# BUNYA PINE (*Araucaria bidwillii*)

ADDRESS: 50 Bunya Pine Drive, Bandiana (-36.153451, 146.933892)

STUDY NUMBER: 2C HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:

DATE: 1880s-1920s

CONDITION: Good

INTEGRITY: Good



Bunya pine at the entry of former Somerville homestead on the Kiewa Valley Highway. (RBA, June 2024)

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### What is significant?

Bunya pine (*Araucaria bidwillii*) at 50 Bunya Pine Drive, Bandiana which is at least a century old is significant. It was planted for James Henry, who was a successful and locally celebrated orchardist and Councillor throughout the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth century.

### How is it significant?

Bunya pine (*Araucaria bidwillii*) at 50 Bunya Pine Drive, Bandiana is of local historical and aesthetic significance.

### Why is it significant?

The rare Bunya pine is of historical significance as a remnant of the Somerville Estate and was a prominent display tree planted as the formal entry to the home of prominent settler James Henry McGeogh and his wife Sarah (nee McKoy). (Criterion A)

The Bunya pine is of aesthetic significance as a reflection of 19th century gardenesque landscape traditions and the taste of affluent pastoralists. Bunya pines were planted in botanic gardens, public parks, and large private gardens during the 19th and early 20th centuries, often becoming a marker of such private and public landscapes. (Criterion E).

## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The Bunya pine (*Araucaria bidwillii*) at the former entry of 'Somerville Estate' on the Kiewa Valley Highway is in good condition though branches weighing down at the base of the tree.

The Bunya pine or bunya-bunya (*Araucaria bidwillii*) is a large evergreen coniferous tree in the family Araucariaceae which is endemic to Australia, mainly southeast Queensland. They can reach a height of 50 metres with a single unbranched trunk with dark brown or black flaky bark and their leaves a small and rigid with a sharp tip. Part of their distinct appearance is determined by their varying branch configuration with those at the top tending to be ascending and those at the lower parts tending to droop. The cones are located at the apex of the tree (terminal) with the female (or seed) cone being larger than the male (or pollen) cone and maturing after (December to March) the male (October to November).

## HISTORIC THEMES

4.4 Farming

6.5 Living in Country Towns

6.7 Making homes for Victorians

## HISTORY

In 1884, James Henry McGeogh and his wife Sarah Matilda McKoy purchased and established a home on Section 25, Crown Allotment 6, Wodonga East (also referred to as being in Bandiana and Baranduda), which they named 'Somerville'. 'Somerville' was 'gradually added to' over the decades to include an extensive fruit and nut orchard, a driveway lined with pines, and a variety of ornamental European trees ('Obituary', 1938). Aerial imagery from 1945, when the site was still occupied by descendants of Sarah and James Henry McGeogh, shows the Bunya pines, former

Aleppo pines and orchard trees in situ (following). All trees have been removed except for one Bunya pine.

