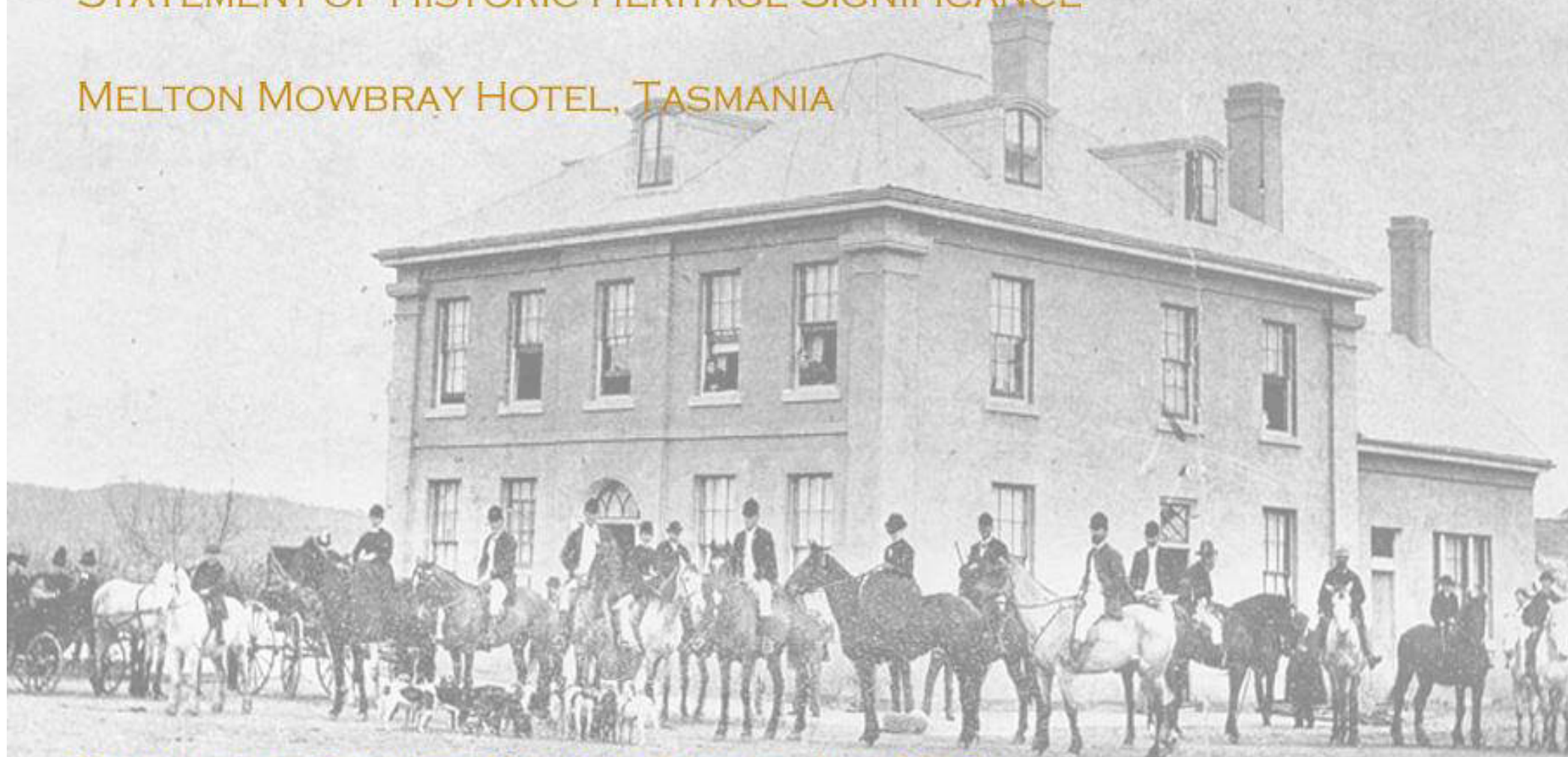


BACKGROUND NOTES &
STATEMENT OF HISTORIC HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

MELTON MOWBRAY HOTEL, TASMANIA



PREPARED FOR SOUTHERN MIDLANDS COUNCIL, JUNE 2015.

