

PLACE: Former Carlo Gervasoni 'Old Stone House' and outbuildings

Place No:

YH/04

ADDRESS: Yandoit Creek Road, Yandoit Hills

OTHER NAME/S:

31 May 2004



Date of Photograph:

MAP NAME & AMG REFERENCE: Yandoit 7723-4-3, BU 394 766

PROPERTY DETAILS: Part Allotment 9 of Section 2 Parish of Campbelltown

CURRENT HERITAGE STATUS ON LEGISLATIVE REGISTERS

Victorian Heritage Register: H808

Victorian Heritage Inventory:

Local Planning Scheme:

CURRENT HERITAGE STATUS ON OTHER REGISTERS

Register of the National Estate - Database No: 003964 **Registered**

National Trust (Victoria) Register: File No.3045 - Classified

THEMATIC CONTEXT

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. The Environmental Setting | <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Transport and Communications |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Exploration and Pastoralism | <input type="checkbox"/> 7. Water Supply |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Gold | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 8. Agriculture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Towns and Settlements | <input type="checkbox"/> 9. Secondary Industry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Local Government | <input type="checkbox"/> 10. Community Life |

CONDITION:

<input type="checkbox"/> Good
<input type="checkbox"/> Fair
<input type="checkbox"/> Poor
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ruins

INTEGRITY:

<input type="checkbox"/> Substantially Intact
<input type="checkbox"/> Altered Sympathetically
<input type="checkbox"/> Altered Unsympathetically
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Damaged/Disturbed

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the place be included in the Heritage Overlay of the Mount Alexander Planning Scheme. It is recommended that the place be retained on the Victorian Heritage Register. It is recommended that the place be retained on the Register of the National Estate.

RECOMMENDED LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE:

State

PRECINCT:

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

The former Carlo Gervasoni Homestead complex, Yandoit Creek Road, Yandoit, is **architecturally** significant at a **STATE** level. The three main buildings on the site, and the other ruinous outbuildings, demonstrate original design qualities of a Victorian Swiss-Italian vernacular style, clearly reflecting the architectural traditions of northern Italy and particularly the Italian masseria (farmhouses). The 'Old Stone House' has a number of these intact qualities that include the gable roof form that is hipped at one end, and the rubble stone wall construction. Other intact qualities include the lapped galvanised corrugated iron roof cladding; two unstable brick chimneys with corbelled tops; modest eaves; timber framed, twelve paned, double hung windows; vertical boarded doors; and the rubble stone skillion addition with two squat rubble stone chimneys at the rear. The adjacent outbuildings are significant for their hipped roof forms, rubble stone wall construction, narrow eaves, lapped galvanised corrugated iron roof cladding, brick chimneys; and timber framed double hung windows. Although ruinous the size and location of the buildings readily evoke the distinctive way of life of the Swiss-Italian settlers in Yandoit and the buildings have become a landmark in the area.

The former Carlo Gervasoni Homestead complex, Yandoit Creek Road, Yandoit, is **historically** significant at a **STATE** level. It is associated with the early establishment of Yandoit in the late 1850s after the gold rush, with the development of the Swiss-Italian farming practices that included dairying, vegetable and fruit growing, butter and cheese making, vineyard development and winemaking. It is also associated with the Italian 'stonehouse company' from the early 1860s, being a consortium of Northern Italians that included the Gervasoni brothers (Carlo, Guiseppe, Luigi and Antonio), Jack Guippore, Battistia Nani and Ambrogio Invernizzi. This homestead complex is especially associated with Carlo Gervasoni, who had the initial vision to establish an agricultural and viticultural farming enterprise at Yandoit in c.1859-60, and whose family was connected with the property until at least 1925. The homestead complex is also integrally associated with Yandoit as the first major agricultural settlement of Italians in Australia.

The former Carlo Gervasoni Homestead complex, Yandoit Creek Road, Yandoit, is **scientifically** significant at a **STATE** level. The rubble stone wall and chimney construction has its roots in the Italian masseria (farmhouses) of northern Italy and is a rare construction technique in Victoria. The complex is also of importance for its ability to provide information contributing to an understanding of the development of Swiss-Italian farming in the 19th century, and has a strong presumption of archaeological research potential.

The former Carlo Gervasoni Homestead complex, Yandoit Creek Road, Yandoit, is **socially** significant at a **LOCAL** level. Although no longer operating as a farm, it is still recognised by the community for its past purpose as an agricultural and viticultural farm operated by the Swiss-Italian Gervasoni family.

Overall, the former Carlo Gervasoni Homestead complex, Yandoit Creek Road, Yandoit, is of **STATE** significance.

DESCRIPTION:

The former Carlo Gervasoni homestead and outbuildings, Yandoit Creek Road, Yandoit, are set on a large rural allotment on gently sloping agricultural land. The complex of buildings and ruins represents a tangible legacy with the dairy, cheese making, winegrowing and making and other

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mixed farm enterprises established there in the early 1860s. Today, the homestead complex is particularly comprised of the 'Old Stone House', two smaller outbuildings and a number of ruins.

The two storey, asymmetrical, partially rendered, rubble stone, Victorian Swiss-Italian vernacular 'Old Stone House' building is characterised by a lapped galvanised corrugated iron gable roof form, hipped at one end. Two unstable brick chimneys with corbelled tops adorn the roofline. Modest overhangs are a feature of the eaves. The timber framed, twelve paned, double hung windows are early, as are the vertical boarded doors. A rubble stone skillion addition with two squat rubble stone chimneys appears to be extant at the rear.

