

JOHN HENDERSON/S - BUILDERS

The name of John Henderson appears twice as an employee in Anne Drysdale's diaries. The first worked between 1842 and 1844 at Boronggoop. The second only appeared between June and September 1851 at Coriyule. The missing diary which covered November 1847 to June 1851 was the period in which Drysdale and Newcomb acquired Coriyule and built their homestead. This missing period is crucial to understanding the role of this second John Henderson in these developments. Although other sources can partially fill the gaps, some of what followed is the best hypothesis based on what we do know. The stories of John Henderson required detective work and some luck to separate out these John Hendersons from each other and others of the same name in the district. A brief summary of the discarded John Hendersons is provided at the end.

Drysdale and Newcomb employed two men named John Henderson. The first man commenced work with Anne Drysdale on 7 April 1842 *'John Henderson and Robert Stow arrived, the former as shepherd and latter as hut-keeper. They worked garden'*.¹ Although employed as a shepherd, this John Henderson spent considerable time working in the garden at Boronggoop and other garden work such as trimming vines under Anne Drysdale's supervision. The garden at Boronggoop was admired throughout the district. In 1848, two visitors described it as *'a beautiful garden filled with gay luxuriant flowers'* in contrast to the *'poor state of their hut'*, while another in 1846 described it as *'surprisingly formal for a cottage garden with gravelled walks dividing the different parterres - the only instance of the kind I have seen in the country'*.² John Henderson was responsible for laying out the gravel paths and much of the development of the Boronggoop garden. He is last mentioned in the diary on 2 April 1844, *'Henderson with sheep'*. However, he may have remained longer as a shepherd, whose work was less regularly detailed in the diary, being by that time under the direct supervision of John Armstrong. This John Henderson arrived in October 1841 on the *Thomas Arbuthnot*, aged 25 (born about 1816), labourer, Protestant, can read and write, native place - Aberdeen, Scotland.³

As John Henderson was a common name at the time, it was not possible to definitely trace the history of this man after he left Boronggoop. In November 1859, two men, Alex Hood and John Henderson were charged with selling liquor without a licence but the case was adjourned. Subsequently, Hood attacked the magistrates using abusive language and riding his horse towards them attacking and attempting to unhorse one man. Henderson then joined the fracas to support his friend, both subsequently imprisoned for short periods.⁴ Both

¹ Anne Drysdale Diaries, diary entry, 7 April 1842, State Library of Victoria.

² Roberts, Miss D and Miss N, quotes from Jane Richardson in Clyde Company Papers Vol. V and John Dunmore Lang, Phillipsland, Visit to Geelong and the Western District of Victoria in 1846, p. 230, pp. 321-32.

³ Public Records Office Victoria, Assisted Immigration Records.

⁴ 'Current Topics', 'Central Police Court'. *Geelong Advertiser*, 9 November 1859, p. 2, p.3.

men resided near Drysdale and a J. Hood held the property next to Garrangill. No other attributable records were found.

The story of the second John Henderson is quite intriguing. A John Henderson was regularly mentioned in Volume IV of Drysdale's diary between June 1851 and September 1851 working at Coriyule. He was usually the first record after the weather implying he was a senior worker. His work primarily involved construction including fencing, placing paving stones in the yard around the house, building the woodshed at Leep Leep, as well as the pig sty, gardener's house, tank, bullock yard and the trellises around the house. He left Drysdale's employ in early September, apparently to her surprise. Between 6th and 10th September 1851 there is an entry each day '*Henderson on his own business*'. On the 11th September, '*Henderson still absent*'. This was the last mention of him as a worker. However, there are further mentions of him until the end of the diaries in 1853 as residing elsewhere. On the 2nd August 1852, Caroline '*took Henderson some medicine and 2 books to read*', and on the 8th, 9th, and 19th August 1852 '*Henry Henderson came for his Father's medicine*' as well as taking vine cuttings and a '*heifer and calf we promised to Henderson*'. There are several mentions in Drysdale's diary of people associated with Coriyule visiting the Hendersons in 1853. On the 23 May 1853, Caroline '*rode to Henderson's to see him about stones for the vault*' for Anne's grave at Coriyule.⁵ This implied he worked both as a mason and a farmer after leaving Coriyule.