Historical background and key historic themes

Samuel Blackwell

Samuel Blackwell was born in the English village of Melton Mowbray in 1814 and later moved later to Foscote in Wiltshire. An unconfirmed and anecdotal story is that Blackwell was the illegitimate son of King William IV, and that he was urged very strongly to leave England – reputedly being paid a sum of money to do so. It could be imagined that with the accession to the throne of William's niece, Queen Victoria in 1837, that the complication of a direct male heir (albeit illegitimate) would have been seen as an inconvenient truth.

Little is known about Blackwell's life in England, however whilst living in Wiltshire he met Mr. John Bisdee Snr., both belonging to the exclusive Tedworth Hunt Club, which had some 80 members. Mr. Bisdee had migrated to Van Dieman's Land in 1821, and, after taking up a holding of land at Hutton Park near the Lower Marshes and running it successfully, was having a holiday in England. He persuaded Blackwell to come with him on his return to this State, and they arrived in 1840.

In 1842, Blackwell married Elizabeth Bailey in the Oatlands Court House – the bride defied tradition by wearing a green wedding dress and riding to Oatlands on horseback to attend her wedding. She had immigrated to the colony with her brother.



MR. S. BLACKWELL, SEN.
Founder of the Southern Hunt Club.

Blackwell the Hotelier

Soon after arriving in the colony, Blackwell became licensee of the Cape of Good Hope Inn at Apsley - near the Bisdee holdings. In 1842 he took over the Royal Oak Hotel (now Oakmore homestead) at Green Ponds (now Kempton). In 1857, local landholder Edward Goodwin sold up his holdings around Green Ponds and Cross Marsh, and Blackwell purchased 110 acres at the junction of the Main Road and the Bothwell Road.

In March 1858, Thomson and Cookney Architects (Hobart) advertised (The Hobart Town Daily Mercury, 11/3/1858:1):

***To Building Contractors.** Tenders will be received at this Office for building and finishing a Dwelling house, Stable and Outbuildings for Samuel Blackwell Esq. at the Cross Marsh, until Friday the 12th instant; where plans and specifications may be seen. Thompson and Cookney, Architects and Surveyors. Stone Buildings, 1st March 1858.*

By April 1859 it was advertised that Bothwell Coach Service was leaving from Blackwell's hotel, Melton Mowbray – Blackwell had named his new hotel after his birthplace - the town that grew around the hotel was to also assume that name. This name apparently took hold quite quickly, with a sketch by T.E. Chapman of Kemp's farm nearby being titled 'At Melton Mowbray' in August 1859 (State Library of Tasmania AUTAS001124061391).

The official opening of the hotel was advertised in the Hobart Town Daily Mercury on the 21st May 1859, with a gala weekend of sports and hearty meals being advertised for the 2nd-3rd of June that year. Blackwell advertised a steeplechase of four miles, with a prize of 40 sovereigns, plus a sweep of 5 sovereigns and 10 sovereigns for second place. A shooting match was held, with three thoroughbred horses as various prizes. The second day featured a 'grand stag hunt' on the property of Mr. Bisdee.

The Hobart Town Daily Mercury (3/6/1859:3) reported on the results of the festivities attended by a large attendance of gentry and sportsmen to celebrate the opening of Blackwell's new house at Melton Mowbray.

MELTON MOWBRAY
 (NEAR GREEN PONDS.)



WEDNESDAY, JUNE 1st,
 OPENING OF THE WINTER SEASON.

—oo—

MR. S. BLACKWELL announces to his many friends and acquaintances that he has arranged the following sports for their amusement in celebration of the opening of his establishment at "Melton Mowbray."

FIRST DAY.
STEEPLE CHASE.

The TALLY-HO CUP, lined with 30 sovs. presented by Mr. S. Blackwell, and a sweep of 5 sovs each added; the second horse to receive 10 sovs. The distance to be about 4 miles over a fair hunting country, as may be pointed out. Weights, 6 yrs. and aged, 12 st; 5 yrs., 11st 9lbs; 4 yrs., 10st, 12lbs; 3 yrs., 10st. An allowance of 5lbs to non-professional riders.

