

HERITAGE CITATION REPORT

children at Polkemmet: Ellen, Margaret, Elizabeth, Martha, William and Robert. During their early years at Polkemmet, the Calder family prospered through their cultivation of some of the region's best land, which reached as far as Pimpinio and Wail. It was reported that up to 30,000 sheep were shorn on the property in one year, including an impressive herd of Shropshire sheep, a breed which the family were the first to import to Australia.[3]

By 1863, the Calder family had grown to six, so they constructed a larger homestead, which to this present day still exists. As with the original homestead, he used felled red gums from his property to construct the framework and verandah posts. Calder baked bricks on the banks of the Wimmera River, which he used to build the chimney; though all of the other materials, such as the weatherboards, iron shingles, bolts and nails were carted by bullock teams from Geelong, which made twice yearly deliveries to the region. The Calder's eldest daughter, Ellen, explains that the timber beams and iron roofing were bolted together, as opposed to being nailed, and boasts that in the seventy-five years that she had lived there, not one of them had ever moved.[4]

The kitchen, Ellen claims, was also 'somewhat of a curiosity'. She described it as:

being built of thick slabs, with pine rafters, black and shining with smoke, and huge chimneys of blocks of stone, quarried three miles away. In those days there was no stove, but a large open fireplace, in which one could sit, took its place.[5]

The new house brought with it new comforts, such as two bathrooms with large baths. Calder, a keen gardener, also established an impressive garden, which he maintained by laying pipes to provide water pumped by hand from the nearby river. Ellen recalls that there were fruit trees, vegetables and 'even a greenhouse and a conservatory so that it was quite a show place [with]in a few years'.[6]

The Calder family worked hard and were rewarded accordingly during their early years at Polkemmet. However, when the family travelled to Scotland to visit relatives in 1873, they were blissfully unaware of the implications that the proclamation of the *Land Act (1872)* would have for Polkemmet Station. When they returned later that same year, they found that selectors had taken up their most prosperous land, as permitted under the provisions of the Act, and they were left with only 3,000 acres of their original holding, which consisted of a forest reserve and lands between selections.[7] Ellen recalls that their remaining land was heavily timbered and it took years to clear for cultivation, as well as being very expensive undertaking. By 1879, the Calders could no longer afford the upkeep of Polkemmet Station and it was taken over by the financial institution, A.M.L. and Co., in March 1879. Calder's finances eventually improved and he repurchased Polkemmet exactly three years later in March 1883.

Gavin Simmons provides an account of the chain of ownership of Polkemmet after Robert Calder's death in 1887:

... the property was taken over by his 'daughter, Miss Ellen Calder who managed the property very well until her passing in 1940. On her death the property passed to her nephew Mr Robert Calder who was the son of Mr William Calder, Miss Calder's brother. On 13th September 1957, when only 1,437 acres remained of the original holding, the property was offered for auction. The land was sold in three sections with 1,074 acres, being lots 100, 97,98, 99 and 83 Parish of Quantong, 180 acres, being lot 206 Parish of Wail and 183 acres being Lot 96 Parish of Quantong. By the time the titles had transferred to the new owners, the property had been in possession of the Calder family for 100 years. The bulk of the land was purchased by Mr Bruno Puls [in January 1958].[8]

The polkemmet homestead, It also served as the region's post office for over 80 years, is presently situated approximately two metres from the banks of the Wimmera River. It is understood by the current owner, Peter

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Rintoule, whose family purchased the property in 1976, that the early buildings were centred around a courtyard, with the house being on one side and the service room wings (including the kitchen), on the other side. The kitchen has since been removed, but the brick chimney associated with the structure is still standing. A period photograph from the 1880s shows the homestead, kitchen and service buildings, along with an ornate conservatory (since demolished) in the centre of the courtyard.[9] In 1905, Polkemmet homestead was described in Martha Calder's Will as follows:

Dwelling house containing 13 rooms and bath-room [sic], store-room [sic], kitchen, laundry, pantry. House of weatherboard, lath and plaster, iron roof, brick chimneys, other out-houses of hard wood.[10]

It also specifies that there were two stables with stalls for 13 horses, as well as other small buildings and outhouses.[11] The homestead has been vacant since the Rintoule family moved into an adjacent dwelling in the late 1990s, after which its physical condition deteriorated.