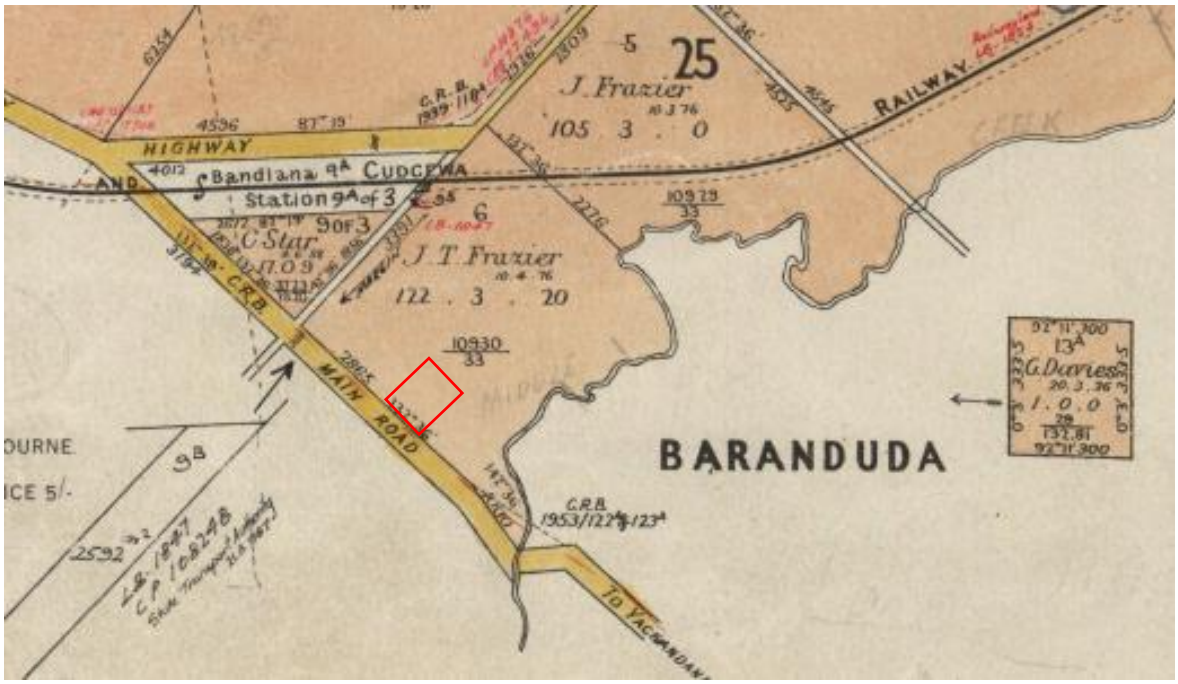
McGeogh was born in Regent Street, London in 1847. He arrived in Australia with his parents in 1858 ('Lived 91 Years', 1938, pp. 91). This first-generation McGeogh family established a series of farms over the mid-19 century, successfully farming across Queensland, NSW, and Victoria. When in 1938, the last McGeogh son died, the *Albury Banner* described the family as a 'pioneering family of landmen' whose farming portfolio consisted of half a million acres. These farms were managed by the seven McGeogh brothers, of which James Henry of Somerville was one ('The McGeogh Family: Pioneer Landmen of N.S.W.', 1945). Sara Matilda McKoy was born in Wodonga West in 1862, the daughter of landowning and prominent early settlers Joseph McKoy and Emma (nee House), West Wodonga ('Family Notices', 1915).

By 1888 he was engaged in 'general farming' on his acreage, which included 10 acres of vines. In the following decade, McGeogh established his fruit orchard, which grew to become a Wodonga export. McGeogh sent large quantities of his produce to major cities such as Sydney and Melbourne ('The Tariff Commission.', 1894). Into the 20th century, James Henry and Sarah McGeogh owned approximately 1000 acres across Wodonga East (Somerville) and Baranduda, with their Somerville estate consisting of 525 acres by 1916 ('Wodonga Shire Elections', 1916, 'New Wodonga Territory', 1911, 'Pollution of The Murray', 1906). In addition to James Henry's success as a landowner and orchardist, he was a prominent member of Wodonga civic life. He served as a member of the Wodonga Shire Council between 1902 – 1913, including Shire President in the singular years of 1902, 1907 and 1912 ('Lived 91 Years', 1938, pp. 91). His position as a leading citizen also saw him present the Coronation medals to Baranduda School students in 1911 - the school attended by Henry and Sarah's children.

