BETTER HERITAGE INFORMATION
SUMMARY OF STATE HERITAGE PLACE

COMMENTARY ON THE LISTING

Description and notes with respect to a place entered in the South Australian Heritage Register in accordance with either the *South Australian Heritage Act 1978* or the *Heritage Places Act 1993*.

The information contained in this document is provided in accordance with s14(6) and s21 of the *Heritage Places Act 1993*.

REGISTERED NAME:	Moorakyne House	**PLACE NO.:** 10363
ALSO KNOWN AS:	Moorakyne (dwelling)	
ADDRESS:	Bunganditj Country	
	4-6 Sturt Street, Robe SA 5276	
	CT 5567/747 T441801 A125 and A90	
	Hundred of Waterhouse	

CONFIRMED IN THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE REGISTER:

24 March 1983

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Moorakyne House, built in 1856 for shipping agent and pastoralist George Ormerod and his family, has a special association with Ormerod and his business Ormerod & Co., which played a central role in the commercial development of Robe and the viability of its port, the second largest in South Australia. Ormerod and his family lived at Moorkyne until 1870 and the house's size, position overlooking Lake Butler and proximity to Ormerod's business interests at the nearby Royal Circus all demonstrate the prominence of George Ormerod, as well as his relationship to the seaport.

INDICATIVE CRITERIA (under section 16 of the *Heritage Places Act 1993*)

(g) it has special association with the life or work of a person or organisation or an event of historical importance

Moorakyne House has a special association with George Ormerod, a prominent mid-nineteenth century pastoralist and shipping agent. Ormerod was a key figure in South Australia's South East from the mid-1840s to the late 1860s. In 1846, Ormerod and Charles Sherratt were the first Europeans to establish a settlement at what is now Naracoorte. Around 1853, Ormerod relocated to Robe, where he founded a shipping company named Ormerod & Co. Between 1853 and 1870, Ormerod & Co. was the largest shipping company in the South East, transforming Robe into one of South Australia's key seaports. Ormerod also went on to own multiple pastoral stations in the region and he and his company helped facilitate the social and commercial growth of Robe. Towards this end, Ormerod and Ormerod & Co. erected several buildings throughout the township.

Completed in 1856, Moorakyne House was built as Ormerod's family home and the size and position of the house overlooking Lake Butler demonstrates Ormerod's prominence in Robe. The proximity of Moorakyne House to the Royal Circus (SHP 12547), where Ormerod's business was primarily conducted, also demonstrates his relationship with the seaport. Multiple extensions were added as the family grew, culminating in a large structure that reflected Ormerod's status and wealth.

SITE PLAN

Moorakyne House   **PLACE NO.: 10363**

4-6 Sturt Street, Robe

Moorakyne House, 4-6 Sturt Street, Robe, CT 5567/747 T441801 A125 and A90, Hundred of Waterhouse

N ↑

LEGEND

 ▭ Parcel boundaries (Indicates extent of Listing)
 ▭ Outline of Elements of Significance for State Heritage Place

Confirmed in the South Australian Heritage Register on 24 March 1983
The South Australian Heritage Council endorsed the content of this BHI - SSHP on 27 June 2024

Physical Description

Moorakyne House is a large dwelling constructed of coursed semi-dressed stone. Moorakyne House comprises three rectangular, gable-roofed wings arranged in an H-shaped configuration, with a hipped-roofed extension filling the southern side of the 'H' and an additional gable-roofed wing or extension on the eastern side. The roofs are covered by corrugated galvanised steel. The front elevation features a sloping verandah flanked by the protruding, gable-ended wings.

Additional features include:

- stone chimneys (render not significant fabric),
- low stone wall along the verandah,
- tall casement windows featuring muntins, surrounded by deep stone sills and lintels,
- scalloped barge boards and facia.

Elements of Significance:

Elements of heritage significance include (but are not necessarily limited to):

- Moorakyne House, including attached extensions,
- Sloping verandah,
- Scalloped barge boards and facia,
- Casement windows with feature muntins,
- Semi-dressed stone walls, including lintels and sills.

Elements not considered to contribute to significance of place include (but are not necessarily limited to):

- Outbuildings,
- Non-original fixtures and fittings,
- Fencing,
- Landscaping.

