structures cast off the earlier basic shelter objective replacing it with one of domesticity. This was often preceded by erection of a woolshed ('spiritual refuges for the new *raison d'être* and force of the landscape - sheep'). Second period homesteads were characterised by quarried and cut bluestone, verandahs encircling portions if not the whole homestead, and careful attention to design form and decoration, often drawn from pattern books echoing classical or Georgian principles with a growing trend towards Gothic revivalism. Second period construction began slowly, but increased with the Orders-in-Council of 1847 that guaranteed land tenure security. Many of these second period homesteads were demolished to build later, grander homesteads, but houses such as Maretimo (1854) and Burswood (1853) typify the architectural treatment of this period. Homesteads such as Ingleby (1860), Gala (1866) and Barunah Plains (1866-67) fit into this second period. Village-like cluster of structures, typified by Warrock, were also a common development of this period and the basalt outbuildings at Barunah Plains hint at this trend. The garden plan for Wooriwyrite by Edward La Trobe Bateman (late 1850s) and many of the homestead paintings by Eugen von Guerard (late 1850s to early 1860s) provide fine examples of the grand ambitions for gardens of this second period.

Third Period (1860-1900): With a peak in wool prices in the mid 1860s and 1870s and the security provided by freehold tenure as a result of land sales, more grandiose homesteads began to be erected. Chatsworth (1859), with its Sienna marble lined corridors, foreshadowed third period magnificence. Jones notes that 'It was left to Barwon Park, a massive two storey bluestone mansion garnished with a cast iron lace verandah and balcony, in 'Romanesque' style, erected in 1869, to set the agenda for third period homesteads'. Large, often stone (basalt) structures, commonly employing Gothic Revival as the preferred architectural style, marked the period, and these were often set on new sites (as at Barwon Park). Examples of this third period include Kolor (1868), Narrapumelap (1873-74), Eeyeuk (c.1874) and Mount Noorat (1877). The extensive use of basalt and a move away from classically derived styles to Gothic Revival led to what Jones has termed a 'unified regional design language'. During this period gardens were often extended or aggrandised rather than



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being completely swept away and replaced. Large gardens such as Mount Noorat (homestead constructed 1877), Trawalla (which relates to the new homestead of 1891) exemplify the surrounds of third period homesteads and in its size and complexity, Barunah Plains, has many of these attributes.

Links with the Russell family

Landscape historian David Jones has noted of the Western District, that:

Families, owning fragmented portions of the landscape mosaic, established a pastoral heritage that continued into the 20th century. Names of Chirnside, Armytage, Austin, Calvert, Manifold, Black, Gray, Henty, Cameron, Winter and Cooke, Milliar, Currie, Beggs, Russell, Dennis, Ritchie, Kininmonth, Ware and McKinnon, established traditions and lineage supplanting the lost clans of Djab wurrung, Wada wurrung, Dhauward wurrung, Jardwadjali, Girai wurrung, Djargurd wurrung, and Gulidjan. Taking responsibility for land management, they established a new set of land-based traditions, that matured into a set of myths during this phase [i.e. 1860-1900], which continues today.

To this could be added that the traditions were based almost solely on British and more particularly Scottish precedents, an aspect of social history evocatively captured by Margaret Kiddle in *Men of Yesterday: A social history of the Western District of Victoria 1834-1890* (Melbourne University Press, 1961). Barunah Plains is an integral part of both the Scottish traditions of the Western District and also closely identified with the pioneering Russell family. The Russell ownership of Barunah lasted 127 years (1851-1978) and through Russell family ownership was linked to family properties such as Golfhill, Mawallock, Carngham and Wurrook (amongst others). John Simson (partner in Thomas Russell and Co.) owned Trawalla and the Kininmonth family (James Kininmonth being overseer at Barunah Plains) owned Mount Hesse, further linking Barunah Plains to other Western District properties.

## Thematic Context

## Recommendations

Local Government external paint controls apply.



National Esate Register, 2003.



National Estate Register, 2003.