

CHALMERS HOMESTEAD

Address	15 Sims Road, Mount Rowan	Date Inspected	August 2023 & September 2024
Construction Date	1860-1861	Period	Mid-Victorian



Chalmers Homestead, close-up of the south elevation, from Sims Road.
(Source: RBA, August 2023)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

WHAT IS SIGNIFICANT?

Chalmers Homestead at 15 Sims Road, Mount Rowan, is significant. It was built of basalt ('bluestone') between 1860 and 1861 for the Scottish immigrants Archibald and Beatrice M. Chalmers. The prominent Ballarat-based architect Henry R. Caselli was responsible for the design and construction. The Chalmers developed the property as a farm, dairy, and orchard into the early 1910s.

The significance of Chalmers Homestead is attributed to its original form and fabric, namely walls of lightly dressed and coursed squared basalt rubble and lintels. The integrity of the east elevation is unknown due to its concealment by the non-significant skillion timber attachment.

The hipped roof (cladding is modern but sympathetic) and extant chimney are original features of the place but have been rebuilt.

The approximately three Monterey cypresses (*Cupressus macrocarpa*) and pines (*Pinus radiata*) immediately north of Chalmers Homestead and the four cypresses to its southern boundary are longstanding windbreak plantings that are also significant.

The timber-framed (east) and small brick (north) attachments to Chalmers Homestead and other corrugated metal or timber outbuildings in its vicinity are not significant.

HOW IS IT SIGNIFICANT?

The Chalmers Homestead is of historical (Criterion A) and representative (Criterion D) significance to the City of Ballarat.

WHY IS IT SIGNIFICANT?

The Chalmers Homestead is of historical significance as a mid-Victorian period basalt farmstead in the hinterland of Ballarat, of which relatively few survive. It is an important illustration of the emergence of Mount Rowan as an agricultural locality in the late 1850s/early 1860s. The use of local basalt/bluestone for the walls is reflective of a phase of domestic vernacular construction in the region that was chiefly restricted to the mid-19th century. Its design by the prolific mid-to-late Victorian period local architect Henry R. Casseli is demonstrative of a new phase of more considerable housing in the area following the short-lived alluvial gold rushes that supercharged the broader development of Ballarat. (Criterion A)

The Chalmers Homestead is of representative significance as a fairly intact mid-Victorian period rural residence built of basalt. While it is a more modest instance of the work of its designer, Henry R. Casseli, the place demonstrates an intriguing case of his engagement with a more vernacular construction mode. Its architectural permanency – relative to the era and then undeveloped rural context – is conveyed through the excellent stonemasonry of the coursed, squared basalt rubble walls with a light rock face finish and its more elongated rectangular form, which is less typical for its type. While stone residences were never a mass type of construction in the municipality, only a small number of 19th-century basalt residences survive in Ballarat. The Monterey cypresses and pines in the vicinity of the building complement its rural character. (Criterion D)

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

Historically, the boundaries of Mount Rowan – which fall within the Country of the Wadawurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung peoples – have been indefinite. At their broadest extent, the district encompassed the area from its namesake – the extinct volcano that dominates the landscape between Cummins (north) and Sims (south) roads – to Burrumbeet Creek in the south and southwest. Then north towards Sulky, east past Midland Highway (formerly Creswick Road), and northwest to the edges of the township of Miners Rest. The landform is of flat volcanic plains dissected by fertile alluvial terraces and underground springs with some low-relief cone-like hills, of which Mount Rowan is the largest. Prior to European settlement, this area was characterised by open eucalypt forest.¹

The post-contact history of Mount Rowan has been one defined by relative consistency, having emerged from the early 1840s as a lightly populated rural landscape – devoid of an urban centre (that role was initially served by Miners Rest) – on the northern outskirts of Ballarat and Wendouree.