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History of the Place

Establishing Colonial Robe

Guichen Bay in the South East of South Australia forms part of the traditional lands of the Bungandidj people, who have been present in the area for at least 30,000 years.[1] Europeans first charted the coastline of the region in 1802 during the Baudin and Flinders expeditions and sealers established a presence at Guichen Bay in 1831.[2]

European exploration of the South East took place from 1839 and settlement began as early as 1840.[3] Much of the South East was initially settled by pastoralists and by 1847, approximately half of the region was held under pastoral licences. As primary production expanded the colonial government began to provide a series of government towns as service and staging centres. The provision of ports to ship goods to market was also viewed as essential and Robe was established in 1846, to provide a port for the burgeoning wool clip then being obtained from the South East.[4] Robe was officially declared a port by the Government in 1847.[5]

Situated towards the south of Guichen Bay, the town at Robe (or Robetown) emerged as the first major town of the South East.[6] Robe became the administrative centre of the region when a Government Resident was appointed in 1846.[7] Over the next two decades, Robe developed as an international port that serviced the local wool industry and import and export markets. It also facilitated the arrival of thousands of immigrants, including British and Irish people, as well as Chinese prospectors during the Victorian gold rush between 1857 and 1861.[8]

George Ormerod and the Development of Robe

Robe's early commercial development was driven primarily by George Ormerod, a pastoralist and merchant. Originally from Lancashire, Ormerod arrived in Australia in 1842 and first settled in western Victoria, where he worked on a pastoral station. In 1845, he formed a partnership with Charles Sharratt and established a station at Mosquito Plains, now Naracoorte. The following year, the partnership ended, leaving Ormerod as the sole proprietor. Over the following decades, Ormerod became a prominent pastoralist with multiple holdings throughout the South East, either held individually or in partnership.[9]

In the late 1840s, Ormerod developed an interest in the shipping industry and was one of several pastoralists who unsuccessfully lobbied the colonial Government to divert its seaport from Robe to Rivoli Bay.[10] Accepting that Robe would remain the seaport, Ormerod relocated there in the early 1850s. He likely established his shipping company in 1853, as the first known reference to 'Ormerod & Co.' appeared in November.[11]

Ormerod & Co. became the primary shipping company in the South East, reaching as far as western Victoria. The company directed the entire export trade and most of the import trade. Exports alone produced £1,696,700 between the mid-1850s and mid-

1860s.[12] At the time, Robe was responsible for exporting the second largest amount of wool in the colony.[13] Ormerod also owned and operated steamers that ran between Adelaide, Robe and Melbourne, beginning with the acquisition of the *Ant* in 1857.[14]

Ormerod was fundamental in establishing Robe as one of the colony's most lucrative ports. His success was such that Ormerod & Co.'s promissory notes served as a makeshift currency throughout the South East.[15]

Ormerod and his company erected several prominent structures that hastened the development of Robe. The company constructed a store and warehouse (since demolished) at the Royal Circus (SHP 12547), the hub of Robe's portside activities.[16] Following the wreck of the *Duilius* in 1853, Ormerod promptly constructed what is now part of Graymasts (SHP 10364) to store salvaged wool.[17] In 1855, Ormerod financed Robe's first jetty, before it was replaced the same year by a government jetty.[18] Additionally, Ormerod built the Ormerod Cottages around 1857 (SHP 10360).

Ormerod & Co. thrived until the late 1860s. In 1870 Ormerod relocated with his family to western Victoria at a time when Robe's role as a port was in decline. Around two years later, Ormerod died at the age of 51.[19] Ormerod & Co was purchased by the Grice family, who kept the name until 1878, when it became John Grice & Co. About five years later, the business was purchased by Andrew Dunn. The company folded around 1893, resulting from the Australia-wide banking crisis.[20]

As of the twenty-first century, no extant structures directly demonstrate Ormerod's shipping activities, as the company's warehouse and store located at Royal Circus have since been demolished. Other extant buildings with an association with Ormerod and his company are Ormerod Cottages, Graymasts and Moorakyne House.

Moorakyne House

In 1855, Ormerod purchased sections 90 and 125 of Robe Town to build a house for himself and his family.[21] He likely also purchased the adjacent sections, together comprising the entire block.[22] Ormerod likely purchased these sections as they were within walking distance of the Royal Circus, a portside roundabout where his business was primarily conducted.