The name, John Henderson, was involved in two significant land purchases. Land lots were put up for sale in the Bellarine area on 27 September 1848. J. Henderson and William Halbert successfully bid for lot 9 in the County of Grant comprising 543 acres for 543 pounds. At the same time, Anne Drysdale and Caroline Newcomb bid 789 pounds 12 shillings for lot 13 comprising 589 acres (Coriyule).⁶ On the 24 November 1848, John Henderson and William Halbert, 543 acres, Grant, lot 9 were reported to have paid the required sum.⁷ The deeds which showed them as tenants in common on this property were lodged in February 1849.⁸ However, lot 9 was later shown as occupied by John Aitken on the map of Blocks 1 and 2 land releases. It is thus possible that Henderson and Halbert acted as 'dummies', purchasing this land for Aitken. This practice was commonly used in the early land sales as a means by which squatters were able to retain possession of the better parts of their leased land. Aitken did not however appear in the list of squatters on the Bellarine in 1846. However, the Aitken family were part of Drysdale and Newcomb's social circle. In May 1854, '*Peter Aitken called, his last child is to be named after my dear Anne*'.⁹ It is not clear which John Henderson was involved in this land purchase, but given the date it was more likely the one who worked the garden.

⁵ Roberts, *Miss D and Miss N*, p. 293.

⁶ 'Government Land Sales', *Argus (Melbourne)*, 29 September 1848, p. 2.

⁷ *Argus*, 24 November 1848, p.1.

⁸ *Argus*, 13 February 1849, p.1.

⁹ Roberts, *Miss D and Miss N*, 2 May 1854, p. 320.

In 1851, additional lands previously part of squatting leases in the Bellarine were surveyed resulting in smaller lots conforming to the 160 and 320 acre standard, while also allowing for roads, town and suburban blocks, and smaller agricultural farming lots. Within this new proclamation of lands, a 320 acre lot, portion 5 of block 2 was identified, to be sold for an upset price of one pound per acre.¹⁰ This lot was sold to John Hart on the 19 September 1851 at the price of one pound per acre.¹¹ A map of landholdings in the Parish of Bellarine, County of Grant 1854 shows John Henderson and Patrick Heart(sic) in possession of 320 acres, lot no. 5. Patrick Heart's name was misspelled and should actually have been Hart. P. Hart held a squatter's licence in the County of Grant in 1846.¹² He is mentioned several times in Anne Drysdale's diaries including when Caroline took him a kitten.¹³ John Hart likely purchased this land on behalf of Patrick.¹⁴ The purchase date coincides with the period of Henderson's absence from Coriyule implying the opportunity to partner with Hart on this land purchase arose suddenly at that time.