Private cemetery

Approximately 200 metres south of the homestead, on a bend in the Wimmera River, lay the grave sites of Margaret and Thomas Baillie, the children of pioneers William and Mary Baillie. Due to significant deterioration of the original headstones, the inscriptions have been reproduced on steel pipe framing erected by the Arapiles Historical Society on 20 May 1978. The inscriptions cite:

Margaret Baillie born February 1852 Died 9 December 1852

Thomas Baillie Born 27 April 1855 Died 27 May 1857

Several pieces of broken masonry are all that remain of the original headstones.

[1] Billis R.V. and A.S. Kenyon (1974) *Pastoral Pioneers of Port Phillip*. 2nd edition. Melbourne: Stockland Press, p.266.

[2] *Pastoral Pioneers of Port Phillip*, p. 266.

[3] *A Brief History of the District of Polkemmet East*, p. 1.

[4] Calder, E. (1933) A Wimmera Woman Pioneer: Polkemmet resident looks back. *Horsham Times*, 30 June, p. 7

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] *Ibid.*

[8] *A Brief History of the District of Polkemmet East*, p. 1.

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[9] Horsham Historical Society files.

[10] Will of Martha Bertram Calder (1905). Probate Administration files 99/173, Series VPRS28, Victorian Public Records Office.

[11] *Ibid.*

Description

Physical Description

Homestead & surrounds – Single storey timber structure, with steeply pitched, hipped roof, timber plank clad walls and wrap around verandah. Roof originally clad with timber shingles, laid as short horizontal planks (probably Stringybark), now covered by corrugated profile roof iron sheeting. The dwelling is of unusual design for the period, containing six rooms of symmetrical layout. A central hall/ entrance with a flat curve archway across the middle allows access to a large living room/ reception room, featuring a fireplace and French doors to the verandah. Four bedrooms are located on the opposite side of the hall, all backing onto a central chimney serving corner fireplaces in each room. Two rooms are accessed from the verandah.

Local commentary notes the dwelling was built on Red Gum slabs, with a Red Gum wall frame. Externally, walls are lined with timber planking, finished on the leading edge with a decorative scroll feature. Internally, walls and ceilings are lath and plaster finished. Floorboards are supposedly of a joinery timber (inspection not possible due to later floor coverings) Architectural joinery is of special note. French doors, sash windows and the front door are well joined and detailed and brass door hardware is of the period and of note. Substantial joinery (possibly cedar) lines one wall of the hallway, with distinctive ‘pointed head’ door panels of ‘gothic revival’ style.

The early kitchen building has been demolished at some time in the past, but the brick chimney and hearth remain standing. A later (possibly 1930-50s) addition to the west of the dwelling contains the later bathrooms and kitchen.

Outbuildings are a mix of construction types and age, mostly built from salvaged material and locally sourced timber. It is unlikely that any of the outbuildings date from the period of construction of the homestead.

Three substantial Kurrajong trees stand to the south of the homestead – supposedly (owner’s comment) part of Calder plantings on the site.

Cemetery – the small family cemetery is found approximately 200 metres south of the homestead, on a promontory in the bank of the river. Graves were marked by the Arapiles Historical Society in 1979. Headstones are now deteriorated and the inscriptions have been reproduced on steel pipe framing installed in the 1980s “Margaret Baillie born February 1852, died 9 December 1852. & Thomas Baillie Born 27 April 1855, died 27 May 1857.” – both children of the settling Baillie family.

Physical Condition

Homestead is in average to poor condition and has not been lived in since 1989. There is evidence of roof leaks, some settlement and minor white ant activity. The surrounding verandah is in worst condition, with most hardwood decking failed or substantially weathered. Later infill walling under the verandah has collapsed. The later kitchen and bathrooms are standing, but sub-standard. A chimney collapsed c2020, bringing with it surrounding roof cladding, thereby opening the house to water damage.

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The homestead is very close to the undercut bank of the Wimmera River, but has been shored up in the recent past with Red Gum posts – should be monitored on an annual basis.

