

Woodlands

Somerton Road, Greenvale, Victoria

The Woodlands homestead and outbuildings (main stables, tutor's cottage, a stables/piggery, external toilet block, men's quarters, chicken coops, two tank sheds, and a garage) are located in the 646 acre Woodlands Historic Park.



Woodlands stables

The earliest section of the homestead, the west wing, is an English prefabricated timber building manufactured by Peter Thompson of London. He was one of the major builders and promoters of portable houses for export to the British colonies, particularly to Australia, in the 1830s and early 1840s. Woodlands is the only known example in Victoria of a prefabricated building manufactured by Thompson. William Pomeroy Greene, who was a former officer in the British Navy, brought this Thompson 'bungalow' with him when he and his family, and an entourage of servants, immigrated to Australia in 1842. He purchased 671 acres of land (the northern section of the present Park) in March 1843 and the house consisting of five rooms and a passage was erected by early June. The Woodlands complex is historically and aesthetically significant as a rare remnant of the early period of land occupation and settlement in Victoria. Few homesteads survive in Victoria from this period.

The timber framed walls, with their external weatherboard cladding, are infilled with brick nogging. The walls are finished internally with hard plaster. Further rooms comprising the north and south wings were added by 1846 using mostly prefabricated materials, possibly purchased in Melbourne. The bakery at the south-eastern corner of the building was built completely from local materials. The east wing was completed by 1850 and was constructed from a greater mix of prefabricated and local materials.



Woodlands is managed by Parks Victoria and is open 12:00 to 4:00 pm on Wednesday, Saturday, Sundays and Public Holidays

The main stables building, which is substantially intact, was primarily erected during the mid to late 1840s and includes accommodation for a groom's man, along with a saddle room, stable areas, and a loft. Over the years the stables housed many thoroughbreds, hunters and race horses. Most of the walls are constructed of brick, and the roof members and timber joinery are generally of prefabricated timber components.

The property had various owners throughout the nineteenth century (including Andrew Sutherland, Charles Brown Fisher, and William Henry Croker), until 1917 when it was purchased by Ben and Cowra Chaffey. During this period it developed a reputation for horse breeding and was closely associated with the nearby Oaklands Hunt Club.



Woodlands Homestead front view



Veranda

Part of the homestead was altered about 1918, not long after Ben Chaffey purchased the property. The original verandahs along the west and south wings were removed and some of the material used to construct a verandah to the east wing. The piers to the new verandah along the west and south wings are constructed of locally quarried granite and the roofline of the original building was extended to rest on them. The dining room was extended and a picture window installed, and other parts of the south wing were modified internally. The blackwood panelling in the entry hall and dining room date from this time. Two small rooms were also added onto the eastern end of the north wing. The brick and timber garage is believed to have been built during the Chaffey period of ownership.

The internal configuration of the homestead is substantially as built between 1843 and c.1850 except for parts of the south wing as described. The original wall finishes used by the Greene family were covered over by subsequent owners but some of those in the west wing have been either partly or wholly revealed. The early decorative schemes of the west wing of the homestead were painted circa 1849. Elegant floriated decorative schemes were used in four rooms, a columned and marble panelled design in another room, and a tooled ashlar scheme was employed in the hallway. These schemes are representative of the Regency style of decoration and may be the only extant example of the style in Victoria.

The two magnolia trees, which were planted in the mid-1840s are believed to be the oldest surviving exotic plantings in Victoria. The innovative irrigation system, which was installed by Ben Chaffey in the 1920s and includes the tank sheds, tank stand and cast iron piping, is also of interest.

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