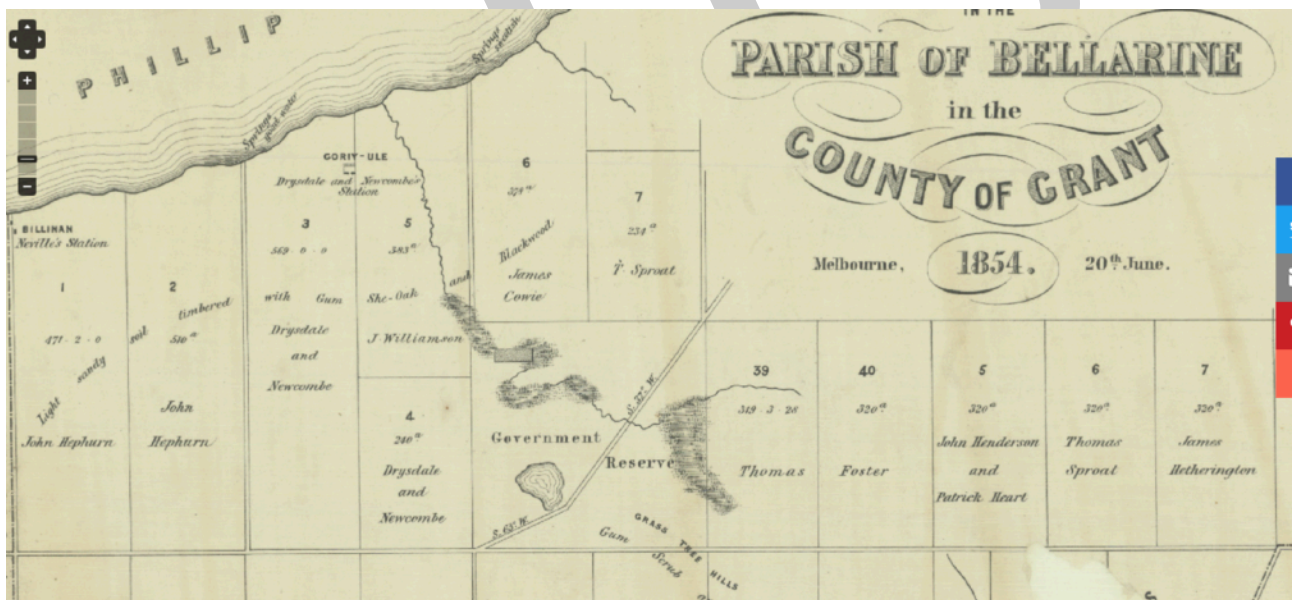


Fig 1 Location of property of Henderson and Hart, Parish of Bellarine, 1854. Source: Public Records Office Victoria.

The same property is shown in 1857 on a composite map, as lying north of the railway line. Today, this land lies between Murradoc and Anderson's Roads in rural land west of Drysdale. The earlier land release appeared to have been resurveyed. Henderson and Hart's lot now comprised 160 acres and with an adjacent lot also 160 acres were shown as occupied by

¹⁰ *Victorian Government Gazette*, No. 9, 1851, Wednesday September 3, 1851, p. 358.

¹¹ 'Land Sales', *Geelong Advertiser*, 22 September 1851, p.2.

¹² 'Squatters Licences Issued', *Geelong Advertiser and Squatters' Advocate*, 23 December 1846, p.1.

¹³ Roberts, *Miss D and Miss N*, p. 313.

¹⁴ Public Records Office Victoria, *Map Warper*, 'Map Parish of Bellarine in the County of Grant, Melbourne, 20 June 1854.

John Aitken by 1858.¹⁵ It is possible Henderson and Hart subdivided and left this property around 1858. Wheat farming was becoming more difficult on the Bellarine, once the granary for Port Phillip, due to competition from larger scale farming in the Wimmera. By 1858, Patrick Hart, farmer, was listed as residing in Myer Street, Geelong¹⁶ while John Henderson was then focusing on construction work. He was probably responsible for several significant building projects in the Bellarine.

