

103 Macquarie Street (GPO Box 618)  
Hobart Tasmania 7001  
Phone: 1300 850 332 (local call cost)  
Email: [enquiries@heritage.tas.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@heritage.tas.gov.au)  
Web: [www.heritage.tas.gov.au](http://www.heritage.tas.gov.au)

**Name:** Mount Stuart  
**Status:** Permanently Registered  
**Tier:** State  
State

**THR ID Number:** 4469  
**Municipality:** Launceston City Council

**Location Addresses**

33-35 MOUNT STUART DR, NEWNHAM 7248 TAS

**Title References**

143180/1

**Property Id**

2575246



Mt Stuart looking south-east  
DPIPWE, 2018

Mt Stuart  
DPIPWE, 2018

Mt Stuart  
DPIPWE, 2018

Mt Stuart from East Tamar Highway  
DPIPWE, 2013

**Setting:** Mount Stuart is an historic agricultural property located on the northern outskirts of the city of Launceston, in the suburb of Newnham. The main residence sits at the top of gently sloping paddocks with a westerly aspect, overlooking the River Tamar. The registered area comprises just over 12 hectares and is intersected by the East Tamar Highway. It includes the main residence and outbuildings, which sit prominently on the hill above the highway.

**Description:** Mount Stuart is an historic agricultural property which includes the main residence and several outbuildings set in open paddocks. The main residence, said to be one of the oldest surviving residences in northern Tasmania, evolved in three distinct phases: 1. the original c.1813 weatherboard residence; 2. c.1824 brick extension to the north and 3. a 1979 brick addition also to the north which mirrors the scale and roofline of the original c.1813 residence. Original interior fittings include doors, windows, fireplace surrounds and staircase; which contribute to the representative character of each phase of the building's construction. Mount Stuart was once a large property with labour provided by assigned convicts. The main residence appears to be the only extant early 19th century building from what was once a large complex of buildings that also included convict barracks, and farm outbuildings (TAHO, Dorset 28, AF396/1/504). An undated survey of the area indicates an eastern wing to the main residence, now demolished, and at least five other outbuildings adjacent to the main home. The registered area may contain subsurface remains and deposits associated with the construction, reconfiguration and occupation of the main residence, as well as former farm infrastructure and workers' quarters. These remains may have the potential to yield information about 19th century farming practices, convict labour, farming technology and day-to-day life.

The original c.1813 building is a hip-roofed weatherboard cottage with central east-west and north-south corridors and low pine ceilings and doorways. It was constructed with brick nogging, a technique in which bricks are employed to fill voids in timber framing. The brick nogging is exposed in one of the rooms. This section of the residence was said to have been constructed on three large squared logs, which sit above a gravel pit. The southern portion of the c.1813 building was formerly a verandah, later enclosed.

The second stage of the residence, from c.1824, is a two-storey stuccoed wing, with hipped roof and gable parapet addressing the river. Dormer windows face north. An original staircase leads to an attic space. Original cedar doors, skirtings, architraves, mantlepieces and stairs are intact.

To the north of this extension is the most recent addition to the residence, dating to 1979 and using recycled bricks from a demolished building in Launceston. It is a hip-roofed rendered building, with verandah addressing the Tamar and enclosed verandah at the far north-western corner (Heritage: Launceston Review 1993, Launceston City Council pp.3-4).

At the rear of the main residence to the north-east in sequence are a timber-clad c.1900 outbuilding, containing a high degree of internal and external fabric; a timber-clad c.1950s garage with roller-door; and a

timber-clad c.1920s outbuilding, the latter two facing north-west. To the north-west of the main homestead are c.1960s farm buildings and associated infrastructure. These c.1960s buildings are considered to be of no heritage significance.

Behind the main residence two mature trees appear to have survived from the 19th century: a pepper tree and unknown variety of pear.

Adjacent to the front verandah is a substantial stone wheel for sharpening implements, said to have been used in a slaughterhouse that once stood at the rear of the complex.

