

HERITAGE CITATION REPORT

Name Axedale General Cemetery
Address Cemetery Road AXEDALE **Grading** 2008 Local
Building Type Cemetery/Graveyard/Burial Ground
Assessment by Context Pty Ltd



Recommended Heritage Protection VHR - HI - PS Yes

Maker / Builder Unknown

Integrity

Good

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 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

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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.[6]

History of Axedale

The plan of the township of Axedale, with its characteristic crescent ends, was laid out circa 1856. Axedale was included in the district of Mandurang and under the control of the Strathfieldsaye Roads Board. Patrick Drake had built the Campaspe Hotel in 1855, and by 1865, the district had developed to the extent that it was able to support a further six hotels.[7] Goldfields were typically rough and lawless places, and hotels were big business in their midst. Patterns of settlement continued to reflect the status of Axedale as a centre of support for surrounding farm lands and mining pursuits, and by the 1860s, there were some 500 residents.[8]

Axedale was proclaimed a district on the 20th August 1861, and then a Shire on the 25th September 1866.[9] Much of the population of Axedale was of Irish origin, and tensions between Catholics and Protestants were articulated through the establishment and development of separate facilities for both religions. Facilities in the town were established to cater for, or became associated with, either the Catholic or Protestant communities, so much so that Axedale duplicated its cemeteries, hotels and schools in order to cater for both sectors.[10]

Religious facilities were first established in Axedale with the opening of the St. Mary's Catholic Church in Axedale in 1862. The Catholics also ran a school from the Church, catering for the children of waves of settlers that continued to arrive in the area. By the end of the 1860s, pressure from the Common School Committee led to their acquisition of Crown Land, that was gazetted as the site for the Axedale Common School in 1869. The school opened in 1871.[11] Alongside the establishment of religious and educational facilities was the construction of the Axedale Police Station, which opened in 1866.

The rich soils of the Campaspe River allowed for the continuation of farming as a mainstay for the area. Alongside the maintenance of agricultural and pastoral pursuits, residents of Axedale developed other industries. Napthali Ingham established a bluestone quarry on his land in the 1860s, and a further quarry was opened in by Riley, Brazier and Nelson in 1905.[12] Vineyards and orchards were important developments in the district.

Development of the district and its industries were further enhanced with the construction of the railway from Bendigo to Heathcote, which opened in 1884. The railway was vital means of connecting a number of small towns in the district. The station at Axedale was opened on the 1st October 1888, and continued to be serviced until its closure during the Second

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World War.[13]

In the 1930s, construction of a weir at the Campaspe River was commenced, though work was suspended at the height of the depression.[14] Proximity to Lake Eppalock, constructed in 1960-65, also proved a source of employment for the town.

The marked development of the region culminated in the decision in 1994 to amalgamate the Shire of Strathfieldsaye with nearby Shires to form the City of Greater Bendigo.

History of Axedale General Cemetery

Allotment 5 of Section 9 was set aside for the Axedale General Cemetery on the 3rd October 1864.[15] The gazettal was prompted by a request for the inhabitants of Axedale to the Department of Health for the establishment of a formal burial ground for the town. Prior to the establishment of the Axedale General Cemetery citizens were burying their dead at either the White Hills or the Bendigo cemeteries. [16]

The first recorded burial at the Axedale cemetery was that of two year old George Bywater, who died in 1865. Margaret Hennessey, aged four and a half years, was buried there in 1867 and sixty year old Edward Avery was interred the following year. None of these early gravestones remain extant at the cemetery, with the oldest example remaining in the cemetery dating from the late 1880s.[17]

Early burials in the Axedale Public Cemetery were multi denominational with the first five sections classified as Church of England. [18]

Development of the general cemetery at Axedale occurred in part in conjunction with the adjacent Catholic cemetery, which was established by Reverend Dr. George Henry Backhaus in 1866. Backhaus' was a private burial ground reserved for the Catholic parishioners of the Axedale community, and the Axedale General Cemetery by extension became the burial ground for the remainder of the population. Much of the Protestant community of Axedale was buried here.[19]

The Axedale General Cemetery remains administered by the Bendigo Cemeteries Trust. It continues as a multi-denominational cemetery. [20]

[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.

[3] Spreadborough and 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] Hewat, Tim (1983), p. 107.

[7] Whitworth, Robert P. (1879). *Bailliere's Victorian Gazeteer and Road Guide*, F. F. Bailliere, Melbourne, p. 17.

