

**Place Name and Address:** Woolmit Homestead  
Woolmit Track  
Kingston SE SA 5275

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**SUMMARY OF HERITAGE VALUE:****Description:**

The Woolmit Homestead complex consists of the stone main house, a smaller slate-roofed cottage and a kitchen forming three sides of an enclosed space, extended by a much larger walled yard about 90m x 60m. It is generally similar to the layout of Bowaka homestead, which was built about the same time and is only 7km away, but Bowaka is on a smaller scale. A modern house and the ruins of early stables and a house or kitchen are nearby. The woolshed is a large rectangular stone masonry building with a hipped cgi roof, about 100m south of the old house. It is remarkable for retaining three generations of wool presses, the first worked by a lever and ratchet, the second worked by a system of pulleys - to house which a little tower was built into the roof - and the third a modern hydraulic press.

**Statement of Heritage Value:**

The Woolmit Homestead complex is a well-preserved representative of the first generation of pastoral homesteads in the upper South-East, still retaining a large proportion of its early fabric intact. Its distinctive layout and the three generations of wool technology preserved in the woolshed are particularly notable.

**Relevant Criteria (Under Section 16 of the *Heritage Act 1993*):**

- (a) It demonstrates important aspects of the evolution or pattern of the State's history
- (d) It is an outstanding representative of a particular class of places of cultural significance

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that Woolmit Homestead be provisionally entered in the South Australian Heritage Register.

**ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE VALUE:**

- (a) It demonstrates important aspects of the evolution or pattern of the State's history.**

The Woolmit Homestead Complex demonstrates the design, construction, layout and fittings of the early pastoral homesteads established by the first pastoral lease-holders in the Upper South-East, and reflects the Scottish antecedents of many of them. In addition, the appearance of the domestic buildings, including the unusually large stone-walled garden, may reflect the influence of the station's founder, Margaret (Hutchison) Dunn.

South Australia's *Waste Lands Act* of 1842 created Occupation Licences to give pastoralists annual renewable rights to an area of land. This accelerated pastoral settlement throughout the colony, and provided an incentive for individuals to find land for themselves. During the 1840s 'waves of land-seekers from both Port Phillip and South Australia' moved into the South-East, where 'the rush for the best land ... was over' by the end of the decade, although somewhat later in the upper South-East. (McGillivray, 1989, p. 27). Several runs were established in the Lacepede region during the rush of the 1840s, although not as many as in the lower South-East because of the impeded natural drainage.

Many of these 'capitalist-pastoralists' were from New South Wales (which then included Victoria). Amongst them, 'the Scots predominated, put down roots and carved a fortune from South-East land', helped by having prior grazing experience in Australia, some capital, hardworking families, and first pick of the best land. (McGillivray, 1989, p. 28.) Margaret Hutchison and her family were numbered amongst these Scottish 'capitalist-pastoralists'.

The overlanding trips from eastern Australia to Adelaide in 1838-39 had drawn the attention of stock owners to the Lacepede Bay district, who followed the same route west in the 1840s. Margaret Hutchison's journey was legendary. Mrs Hutchison and her husband, Francis John had emigrated from Scotland with five young daughters and a friend, Andrew Dunn, and formed a cattle station near Melbourne. Francis Hutchison died soon after the birth of their son, William. Margaret decided to take up land in the western district, and, after buying and selling property there with her children, journeyed on into South Australia. They travelled by bullock wagon on the overland route formed by Charles Bonney in 1839. She set up a dairy at 'Dairy Range' near Robe, and in 1846 moved north to a better site near Lacepede Bay, where she established Woolmit Station with Andrew Dunn, whom she married in that same year. Margaret Hutchison took up an Occupation Licence in 1847, and appears as the only woman in a list of 41 licences issued in the South-East in that year.

Although Occupation Licences carried the right to build on Crown Lands, Margaret was unusual in building a permanent house from the beginning, perhaps because

she had a family of six children to house. This was what is now known as an outbuilding, a cottage of several rooms with a slate roof.

By 1850 much of the South-East was a 'sheep walk'. Graziers held almost 5,000 square miles under licence, had purchased 2,000 acres of good land, and 'were running approximately one half of the colony's sheep'. (McGillivray, 1989, p. 31.) Their control of the land was reinforced in 1851 when an amendment to the *Waste Lands Act* replaced Occupation Licences with Pastoral Leases lasting 14 years. The change greatly improved security of tenure, and contributed to the more substantial construction or extension of station buildings. Around 1851 Margaret and Andrew Dunn had a larger homestead constructed as well as other station buildings (the date 1851 is carved above the door at nearby Bowaka station, which includes buildings very similar in appearance to those at Woolmit, and possibly constructed by the same mason.)