The single storey, rubble stone, Victorian Swiss-Italian vernacular styled outbuilding nearest the 'Old Stone House' is characterised by a lapped galvanised corrugated iron hipped roof form. A simple brick chimney is located at one end and narrow overhangs are a feature of the eaves. The timber framed double hung windows appear to be early.

Adjacent to the first outbuilding is a smaller, Victorian Swiss-Italian vernacular styled rubble stone structure, having a lapped galvanised corrugated iron roof and narrow eaves.

Beyond this outbuilding are at least three rubble stone ruins, representing earlier farm structures on the site.

HISTORY:

With the first discovery of gold in Yandoit in 1854, large numbers of miners flooded into the gullies and close to the creek. As well as the rapid monetary gains that came with the gold discoveries, were the cultural and farming riches brought out by the immigrant miners and associated workers. The north Italian Gervasoni brothers, Carlo (head), Guiseppi, Luigi and Antonio, were central figures in the establishment of Yandoit from the late 1850s and early 1860s. The Gervasoni brothers and several other families who became farmers at Yandoit, were from the Valle Brembana in the foothills of the Alps above Bergamo, in Lombardy, not far from the Swiss border. Not surprisingly, therefore, the Swiss-Italian vernacular architecture of many of the structures throughout the Yandoit district is reminiscent of the Italian masseria (farmhouses) and their outbuildings of the patriarchal peasant communities of rural Italy.

Carlo and Guiseppi Gervasoni emigrated to Victoria in 1858, with Carlo commencing a dairying business in the Hepburn/Shepherd's Flat area, selling milk, butter and other products to the gold miners. Carlo came to Yandoit Creek in c.1859-60 because of his interest in a tunnelling operation which sought to find gold under the basalt of the Yandoit Hill. Yet it was the rich Yandoit flats which reminded him of his homeland that particularly took his interest, and so he moved to Yandoit with his dairy herd of cows soon after.

Between 1858 and the early 1870s, Carlo was joined at Yandoit by his brothers (Luigi, Antonio and Guiseppi) and fellow northern Italians, Jack Guippore, Battistia Nani and Ambrogio Invernizzi (who had all tried their hand at gold mining). A mixed farming company was established which had interests in dairying, vegetable and fruit growing, butter and cheese making, vineyard development and winemaking.

This site, comprising part of allotment 9 of Section 2 of the Parish of Campbelltown (19 acres, 1 rood and 30 perches), was purchased by the Italian 'stonehouse company' on 22 July 1865, under the names of Ambrogio Invernizzi and Luigi, Carlo and Antonio Gervasoni. The two-storey ruin

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known in the Gervasoni family as the 'Old Stone House' seems to have been constructed soon after the purchase of the land, and it became central to the interests of the company. The house was originally built with five rooms, two at ground level with three upstairs. A rear skillion accommodated a dairy and cheese house.

In 1868, Invernizzi and Antonio Gervasoni withdrew from the company and the land was transferred under the names of the remaining partners. By 1871, it was under the Gervasoni name only, and became the home of Carlo Gervasoni.

In c.1887 the house was extended to accommodate Carlo's growing family. On the south side of the main house, the so-called 'new' house was constructed. This building consisted of two bedrooms and a large living room. A substantial wine cellar was located underneath which had its own wide entrance. An underground tank, a brick-lined pit with a domed cover, holding 20,000 gallons was also built at this time. Sometime later a new dairy and wash-house (laundry) were constructed between the two buildings and the 'old' and 'new' houses were connected by a verandah. In 1893, new horse stables were erected at the rear of the 'Old Stone House'. Wagon and machinery sheds and a fruit house were constructed in the ensuing years. On 19 November 1897, the 'Old Stone House' was hit by a tornado and the house required substantial remodelling. The original roof was lifted by 5 feet and renewed, and the house was extended 20 feet to the north, creating a large dancing/ball room, with a cheese cellar of the same size having been constructed underneath. A new verandah was also constructed. The work was carried out by Bill Barker of Daylesford, with the stone mason being Tony Duico.

After Carlo's death, while on holiday in Italy in 1901, his second wife Anne (Carlo's first wife, Maria, having died in 1876, leaving Carlo with two children) continued to live there with some of the 11 Gervasoni children. Upon the death of Anne in 1920, her son, John Gervasoni, and his family lived there until c.1922. A photograph of the house in 1919 shows a two storey, gabled building with a lapped galvanised corrugated iron roof. The house had a verandah and balcony supported by timber posts. The balcony had a capped balustrade, while the verandah was characterised by a timber picket balustrade. The house was linked to the adjacent building by an enclosed skillion verandah. In c.1922 the property was sold to another son, Nichol, who leased it to his brother, Carlo (Cling). In 1925, Nichol sold the 'Old Stone House' to his cousin, Jack Gervasoni (Luigi Gervasoni's son), but he never lived there and it has been unoccupied since. It is still owned by a member of the Gervasoni family, Vincent, who is Jack Gervasoni's son. According to Vincent, some of the outbuildings, including the horse stables and machinery shed were destroyed by a bush fire in 1969.

REFERENCES:

Heritage Victoria, Victorian Heritage Register No. H808, File No. 8601583

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The Sun, 18 October 1967.

Roslyn Maguire, 'Italians in evidence in nineteenth century Australia', in *Heritage Australia*, Autumn 1987, pp.2-7.