

'Woodlands'**SC-STDO-280**

280 Stony Creek-Dollar Road,
Stony Creek 3957

Significance

Local

Designer

Unknown

Contractor

FW Morris (1924)

Significant**Dates**

1924, c.1945,
c.1955

**Style**

Interwar bungalow

Statement of significance**What is significant?**

'Woodlands, the Helms family farm, at 280 Stony Creek-Dollar Road, Stony Creek is significant. William and Elsie Helms purchased this property in 1915 and established a dairy farm. The property, which became known as 'Woodlands', has remained in the continuous ownership of the family until the present day. Early buildings on the farm include the homestead constructed in 1924 (set within a mature garden with several early trees), the 1920s hayshed and part of the original dairy, the 1940s machinery and the remains of the piggery. Also of note is the original cream can stand situated within the road reserve to the west of the original driveway entrance.

How is it significant?

'Woodlands', the Helms family farm, is of local historic and aesthetic significance to South Gippsland Shire.

Why is it significant?

Historically, it is associated with the settlement and establishment of dairy farms in the Stony Creek district during the early twentieth century and is also important for its long and continuing association with the locally important Helms family. (Criteria A & H)

The farm is significant for its collection of farm buildings including an early hayshed, part of an early dairy, machinery shed and ruins of a piggery. Also notable is the early cream can stand, which is the only known surviving example in the Shire. Collectively, the buildings provide an insight into the working life of small dairy farms of the twentieth century. (Criteria C & D)

Aesthetically, the 1924 homestead is a locally notable example of a Federation/Interwar transitional bungalow with typical detail. It is notable for the unusual application to the verandah of a false balcony. The house is complemented by a large garden with several early trees including the pair of Canary Island Palms and an Oak. (Criterion E)

History

Land to the east of Stony Creek township in the Parish of Dumbalk was offered for selection in the late nineteenth century. The present 280 Stony Creek-Dollar Road comprises the original Crown Allotments 64 and 107A, the former selected by E. Hayes in 1886 and the latter by J. Caldwell in about 1889. By the early 1900s both allotments were in the ownership of Thomas Charlton who had leased the property to Phillip and Bertram Walsh (SCBTC 1985:142, RB).

The first description of the property in the Shire of South Gippsland Rate Book that includes a house appears in 1902-03 when the Net Annual Value is £28. In 1908-09, the NAV increases to £35, and remains at this level until Thomas Charlton sold the property to F.W. (William) Helms on 27 March 1915 (RB).

William and Elsie Helms and their three children Frederick, Nina and Oscar had moved to the property by 1916. The family established a dairy farm and lived in a timber cottage that had four main rooms contained within a double gable roofline. Over the years, a timber dairy, a gabled barn and hayshed, and a piggery were added.

Like other early dairy farms in the area, the Helms family sent their cream to the butter factory at Stony Creek. After being separated from the milk, the cream was transferred to cans, which were transported from the dairy and placed on the cream stand adjacent to the entrance gates on the Dollar Road where they were collected and taken to Stony Creek.

In the early 1920s the family inherited money from Elsie's family and with the proceeds in 1924 erected a fine new homestead close to the main entrance facing the Dollar Road and also purchased their first motor vehicle, a Dodge Tourer. The house, named 'Woodlands', was possibly designed and constructed by local builder F.W. Morris, who had carried out additions to the Stony Creek Hall at the same time and built several houses in Leongatha.

Later, following completion of the new homestead, two rooms of the original cottage were moved by bullock dray immediately behind it, while materials from the balance were used to create an attached garage.

In 1927, the eldest son, Frederick, married Margaret Zeuschner and they had three children Bill, David (who died when a baby) and Robert (Bob). They shared 'Woodlands' with William and Elsie and continued to run and develop the farm.

After World War II, the lot immediately to the west was acquired. The homestead was renovated and a new dairy was constructed in the late 1940s, along with a machinery shed by the early 1950s. A new hayshed followed in 1959.

In 1960 the family decided to try sharefarming and a new residence was built on the site of the original cottage. Around this time, Margaret Helms expanded the garden around 'Woodlands' taking in land between the house and the entrance driveway, which was enclosed by a new fence with matching entry gates. Here she planted numerous exotic trees, shrubs and roses and the garden became a showpiece of the district for many years.

William Helms and his son Fred were active in the development of Stony Creek. William was involved in the Stony Creek Progress Association, which was

instrumental in the establishment of the Butter Factory, Farmers Club, Bank of Australasia and State School in the town. He was Chairman of the Butter Factory, the Secretary of the Stony Creek Racing Club and Recreation Reserve, and was director of the Gippsland Bacon Company at Dandenong.