### **Comparative analysis**

**Timber framed and weatherboard-clad** buildings of this period are extremely rare. The original Woolmers (THR#5077) weatherboard structure now incorporated in the main residence, is believed to date to c.1819-1821. One early stand-alone example is 225a Collins Street, Hobart (THR#2236), said to date to the 1820/30s, whilst at Port Arthur Historic Site, the Shipwright's residence (THR#6 c.1834) has survived, complete with internal brick nogging. The timber building attributed as the residence of Captain Swanston's secretary on Risdon Road, New Town (THR#2729) is also said to date to the 1840s, although an exact date has not been determined. Mount Stuart contains what is likely to be the oldest weatherboard structure in northern Tasmania and likely the state.

**Brick nogging** was a technique employed historically to insulate and stabilise walls. Mount Stuart is an uncommon early Tasmanian example, particularly in northern Tasmania. Coswell (THR #1560) at Swansea is near contemporary, said to have been constructed c.1828. The Shipwright's Residence (THR#6) in the Port Arthur dockyards dates to c.1834. Captain James Kelly's Waterview (THR#10990 c.1840) on Bruny Island is also believed to contain some remnants of brick nogging. The Bennell family of builders used brick nogging in their 1850s townhouses in Cameron St (THR #3940) and two residences the family erected in the 1870s in Stewart Street, East Launceston (THR#s 4629 & 4630). Although not a rare building technique in 19th century Tasmania, Mount Stuart is an early example of its use, and is an uncommon survivor from the period.

### **History:**

Although originally known as Mount Stewart, the property is now known as Mount Stuart.

An undated survey of greater Launceston has the land on which Mount Stuart now stands as granted to Thomas McQueen (TAHO, AF396/1/504). A Thomas McQueen was granted 50 acres adjacent to the River Tamar in 1813 by Governor Macquarie. It was granted on the condition that the government had the right to use a portion for a public road, and also reserved for the use of the Crown 'such timber as may be deemed fit for naval purposes' (TAHO, Index to deeds of Land Grants AD956 via [www.ancestry.com.au](http://www.ancestry.com.au)). This may explain the gravel pit and substantial eucalypts said to be still extant underneath the early section of the Mount Stuart c.1813 original residence. McQueen, an ex-convict, had been a teacher in Sydney and Norfolk Island and in 1810 was appointed schoolmaster at Port Dalrymple, now George Town (Colonial Secretary's Papers, Special Bundles, 1794-1825 via [www.ancestry.com.au](http://www.ancestry.com.au)).

In 1817 'rapid progress' of the construction of a road between Launceston and George Town was noted and 'Mount Stewart is nearly at equal distance between the two settlements' (*Hobart Town Gazette & Southern Reporter*, 29 March 1817 p.2). There is some speculation the main residence at Mount Stuart may have been used as a customs house, however the lack of government markings on surviving fabric suggests it was not purpose-built as such a facility. Curiously, Irish convict Martin Edwards, later owner of 21 Welman St in Launceston (THR #8277), was in 1824 sworn in as a constable and watchman of the government store at Mr McQueen's (<https://manuscript3251.wordpress.com/>).

The next owner of Mount Stuart appears to have been Captain Robert Petty Stewart, who arrived in New South Wales with the 40th Regiment in 1824

(<http://freepages.rootsweb.com/~garter1/history/robert%20stewart.htm>). It is likely the property was not named after Captain Stewart, but after James Stewart, who was Commandant at George Town, as the name Mount Stuart pre-dated Captain Robert Stewart's arrival. Lady Jane Franklin, wife of Lieutenant-Governor John Franklin, encountered Captain Stewart during a visit to Launceston. He advised her that in the early days there was no road and that his journey into Launceston was by boat (Mackanness, 1977 in *Heritage: Launceston Review* 1993, Launceston City Council pp.3-4).

Captain Robert Stewart married several times, living at Mount Stuart with his third wife, Mary Ann, and their six children ([www.ancestry.com.au](http://www.ancestry.com.au)). Although the viability of the home and farm depended on convict labour, it came with its disadvantages. In 1827 prisoner John Furlong and his wife Hannah were charged with stealing Captain Stewart's shirts, John was fined 20 shillings and Hannah was sentenced to one month in prison (*Colonial Times & Tasmanian Advertiser*, 19 January 1827 p.4). Male prisoners appear to have been housed in separate quarters on the estate, as revealed in court by Stewart over a scuffle with a prisoner. He testified that the prisoners were drinking contraband rum in their hut prior to Stewart being attacked by one of their dogs (*Launceston Advertiser*, 9 May 1831 p.149).

