GRAVE OF FINENTIGUE

ADDRESS: Lot 33, PS706017 (-36.158306, 146.862389), Huon Creek Road, Wodonga

STUDY NUMBER: 2B HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:

DATE: 1967

CONDITION: Good

INTEGRITY: Good



(Biosis, March 2020)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

What is significant?

The Grave of Finentigue on Huon Creek Road (in PS706017), Wodonga is significant. The grave with its plaque commemorates the Finentigue's racing career and legacy. The horse's earnings provided critical financial support to the Martin farm, *Aherlo,* on which he is buried, following the 1952 bushfires.

How is it significant?

The Grave of Finentigue is of local historical and associative heritage significance to the City of Wodonga.

Why is it significant?

The Grave of Finentigue is of historical significance as a surviving, tangible element of the *Aherlo* farm, which was demolished to make way for future development in the Albury-Wodonga region. The Martin family stipulated that the grave was to be retained as part of the redevelopment of the site.

The commemoration of Finentigue reflects his importance to the Martin family and their *Aherlo* farm, as well as the broader historic importance of horses to the City of Wodonga as central to the development of the stock and sporting industries. (Criterion A)

The Grave of Finentigue is of associative significance as the burial place of the successful steeplechaser Finentigue and with his breeder and owner, the renowned horseman Desmond Martin. Martin achieved recognition for his riding abilities, becoming the first amateur allowed to compete by the Victorian Racing Club, the first president of the Victorian Amateur Riders Association, the founder of the Murray Valley Hunt Club, and as an advocate for Australia's equestrian sports at the international level. (Criterion H)

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The grave of Finentigue is approximately two by two metres enclosed by a wire fence supported by timber posts. Concrete slabs (damaged in part) are situated on either side of the with a central metal plaque set in a concrete base and inscribed:

> *FENINTIGUE.1941-1967. By Prittle Prattle from Goonaroi. Champion Steeplechaser, whose winnings saved this property, "Aherlo", Wodonga, from financial collapse after the disastrous bushfires of 1952. Bred, owned, trained, and often ridden, by Desmond Martin. "Ut venient omnes" (let all come).*

Though the grave is currently overgrown, the physical remains of the grave appear to be original to 1967.



Setting of the grave (Biosis, March 2020)



Detail of original plaque behind fencing (Biosis, March 2020)

HISTORIC THEMES

8.5 Preserving traditions and commemorating

9.1 Participation in sport and recreation

HISTORY

The grave of steeplechaser Finentigue is located on the former Martin family homestead where he was buried after his death in 1967.

Michael 'Mick' Martin, following his marriage to Mabel Eileen née Desmond, purchased the homestead comprising 519 acres (210 hectares) from Albert Schlink in Huon Creek Road in 1911 (Desmond Martin, 1981, p3).

There Martin constructed a new residence which he named *Aherlo,* after his parent's home in Tipperary, Ireland. The property was divided into pastures for sheep, cattle, and horses with additional acreage for the cultivation of hay and lucerne (Martin, 1981, p3). The whole of the homestead grew to be approximately 1,500 acres (607 hectares) in size (Biosis Research, 2003).



Aerial image of the *Aherlo* Homestead, Huon Creek Road, in 1963. The residence and gardens are circled. At this time, the property was still in operation under the ownership of Des Martin with Finentigue, then retired, living at the property. (CAD 8, Run 2, Frame 269, Geoscience Australia)

Martin was President of the Wodonga Council and a founder of the Bush Fire Brigade Movement in Victoria. He died in 1950 at the age of 80 leaving the property to his son Desmond 'Des' Martin.

Des, like his father, was a skilled and passionate horseman. During World War II, he joined the 8th Light Horse Regiment and later served in the 2/2nd Australian Pioneer Battalion earning the rank of Lieutenant. After the war, Des returned to *Aherlo*, resuming his operation of the family's stud.

During this time, Des furthered his equestrian interests going on to earn national and global attention in his pursuits (*Border Morning Mail,* 6 June 1951, p8). He was the first rider granted permission by the Victorian Racing Club to compete as an amateur with the *Sydney Morning Herald* describing him as having been the 'best gentleman jockey in Australia.' He then became the first president of the Victorian Amateur Riders Association and founded the Murray Valley Hunt Club in 1953 for which he served as hunt master for 21 years (Wodonga & District Historical Society, Victorian Collections). He played a role in producing Australia's first Olympic Eventing Team in 1956 and went on to be a Steward at the competition held in Stockholm, Sweden (*Border Morning Mail,* 6 June 1951, p8). He published several books about the industry including the first *Australia Astride* (1959) and collaborated with R M Williams to develop their national publication 'Hoofs and Horns' (*Sydney Morning Herald,* 22 Aug 1959, p13; *Daily Telegraph,* 8 Jan 1960, p16).