Fred Helms was secretary of the Stony Creek Racing Club and Recreation Reserve during the 1920s and was president of the Hall committee in the 1930s. He was instrumental in the establishment of the new Stony Creek Cricket Ground in 1975 and this facility is now named Fred Helms Park in his honour.

Fred and Margaret and their sons Bill and Bob were active members of the Stony Creek Football Club for many years. Fred played in the 1920, 1925 and 1930-31, whilst Bill followed in the premierships of the 1940s and 1950s when Stony Creek was one of the strongest teams in South Gippsland. All were made Life Members of the club. It is believed that one of the paddocks on CA64 adjacent to the creek was used in 1913 for early matches of the Stony Creek Football Club.

The farm remains in Helms family ownership today. Around 2000 the homestead was renovated, restoring some of the original features that had been removed during renovations in the 1940s and 1950s. The garden was also rejuvenated.

Description

“Woodlands”, the Helms family farm at 280 Stony Creek-Dollar Road, Stony Creek, comprises the homestead, built in 1924, and a complex of farm buildings including the 1920s hayshed and part of the 1920s milking shed, the 1940s machinery, the 1960 hayshed and the remains of the piggery.

The 1924 homestead is a single storey weatherboard single hip roofed bungalow of rectangular plan with an encircling contiguous verandah at the same pitch as the main roof. The short ridge is capped with metal scroll finials and cresting. A wide central gable projecting from the main roof to half the width of the verandah, is fronted by a short skillion roof cut into the main roof and slightly projecting, with an open timber balustrade at its leading edge. The general perimeter of the verandah has paired routed posts supporting segmentally arched valance boards with circular perforations. The balustrade has an open ladder frame between the posts projecting above the skillion roof, the centre two of which are higher.

Other notable elements include:

- The plain chimneys which have been relocated.
- The double multi-pane front doors with diamond leadlight matched by a window which is understood to have also been doors.
- The wide casement windows with hoppers above in symmetrical boxed bays.
- The geometric panelling of the gable end.

Minor alterations have been made to the external appearance of the 1924 homestead, which included the replacement of french doors to the verandah with windows, and the replacement and relocation of original chimneys. Wooden fretwork detail to the verandah was removed in the 1950s and was reconstructed in 1999 using original photographs.

The homestead is surrounded by an expansive garden, which has been developed in stages since the late 1920s. Notable early plantings include the pair of Canary Island Palms (*Phoenix canariensis*) to the west of the house, which were planted c.1930, a very old Oak (*Quercus sp.*) to the southeast of the homestead within the former chicken yard. Many of the shrubs in garden, which include several mature Camellias,

and several exotic trees were planted in the 1950s and 1960s. Just outside the garden is a line of Eucalypts, which date from the early twentieth century.

Originally situated behind the main homestead was part of the original cottage. It was a two-roomed weatherboard cottage with a gable iron roof with a later skillion garage added at the rear. It, however, has been demolished.

At the base of the hill below the homestead is the former sharefarmer's house, which is an asymmetrical postwar residence with a hipped tile roof and weatherboard walls. To the west is the complex of farm buildings, which are all timber framed structures clad in corrugated iron. They include the c.1920s gabled hayshed, the c.1940 machinery shed (a double-gable structure open along one side), and the remains of the piggery (concrete foundations, some timber framing and remnant iron). The 1960 hayshed is a steel-framed gabled structure with one end wall.

The other early structure associated with the farm is the early twentieth century timber cream can stand, which is situated within the road reserve to the west of the original driveway entrance. It is partly obscured by trees and vegetation.

Thematic Context

Settling the land

Working the land

Sub-Themes

Selection era

Dairying

Comparative Examples

See Style

Existing Listings

Nil

Recommendations

It is recommended that the homestead and cream can stand at "Woodlands", 280 Stony Creek-Dollar Road, Stony Creek be added to the Schedule to the South Gippsland Planning Scheme Heritage Overlay as an individual place.

Extent of Designation: The homestead and cream can stand and associated land to a minimum extent of 10m surrounding each building, including the whole of the cultivated garden area.

Conservation Recommendations: Maintain and conserve existing fabric. It would be desirable to restore original French windows and finish later chimneys to match original. See Heritage Policy.

References

Stony Creek Back-To Committee (SCBTC), *Stony Creek: A history*, 1985

Shire of South Gippsland Rate Books (RB), 1900-1920s

Other information provided by Bill Helms and David Helms