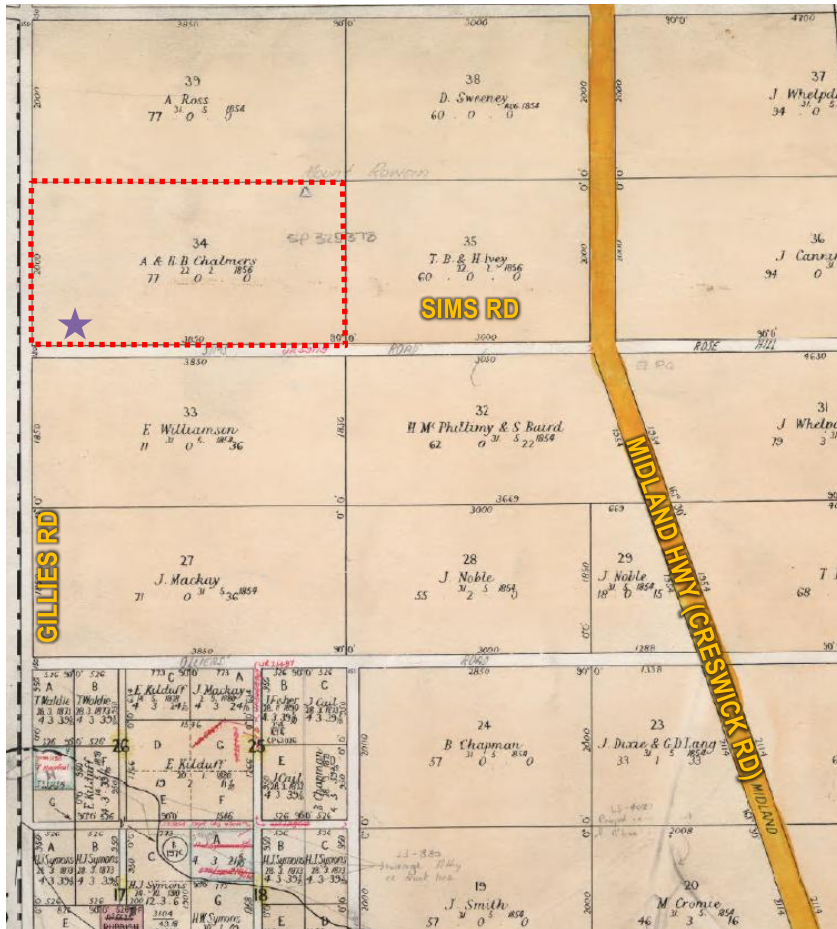
Much of Mount Rowan was initially encompassed within Thomas Waldie's (d. 1884) pastoral run known as Wyndholm (at its peak, over 18,000 acres), on which he obtained a Pre-emptive Right to 640 acres by 1854.² Private sales commenced at pace in the locality from the mid-1850s, with small to medium-sized mixed farms (agricultural/pastoral) rapidly emerging, alongside some limited company-led deep lead exploration and quartz crushing. Mining activity appears to have largely ceased by the early 20th century, with the area characterised in 1905 as a 'post town' encompassing a state school (no. 757, closed 1946), one store, and 'a small, rather scattered population of about 200.'³

The *City of Ballarat Thematic Environmental History* (July 2024) provides the following contextual summary:

Mount Rowan is a small farming locality north of Ballarat, close to the Creswick Road, and takes its name from a volcanic hill of the same name. The Burrumbeet Creek crosses the area to the south. Crown land allotments were sold for farming from the mid-1850s. A common school was established in the mid-1860s and a Presbyterian Church was built c.1870. A state school was built in 1876 (VGG, 1876) and a local post office was also provided. By the 1930s, there was sparse settlement in the locality (Military map, 1935). The state school closed in 1946 (Watson 2001). A new government secondary school opened in 2019.⁴

PLACE-SPECIFIC HISTORY

The subject land derives from Crown Portion 34 in the Parish of Ballarat, Country of Ripon. This 77-acre holding (approximately 31 ha) – which encompassed a portion of Mount Rowan – was acquired by the brothers Archibald and Henry Black Chalmers in February 1856.⁵



Extract from the Paris of Ballarat Plan with the Chalmers brothers grant (Crown Portion 34) outlined in dashed red. The approximate location of the *Chalmers Homestead* is starred. (Source: Ballarat Sheet 2, B126, PROV)

Archibald (1826-1909) and Henry B. (1828-1912) Chalmers were born in Lanarkshire, Scotland. The brothers – in their early to mid-twenties – immigrated to Victoria at the outset of the Gold Rush, accompanied by Archibald's immediate family.⁶ Their partnership as 'wholesale grocers, and wine and spirit merchants' (A. & H. B. Chalmers) in Ballarat was dissolved in 1857.⁷

Crown Allotment 34 was mainly worked by Archibald, who developed it as a farm with his wife Beatrice née Main (1825-1906) (m. 1846) – purportedly the 'first female who took up her residence on the goldfields of Victoria' – with whom he had ten children (most born in Victoria).⁸ At his death, Archibald 'late of Mount Rowan' was described as 'one of the early settlers' in the area.⁹

In August 1860, the *Ballarat Star* reported:

Yesterday (Tuesday) morning a fire broke out in the farm house of Mr Chalmers, at Mount Rowan, which completely destroyed, not only the building, but all the property therein.