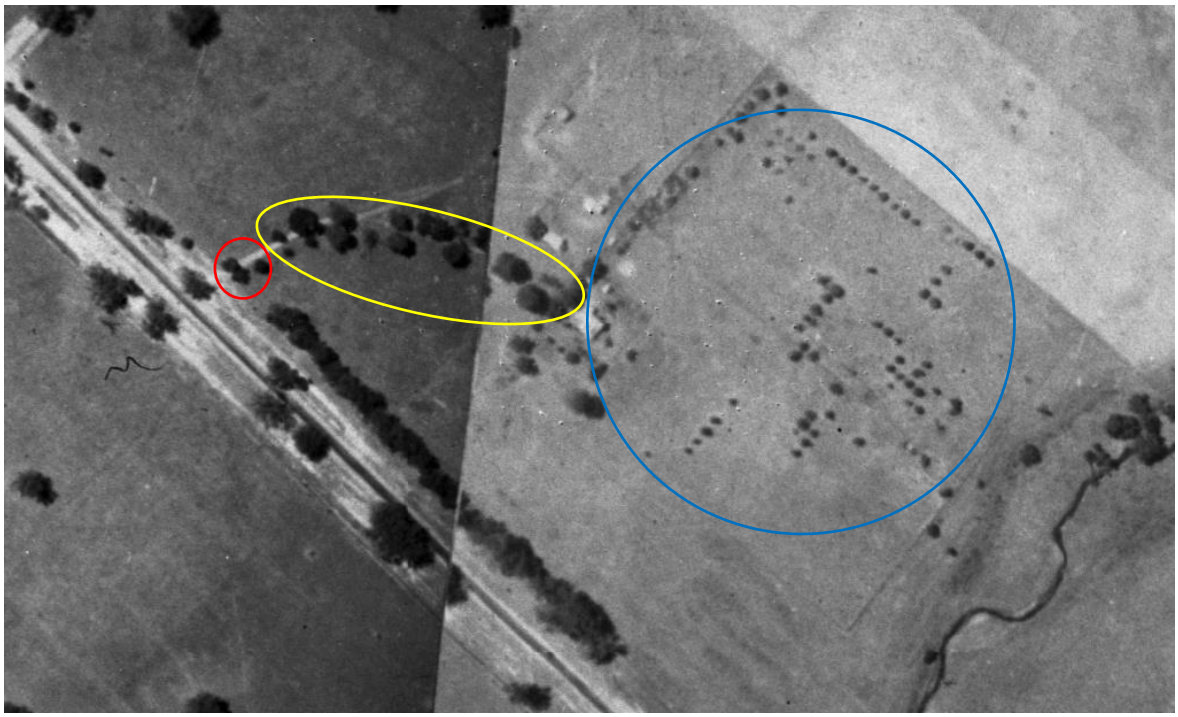
Sarah McGeogh died at Somerville in 1915 at 52 years of age, and James Henry Snr in 1938. The couple's son, also James Henry (known as Jim) inherited Somerville ('The McGeogh Family: Pioneer Landmen of N.S.W,', 1945). James Henry Jnr died suddenly in 1945 and, like his father, was a prominent and respected member of the Wodonga business, agricultural and civic communities ('Sudden death of J. H. McGeogh', n.d.).

In 1970, the Wodonga Council paid the estate of James Henry McGeogh $25,000 for 26 hectares of land at Bandiana for its new saleyards. The homestead at Somerville is listed on the National Trust, however, over the years has gradually fell into ruin and by 1988 was unoccupied. The *Wodonga Heritage Study Stage 1* recorded no physical remains of the homestead in 2002. The Somerville Homestead is registered on the VHI, Place ID: 207100 & HI Number: H8225-0156. The extent on this place does not include nor does it mention the historic plantings (*Somerville Estate*, n.d.) 'Somerville' is now part of Crown Allotment 6, 6 Whytes Road, Wodonga East, located north of the property itself (*Somerville Estate*, n.d.).

Stage 1 identified a driveway border with Aleppo pines which led to a former garden compound and orchard. These included a crimson oleander, a myrtle (or juniper), hawthorn, crab-apple, privet, a dead palm, and fruit trees including almonds, mulberry, citrus, plums, pear. Aerial imagery from 1945 shows the remnants of these garden trees and orchard, as well as the Aleppo pines.




Approximate location of Somerville tree plantings. This map from 1877 lists the owner prior to McGeogh (Wodonga Parish Plan, 1877).



1948 Aerial image of Somerville. It shows the existing Bunya pine in red (one remaining of originally two). Other original exotic trees south-west of the VHI Somerville Estate site including Aleppo pines along a curved driveway (yellow) and the location of the fruit orchard (blue).



2002, Bunya Pine taken during Heritage Study Stage 1. The Aleppo pine and others seen in the distance have been removed.

## COMPARISON

Bunya pines are a not common tree in Victoria, having been introduced from Queensland in the nineteenth century, and becoming a prominent display tree in botanic gardens, public parks, and large private gardens.

