

HERITAGE CITATION REPORT

Name House and outbuildings
Address 431 Somerset Park Road STRATHFIELDSAYE **Grading** 2008 Local
Building Type House
Assessment by Context Pty Ltd



Recommended VHR No HI No PS Yes
Heritage Protection

Architectural Style Victorian Period (1851-1901)
 English Queen Anne Revival

Maker / Builder Unknown

Integrity

Altered

History and Historical Context

History of the Shire of Strathfieldsaye

The land around the former Shires of Strathfieldsaye and McIvor had a long history prior to the arrival of Europeans. The Jaara Jaara people are the original inhabitants of the area.

The area around Port Phillip was explored by Sir Thomas Mitchell, the Surveyor General of New South Wales, and a large party in 1836, on the homeward leg of a journey to Portland Bay. Impressed by what he perceived as the bounty of

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the land, Mitchell named the area *Australia Felix*.^[1]

The Port Phillip district was opened up for settlement soon thereafter, and much of the land in the Western districts of Victoria, including the former Shires of McIvor and Strathfieldsaye, was subsequently dominated by a series of pastoral runs. Most of the area around the town of Axedale and the numerous small towns in its vicinity was licensed to David Jennings as part of the Campaspe Plains run. The run covered an area of more than 144,900 acres and was populated with an estimated 12,000 sheep. A portion of Campaspe Plains was licensed to A. Jennings and George Playne in 1840 and the 67,000 acre station became known as Axedale. In the coming decade the holders of the license changed a number of times. By the time the leasehold over the land was cancelled in 1865, the run had greatly reduced in size.^[2]

Following the cancellation of leasehold, land holdings were of a smaller scale and pastoralists were gradually overtaken by farmers. The discovery of gold at Bendigo and the surrounding areas changed the face of the district and brought about new patterns of settlement and expansion. William John Bulling claimed to be the first man to discover gold at McIvor, and he was granted a £400 reward for the find. By 1853, over one hundred prospectors had assembled at Wild Duck Creek in the hopes of striking it rich. This number expanded the following year, and included some 2,000 Chinese immigrants.^[3]

The Strathfieldsaye Road District was proclaimed in the Government Gazette on the 12th August 1861, and encompassed within it the parishes of Axedale, Strathfieldsaye, Eppalock, Mandurang, Sedgwick and Lyell.^[4] The process of election of the board was punctuated by rivalries between Catholic and Protestant faiths, a characteristic of the district which infiltrates much of its history. Strathfieldsaye met the criterion prescribed to become a Shire in 1863, a transition that was officially proclaimed on the 17th September of that year.^[5]

In 1864, Strathfieldsaye Shire was divided into three wards; Mandurang, Strathfieldsaye and Axedale

History of Strathfieldsaye

The Shire Hall at Strathfieldsaye was built in 1869 to accommodate the officers of the new Shire. Prospectors panned for gold in the nearby Sheepwash Creek at the height of the gold boom. Following the dwindling of the gold boom, many former prospectors turned to farming and agricultural pursuits. Orchards were established and flourished in the rich soils of the district, though Strathfieldsaye remained one of the smaller townships in the district. The forestry industry was also of some importance to the township of Strathfieldsaye, especially during the height of the gold rushes.

By the late 1800s, the area around Strathfieldsaye was being used extensively as vineyards, though the industry was devastated by the Phylloxera outbreak in the 1890s. The failing of the wine industry then prompted the development of many of the already established orchards in the vicinity of the town. The provision of dried fruit to prospectors had proved a valuable industry during the gold rushes, and orchardists continued to expand in the district into the twentieth century.

During recent times Strathfieldsaye has expanded in response to growing pressure for residential land, and has gradually shifted away from its previous agricultural focus.

History of House, 431 Somerset Park Road, Strathfieldsaye

The house at 431 Somerset Park Road is built on part of allotments 3 and 4 of section 13 in the Parish of Strathfieldsaye, which were granted by the Crown to Thomas Clancy. The date of the Crown grant is not recorded on plans of the Parish. Clancy's land covered an area of more than 187 acres. He also owned the adjacent lot 1 of section 13, which added a further 57 acres to his holding.^[6]

By 1887, Charles Henry Read was the owner of the land. Read was a butcher, who ran a premises in High Street,

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Bendigo. Read must have been a man of quite substantial means, given the large acreage he acquired, and it is likely he established a farm on the land. A photograph of the house taken in 1896 exists, so it can be assumed that the house was constructed by either Read or Clancy. It is reported that the construction was completed to a design by architect Mr Ovey. [7]

Read held the land until his death on the 9th May 1907. Following his death, probate of his will was granted to Henry John Read and George Somerset Read, who were probably his sons, as well as the Sandhurst and Northern District Trustees Executors and Agency Company. [8]

On the 14th September 1907, Thomas Somerville became the owner of the property. He mortgaged the property in order to finance his purchase of the place, and this may have also been a means of undertaking works on the property. Somerville was an orchardist, and it is likely that he took advantage of the large acreage at Somerset Park Road to establish an orchard. Somerville lived at 431 Somerset Park Road until his death on the 17th March 1940.[9]

Oliver Somerville had taken over the property by 1941, and continued to run the orchard there. He mortgaged the place to Elizabeth Ann Somerville on the 11th July 1941. Oliver Somerville lived at the residence until he died in 1975, after which time Alan Desmond Somerville became the owner.

[1] Randell, J. O. (1985). *McIvor: A History of the Shire and the Township of Heathcote*, Shire of McIvor, p. 1.