Mr Chalmers left home at six o'clock in the morning for Castlemaine, leaving his wife, children, and servants in charge of the place. About eight o'clock a fire broke out in the house ... Mrs Chalmers on seeing the danger rushed out, getting with her all the children but the youngest one; fortunately one of Mr Williamson's men, who lives hard-by, rushed into the burning house and rescued the child.

The house, which was a neat weatherboard one with a verandah, was completely destroyed, and to add to the calamity, Mr Chalmers, we believe, was uninsured.¹⁰

The loss of Archibald's timber residence was presumably the catalyst for the construction of the existing basalt house.

Soon after the fire, Archibald engaged the services of the professional local architect Henry Richard Caselli (see below). The use of an architect at the time, even for a modest house, is of some note for the time (particularly in a rural hinterland area) and reflective of Archibald's relative social cachet and prosperity.

Caselli advertised tenders for quarrying stone and a stonemason in the *Ballarat Star* in September 1860:

TENDERS required to Quarry Stone for new residence near Mount Rowan, for A. Chalmers, Esq. Apply ... at the office of H.R. CASELLI, Architect, Webster Street [Ballart].¹¹

TENDERS required from Mason's (labour only) to Erect a Stone Residence for A. Chalmers', Esq., at Mount Rowan. Drawings and specifications may be seen ... at the office of H. R. CASELLI ...¹²

By February 1861, Caselli was advertising a tender for 'Carpenters, Plumbers, Slaters, and Painters, for the various works to [the] stone residence for A. Chalmers'.¹³ A statement of Archibald's assets in his probate noted a 'seven roomed stone house' at his Mount Rowan property.¹⁴



Portrait of Archibald and Beatrice Chalmers (second from the left and right, respectively) and family, undated. (Source: public family tree, <https://ancestors.familysearch.org/en/KLBX-BKX/archibald-chalmers-1826-1909>, accessed 24 October 2024)

Soon after completing his new dwelling, Archibald put his Mount Rowan 'Agricultural and Dairy Farm' up for lease:

comprising 77 acres of rich chocolate soil, fenced, with improvements thereon as follow:—
65 acres of oat crop, 6 acres of potatoes, 2 acres of carrots, 2 acres of orchard; stone house, barn, cattle-shed, milking yards, dairy, &c.; 30 milch cows.¹⁵

While leased, it appears that Archibald continued in residence and pivoted to orcharding activities. In 1899, for instance, the *Ballarat Star* reported:

One of those pleasant places of resort that surrounds Ballarat, and one that will indeed become popular, is Chalmers' fruits gardens, Mount Rowan. These gardens which cover several acres of ground, have recently been thrown open to the public, and during the Christmas holidays quite a number of garden parties were there.¹⁶

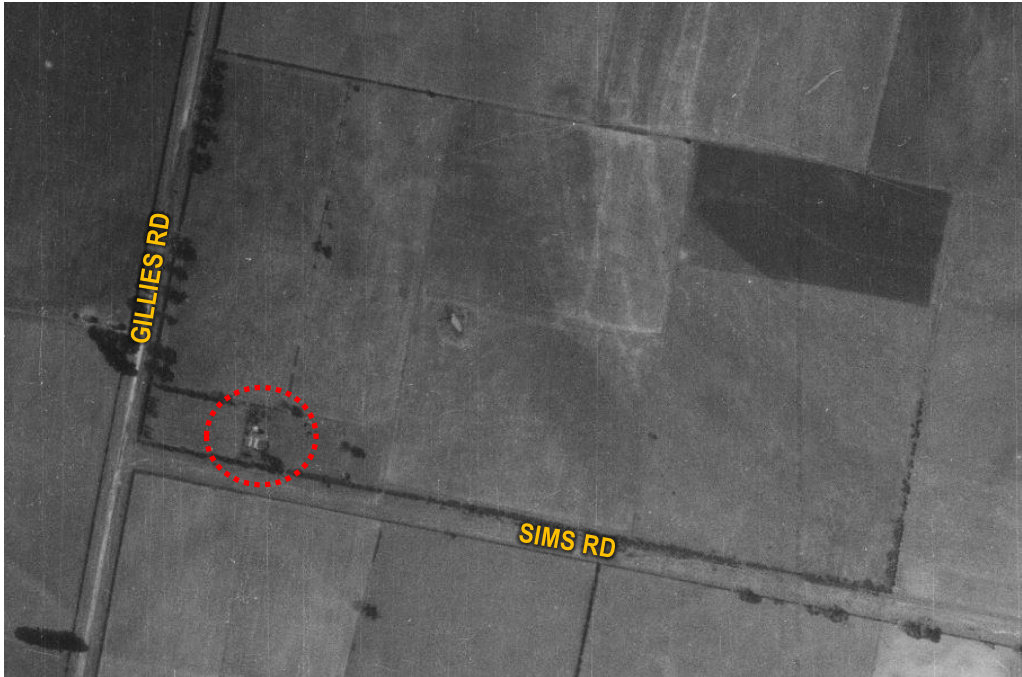
At least one of the lessees is known – Clement Thomas Bond – who, in the context of a court case against Archibald, was reported as 'occupying' the farm while boarding with him.¹⁷ Chalmers' probate noted the Mount Rowan farm was still under lease at the time of his death (£60 per annum).