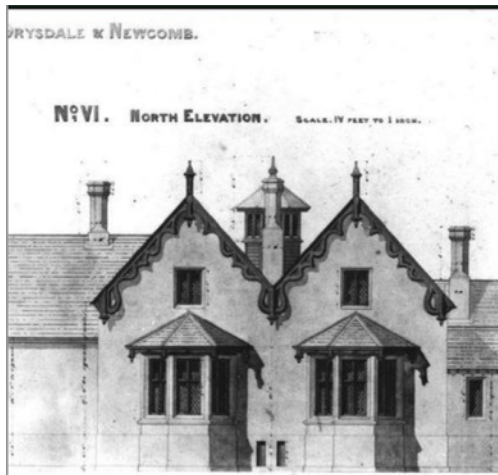


Fig. 2 Coriyule Homestead Plans, Source: Bellarine Historical Society



Fig 3 Coriyule Homestead, Source: Bellarine Historical Society

Charles

Coriyule Homestead was built between 1849 and 1850. Laing, a Melbourne architect, designed Coriyule, the home of Anne Drysdale and Caroline Newcomb, with plans dated 1st February 1849. The walls consisted of several types of stone, including ironstone, limestone and quartzite constructed as rubble work, worked in courses. The windows, door surrounds and chimneys were of dressed sandstone from the Barrabool Hills. It was built under two agreements let on 12 February 1849. The first was to a Geelong builder John Henderson for masonry and brickwork, to be completed by 1 December - most materials supplied. The carpentry and joinery on a separate contract was to be completed by 1 March 1850. Anne and Caroline moved in on 9 August 1849 before the homestead was completed due to the deteriorating state of their hut on Boronggoop.¹⁷ When this John Henderson emigrated to Australia, his trade was a mason.¹⁸ Thus the man who worked at Coriyule in 1851 was most probably the person who had previously constructed Coriyule. He then remained working for Anne Drysdale to complete work around the homestead and other construction needed by the partners. Searches of Geelong Business Directories and newspapers on Trove did not find

¹⁵ Public Records Office Victoria, Map PROCB58, Bellarine, VPRS 1868/P0002, Surveyor-General's Department (VA2921): 1851 - 1857.

¹⁶ Business Directories Geelong, 1858, Geelong Heritage Centre, City of Greater Geelong Library.

¹⁷ John Richardson, *The Lady Squatters*, Bellarine Rural City Council, 1986, p. 23.

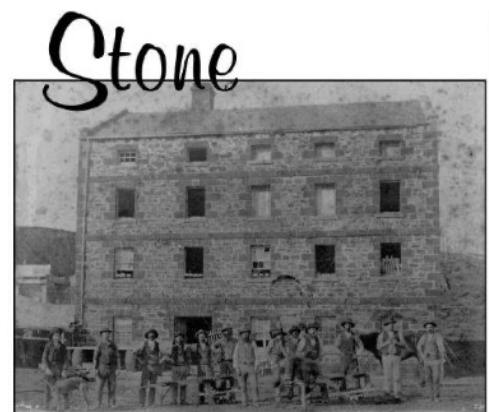
¹⁸ *Public Records Office Victoria*, Register of Assisted Passengers, Book 2/3. P. 176.

any records of a builder named Henderson between 1848 and 1866 implying this was his only work.¹⁹

John Henderson was also involved in the establishment of the Portarlington Steam Flour Mill. A Mr John Henderson is shown as the chairman of the Portarlington Steam Flour Mill consortium asking for applications to take up 150 shares in the Mill of 50 pounds each, thus raising a capital of 7,500 pounds, a considerable amount in those days. The first call for shareholders came on 21 July 1856 which mentioned John Henderson as chairman issued by A.W. Bailey, Secretary.²⁰ A further call for shareholders was advertised by D. McAndrew, Honorary Secretary of the Committee of Management in August 1856.²¹ An advertisement to purchase 'an Engine of not less than sixteen-horse power, Four Pairs French Burr-Stones, patent Dressing and Smutting machines and all gear complete' for the Portarlington Steam Flour Mill was issued by Mr. John Henderson, Chairman, Indented Heads in September 1856.²² As detailed below, the John Henderson noted above as a mason had a daughter born in Indented Heads in 1856. Thus, it is highly likely he was the same person who was the original chairman of the Mill Committee of Management and the person who initiated the project. The mill was constructed in 1857. By this time, John Henderson was no longer Chairman and the tendering process was managed by its' architect, Andrew McWilliams.²³ The name of the successful tenderer is not documented. Although constructed of sandstone, the Mill, as was Coriyule, is a rubble construction with clear coursing. It is thus possible that as a stonemason, John Henderson constructed the Mill. If so, he would have been responsible for destroying the sandstone cliff below Buckley's Head at



Fig 4 Portarlington Mill, Source: Tripadvisor website



THE OLD MILL PORTARLINGTON
Bellarine Historical Society Photo Collection # 2949

Sandstone was quarried on site
this 'little cliff' was once known as

BUCKLEY'S CLIFF

¹⁹ Ann Hodgkinson, personal search of holdings, Geelong Heritage Centre, Thursday 8 September 2022.