Ormerod contracted Henry Smith to build his house and work probably commenced in 1855.[23] During construction, it is understood that Ormerod and his family were residing at what is now known as Granny Banks' Cottage (SHP 12646).[24] They also briefly returned to England.[25] The house was completed in 1856.[26] Ormerod named it 'Moorakyne', allegedly derived from a Bunganditj name for Lake Butler.[27]

Unusually, Moorakyne House's floor joists were bedded in the perimeter walls without additional support. The house also boasted a 'magnificent' three-roomed cellar, accessed through an external door, a detached stone kitchen, servants' quarters, laundry and dairy, and two coach houses.[28]

Ormerod made multiple extensions and alterations to Moorakyne House to accommodate his growing family, which eventually comprised himself, his wife Mary and nine children.[29] During Ormerod's ownership, the house expanded to thirteen rooms.[30]

The Ormerod family lived at Moorakyne House until 1870, when they relocated to Victoria.[31] Following George's death in 1872, Mary returned to England in 1874, where she remained for twelve years. She then returned to live at Robe before again moving to Heidelberg in Victoria, where she established a property also named Moorakyne.[32]

The Grice family acquired Moorakyne House along with Ormerod's business in the early 1870s.[33] John Grice registered the property in 1880, following the assent of the *Settled Estates Act 1880*. At that time, the property comprised sections 89, 90, 91, 92, 126, 125, 124 and 123.[34] Four years later, the property was transferred to Andrew Dunn and Charles Gell, who acquired the business from the Grice family.[35]

Following a succession of owners, Alexandrina Hutchinson purchased the property in 1896 and lived there until her death in 1909.[36] Hutchinson bequeathed Moorakyne House to the Anglican Church, which used the house as a rectory until 1923.[37] Subsequently, the property was again used as a private residence. Moorakyne House has had multiple owners since, including V. C. Hunt who restored the house over many years,[38] and was known colloquially as 'Green Gables' during the twentieth century.[39] Moorakyne House was confirmed as a State Heritage Place on 24 March 1983.

Chronology

Year	Event
1842	George Ormerod arrives in Australia and begins working at a station in Western Victoria.
1845	George Ormerod and Charles Sherratt are granted an occupation license at Mosquito Plains in South Australia, now known as Naracoorte.
1846	The Counties of Grey and Robe are proclaimed by the colonial government and are opened to claim under pastoral license.
	The Government of South Australia establishes Robe as the administrative centre of the South East.
	The partnership between Ormerod and Sharratt ceases and Ormerod assumes sole control of the license.
1847	Robe is officially gazetted as a port by the colonial government.
1853	August, George Ormerod purchases Sections 26 and 27.

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> **Around this time, Ormerod becomes involved in the shipping industry and relocates to Robe.**
>
> **November, the first known reference to his new business, 'Ormerod & Co.', appears.**
>
> **December, Ormerod sells the Naracoorte lease.**

1855 **Work begins on Moorakyne House.**

> Ormerod purchases additional land around the Royal Circus (SHP 12547), the hub of Robe's portside activities.

1856 **The Ormerod family move into their new home, which they name 'Moorakyne' (SHP 10363).**

1859 Robe becomes South Australia's second-largest export for wool.

c.1863 Ormerod erects 'Ormerod' Cottages (SHP 10360) on Section 26 no later than 1863.

1872 **10 April, George Ormerod dies at the age of 51. His business is subsequently taken over by the Grice family. They retain the 'Ormerod and Co.' business name for several years.**

1878 'George Ormerod and Co.' is renamed 'John Grice and Co.'.

1883 The Grice family's Robe operations are taken over by Andrew Dunn.

1984 **24 March, Moorakyne House is confirmed as a State Heritage Place, listed as 'Moorakyne' House.**

2003 The Heritage Branch approves Development Application 822/87/03 to allow Moorakyne House to be used as bed and breakfast accommodation.

2017 Heritage South Australia conditionally approves Development Application 822/10417 to undertake conservation work on the roof and sandstone walls.

