

Sinnamon Farm Heritage Precinct - a Brief History

Background

From the early 1940s Sir Hercules Sinnamon, grandson of 19th century pioneers James senior and Margaret Sinnamon, gradually acquired farmlands once owned by his grandparents, by his father James junior and by several uncles and aunts in the Seventeen Mile Rocks farming district. He also acquired a block between the Sinnamon farms that had not formerly been in Sinnamon hands but that had been the site of Thomas Macleod's pioneering flight. The Sinnamon properties included two working dairy farms, each with a farmhouse and farm buildings; and situated between them, the first Sinnamon home 'Beechwood', a timber cottage dating possibly to the late 1860s. In addition, Sir Hercules purchased the 19th century Seventeen Mile Rocks State School, originally in Goggs Road, after its closure and later moved it onto his land as it was situated on Crown land and had to be moved. Sir Hercules was also instrumental in ensuring that the historic Church (formerly Methodist, now Uniting) remained in the district. He donated land to which the Church, originally located near the south-western corner of Goggs and Seventeen Mile Rocks Road, could be moved. Construction of the Centenary Highway, with associated access ramp and overpass, necessitated that the Church be moved or demolished. See articles on Sinnamon pioneers <http://cshsoc.files.wordpress.com/2012/03/sinnamon-families.pdf>; Seventeen Mile Rocks Uniting Church <http://cshsoc.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/seventeen-mile-rocks-uniting-church1.pdf>; Seventeen Mile Rocks State School <http://cshsoc.files.wordpress.com/2012/08/school.pdf> and Thomas Macleod aviation site <http://cshsoc.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/thomas-macleod.pdf>.

These properties provided the basis of what is now the State Heritage-listed Sinnamon Farm precinct. The Church has a separate listing. Sir Hercules initiated the heritage listing by nominating all of the buildings for the Register of the National Trust of Queensland in 1980. This was accepted and the properties were entered on the Register on 24 November 1980. Subsequently, with State and Council heritage registers being created, the properties were entered on the Queensland Heritage Buildings Protection Act (1990) schedule, the Queensland State Heritage Register (October 1992) and the Brisbane City Council Heritage Register (2000).

Sir Hercules Sinnamon at the entrance to the historic barn at 'Glen Ross'. State Library of Qld.



Sir Hercules was also very interested in making part of the farm properties available in perpetuity for public educational purposes. He had a particular interest in facilities that would educate school children about rural farming practices and/or past farming lifestyles. From 1988 he made the school building which he then owned available to the Education Department for use by school groups as an interactive museum. Also in the late 1980s, a series of meetings was held at his home for the purpose of planning future use of the buildings as well as of farm implements, for public purposes. He also welcomed groups of school children to his home where he gave them a talk and showed them farming implements.

Sir Hercules's specific ideas about the constellation of buildings and the amount of farmland to be left for public use varied over time, as reflected in a succession of wills made during the last 20 years of his life. He also wished that the farm should continue to be operated as a working farm under Sinnamon family management for as long as possible. Clearly there must have been tensions between on the one hand, leaving the buildings as a heritage precinct and on the other hand, expecting the farm to be owned and operated as such by his relatives. At times his wills made provision for a precinct to be left for public purposes but with conditions attached.

When Sir Hercules died in February 1994, he had already gifted the whole farm to his brother Ivan Sinnamon and his friend and carer Norm Henry the previous year. This intention was later supported by the Supreme Court judgment on challenges to Sir Hercules's wills. It seems likely that Sir Hercules hoped that his aims would be achieved in the long term by the protection afforded through heritage listing.



*'Glen Ross' Homestead, Farm Buildings, with Orchard in background
ca 1980s*

The whole farm was sold in 1996 to a developer, Ronald William Baldwin, who used the lands to develop Windermere Estate through his company Baldwin Riverlands Estate Pty Ltd.

Components of the Heritage Precinct

The listing on the State Heritage Register includes the following as components of 'Sinnamon Farm':

'Beechwood' and planting ('several old Bunya pines' on the river side are specifically mentioned);

'Glen Ross' with outbuildings, fencing and formal garden: the planting 'comprises a formal front garden, rear vegetable beds, an orchard to the east including persimmon and a large Moreton Bay fig tree near the front gate';

'Avondale' with outbuildings;

Former Seventeen Mile Rocks State School and shelter shed;

Thomas Macleod aviation site.