²⁰ 'Portarlington Steam Flour Mill', *Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer*, 21 July 1856, p. 3.

²¹ 'Portarlington Steam Flour Mill', *Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer*, 2 August 1856, p. 3.

²² 'Wanted to Purchase;', *Argus*, 23 September 1856, p. 1.

²³ Lorraine Stokes, *Discovering Portarlington*, p. 13, p. 14; Anon. 'Portarlington Mill', Victorian Heritage Database Report.

Portarlington from which the Mill's construction material was derived. This cliff is now known to be a significant Indigenous site for the local Wadawurrung clan.

Given his involvement in the construction of Coriyule, it is also possible that John Henderson built the Tuckfield Chapel. The first Wesleyan chapel was probably built in 1849-50 on two acres of land in what is now Wyndham Street owned by Drysdale and Newcomb. It was built to a rectangular 26 feet by 14 feet plan. It was constructed of handmade slop-moulded bricks. They probably came from the kilns on nearby Coriyule Station although this cannot be verified due to the missing diary.²⁴ These kilns were built for the construction of Coriyule which occurred at the same time so it can be speculated that John Henderson was also the builder of the chapel. The original chapel survives within a later timber structure built when it was converted into a parsonage in 1855.

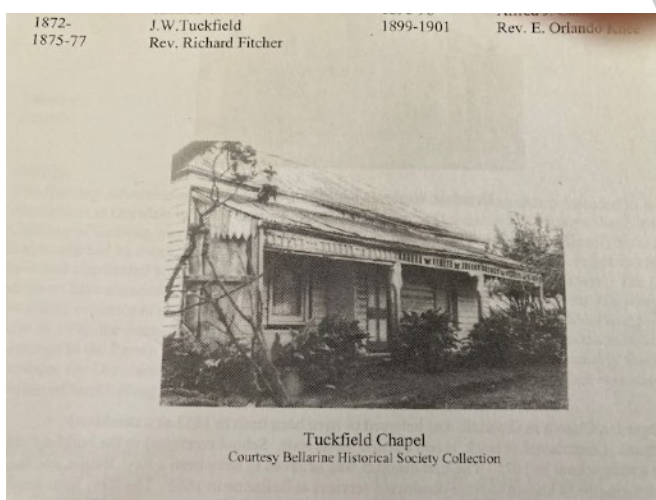


Fig 6 Tuckfield Chapel within Parsonage structure, Source: M. Frewin and L. Phelan, *Churches of Geelong and District*, Vol. 2, p.35.

The above propositions are consistent with what is known of John Henderson's life history. He arrived in April 1844 on the *Sea Queen*, aged 28 (born about 1816), mason, Protestant, can read and write, native place - Kinross(shire) Scotland, left on own account, accompanied by:²⁵

- * Christina, wife, aged 28, born 9 April 1815 at Orwell, Kinross, Scotland²⁶, died 22 March 1897, aged 81, at Auckland, New Zealand;
- * Henry, son, aged 4 (born about 1840);
- * William, son, aged 2 (born about 1842);
- * James, infant, (born about 1844).

²⁴ Allan Willingham, *Tuckfield Parsonage and Wesleyan Chapel Drysdale: A Conservation Analysis*, Shire of Bellarine and Geelong Regional Commission, 1982, p. 30.

²⁵ Public Records Office Victoria, Register of Assisted Passengers, Book 2/3, p. 176

²⁶ Scotland, Select Births and Baptisms, 1564-1950, Ancestry, accessed by Lorraine Stokes, 14 September 2022.

They had four children born in Victoria:

- * John, born 1848, Moorabool;²⁷
- * Ann Elizabeth, born 4 December 1851, Indented Head (her birth was commented on in Anne Drysdale diaries);²⁸
- * Christina, born 1856 in Indented Head²⁹, died 3 November 1928, aged 72, buried in grave with father and mother;
- * Mary, born 1858 in Indented Head³⁰, died about 1863, New Zealand, aged 5, buried in grave with father, John Henderson.