Errant convicts were not the only source of concern for the Stewart family. A shepherd was speared by an Aborigine at one of Captain Stewart's stock huts (*Launceston Advertiser*, 18 October 1830 p.3) and six months later a worker of Stewart's was 'speared in the shoulder on the east side of the Tamar, very near Launceston, he is not however dangerously wounded'. Around the same time a neighbour named Fitzgerald was perilously close to death having been speared multiple times (*Launceston Advertiser*, 11 April 1831 p.118).

In 1837, Maryann, wife of Captain Stewart, died at Mount Stuart aged 32 (TAHO RGD34/1/1/ #5098). Robert was left a widower with six children, although he appears to have had a succession of female convicts to

assist with running the household and managing the children. These included Ellen Galvin, one of six convict women who survived the shipwreck *Neva* off King Island, considered one of Australia's worst maritime disasters. She was assigned to Captain Stewart shortly after the disaster, which took the lives of her mother and sister (TAHO, CON40/1/3 p.78, *Launceston Advertiser*, 2 July 1835 p.4).

After the death of his wife, Captain Stewart intended to return to Britain:

*'MOUNT STUART to be sold by private contract, the proprietor wishing to return to England. The above estate, situated three miles from Launceston on the east bank of the Tamar. The dwelling house, with detached kitchen and out offices, an excellent barn and a four-acre garden well-stocked with fruit trees, is delightfully situated on the bank of the river; the farm contains 100 acres in cultivation and runs back to the George Town Road (True Colonist, 29 June 1838 p.3).*

Despite these intentions, Stewart remained in the colony. In 1846 he sold Mount Stuart to Captain William Fawcett, of Mendip Lodge, Somerset, England (LTO 03/1648), the land consisting of 270 acres, including a frontage to the Tamar River (*Cornwall Chronicle*, 26 March 1850 p.197). Although Stewart was forced to sell Mount Stuart, he remained living there as a renter. Local surveyor James Scott wrote to a relative in late 1848: 'Captain RP Stewart still resides on his old farm – has to pay rent now for about 200 acres, in place of having the whole – it now belongs to Captain William Fawcett – Stewart is very badly off now – he has not stock even for his farm and I don't know how he lives on it' (Archer, [ed.] 2009 p.286). The 1848 census records that Mount Stuart was occupied by Robert Petty Stewart, constructed of brick, complete and inhabited by 12 people on census night, seven of whom were free (TAHO, CEN1/1/103 p.44). Stewart later departed the farm, dying in Victoria in 1855 (*Launceston Examiner*, 24 February 1855 p.2).

After Stewart's departure, farmer John Stubbs leased the property, running a horse and cart business from stables at Mount Stuart (*Cornwall Chronicle*, 21 September 1850 p.624). Stubbs was an ex-convict transported in 1836 on the *Elphinstone* for stealing oats (TAHO, CON31/1/40) and by the following decade was a servant to Richard Dry at Quamby.

William Fawcett's son William Jnr inherited Mount Stuart (*Hobart Town Gazette*, Selby assessment roll, 25 January 1870, p.106), neighbour Alexander Milligan acting as his agent: 'FOR SALE - The estate of Mount Stuart, on the East Tamar, consisting of 3038.5 acres of land, partly agricultural and partly sheep land. This property is divided into five different farms beside the sheep run, to which there are attached several thousand acres of available Crown land. AM Milligan' (*Launceston Examiner*, 8 March 1873 p.5). The property does not appear to have sold, William Coe occupying the premises in 1880 (*Hobart Town Gazette*, Selby assessment roll, 23 November 1880 p.1148).

Mount Stuart was later owned by Robert McKay, of the Launceston drapery firm McKay, Sampson and McKinlay. McKay appears to have leased the property to Frank and Jessie Murray and family, who ran a horse stable from Mount Stuart. In 1887 the Murray family even entertained the Tasmanian Governor and his party, who watched from the verandah mock military exercises on the slope below the main homestead (*Daily Telegraph*, 12 April 1887 p.3). In 1904 McKay's brother-in-law William Kidd published a notice of intention to occupy Mount Stuart farm and have 'the double benefit of increased facilities for raising stock, and a closer proximity to the city' (*Daily Telegraph*, 6 October 1904 p.4). William Kidd's son Hugh, aged 12, was left the property in trust as part of the split of the family business McKay, Sampson and McKinlay. Hugh Kidd received Mount Stuart as payout for the family business.