The 'Avondale' site at 645 Seventeen Mile Rocks Road is separated from the site of the other buildings - at 693 Seventeen Mile Rocks Road - by privately owned properties and a suburban road. The Church has a separate listing on the Register.

More details of the content of the State Heritage listing for Sinnamon Farm can be seen at the following website: <https://www.derm.qld.gov.au/chimsi/placeDetail.html?siteId=15008>

Development Phase

Development approvals from both Brisbane City Council and the Environment Protection Authority required the heritage properties to be maintained with heritage features intact. In 1996 Council announced that the developer Mr Baldwin had made a commitment to preserving a heritage precinct within the development that would include the historic homestead of Sir Hercules, 'Glen Ross'. The media reported that the heritage precinct would comprise approximately 2 hectares (10 acres).



Farm sheds and western side of 'Glen Ross' homestead. Bruce Robinson.

Maintenance issues

Community concerns about deterioration of the buildings due to inadequate maintenance increased between 2002 and 2005. As a result of such concerns, the Environment Protection Authority wrote to the owner about maintenance issues in 2002. However, local residents observed continuing threats to the buildings through inadequate maintenance. In 2005, the State MP for the district, Julie Attwood approached the Environment Protection Authority as a result of

community members expressing concerns. The EPA advised it was not able to compel an owner to maintain or conserve a heritage place.

Claire Wilson and Dianne Ruffles of the Centenary Suburbs Historical Society organized a petition lobbying for urgent action for the preservation of the Sinnamon Farm heritage buildings. With the help of the Seventeen Mile Rocks Progress Association, they organized widespread distribution through the local community from Seventeen Mile Rocks to Riverhills. In addition to distribution to residents, distribution outlets included schools, churches, medical centres, community groups, retail and other business outlets. There was widespread support from management at these distribution outlets. Local newspapers responded with publicity and photographs. The Centenary Suburbs Historical Society displayed the petition at its stall at the CRocks! Festival and invited people to sign it.

The campaign resulted in 2,141 signatures supporting urgent action for preservation of the buildings and precinct. The signed petition forms were sent to the then local BCC councillor, Felicity Farmer who presented them to the BCC Urban Planning & Economic Development Committee. The Council issued a 'show cause' notice to the owner and subsequently engaged in negotiations for and monitoring of maintenance.

Development plans

1. Official records of subdivisions

The larger property on which 'Avondale' was located was re-configured in 2004 to create the lot at number 645 Seventeen Mile Rocks Road. In 2011 approval was given for its subdivision into 5 lots. The property was to have four small freehold lots of approximately 450 square metres on the southern and western perimeters for townhouse style developments and a much larger lot of over 2000 square metres on which 'Avondale', outbuilding and farm artefacts are situated.

In the course of development of Windermere estate, number 693 Seventeen Mile Rocks Road (the Glen Ross-Beechwood-School site) was designated as an area of 14,580 square metres (1.4580 hectares or 3.6028 acres).

2. Planning processes and outcomes

The Sinnamon Heritage Precinct Lobby Group had been formed in 2005 to provide a focus for community consultation and negotiation with the developer and Council. During 2006 and subsequent years, Mr Baldwin engaged in a community consultation process, putting notional development proposals to this and other community groups prior to submitting a formal development application to Council. These consultations were facilitated by then councillor for Jamboree Ward, Felicity Farmer. Broadly, Mr Baldwin's intention was to develop the 'Avondale' site first and use some money from the sale of that site to develop detailed plans for the 'Glen Ross'-'Beechwood'-School precinct. He planned to submit the development application for the 'Avondale' site by 30 November 2007 and to commence work the following year.

'Glen Ross' in 2007, pre-fire. Ruth Carmichael.



On the night of 14th July 2007 a fire caused very significant structural damage to 'Glen Ross' homestead, to the extent that many

considered it beyond repair. Photos taken on a visit to the site in 2012 indicate the extent of damage. See <http://cshsoc.org.au/visit-to-sinnamon-farm-heritage-precinct-8-august-2012/> This led to a revised concept for the 'Glen Ross' site including consideration of moving the 'Avondale' house to the 'Glen Ross' site (subject to development approvals for the removal).