A less respectable impression was conveyed in 1909 when Archibald – then aged 78 – was charged under the *Vegetation Diseases Act* with 'having neglected to eradicate diseases and destroy fungi on trees in his orchard', which was purportedly 'overgrown with Cape broom, wattle, and blackberries'.¹⁸

The following aerial photograph of Crown Portion 34, dated 1934, depicts a largely cleared agricultural landscape with perimeter and dividing windbreaks and a small cluster of built forms.¹⁹

A close-up inspection shows three freestanding footprints, only one of which survives (the basalt former dwelling). Two of the buildings, including Chalmers Homestead (the eastern hipped-roof element), are situated close together with their short elevation facing Sims Road. The extant timber volume attached to the east face of Chalmers Homestead is not evident.

Given that there is a 'break' in the southern fence/windbreak line to the east of the hipped building (approximate to the current entry to the property), it is likely that the façade of Chalmers Homestead was its east elevation, which is now concealed by the timber attachment. The circular northern-built form and the western-built wing (possibly initially a kitchen) were later lost.



Aerial image, dated 1934, with Crown Portion 34 outlined. *Chalmers Homestead* is circled (close-up below). North is top of the image. (Source: Map 2805, Run 6, Frame 13241, Geoscience Australia)



Close-up of *Chalmers Homestead* dated 1934. The existing basalt wing is identified by the red arrow. The smaller western element has been lost. (Source: Map 2805, Run 6, Frame 13241, Geoscience Australia)

Owners of the property following Archibald's death have not been researched. At an unknown date, the property to the east (Crown Portion 35) was acquired.

Crown Allotment 34 remained unsubdivided until 1994, when 5.5 ha were acquired by the Ballarat City Council and the Mount Rowan Reserve was established.²⁰

Modern use/s of Chalmers Homestead are unknown but appear to be that of an agricultural or utilitarian nature, with the role of a primary residence likely transferred to the interwar timber bungalow to the northeast of the basalt homestead. There is also a late 20th-century house further to the north on the holding.

The property has the name Dunblane affixed to the gate of the Sims Road vehicular entry. The connection or otherwise of this name to the Chalmers' phase of occupation/development is not known.

HENRY RICHARD CASELLI (1816-85)

Caselli, born in Cornwell, southwest England, to Italian parents, was a notable early professional architect in Ballarat.²¹ He was apprenticed in 'early boyhood' into a shipbuilding yard but, upon completion, undertook further studies to qualify as a naval architect/engineer.²² Caselli drew note in England and the Continent for his invention of an improved gun carriage platform and later worked in Germany overseeing improvements to coastal batteries.

In his late thirties, Caselli immigrated to Australia, arriving in Geelong in 1853, where he accepted the role of a surveyor of Corio Bay Harbour for Lloyd's Shipping Company. The next year, Caselli shifted to Ballarat in the halcyon days of its gold rush. He had 'moderate success' as a miner on the diggings at Pennyweight Flat, Dalton's Flat, Eureka, and other sites, 'but feeling that Ballarat would become a thriving centre Mr Caselli determined to cease his wanderings and settle down to business as an architect.'²³

Caselli's design output in Ballarat and its hinterland between the mid-1850s until his death was prolific. Alongside an array of substantial civic, religious, industrial, and commercial projects, he was responsible for 'scores of private residences, including some of the mansions of the district, being able to work across several popular styles, including late Regency, the Italianate, and Gothic.'²⁴ Publicly spirited, Caselli was framed as a leading Ballarat citizen at this death, having been closely involved in several local organisations.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Chalmers Homestead is a single-storey mid-Victorian period masonry building situated lengthwise to the north side of Sims Road at a deep setback from Gillies Road in the west. Its elevations are relatively obscured by perimeter plantings, some of which include four Monterey cypress (*Cupressus macrocarpa*) trees to the southeast of the building. There are also approximately three Monterey cypresses and pines (*Pinus radiata*) in the backdrop of Chalmers Homestead (north). These Monterey cypresses and pines are evident in the 1934 aerial photograph of the place and were likely planted as windbreaks.