PIGEON MATCHES.

First for a well-known race horse, and second for a sweepstake, as will hereafter be announced. N.B.—A hearty dinner, with as hearty a "welcome," at seven in the evening.

—

SECOND DAY.
GRAND STAG HUNT

With the famous Hutton Park pack, by the kind permission of the master, John Bisdee, Esq. The hounds will meet at "Melton Mowbray," at 11 sharp.
 Mr. Fred. D. Hamilton will superintend the sports.

Hobart Town Daily Mercury 21/5/1859

James Thomson – Architect

According to the call for tenders for the erection of Blackwell's establishment, the architect of the hotel was James Thompson, a prominent Hobart Architect. Thomson was transported to Van Diemens Land in 1825. Although his convict record states his trade as 'decorative painter' his draughting skills were recognised and he was assigned to the Public Works Department and worked under Colonial Architect David Lambe and his successor John Lee-Archer. He became overseer of government plumbers, glaziers and painters in 1830 and was overseer of the building of St Lukes Church, Richmond between 1834-37. He received a conditional pardon in 1835 (free pardon in 1839) and set up a practice in Liverpool Street, from which he worked for the remainder of his life (this building is now part of the Menzies Centre). During the 1840s he was working in partnership with James Blackburn and his business interests also included lithography, valuer, estate agent and map printer. He was an Alderman of the Hobart Municipal Council from 1853-57, one of his great concerns was the Hobart water supply (a possible influence of his time working with Blackburn, whose fame later arose from designing the first Melbourne water supply). He died of typhoid fever whilst holidaying in Scotland in 1860, aged 55 years. His practice partner since 1845, George Cookney, continued the practice until his death in 1876.

Thomson's known works include the Hobart Synagogue (1843), St Josephs Hobart (1841), Lauderdale Cottage (New Town 1841), the Hobart Attorney General's rooms, the Hobart slaughterhouse complex, Lieutenants quarters – Anglesea Barracks and with Blackburn on the Bridgewater bridge and causeway. The doorcase and fanlight of Lauderdale Cottage is identical to that of the Melton Mowbray Hotel, and the hotel also has the same low-relief pilasters as Lauderdale as well as the Stone Buildings offices from which Thompson worked.



Thomson works



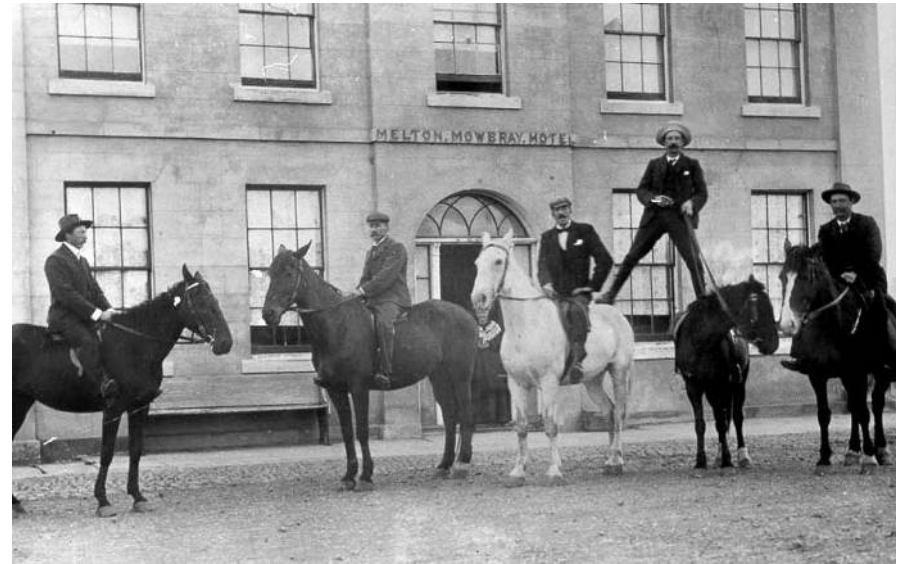
The earliest known photograph of the Melton Mowbray Hotel, Alfred Abbott, probably c1865. Note the extent of stables and outbuildings as well as the trough being located on the opposite side of the road to the hotel (the road is not clearly in this image, however see the later Clifford photograph below for a clearer indication). Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery Q2001.15.26.86.