At *Aherlo*, Des bred and trained his most successful jumper Finentigue who was referred to in 1952 by the *Weekly Times,* as 'Victoria's most dashing steeplechaster.' Finentigue won a number of prestigious races including the Caulfield Cup and Melrose Steeple with Des at times riding (*Sun,* 25 May 1952, p32).

According to the grave plaque, Finentigue's winnings saved *Aherlo* from financial collapse following the bushfires in 1952 and were also reported to provide considerable aid to Des' neighbours (Rory Fitzgerald pers comm 2020). Newspapers at the time also highlighted Finentigue's direct involvement writing that he had gained *'local fame by helping to beat the bushfires which raged in the district and burnt out the countryside and destroyed miles of fencing. The position became so desperate, Mr. Martin saddled his team of five racehorses and they were galloped for miles rounding up stock and driving them to safety.'* (*Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate,* 26 May 1952, p6)



A MOUNT ON A CHAMPION

Many youngsters in Melbourne have heard, if not read, of the great Finentigue, the champion steeplechaser owned by Mr. Des. Martin, of Wodonga, but only a chosen few have been able to ride him. Here jockey Ron Quinsie is pictured leading "the champ." as one of the lads gets set for a ride. The boys, 20 all told, have been enjoying their stay on Mr Martin's property for the past week.

Published image of Finentigue taken at the *Aherlo* homestead in 1953, the year following his Caulfield Cup win. ('A Mount on a Champion,' *Border Morning Mail*, 16 January 1953, p12)

The *Aherlo* property was acquired by the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation in the 1970s, however the Martin family remained in residence until November 1978. The Martin family established an agreement with the Corporation to ensure the grave would be protected, however the house, stables, and gardens demolished (AECOMS, 2016; Martin, 1981, p4).

The grave of Finentigue is currently located within the proposed residential estate 'Connaught Estate.'

COMPARISON

The grave site consists of a burial plot and memorial plaque to honour the racehorse Finentigue. There are no comparable examples of grave sites included on the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay for the City of Wodonga, and there is only one example of a memorial.

Included in the listing for HO47 is the granite War Memorial, located in Woodland Grove, Wodonga, constructed in 1924 in honour of the members of the district who served during World War I with later plaques added to honour those who served in later conflicts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

EXTENT OF LISTING

It is recommended that the Grave of Finentigue on Lot 33, PS706017 at Huon Creek Road, Wodonga (Coordinates: -36.158306, 146.862389) is included in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Wodonga Planning Scheme.

The extent of the heritage overlay should include the fenced grave, plaque and five metres of surrounding curtilage as outlined 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?	N
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?	N
Aboriginal Heritage Place?	N

REFERENCES

AECOM *Lot 33, PS706017, Huon Creek Road, Wodonga Vic Town Planning Due Diligence Report*, Prepared for Department of Finance, 2016

Aerial image, CAD 8, Run 2, Frame 269, 1963, Geoscience Australia

Biosis Research, *Archaeological survey for the proposed housing development 'Huon Creek Estate,'* 2003

Desmond Martin, *A Tale of Twin Cities, Pt 1: The Founding Years,* 1981

'Historical Information,' Wodonga Historical Society, Victorian Collections, WHS 01332

'Horsemanship in the Antipodes,' *The Daily Telegraph* (UK), 8 January 1960, p16

'Horses and Their Riders in Australia,' *Sydney Morning Herald,* 22 August 1959, p3

'A Mount on a Champion,' *Border Morning Mail,* 16 January 1953, p12

Oral history provided by Rory Fitzgerald, Director Duvoux Pty Ltd.

'To Run in Steeple,' *Weekly Times,* 23 July 1952, p63

'Trained over sheep gates,' *The Sun,* 25 May 1952, p32

'World famous horseman to judge Wodonga gymkhana,' *Border Morning Mail,* 6 June 1951, p8

'Valley Win Triumph for Owner,' *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate* (NSW), 26 May 1952, p6