All of the timber structures in the vicinity of the Chalmers Homestead and attached to its east elevation are believed to be later additions.

Chalmers Homestead has a rectangular and elongated footprint with a low-pitched hipped roof clad in replacement corrugated metal sheeting (initially slate). Exposed timber rafter ends are evident, which are not typical of the period, raising the possibility that the roof has been rebuilt with eaves. A red brick chimney punctures the southern roof plane. Its cap/moulding has been lost. The chimney may have also possibly been rebuilt.

The walls are of coursed, squared basalt rubble, hand-dressed in a light rock face finish. From the public realm, the west elevation is partially concealed by plantings and the adjacent timber outbuildings; however, three symmetrical recessed openings (likely French doors originally) are apparent with large lintels. The existing timber doors with upper louvres are non-original.

As discussed, the façade – which possibly could have featured a verandah – is presumed to be the east elevation, currently concealed by the attached weatherboard skillion volume. The arrangement of the east elevation has not been determined in this assessment.

There is a small red brick lean-to abutting the basalt section in the north, which is an addition.



Panorama aerial photograph of *Chalmers Homestead* (red arrow), facing east.
(Source: Nearmap, January 2024)



South elevation of *Chalmers Homestead* (basalt section) from Sims Road, facing north.
(Source: RBA, August 2024)



Close-up of the west (likely rear) elevation of *Chalmers Homestead* from Gillies Road. Note the three tall openings with basalt lintels. (Source: RBA, August 2024)



View to Chalmers Homestead and rear significant plantings (Monterey cypresses and pines) from Gillies Road. (Source: RBA, August 2024)



Thicket of Monterey cypresses west of vehicular entrance from Sims Road.
(Source: RBA, August 2024)

THEMATIC CONTEXT

GML, *City of Ballarat Thematic Environmental History*, vol. 2, final report (interim), July 2024:

3.3 Adapting and exploiting the land and its resources

3.4.5 Farming

The gold rushes in the Ballarat district hastened the development of farming in the Ballarat area, which quickly became a highly productive land use owing to the good soils and temperate climate. The sudden influx of thousands of people to the goldfields in the early 1850s led to a high demand for fresh produce, particularly meat, grain and potatoes. Licensed slaughterhouses were also established, which were required under the health regulations. Farming ensured a ready market for agricultural produce and also encouraged the development of flour mills. Yields of wheat in the northern area of the City of Ballarat in the 1870s and 1880s were high, and the area's overall production made up a sizeable component of Victoria's total yield [Blainey, *A History of Victoria*, Cambridge University Press, 2013]. So great was the demand for fresh food at the Ballarat goldfields that supply also came from much further afield, including the rich potato country around Koroit in southwestern Victoria, over 100 miles away [Doyle, *Moyne Shire Thematic Environmental History*, 2006]. By the 1880s, once farm production had become well established, Ballarat was also supplying produce to Melbourne.

3.4.8 Quarrying

Stone for building and other purposes could be obtained at a number of quarries in the vicinity of Ballarat that were operating by the mid to late 1850s... The stone quarried for building purposes was predominantly bluestone, which was plentiful in the volcanic country around Ballarat. An 1861 plan of Ballarat identifies various stone reserves, as well as a number of quarries in the area around Black Hill [Brache, *Ballarat Goldfield*, 1861]. Others were at Redan and Warrenheip. Some

bluestone was brought up from the deep lead mines and used for building, for example in the construction of Montrose Cottage, Ballarat East, in 1856.