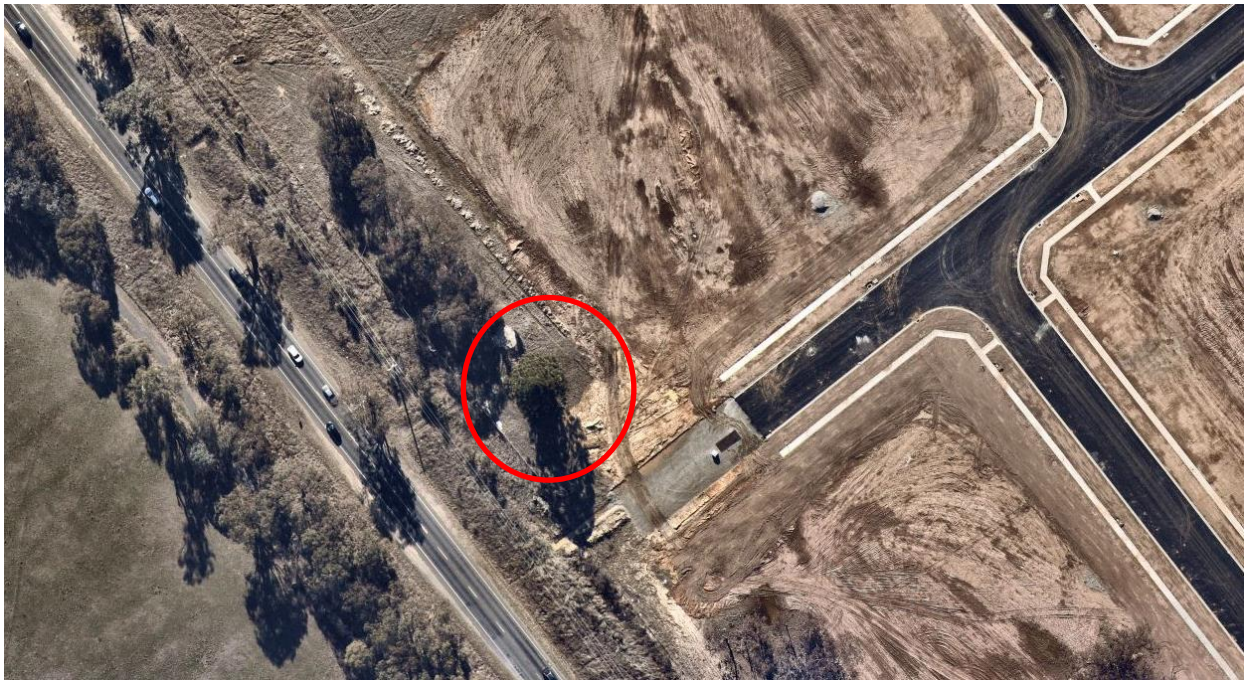
This is the only known example of a Bunya pine in the municipality and no other specimen trees are included among the non-VHR sites in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

## EXTENT OF LISTING

It is recommended that the Bunya pine near the road reserve at 50 Bunya Pine Drive, Bandiana (Coordinates: -36.153451, 146.933892) is included in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Wodonga Planning Scheme.

The extent of the heritage overlay should include the tree and a nominal five metre of curtilage about it as indicated below.



(Nearmap, 22 June 2024)

## PLANNING SCHEME CONTROLS

| Planning Controls | Y/N |
|---|---|
| **External Paint Controls Apply?** | N |
| **Internal Alteration Controls Apply?** | N |
| **Tree Controls Apply?** | Y (Bunya Pine) |
| **Solar energy system controls?** | N |
| **Outbuildings or Fences Not Exempt Under Clause 43.01-4?** | N |
| **Included on the Victorian Heritage Register Under the Heritage Act 2017?** | N |
| **Prohibited Uses Permitted?** | Y |
| **Aboriginal Heritage Place?** | N |

## REFERENCES

Wodonga Parish Plan, 1877.

**'**Araucaria_bidwillii'**,** https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Araucaria_bidwillii, accessed 19.07.2024

'Family Notices', 1915., *Wodonga and Towong Sentinel (Vic.: 1885 - 1954)*, accessed 26 July 2022, http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article71343222.

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*Somerville Estate*, n.d., Victorian Heritage Database, accessed 28 July 2022, https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/207100#statement-significance.

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