[2] Spreadborough, Robert and Anderson, Hugh (1983). *Victorian Squatters*, Red Rooster Press, Ascot Vale, p. 150

[3] Spreadborough & Anderson (1983), p. 31.

[4] Hewat, Tim (1983), *Bridge Over Troubled Waters, A History of the Shire of Strathfieldsaye*, Shire of Strathfieldsaye, Victoria, pp. 11 - 12.

[5] Hewat, Tim (1983), p. 18.

[6] Plan of the Parish of Strathfieldsaye, 19/11/1904.

[7] Information supplied by Mike Butcher, National Trust, Bendigo Branch, 2009

[7] Certificate of Title, Vol. 1931, Fol. 087.

[8] Certificate of Title, Vol. 1931, Fol. 087.

Secondary sources

Hewat, Tim (1983), *Bridge Over Troubled Waters, A History of the Shire of Strathfieldsaye*, Shire of Strathfieldsaye, Victoria

Randell, J. O. (1985). *McIvor: A History of the Shire and the Township of Heathcote*, Shire of McIvor

Spreadborough, Robert and Anderson, Hugh (1983). *Victorian Squatters*, Red Rooster Press, Ascot Vale

Information supplied by Mike Butcher, National Trust, Bendigo Branch, 2009

Relevant Historical Australian Themes

4 Transforming the land

4.4 Farming

Description

Physical Description

Strathfieldsaye is formerly an agricultural area but is rapidly developing as a new suburb of Bendigo and the remnants of farms co-exist with new suburban developments. 431 Somerset Park Road is an unusual farm complex comprising a substantial allotment adjacent to a creek frontage with a several outbuildings and a large house built in the domestic Queen Anne style of house of flamboyant design. The outbuildings belong to an earlier era of development and there was apparently an earlier farm house on the property closer to the creek, although this has been demolished.[1]

The house has stylistic similarities to a number of properties in Bendigo and is reportedly designed by architect Mr Ovey [2]. The design is unique in the study area and is an unusual design for a country house. Of particular interest is the use of patterned brickwork in courses, and the window surrounds to the front elevation that are set out from the face in cream brick. Festoon decoration is used beneath the sill of the upper floor central window. The gable end has decorative timber bargeboards and brackets. The chimneys are highly unusual in that they incorporate an open arch between the two flues. The arch motif is repeated in debased form on a secondary chimney. There is extensive use of brickwork techniques involving dog-tooth dentils, polychrome brickwork in brown, red and cream bricks, diaper patterning, red and cream tilework to the top of walls. The verandah has been built in with timber cladding and louvre windows, although apparently the verandah detailing is behind this and all intact. The house is highly intact to the interior and apart from the verandah has undergone no major changes to the exterior.

[1] Information from the current owner Mr Colin Jack , October 2008

[2] Information supplied by Mike Butcher, National Trust, Bendigo Branch, 2009

Physical Condition

Good

Conservation Policy

Guidelines (Specific)

The following specific conservation actions are recommended, should the opportunity arise:

Removal of the timber wall and windows to the verandah

Re-establishment of a garden would enhance the surrounds of this house.

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

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431 Somerset Park Road, Strathfieldsaye including the brick two storey house built c.1900, and the outbuildings including the blacksmith's shop, worker's hut, machinery shed, dairy and milking shed are significant.

How is it significant?

431 Somerset Park Road is of historic and architectural significance to the City of Greater Bendigo.

Why is it significant?

431 Somerset Park Road is historically significant for its association with Thomas Somerville who established an orchard on the property in 1907. Prior to his ownership the property was held by Bendigo butcher Charles Read from 1887, and it was probably in Thomas Clancy's ownership prior to this date, when a number of the outbuildings were constructed. It has not been established whether the house dates from the Read or Clancy period of ownership, however from photographic evidence it can be assumed that it was prior to 1896. *Criterion A*

The outbuildings are significant for their demonstration of the evolution of a substantial farming property close to the urban edge of Bendigo. The well watered land by nearby Axe Creek allowed an agricultural industry to develop that required several early outbuildings probably dating from Clancy's ownership (including the dairy, milking shed and blacksmiths workshop), and the workers hut probably dating from Somerville's ownership when the property was used for an orchard.

The house is significant for its flamboyant Queen Anne design displaying many architectural brickwork details found in urban buildings in Bendigo. This is reportedly a design of architect Mr Ovey. The arched detail on the chimneys is unusual, and the house exhibits tile patterning, diaper brickwork, elaborate bargeboards and festoon decoration. The verandah has been built in with a timber and glazed wall, although the cast iron verandah is apparently still intact.

Criterion E

Assessment Against Criteria

HERCON CRITERIA

Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history. *Criterion A*

Possession of uncommon rare or endangers aspects of our cultural or natural history. *Criterion B*

Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history. *Criterion C*

Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments. *Criterion D*

Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics. *Criterion E*

Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period. *Criterion F*

Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of the continuing and developing cultural traditions. *Criterion G*

Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history. *Criterion H*

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Recommendations 2008

External Paint Controls	No
Internal Alteration Controls	No
Tree Controls	No
Fences & Outbuildings	Yes
Prohibited Uses May Be Permitted	Yes
Incorporated Plan	Yes
Aboriginal Heritage Place	No

Other Recommendations

It is recommended that the house and outbuildings at 431 Somerset Park Road, Strathfieldsaye be added as an individual place to the Heritage Overlay of the Greater Bendigo City Planning Scheme with the schedule entry as shown above. The extent of registration is defined by a map. The recommended Incorporated Plan is the 'Permit Exemption Incorporated Plan - Former Shires of McIvor and Strathfieldsaye.'