3.5 Shaping the city, towns and villages

3.5.5 Building Homes

Victorian-era houses predominate in the early residential areas of Ballarat, including Ballarat East, Ballarat West, Eureka, Mount Pleasant and Canadian. Later periods are also represented by the existing housing stock, especially the Edwardian/Federation and interwar eras. There are fewer houses from the postwar period. In the areas that were later to develop, such as Ballarat North and Alfredton, there are still many Victorian and Edwardian homes but also a greater number of interwar and postwar homes. In Wendouree there is mixture of styles, with a large proportion of Federation and interwar residences, and also a fair share of postwar homes. Generally, the occurrence of postwar housing increases with the distance from the city centre. Many of the postwar homes that have been built in early mining areas, such as Ballarat East, are constrained by the small suburban lot sizes of the 1850s and have been designed accordingly.

[...]

Victorian era

The Ballarat municipality was born and came of age in the Victorian era, which officially began in 1848 when Queen Victoria ascended the throne. The building styles and methods that pastoralists and others brought with them to Buninyong and Ballarat from the late 1830s, however, more often followed a simple Georgian style or colonial vernacular traditions.

Extremes of wealth and economic hardship that were a product of the gold-mining environment saw a corresponding variation in the style and quality of homes. Houses built in the Victorian era in the City of Ballarat range from the most modest cottages to grandiose displays of wealth.

[...]

As permanent settlement took shape on the goldfields, small dwellings were built to a simple square or rectangular form plan. These early cottages retained vestiges of a colonial vernacular Georgian style, despite the passage of several years since Queen Victoria's death. Cottages were typically double fronted with a symmetrical facade, but smaller cottages that were only one-room wide were also built. They were typically built without verandahs and were set flush with the roadside ... They were predominantly timber-framed and clad in weatherboards ...

Those who could afford it built better-quality homes or called on the assistance of an architect. Montrose Cottage, built in 1856, is an unusual example of a bluestone cottage from this period [VHR H0108] ...

[...]

Prominent local architect Henry Caselli, a Cornishman with Italian heritage, prepared plans for a number of private homes in the city of Ballarat during this period. Better quality homes followed similar principles but were typically masonry rather than timber. They often used imported slate tiles for roofing. Often employing the Italianate style, they took on grander proportions, with high ceilings, and featured more ornate decorative treatments. Extravagant examples were double storeyed and often included a tower. An elevated position from which to view one's surroundings was an essential element of the Italianate style [Hubbard, 'Towering Over all: The Italianate villa in the colonial landscape', PhD thesis, 2003]. This was also befitting of the conspicuous wealth and bourgeois taste of Ballarat society at that time.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Dwellings of varying intactness from the mid-to-late Victorian period are relatively well-represented under the Schedule to Clause 43.01 (Heritage Overlay) in the Ballarat Planning Scheme. However, distinguishing Chalmers Homestead from this heritage-listed building stock is its hinterland location and materiality.

The majority of heritage overlays (HOs) in the municipality are concentrated within the urban core of Ballarat or along historic arterial routes leading to the centre. To date, rural areas in the municipality have not been closely reviewed

from a heritage perspective, despite farming and agricultural development forming pronounced themes shaping of Ballarat's cultural landscape.

Most of the 19th-century building stock in Ballarat utilised timber or brick. By comparison, the use of worked basalt (colloquially 'bluestone') was less common. Due to the cost of quarrying and engaging a stonemason, masonry construction tended to be reserved for more prestigious work or in situations where good quality timber or brick was unavailable. Basalt dwellings in the municipality are generally single storey with hipped roofs, symmetrical façades, and restrained (neo)classical or, less frequently, Regency detailing. Those from the 1880s or later are often embellished by an ornamented cast-iron verandah, features that may have been added to earlier basalt dwellings.

Of basalt housing affected by a heritage listing, only two are rural:

- Lauderdale (Homestead), 7 Prince Street, Alfredton (VHR H0486, HO1). A State-significant, substantial, architect-designed (J.A. Doane) Free Classical-style former homestead (1863) with a corbie gabled outbuilding, both of basalt. Architecturally elaborate (bracketed eaves, dressed quoining, window surrounds, and decorative verandah). Formerly rural, now set within well-established suburban environs.
- Lintel Grange Homestead Complex, 127 Edmonston Road, Addington (HO232). An evolved mid-to-late Victorian period hipped-roofed farmstead of basalt construction (squared random coursed and finely dressed, tuckpointed façade) with white local granite accents and a classically refined, cast-iron filigree character. Various other significant elements, including multiple and varied late 19th century outbuildings, Golden privet hedge fencing, and some historic plantings (Weeping Nootka cypress, ash and walnut trees).