Blackwell's hotel established a fine reputation with travellers of the midlands. It was not unusual for travellers on the coaches from Hobart to Launceston to break their journey for two days at Melton to converse with Mr. Blackwell and admire his trophies and the handsome pictures which adorned the walls. Blackwell's hotel became the centre of gentlemen's sporting activity in the Midlands.

Many members of the Government stopped at Melton Mowbray, and when Governor Weld was appointed in 1875 he made a habit of spending all his annual holidays at Melton and travelling up there for all the races.

On one occasion His Excellency sent his children and their governess to the hotel for six weeks' holiday especially for Mr. Blackwell to teach the children to ride.

During the first Royal Tour of Australia in 1878, His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh was the guest of Mr. Blackwell. Anecdotes of that visit relay Blackwell's amusement at HRH picking up the bellows and encourage the fire to combat the cold. Ironically – could he have been Blackwell's second-cousin?!



Patrons of the Melton Mowbray Hotel (date unknown, probably c1880s).
Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office PH30-1-9155.

Blackwell's Coach Service

On September 18, 1850 Blackwell was granted a stage coach licence for a two-wheel vehicle to run between Green Ponds and Bothwell for 12 months which was to take advantage of the new road which had been formed from the main road at Woodlands to Bothwell. The *Colonial Times* (27/9/1850:2) reported in an Editorial:

New Conveyance: By a reference to our advertising columns of to-day it will be seen that Mr. Blackwell of the Cross Marsh, proposes starting a two-horse vehicle, to run between the Royal Oak and Bothwell. It will be a great convenience to all people going to or coming from Bothwell who are in the habit of travelling by the coaches, particularly as the new line of road through Mr. Berthon's property is now finished and the desperate bog known to the inhabitants of Green Ponds as White's Lane, and in which both horses and cattle have perished, will be thereby completely avoided. Mr. Blackwell is too well known to the people of Van Diemen's Land to require one word of commendation from us. We heartily wish him every success and firmly believe he will do his best to deserve it.

An notice published on the 23rd of April 1859 in The Hobart Daily Mercury indicated that Blackwell's coach service would, from two days after that notice, then depart at an amended time from his establishment at Melton Mowbray, heralding Blackwell's move from the Royal Oak (the initial 1-year license obviously having been extended).

NOTICE.



The Bothwell Conveyance.

ALTERATION OF TIME.

THE ABOVE CONVEYANCE will leave Blackwell's Hotel, Melton Mowbray, daily, for Bothwell, after the arrival of the day Coach from Hobart Town, which will commence running on **MONDAY, the 25th April**, and will return from Bothwell, in time for the afternoon Coach for Town. **1 m**

The Hobart Daily Mercury, 23/4/1859:3.



Coach outside the Melton Mowbray Hotel (date unknown). Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Q1996.15.51.

Blackwell's Racehorse Interests

By the time Blackwell had acquired the Royal Oak, horses owned by him were doing well at races on the old Green Ponds track. In 1853 he entered horses in the Town Plate run at New Town. A few years later he sought to import a racehorse from England, and commissioned a Mr. Brown of Hobart Town, to select a suitable one during a visit to England. Mr. Brown bought Panic while the horse's owner was absent from home, and there was consternation when he found his favourite racer had been sold. However, he agreed to let the purchase stand, and received 1,000 guineas in payment. Blackwell and his trainer travelled to Hobart Town to take delivery of the animal from the sailing ship Harriet McGregor. However, the horse had been ill on the voyage out, and was of very poor