The community consultations prior to and subsequent to the fire revealed varying and at times competing expectations that needed to be addressed/reconciled in a development plan. In 2008, options for development of the Sinnamon Farm heritage precinct were included in Brisbane City Council's consultation document on the Centenary Suburbs Neighbourhood Plan. This would result in guiding principles for the development of the precinct. In May 2009 Council produced a report on the key issues emerging from the consultation and what Council's response to each of the issues was. This report can be found online by searching for 'Centenary Suburbs Neighbourhood Plan Report on Submission May 2009'.

The **Centenary Suburbs Neighbourhood Plan** was endorsed by Council on 9 February 2010 and legally came into effect on 1 July 2010. It is a legal document incorporated in *Brisbane City Plan 2000*. The Plan provides for the preservation of the Sinnamon Farm Heritage (Precinct 10). However, Council took the view that creation of a non-profit or publicly owned heritage park was not financially viable and that private development that was consistent with an approved Conservation Management Plan offered the best hope of maintaining the heritage buildings. The Council did not exclude non-residential use of site and buildings but stated that such would only be approved if certain conditions were met. These conditions are:

- the development of a comprehensive Conservation Management Plan that demonstrates how the heritage features and character will be retained;
- protection of residential amenity (addressing noise, visual impact, hours of operation, landscape treatments, management of car parking);
- the sympathetic retention, restoration and adaptation of heritage buildings (including landscape setting) and vegetation;
- traffic layout that maintains the existing level of separation between Seventeen Mile Rocks Road and the residential area to the north of the precinct; and
- respect of existing residential building scale.

The Plan also states that all access to the precinct will be from Seventeen Mile Rocks Road and that a 1.8metre high screen fence and landscaping should be installed to 'maintain amenity to surrounding properties'. See Chapter 4, section 3.10, p.262ab, also section 5.6, p.262ai and p.262aj of the City Plan for decisions regarding the Sinnamon Farm Heritage precinct: on the Brisbane City Council website, Brisbane City Plan 2000 – www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/city-plan-2000 :



Seventeen Mile Rocks State School and Shelter Shed in original location on Goggs Road.

See <http://cshsoc.org.au/seventeen-mile-rocks-state-school/>

National Trusts of Australia Heritage at Risk register. In 2011, the state of and threat to the historic buildings was recognized in a national forum. The precinct was listed on the National Trusts of Australia Heritage at Risk register. The *Trust News* Spring 2011 edition noted that the precinct was 'under threat from nearby development pressures'.

Change in Ownership of the Heritage Precinct properties. The properties on which the historic buildings, orchards, gardens and farm artefacts are/were situated were sold. In February 2011, Jamieson Projects Pty Ltd became the registered owner of the property occupied by 'Glen Ross', 'Beechwood' and the school. In September that year, Renard Developments Pty Ltd became the registered owner of the property where 'Avondale' and its outbuildings are situated.

Jamieson Projects submitted a Development Application for a strata title development that includes reconstruction of fire-damaged 'Glen Ross' and sale as a private home; restoration of the school building with retention of the original parts of the building without alteration but including extensions to enable it to be sold as a private dwelling; restoration of 'Beechwood' without alteration of heritage features, to become part of the common property available for use by the community of owners; townhouses that would be set toward the back of the property; and green space fronting the road together with minimal removal of original trees. The proposal was accepted and development work commenced in 2012. Marketing/sale off the plan commenced in April 2013. See <http://cshsoc.files.wordpress.com/2012/03/sinamon-farm-masterplan.pdf>

In 2012 the 'Avondale' farmhouse underwent some renovations with care to retain original features of the building. 'Avondale', still owned by Renard Developments Pty Ltd, was placed on the market as a 2500 sq metre property that retains the old farm milking shed and farm artefacts.



'Avondale' 2012. Centenary Suburbs Historical Society.

Footnote: CSHSoc has a more detailed account of the history of the SF Heritage precinct in its reference files.



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