The birth records for the last two daughters show their mother's maiden name was Christina Chapman.

There are no further mentions of this John Henderson in the Bellarine after 1858. However, it appears that he, like many others at that time, moved to New Zealand although their emigration records have not been found. A Geelong newspaper reported in August 1863 of the death on the 20 July 1863 at Wairoa, North Island, New Zealand of a John Henderson who *'was for many years a farmer on the Bellarine'*. He was a settler in the Wairoa area, had a large family and was in this report 47 years of age (i.e. born in 1816). He was in the Forest Rifles, a volunteer militia, when *'within a few hundred yards of his own house, that gentleman's horse fell, throwing him over its head and falling upon him. It is supposed that the rifle, which he had slung behind his back, must have come in contact with some vital part, causing instant death'*. He had two sons in this volunteer militia which defended the district (from Maori attack).³¹

John Henderson was buried at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Clevedon, Auckland, New Zealand. The inscription gives his age as 51, i.e. born in 1812. In the same grave are his daughter Mary aged 5 (1858 - 1863), wife, Christina aged 81 (1816-1897), and his daughter Christina aged 72 (1856-1928).³² These later dates are consistent with those on other sources cited above. John himself is shown as four years older than the age given in his Victorian immigration record, while the age shown in the newspaper report is consistent with the immigration record. People did understate their age during immigration as this could result in cheaper passage or lower bounty debt. The age on death is given by relatives who may guess it incorrectly, although his wife would have been aware of his correct age. His death certificate also shows his age at 51.³³

²⁷ Victorian Births, Registration 8399/1848.

²⁸ Roberts, *Miss D and Miss N*, p. 293.

²⁹ Victorian Births, Registration 4899/1856.

³⁰ Victorian Births, Registration 11926/1858.

³¹ 'Current Topics', *Geelong Advertiser*, 24 August 1863, p. 2.

³² New Zealand Cemetery Transcriptions, 1840 - 1981, database, New Zealand Society of Genealogists, Auckland, FamilySearch, accessed 8 September 2022.

³³ Transcript from Registry of Deaths, New Zealand Births, Deaths and Marriages, accessed 14 September 2022.

As alluded to above, in order to piece together the story of John Henderson of Coriyule, it was necessary to separate him from other John Henderson's in the area. The most prominent of these was John, son of George and Katherine Henderson of Douglas House, Portarlington. This John Henderson was born in 1847 at Barrabool near Geelong. He could be eliminated because of his age. He moved to west Gippsland in 1865 with his brother George. However, he continued to occupy farming land on the Bellarine owned by his father between 1875 and 1888, before permanently residing in Gippsland, marrying in 1894 and having seven children in Lower Tarwin. George and Katherine also had a daughter named Christina (1859 - 1896), the same name as John Henderson's wife and daughter to further confuse matters. Several family members are buried at the Drysdale Cemetery although this John Henderson died in Leongatha in 1932 aged 85.

Other possibilities were eliminated as they did not have a son named Henry. One such John Henderson was a man who died on the 15 November 1889 at Mt. Moriac, a native of Inverness, Scotland aged 85 and was buried at the Eastern Cemetery in Geelong. His wife was Catherine Robertson and children were Dugald, Mary (at whose home he died), Catherine, Duncan, Donald, Allan, Flora and Julia.³⁴ Another was a John Henderson who married Christina, nee Drysdale. They lived in Brighton, Melbourne but had no children. There were several others who could not be clearly identified including a John Henderson who had a bluestone quarry on the Colac Road in 1859.³⁵

(C) Ann Hodgkinson, Bellarine Historical Society, 2023.

³⁴ Deaths in the District of Mount Moriac, No. 460/1889, Victorian Births, Deaths and Marriage.

³⁵ 'Current Topics', *Geelong Advertiser*, 23 April 1859. P. 2.