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References

Books and Chapters

Bermingham, Kathleen. *Gateway to the South East*: *A Story of Robetown and the Guichen Bay District*. Millicent: The South Eastern Times Ltd., 1961.

Bermingham, Kathleen. *The Second Eleven Tales of Robe*. Robe: self-published, 1971.

Cockburn, Rodney. *Pastoral Pioneers of South Australia, Vol. 2*, facsimile edition indexed by A. Dorothy Aldersey. 1925; Blackwood, SA: Lynton Publications, 1974.

Harfull, Liz. *Almost an Island: The Story of Robe*, reprinted edition, 2013; Mile End: Wakefield press, 2015.

Marsden, Susan. *A Glimpse of Golden Days*. Robe: District Council of Robe, 1985.

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Reports and Theses

Dallwitz, John, and Marsden, Susan. *Robe Historical Interpretation Study: Stage 1 in the Establishment of the Robe Historical Interpretation Centre*. Adelaide: Department of Environment and Planning, 1983.

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Danvers Architects. 'Ormerod Cottages', Heritage Survey Identification Sheet, Region 6: South East, 1983.

Newspapers

'Miss Ormerod – Daughter of One of the Earliest Residents of the District'. *Narracoorte Herald*, 3 March 1942, p.1

'A Robe Estate. Bequest of a Parsonage'. *Evening Journal*, 27 August 1909, p.2.

'Robe's Historical Buildings'. *South-East Kingston Leader*, 25 November 1965, p.8.

Land Titles

Certificate of Title 335, Folio 245.

Websites

André, Roger. 'Wool', SA History Hub, History Trust of South Australia, 19 March 2014. https://sahistoryhub.history.sa.gov.au/subjects/wool Accessed 5 March 2024.

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SITE DETAILS

Moorakyne House   **PLACE NO.: 10363**

4-6 Sturt Street, Robe

FORMER NAME:	Green Gables
DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:	Large dwelling constructed of coursed semi-dressed stone with multiple wings.
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION:	c.1856
REGISTER STATUS:	Nominated: 3 September 1979
	Identified: 15 April 1981
	Provisionally entered: 28 October 1982
	Confirmed: 24 March 1983
CURRENT USE:	Private residence, 1939 -
PREVIOUS USE(S):	Private residence, c.1856 - 1911; Church rectory, 1911 - 1939
BUILDER:	Henry Smith
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:	District Council of Robe

LOCATION:	**Street No.:**	4-6
	Street Name:	Sturt Street
	Town/Suburb:	Robe
	Post Code:	5276
LAND DESCRIPTION:	**Title Reference:**	CT 5567/747 T441801 A125 and A90
	Hundred:	Waterhouse

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PHOTOS

Moorakyne House

4-6 Sturt Street, Robe

Part of the front elevation, c.1900.

Source: SLSA B 18550

The front elevation showing extensive ivy coverage, c.1915.
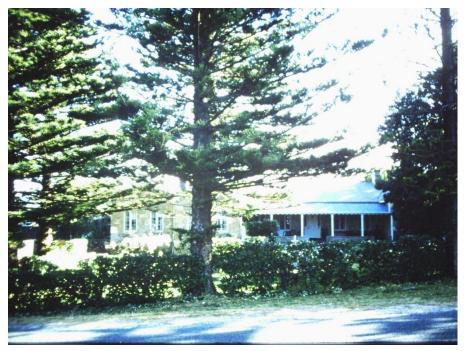
Source: SLSA B18842

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Moorakyne House viewed from Sturt Street, c.1983.

Source: DEW Files

Part of the front elevation showing the verandah, c.1983.

Source: DEW Files

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Two eastern wings adjacent to the front verandah, c.1983.

Source: DEW Files

Front elevation of Moorakyne House as glimpsed from the street, 2023.

Source: Google Street View.

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[1] Liz Harfull, *Almost an Island: The Story of Robe*, reprinted edition (2013; Mile End: Wakefield press, 2015), 12-14; Susan Marsden, *A Glimpse of Golden Days* (Robe: District Council of Robe, 1985), pp.11-12.

[2] Harfull, *Almost an Island*, p.11; Marsden, *A Glimpse of Golden Days,* p.12.

[3] Harfull, *Almost an Island*, pp.14-16; Marsden, *A Glimpse of Golden Days,* p.14.