The other heritage-listed homestead complexes are:

- Ballantrae, 7208 Midland Highway, Buninyong (H0551, HO133). A State-significant, highly ornate, and commodious Gothic Revival-style timber dwelling, built in 1857 – set in extensive landscaped grounds but historically seemingly not a working/agricultural property ('gentleman's retreat').
- Barnfield Cottage and Barn, 195 Kennedys Road, Miners Rest (HO138). No heritage assessment is available; however, the list includes a mid-Victorian period hipped house with bichromatic brickwork to the façade (at least) and a verandah that returns to both sides as well as a basalt outbuilding (squared random courses, roughly worked).
- Roxburgh Dairy Farm (Former), 624 Glenelg Highway, Smythes Creek (HO212). A small complex with two timber residences dating from the mid-to-late Victorian period respectively, a double-height wooden 'Cow Shed', and some significant plantings (a pair of Canary Island Date palms and several Monterey cypress trees).

The number of basalt residences in urban Ballarat is relatively few, with some key examples following:

- Montrose Cottage, 111 Eureka Street, Ballarat East (VHR H0108, HO39). Rare early surviving residence (1856) and the only known 'bluestone and brick patterned building' in Ballarat. Miner's cottage typology, Victorian Georgian style.
- Elsinore, 13 Hotham Street, Lake Wendouree (part of HO166, Central Ballarat Heritage Precinct) Designed by Henry Richard Caselli for L.E. Brunn, c. 1869. An Italianate-style two-storey home, with a basalt ground and brick or rendered first-floor (possibly built in two stages). Impressive garden setting.
- 504 Darling Street, Redan (part of HO168/South Ballarat Heritage Precinct). A notably ornate cottage orné, probably 1890s. Unusually for its typology, it has an asymmetrical format with a projecting gabled wing.
- Aberfeldy, 301 Skipton Street, Ballarat Central (part of HO168/South Ballarat Heritage Precinct). Commodious town residence with quoining to openings and corners. The originality of the return verandah with turned timber posts and decorative cast-iron frieze/brackets is unknown.
- 413 and 419 Lyons Street South, Ballarat Central (all part of HO168/South Ballarat Heritage Precinct). More modest scale, town residences with quoining and dressed window surrounds as well as front verandahs (only no. 419 is intact). Tall basalt chimneys at no. 413. Both are partly concealed by front garden vegetation.
- 416 Dawson Street South, Ballarat (part of HO168/South Ballarat Heritage Precinct). Largely concealed by plantings and non-original fencing. Representative town example.

- 23 Ragan Street South, Ballarat (part of HO168/*South Ballarat Heritage Precinct*). Victorian Regency style with random ashlar basalt courses and rendered window surrounds. The front-hipped verandah (exposed rafter ends, Tuscan Order columns) is likely an addition.

As discussed, the architect behind Chalmers Homestead, Caselli, was very active across Ballarat and the surrounding areas over the mid-to-late Victorian era; however, most of his identified buildings are his non-domestic projects (churches, civic, industrial, etc.). Caselli's residential body of work has not been comprehensively surveyed, but in type and expression, it clearly ranged widely, encompassing more modest cottages and villas as well as grander developments.

Of interest is the following photograph of a Ballarat residence (address or survival unknown) attributed to Caselli. It depicts a basalt house in a distinct Regency mode (French door openings to the front, restrained classicised elements to the raised verandah). Chalmers Homestead could have had a similar façade composition and/or arrangement (an inspection of its concealed east elevation would yield further insight).



Caselli-designed basalt residence, unidentified location in Ballarat, for T. MacDermott, dated 1861. Victorian Regency style example. (Source: SLV, H2058)

In light of the above examples, Chalmers Homestead is set apart as one of the earlier and more humble instances of basalt domestic construction (a rare surviving typology more broadly) known in Ballarat. Nevertheless, the status/expense of its material and the employment of an architect, particularly in a rural area, is differentiating, marking it out as a residence of some note, even if its scale and detailing (the extent of which is unknown due to the concealment of the east elevation) are more reserved than other surviving mid-to-late Victorian period comparable places. The more elongated rectangular form of Chalmers Homestead is also of interest, with other examples characterised by more conventional (more square) footprints.

While the concealing timber attachment at the place makes it difficult to determine its design mode (whether Victorian Georgian or Regency style) or integrity, Chalmers Homestead – in its current state – is fairly intact and remains interpretable as a 19th-century basalt building, with the presence of complementary historic windbreak plantings suggestive of its farmstead antecedents. The relative rareness of its basalt construction in Ballarat counteracts the effect of missing or rebuilt elements.