[8] Centenary and Back to Axedale Committee (1970), *Accent on Axedale*, Axedale, Victoria, p. 8.

[9] Centenary and Back to Axedale Committee (1970), p. 21.

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- [10] Earth Tech Engineering Pty Ltd (2002), *Heathcote - Strathfieldsaye Thematic History*, City of Greater Bendigo, Bendigo, p. 10.
- [11] Centenary and Back to Axedale Committee (1970), p. 16.
- [12] Centenary and Back to Axedale Committee (1970), p. 21.
- [13] Centenary and Back to Axedale Committee (1970), p. 28.
- [14] Hewat, Tim (1983), p. 115.
- [15] Gladwin, Frances (1997), *Axedale Cemetery: historical report*, the author, Axedale, Victoria, p. 1.
- [16] Gladwin, Frances (1997), p. 1.
- [17] Gladwin, Frances (1997), p. 1.
- [18] Information supplied by Bruce Macumber, Dec 2008
- [19] Gladwin, Frances (1997), p. 1.
- [20] Information supplied by Bruce Macumber, Dec 2008

Primary sources

Whitworth, Robert P. (1879). *Bailliere's Victorian Gazeteer and Road Guide*, F. F. Bailliere, Melbourne.

Secondary sources

Centenary and Back to Axedale Committee (1970), *Accent on Axedale*, Axedale, Victoria.

Earth Tech Engineering Pty Ltd (2002), *Heathcote - Strathfieldsaye Thematic History*, City of Greater Bendigo, Bendigo.

Gladwin, Frances (1997), *Axedale Cemetery Historical Report*, publisher unknown.

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.

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Relevant Historical Australian Themes

8. Building community life

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8.1 Maintaining spiritual life

Description

Physical Description

The Axedale General Cemetery is located on the outskirts of the township of Axedale and adjacent to the Axedale Catholic Cemetery. The fencing is of 'Cyclone' woven wire in a 20th century pattern and the plantings are of native trees. By contrast with the Catholic Cemetery there are a lesser proportion of elaborate memorial.

There is little evidence of a formal layout and no ornamental plantings. The graves are generally utilitarian rather than flamboyant and the trees are scattered rather than formally planted.

Physical Condition

Good

Conservation Policy

Guidelines (Specific)

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

Further research to determine whether there was any type of older fencing and gates once used would be useful if there were any plans to replace the fence.

Maintenance of the graves is recommended, as long as it is in accordance with Division 3-Maintenance of Memorials, Places of Interment and Buildings for Ceremonies of the Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2003.

Clause 43.01 clearly outlines permit exemptions for cemeteries. The wording is as follows:

43.01-2 No permit required

No permit is required under this overlay:

-For interments, burials and erection of monuments, re-use of graves, burial of cremated remains and exhumation of remains in accordance with the Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2003

Comparative Analysis

Axedale General Cemetery is a modest burial place when compared with that of Heathcote or the Catholic cemetery adjacent.

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

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The Axedale General Cemetery, on Cemetery Road, established by the Department of Health in 1864, at the request of the residents of Axedale, is significant.

How is it significant?

The Axedale General Cemetery is of local historic and aesthetic significance to the City of Greater Bendigo.

Why is it significant?

Historically, as tangible evidence of the early development of Axedale from the 1860s, in particular of its Protestant population. The early chapters of Axedale's history are recorded in its headstones. *Criterion A*

Aesthetically, for demonstrating the art of the stone mason in the memorials, the earliest of which date from the 1880s. *Criterion E*

Assessment Against Criteria

Criteria:

Criterion A Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history.

Criterion B Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history.

Criterion C Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Victoria's cultural history,

Criterion D Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places or objects.

Criterion D Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.

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

Criterion G 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 their continuing and developing cultural traditions.

Criterion H Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Victoria's history.

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Recommendations 2008

External Paint Controls	No
Internal Alteration Controls	No
Tree Controls	No
Fences & Outbuildings	No
Prohibited Uses May Be Permitted	No
Incorporated Plan	None Specified
Aboriginal Heritage Place	No

Other Recommendations

It is recommended that the Axedale General Cemetery, Axedale be added as an individual place to the Heritage Overlay of the City of Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme with the schedule entry as shown below. The extent of registration is the whole of the property as defined by the title boundaries. It is also recommended that an Incorporated Plan is created for the site as soon as possible.