The Kidd family established a successful piggery and orchard, the latter on land now part of the suburb of Newnham behind the Mount Stuart's main residence (*Heritage: Launceston Review* 1993, Launceston City Council pp.3-4). The family operated a small slaughterhouse behind the main residence, although the building no longer stands. In 1979 the main residence was extended to the north, utilising salvaged bricks from the demolished Coogan's building in Launceston (pers. comm, WHM Kidd, 2018). In 2018 Mount Stuart is a well-maintained private residence, owned and occupied by the third and fourth generations of the Kidd family.

#### References:

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**Statement of Significance:**  
(non-statutory summary)

Mount Stuart is of historic cultural heritage significance for its ability to demonstrate the evolution of a colonial-era agricultural property established on an early land grant. It is associated with key phases of the development of the colony, including conflict with the First Tasmanians, the use of assigned convict labour to establish private farms and enterprises, the experiences of convicts within the assignment system, the economic difficulties experienced by farms when the cessation of the assignment system removed relatively cheap convict labour, and the subdivision of large estates to ensure their ongoing viability. The early part of the main residence is a very early and rare surviving example of timber framed and weatherboard construction, and contains an uncommon example of brick nogging, possibly one of the earliest surviving examples in the state. The Mount Stuart property once included a complex of outbuildings, with potential for subsurface remains and occupational deposits. Mount Stuart main residence is also an early and intact example of a colonial-era Georgian rural residence, sited to overlook the River Tamar and set among productive farmland.

**Significance:**

The Heritage Council may enter a place in the Heritage Register if it meets one or more of the following criteria from the Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995:

**a) The place is important to the course or pattern of Tasmania's history.**

Mount Stuart is important for its ability to demonstrate the evolution of a colonial-era agricultural property established on an early land grant. The earliest part of the residence dates to c.1813 with subsequent extensions in c.1824 and 1979. Nestled on a rise above the Tamar River, Mount Stuart is also associated with themes relevant to the development of the colony; conflict with the First Tasmanians, the use of assigned convict labour to establish private farms and enterprises, the experiences of convicts within the assignment system, the economic difficulties experienced by farms when the cessation of the assignment system removed relatively cheap convict labour, and the subdivision of large estates to ensure their ongoing viability.

**b) The place possesses uncommon or rare aspects of Tasmania's history.**

Brick nogging is a relatively rare form of construction in Tasmania, and Mount Stuart is a particularly early example in a Tasmanian context. The oldest section of the home contains this technique, in which bricks are employed to fill voids in timber framing. Mount Stuart is likely the earliest surviving example of a timber framed, weatherboard clad building in northern Tasmania, and possibly in the state.

**c) The place has the potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Tasmania's history.**

The registered area may contain subsurface remains and deposits associated with the construction, reconfiguration and occupation of the main residence, as well as former farm infrastructure and workers' quarters. These remains may have the potential to yield information about 19th century farming practices, convict labour, farming technology and day-to-day life. Furthermore, the main residence has the ability to yield information about brick nogging and construction techniques, prior to 1830.

**d) The place is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of place in Tasmania's history.**

Mount Stuart is an early and intact example of a colonial-era Georgian farming estate residence, erected between the two major towns of George Town and Launceston, strategically placed on a hill overlooking the Tamar River amongst productive farmland. The main homestead, particularly the early sections, includes a high degree of internal integrity, with original joinery including doors, windows, floors and skirtings. The relationship between the buildings with their westerly aspect and the Tamar River can also still be understood.

**e) The place is important in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement.**

No Data Recorded

**f) The place has a strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social or spiritual reasons.**

No Data Recorded

**g) The place has a special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Tasmania's history.**

No Data Recorded

**h) The place is important in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.**

No Data Recorded

**PLEASE NOTE** This data sheet is intended to provide sufficient information and justification for listing the place on the Heritage Register. Under the legislation, only one of the criteria needs to be met. The data sheet is not intended to be a comprehensive inventory of the heritage values of the place, there may be other heritage values of interest to the Heritage Council not currently acknowledged.