The association with Caselli, even if not one of his architecturally noteworthy designs, is of historical interest as a testament to the gamut of his historical design activities as amongst the foremost 19th-century architect practitioners in the district.

PREVIOUS HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

Previously identified as a '*basalt residence & iron outbuildings*' (given the address of Gillies Road) and recommended for local heritage listing – Andrew Ward, *Ballarat Heritage Review*, vol. 4, 1998, p167

RECOMMENDATIONS

HERITAGE OVERLAY SCHEDULE CONTROLS

External paint controls	No
Internal alteration controls	No
Tree controls	Yes (Monterey cypresses and pines)
Solar energy system controls	Yes
Outbuilding or Fences	No
Prohibited uses permitted	Yes
Aboriginal heritage place	No

EXTENT OF THE HERITAGE OVERLAY

Chalmers Homestead at 15 Sims Road, Mount Rowan, is recommended for inclusion under the Schedule to Clause 43.01 (Heritage Overlay) of the Ballarat Planning Scheme with a reduced extent of the overlay (not title boundaries), as depicted in the aerial photograph below.

The recommended HO polygon extends from each of the basalt elevations as follows: south to the title boundary/Sims Road, north by 43 metres, east by 43 metres, and west by 30 metres. This curtilage encompasses the significant Monterey cypresses and pines to the north and south of *Chalmers Homestead*.



The recommended extent of the heritage overlay for 15 Sims Road, Mount Rowan, is shaded in red.
(Source: Nearmap, February 2025)

ENDNOTES

- 1 See *Native Vegetation – Modelled 1750 Ecological Vegetation Classes*, Department of Energy, Environment, And Climate Action (VIC)
- 2 William Bramwell Withers, *The History of Ballarat, from the First Pastoral Settlement to the Present Time*, 2nd ed., 1870, available online, Project Gutenberg Australia, p13
- 3 *The Australian Handbook*, Gordon & Gotch, 1905, p466
- 4 GML, *City of Ballarat Thematic Environmental History*, July 2024, vol. 3, p19
- 5 Parish of Ballarat Plan, VPRS 16171/P0001/1, PROV
- 6 Genealogy information sourced from Ancestry, kabenton63, *Archibald Chalmers family tree* (public), available online. accessed 24 October 2024
- 7 'Advertising', *Ballarat Star*, 10 June 1857, p3
- 8 'The Old Pioneers', *Ballarat Courier*, 12 August 1876, p3
- 9 'Obituary', *Ballarat Star*, 20 November 1909, p4
- 10 'News and Notes', *Ballarat Star*, 22 August 1860, p2
- 11 'Advertising', *The Star* (Ballarat), 8 September 1860, p4
- 12 'Advertising', *The Star* (Ballarat), 17 September 1860, p3
- 13 'Advertising', *The Star* (Ballarat), 15 February 1861, p3
- 14 PROV, VPRS 28/P0003, 113/927, Archibald Chalmers, Grant of Probate
- 15 'Advertising', *Ballarat Star*, 19 November 1863, p3
- 16 'Gossip', *Ballarat Star*, 14 January 1899, p5
- 17 'Insulting Words', *Ballarat Star*, 14 November 1900, p3
- 18 'Country News', *Argus*, 12 September 1903, p16
- 19 Aerial imagery dated 1933 (RAAF Ballarat) is available online via *Visualising Ballarat* (Historic Urban Landscape Ballarat) but is of a moderately lower quality than the 1934 image reproduced in this citation (see: https://visualisingballarat.org.au/visbal_map.php).
- 20 Plan of Subdivision, PS 331091X, Landata
- 21 GML, *City of Ballarat Thematic Environmental History*, vol. 2, final report (interim), July 2024, p357. See also Dorothy Wickham, *The biography of Henry Ricard Caselli: architect*, undergraduate thesis, University of Melbourne, 1977, available online
- 22 'Death of Mr H.R. Caselli, J.P.', *Ballarat Star*, 4 March 1885, p2
- 23 'Death of Mr H.R. Caselli', *Ballarat Star*, 4 March 1885, p2
- 24 'Death of Mr H.R. Caselli, J.P.', *Ballarat Star*, 4 March 1885, p2. A list of known Caselli designs is available at 'Henry R. Caselli', *Ballarat and District Industrial Heritage Project*, Federation University Australia, updated 6 June 2019, accessed 30 October 2024, https://bih.federation.edu.au/index.php?title=Henry_R._Caselli>