Australian Heritage Commission Criteria

Relevant HERCON Criteria

Criterion A: Importance to the course, or pattern, of our cultural or natural history (as an early homestead in the district, representing the development and growth of farming properties from the mid nineteenth century, as well as the subsequent land divisions that occurred)

Criterion H: Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of person, of importance in our history (being associated with several prominent early landholders, and as the site of their enterprises)

Comparative Analysis

Note: sites on Hermes that are currently listed are generally larger (two storey) masonry buildings – few timber framed homesteads of this era identified to date in the district.

Oakville Park Homestead, 522 Vectis Station Road, Vectis, Hermes no. 186224: –much later building date and different construction type. Also in fair condition.

Homestead, Lindners Road, Vectis, Hermes no. 186211: Lindner Homestead – no information known for comparison at present.

Homestead, Greenhills Road, Jung, Hermes no. 186133: Green Hills Homestead – no information known for comparison at present.

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The elements of heritage value of the c1863 Polkemmet Homestead, 1614 Polkemmet Road, Pimpinio, and 1852 & 1857 graves are:

- . The single storey building, including timber framing, weatherboard cladding, timber window and doors including hardware, hipped corrugated sheet metal roof with return verandah and timber shingle roof under;
- . Internal joinery, fireplaces and remnant detailing including archway in hall;
- . The burial sites, including remnant original headstones and reproduced steel piping installed in the 1980s.

How is it significant?

The c1863 Polkemmet Homestead and associated 1852 & 1857 graves are of local historic and associational

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significance to Horsham Rural City.

Why is it significant?

The c1863 Polkemmet Homestead and associated 1852 & 1857 graves are:

. Of local historic value, as an important remnant of one of the Wimmera's early substantial pastoral runs. In April 1846, Mr Robert Hamilton and his sister-in-law, Lady Mary Baillie, took up the lease. Under the next owner, Robert Calder (1858-1887), Polkemmet became one of Victoria's most significant sheep breeding and wool producing properties in the Wimmera, which prior to its subdivision in 1873, ran approximately 30,000 sheep. Calder built the present homestead and his family retained ownership until 1958. The run was subdivided in 1848 by the Baillie family into Polkemmet and Wyn Wyn during a period when subdivisions of large runs were increasingly taking place across the Wimmera. The 96,000 acre Polkemmet run was further subdivided when the whole colony was opened for selection under the *Land Act (1869)*. The Polkemmet Homestead complex is historically important as a remnant of the large scale subdivisions that took place under the Act. (Criterion A)

. Of local associational significance, for its chain of ownership, firstly by the Wilson Bros, Thomas and Mary Baillie, and Robert Hamilton, all of whom made significant contributions to the development of the agricultural industry in the wider Horsham region. It was then taken up by Robert Calder, who made a significant contribution to Australia's livestock industry as the first person to introduce Shropshire sheep to Australia. Due to their ability to survive and produce fine wool in poor conditions, the Shropshire became a popular breed in Australia and they were later declared "the best of the modern breeds". The private graveyard, where Margaret and Thomas Baillie, the children of pioneers William and Mary Baillie, are interred, strongly illustrates the earliest European settlement of this place. (Criterion H)

Recommendations 2022

External Paint Controls	No
Internal Alteration Controls	No
Tree Controls	Yes 3 mature Kurrajong trees
Fences & Outbuildings	No
Prohibited uses may be permitted	No
Incorporated Plan	-
Aboriginal Heritage Place	No

References

Literature title: Pastoral Pioneers of Port Phillip

Literature type: General Reference

Literature author: Billis, R. V & Kenyon, A. S

Literature publisher: Stockland Press

Literature year: 1974

Literature title: Heritage Sheep Australia Shropshire

Literature type: General Reference

Literature author:

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Literature publisher:

Literature year: 2014

Literature title: Horsham Times Newspaper

Literature type: General Reference

Literature author:

Literature publisher:

Literature year:

Literature title: A Brief History of the District of Polkemmet East

Literature type: General Reference

Literature author: Simmons, Gavin

Literature publisher: self published

Literature year: 1998

Literature title: Will and Probate of Martha Bertram Calder (1905). Probate Administration files 99/173, Series VPRS28, Victorian Public Records Office.

Literature type: General Reference

Literature author:

Literature publisher:

Literature year: 1905

This information is provided for guidance only and does not supersede official documents, particularly the planning scheme. Planning controls should be verified by checking the relevant municipal planning scheme.