

Working for Drysdale and Newcomb

**The stories of the people who helped establish and
run the properties of Boronggoop and Coriyule**

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INTRODUCTION

This project tells the stories of some of the people who worked for the 'Lady Squatters', Anne Drysdale and Caroline Newcomb on their properties, Boronggoop and Coriyule . While the histories of Drysdale and Newcomb are well known, those of their workers are not. It starts with four of the more important workers, overseers and builders, and then some of the women, cooks, laundresses and house maids. Their stories have been pieced together from entries in the diaries and other sources. They are far from complete but give an idea of where they came from, how they contributed to the ladies' success, and how some workers were able to prosper in early colonial Victoria.

BORONGGOOP

Anne Drysdale and Caroline Newcomb help Boronggoop Station on an annual

licence from 1840 to 1852. Anne

initially obtained the licence from Dr. Alexander Thomson, the first settler in the Geelong area who had taken out licences for large tracts of land in the area.

Boronggoop consisted to 10,000 acres situated on the eastern side of the Barwon River in the area now covered by St. Albans and South Geelong. It was later extended by the addition of Leep Leep which gave them all the area east of the river and west of what is now the Bellarine Highway to Leopold and as far south as the northern shore of Lake Connewarre and Reedy Lake. The licence for Boronggoop was resumed for development in 1852, initially sold as larger estates and then divided into industrial and eventually suburban lots. Their history in the area is commemorated in the naming of

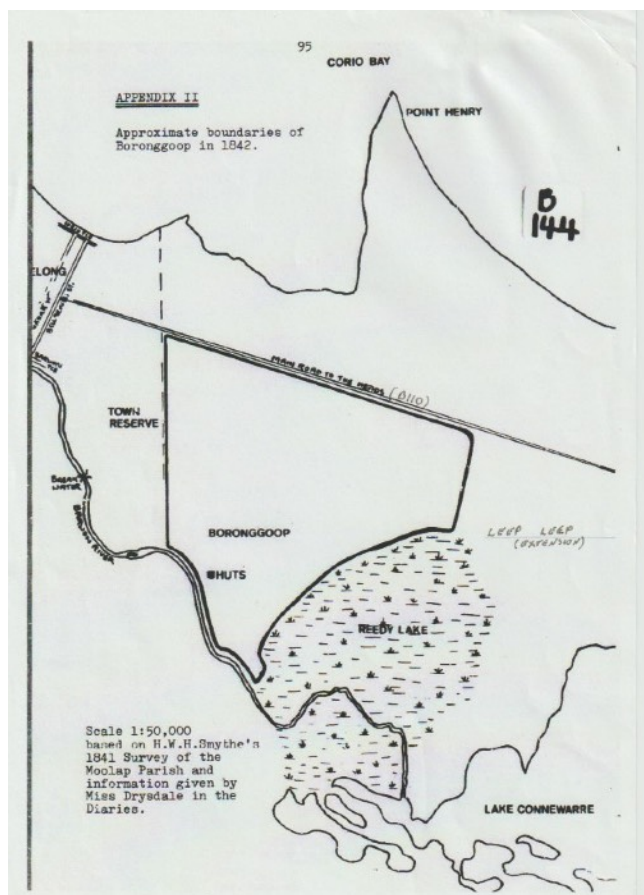


Fig. 1 Boronggoop Boundaries, Geelong Heritage Centre

the suburb of Newcomb. They retained Leep Leep for a few years longer, hoping to buy it freehold. However, they were unsuccessful and the land was resumed and sold as small farming lots in 1854. The Leep Leep land has been retained this usage as can be observed from the highway as you approach Leopold. Anne Drysdale relied on her Overseers to run the day to day operations at her properties. The stories of her two overseers at Boronggoop, Thomas Clark and John Armstrong are included in this report.

CORIYULE

Anne Drysdale's diary which covered the period from November 1847 to May 1851 is missing. This was the period in which they acquired the freehold for Coriyule and built their 'stone cottage'. It is however, possible to fill in some of this information from other sources. Rural land in the area of what is now the town of Drysdale in the Parishes of Bellarine and Paywit were surveyed and offered for sale at the upset price of one pound per acre in 1848. They had acquired the licence for what was previously known as Steel's Station and which they renamed Coriyule in April 1843. Anne Drysdale and Caroline Newcomb, as tenants in common, purchased the freehold for Coriyule, lot 13 in the County of Grant consisting of 569 acres, for 769 pounds, twelve shillings.¹ A number of lots offered at that sale were passed in.