[4] Roger André, 'Wool', SA History Hub, History Trust of South Australia, 19 March 2014. https://sahistoryhub.history.sa.gov.au/subjects/wool; Michael Williams, *The Making of the South Australian Landscape: A Study in the Historical Geography of Australia* (London; New York: Academic Press, 1974), pp. 339-341.

[5] Dallwitz and Marsden, *Robe Historical Interpretation*, pp.4-10.

[6] Dallwitz and Marsden, *Robe Historical Interpretation*, pp.4-10.

[7] Marsden, *A Glimpse of Golden Days,* pp.21-24.

[8] Dallwitz and Marsden, *Robe Historical Interpretation*, pp.10-16.

[9] Harfull, *Almost an Island*, p.32.

[10] Harfull, *Almost an Island*, p.32.

[11] Harfull, *Almost an Island*, p.34.

[12] Kathleen Bermingham, *Gateway to the Southeast: A Story of Robetown and the Guichen Bay District* (Millicent: South Eastern Times Ltd., 1963), p.123; Rodney Cockburn, *Pastoral Pioneers of South Australia, Vol. 2*, facsimile edition indexed by A. Dorothy Aldersey (1925; Blackwood, SA: Lynton Publications, 1974), p.20.

[13] Marsden, *A Glimpse of Golden Days,* p.27; Harfull, *Almost an Island*, p.36.

[14] Harfull, *Almost an Island*, p.37.

[15] 'Robe Town', *South Australian Weekly Chronicle* (Adelaide), 24 September 1859, p.3; Harfull, *Almost an Island*, pp.36-37.

[16] Dallwitz and Marsden, *Robe Historical Interpretation*, p.8; Harfull, *Almost an Island*, p.36.

[17] See Danvers Architects, '"Greymasts" Woolstore and Attached Cottage', Heritage Item Identification Sheet, Region 6: South East, 1983.

[18] Wilf Sprengel, *The Ecstasy and Agony of Guichen Bay* (Robe: self-published, 1986), p.13 and pp.15-19.

[19] Harfull, *Almost an Island*, p.41.

[20] Harfull, *Almost an Island*, p.41.

[21] Moorakyne House was built on Sections 90 and 125.

[22] Liz Harfull notes that the grounds covered 1.6 hectares. This indicates that Ormerod would have owned the entire block. Harfull, *Almost an Island*, p.38.

[23] Danvers Architects, 'Morakyne House' Heritage Survey Identification Sheet: South East, 1983.

[24] Bermingham, *Gateway to the Southeast*, p.126.

[25] Harfull, *Almost an Island*, p.38.

[26] Bermingham, *Gateway to the Southeast*, p.126; Harfull, *Almost an Island*, p.38.

[27] Bermingham, *Gateway to the Southeast*, p.126; Geoffrey H. Manning, *A Compendium of the Place Names of South Australia: From Aaron Creek to Zion Hill* (Adelaide: self-published, 2012), p.152.

[28] Harfull, *Almost an Island*, p.38.

[29] Harfull, *Almost an Island*, p.38.

[30] Harfull, *Almost an Island*, p.38.

[31] Harfull, *Almost an Island*, p.41.

[32] Harfull, *Almost an Island*, p.41.

[33] Certificate of Title Vol. 335, Folio 245; Harfull, *Almost an Island*, p.41.

[34] Certificate of Title Vol. 335, Folio 245.

[35] Certificate of Title Vol. 335, Folio 245, transfer no. 169742; Harfull, *Almost an Island*, p.41.

[36] Certificate of Title Vol. 335, Folio 245, transfer no. 301118 and application no. 503556.

[37] 'A Robe Estate: Bequest of a Parsonage', *Evening Journal* (Adelaide), 27 August 1909, p.2; Harfull, *Almost an Island*, p.41.

[38] Harfull, *Almost an Island*, p.41.

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[39] The Heritage Identification Sheet completed in 1983 mentions 'Green Gables' as a former name. In 1965, the South-East Kingston Leader referred to the place as 'Old Moorakyne (Green Gables)'. Danvers Architects, 'Morakyne House' Heritage Survey Identification Sheet; 'Robe's Historical Buildings', *South-East Kingston Leader*, 25 November 1965, p.8.

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