Margaret's son by her first marriage, William Hutchison, became Andrew Dunn's partner in 1862. They formed 'the biggest combination of pastoral interests in the South-East' (Cockburn, in Banks 1970, p. 5), with stations including Woolmit, Murrabinna, Blackford, Morambro, and Mount Benson, holding nearly all the land between Robe and Bordertown with up to 70,000 sheep. However, they were brought down by the depression of the early 1890s. Margaret had died at Woolmit in 1878 and was buried at Robe, and Andrew Dunn moved to Robe in 1895 after the collapse of his pastoral activities. He died in 1901.

A plaque at Woolmit (dated 1996) records the station's founding in 1846 by Andrew and Margaret (Hutchison) Dunn, being named after her Scottish home. Four of the five daughters married South-East pastoralists, and Woolmit passed to Ann Hutchison, who married Thomas Morris of the neighbouring property Bowaka (in the South Australian Heritage Register). In 1901 their son, Hugh Allan Morris moved onto the property. In 1911 it was purchased by Harry and Victor Clarke. Jean Clarke married Bill Pinches in 1935 and they went to live at Woolmit. 'Nobody had lived there for many years, the home was old, but substantially very cool in summer. The trees were magnificent and bird life beautiful...' (Hensel, p 13.) Woolmit remains in the Clarke family, who have built a new homestead but have taken care to maintain and gradually restore the old homestead complex and to keep the tools and machinery (including three generations of wool presses) intact in the impressive stone woolshed. The oldest wool press, as well as Woolmit itself, were entered on the Register of the National Estate.

**(d) It is an outstanding representative of a particular class of places of cultural significance.**

Woolmit is an exemplary early pastoral complex. Its early date, high proportion of early buildings that survive, and the good state of preservation of most of those buildings raise it out of the ordinary. In addition its walled layout, shared by only a few other early homesteads is unusual and of great interest.

The complex also incorporates a significant collection of historical objects, including wagons and other farm machinery, in particular in the wool shed. These include three generations of wool presses, manually powered by means of levers and pulleys, and a hydraulic press still in use.

**REFERENCES:**

*Australian Heritage Places Inventory*

Banks, Jessie, 1970, p. 5

Danvers Architects, Heritage of the South East, 1984

Hensel, Brenda, *Reedy Creek Reflections*, 1988, p. 13.

Kingston Heritage Advisory Committee, file notes, 2005

MacGillivray, Leith, " 'We Have Found Our Paradise': The South-East Squattocracy, 1840–1870", *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia*, 17, 1989, pp. 27-31

Plaque at Woolmit, 1996

*Register*, 17 and 21 January 1911, pp. 5 and 13g (reporting on the sale of Woolmit Station).

Smith, C.J.D, "Memoirs of Lacepede Octogenarians: Mr Edward Goode", re-published in *Kingston South-East Coastal Leader*, 1978

State Records of South Australia, Research note 249, "List of Occupation Licences for Runs in the South East 1846-47"

Linda Clarke (owner), Verbal information, 16 May 2006

**SITE RECORD:****FORMER NAME:** n/a**DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:** Complex of house, cottage, sheds, walled yard, some ruinous structures and woolshed**DATE OF COMPLETION:** 1851**REGISTER STATUS:** **Description:** n/a**CURRENT USE:** **Description:** Farming  
**Dates:** 1846+**PREVIOUS USE(S):** **Description:** n/a  
**Dates:****ARCHITECT:** **Name:** n/a  
**Dates:** n/a**BUILDER:** **Name:** n/a  
**Dates:** 1847-51**SUBJECT INDEXING:** **Group:** Farming and Grazing  
**Category:** Homestead Complex**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:** **Description:** Kingston DC**LOCATION:** **Unit No.:** -  
**Street No.:** -  
**Street Name:** Woolmit Track  
**Town/Suburb:** Kingston  
**Post Code:** 5275  
**Region No.:** 6  
**Region:** South East**LAND DESCRIPTION:** **Title Type:** CT  
**Volume:** 5456  
**Folio:** 321  
**Lot No.:** H 440100/S 403  
**Section:** 403  
**Hundred:** Bowaka