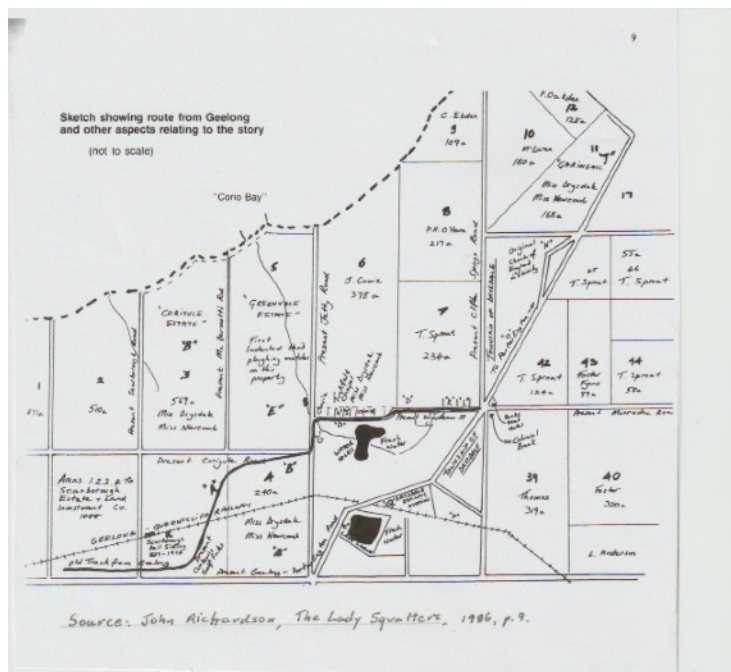


Fig. 2 Location of Coriyule and Barrangill properties, Drysdale.

Drysdale and Newcomb subsequently purchased Lot 14 of 240 acres for 240 pounds, on the 28th September 1848, and lot 31 of 168 acres, 2 roods for 168 pounds, 10 shillings on the 2 October 1848.² This latter property was subsequently named Garrangill. This gave them a total of 977 acres freehold.

Construction of their 'stone cottage' began in 1849. It was designed by architect Charles Laing of Melbourne who let two contracts, one

¹ 'Government Land Sales: Country Lots, County of Grant', Argus (Melbourne), 29 September 1848, p. 2.

² 'District of Port Phillip, Return of selections of land', Argus (Melbourne), 16 January 1848, p.1.

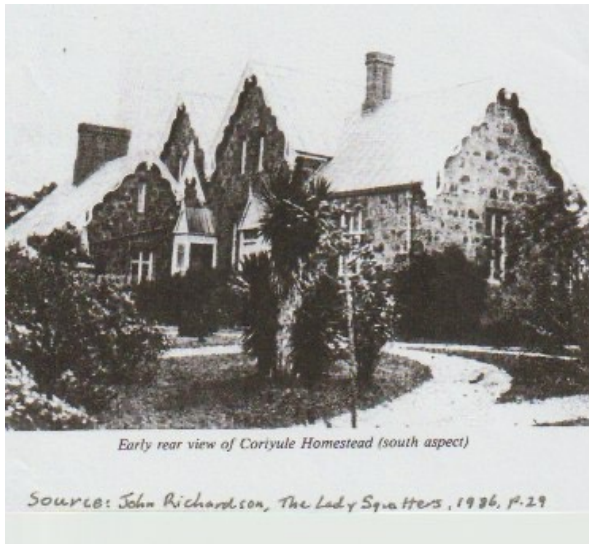


Fig. 3 Coriyule Homestead, Drysdale

to John Henderson, builder, for the brick and stone work and a second to Benton and Howell, builders, for the carpentry and joinery work. It was a substantial villa in the Gothic Revival style consisting of two stories and extensive cellars. Anne and Caroline moved in August 1849 before the house was finished, scheduled for March 1850.³ The plans and indeed the building itself in its original structure still exists. The story of John Henderson who built Coriyule is the third one told in this report.

Life at Coriyule was very different from that at Boronggoop. There were markedly less social visitors, probably deterred by the longer distance and the appalling state of the roads. They still maintained a close relationship with the Thomson family and there were regular visits from Methodist preachers, particularly Francis Tuckfield. The next diary commenced in June 1851. Anne's ties with the Scottish Presbyterian community lessened and she was clearly starting to feel her age, by then she was 58. Caroline took a more active role in running the property, making frequent trips to Corio on business, particularly to find workers as the lure of the goldfields depleted their workforce. While the licence for Boronggoop was resumed, they retained Leep Leep for several years for sheep and attempted, without success, to purchase its freehold. The focus at Coriyule became increasingly on growing and selling crops and operating a horse stud which became Anne's main area of attention. Caroline increasingly depended on their Overseer, Thomas Gange, to run their properties. His story is the fourth one told in this report.

Anne died on the 11th May 1853 after suffering for some times from the effects of what appeared to be a stroke. Caroline continued to run Coriyule although she leased out much of the land to other farmers. She married a young Methodist minister, Rev. James Dodgson, in November 1861. In April 1864 he resumed his ministry and Caroline left with him. At some stage she gifted Garrangill to Thomas Gange. Caroline died on 7 October 1874. Dodgson inherited her estate but sold it in 1889.

³ Bev. Roberts, *Miss D & Miss N, an extraordinary partnership*, Melbourne, Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2009.