**SITE RECORD (Cont.):****AMG REFERENCE:**

**Zone:** 54  
**Easting:** 0407630  
**Northing:** 5902910  
**Map Sheet:** 6293-I Konetta  
**Map Scale:** 1:50,000

**OWNER:**

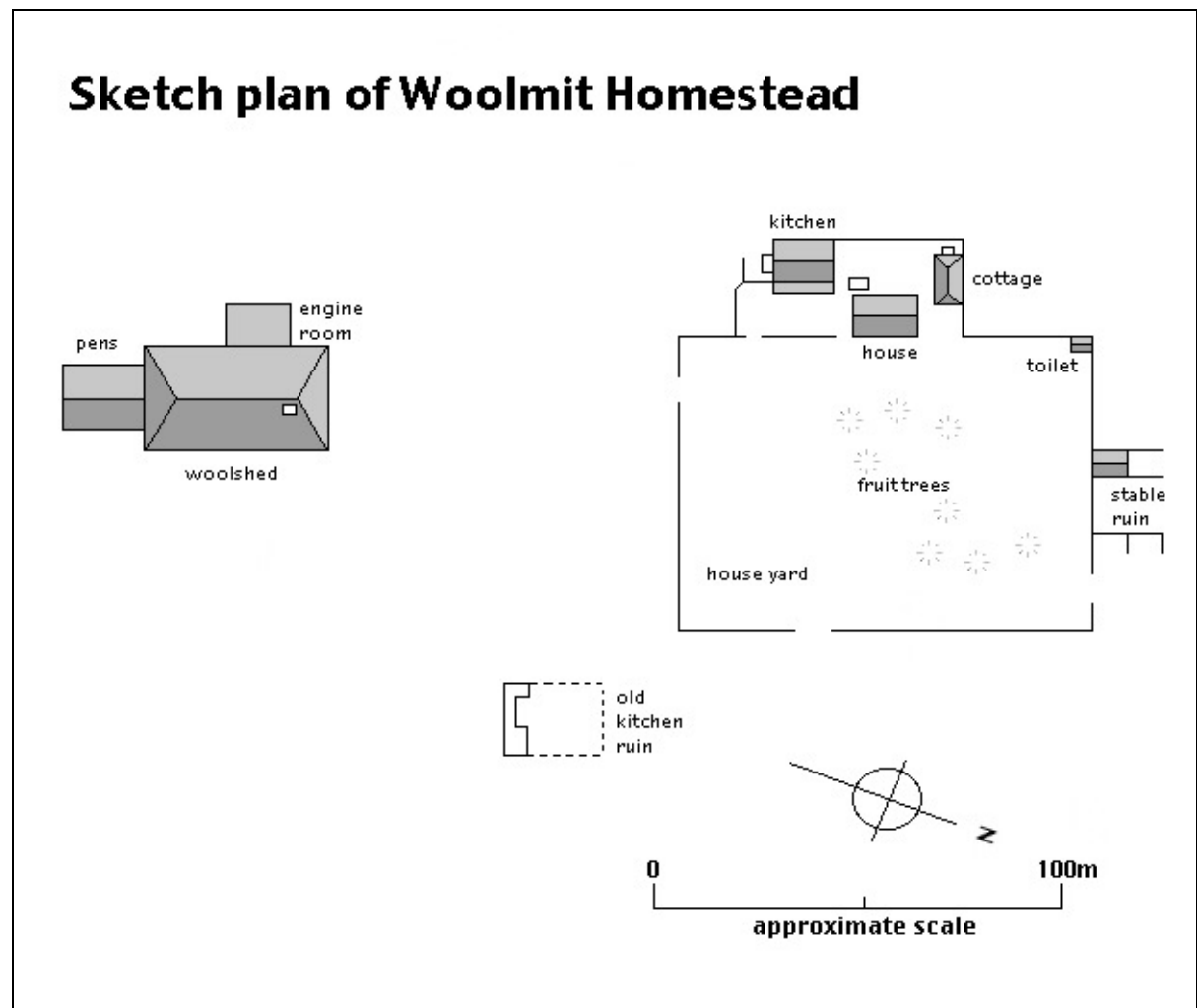
**Name:** Chris & John Clarke  
**Address:** PO Box 204  
**Town/Suburb:** Kingston  
**Post Code:** 5275

[illegible]

(Source: *CFS Map Book* Region 5, 2001)



## Site Plan



Plan of Woolmit Homestead Complex



**Cottage, Woolmit, general view from S**



**Stone wall & toilet, Woolmit, from SE**



**Woolshed, Woolmit, general view from E**



**Woolshed, Woolmit, interior**