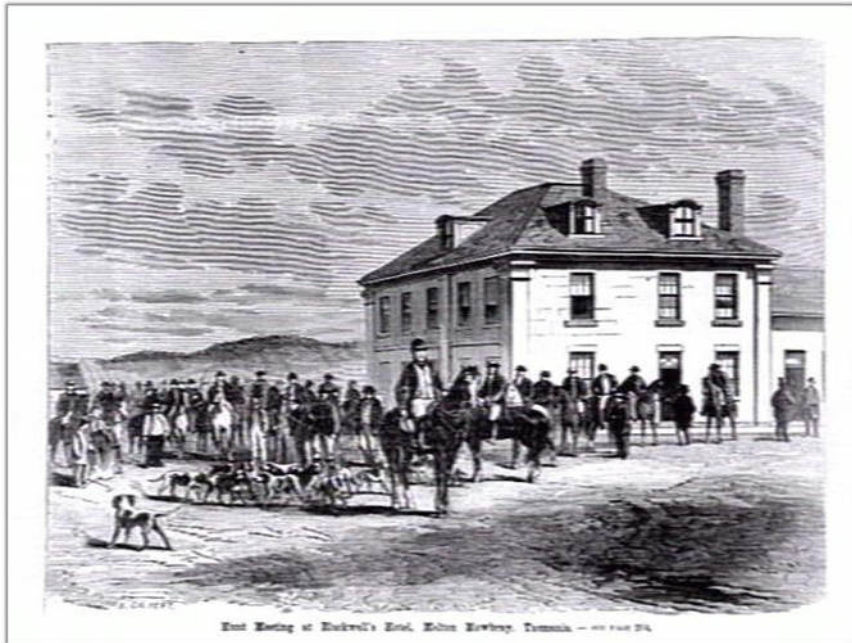
condition upon arrival. Brown agreed to keep the horse on his property free of charge for six months. After three months the brown colt was in perfect condition.

Panic gained many successes in races, the most notable being when he won the "Championship" of 1865, and ran second in the Melbourne Cup. Then he was turned out to stud, and one of his first stock was Strop who won the Launceston Cup four times. Another of Panic's foals was Nimblefoot, owned for a time by Blackwell, who sold him a few months before that horse won the Melbourne Cup. As recently as 1920 prospective owners sought horses with the Panic strain, for the old horse was renowned for his stamina and staying ability.

Blackwell and the Midlands Hunt Club

In 1860 Mr. Bisdee gave Blackwell a pack of Beagle hounds formerly the Hutton Park hounds of the Southern Hunt Club and Blackwell established the Midlands Hunt Club. Bisdee also supplied Blackwell with a number of deer and he established a deer park adjacent to the hotel. Bisdee had previously imported the first deer to Australasia and established the Hutton Park deer park – the Melton Mowbray park presumably being an adjunct to that. He had been made a member of the Royal Society of Queensland for introducing deer to that state also.

The Midlands Hunt club proved very popular, attracting 'redcoat' members from the Midlands aristocracy, with the Biseedes, Pages, Harrisons, Gilletts and Brocks all keen participants. An adjunct of the Midlands Hunt Club was the Midlands Steeplechase Club and these clubs operated in various capacities up until the 1920s.¹



Hunt meeting at Blackwell's Hotel, Melton Mowbray, Tasmania, 1866. From a wood engraving by Samuel Calvert. The Illustrated Melbourne Post 25/4/1866.



The Midlands Hunt Club outside the Melton Mowbray Hotel (date unknown, probably c1900). Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery Q1996.15.680.

¹ For further discussion on the wider context of hunt clubs in the Midlands, see Obendorf, D (2010) <http://tasmaniantimes.com/index.php/article/hunting-foxes>



Samuel Blackwell (standing, centre) with his two sons (far left and right) and Samuel Page (of coaching fame) on a hunt at Melon Mowbray. Photograph courtesy of David Blackwell.



The Midland Hunt Club assembled with hounds outside the Melton Mowbray Hotel for the Meet of Mr Carr-Lord on 22 June 1907. Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office. PH30-1-9304.



1876 Midland Hunt Club cup, won by Mr. C.J.C. Lord, made by Walsh Bros. Melbourne. Powerhouse Museum, Sydney (Object A6376).

Blackwell's Saleyards and the Cross Marsh Market

The Cross Marsh markets were a very early and significant trade and meeting place – being the central rural-commerce area of the lower Southern Midlands and Bothwell. The earliest market site was located close to Belgrove, however by 1829 had been moved near to the Royal Oak, the site which Blackwell was to occupy some 12 years later.

Blackwell's Cross Marsh Saleyards were commonly advertised in the late 1850s which were located close to his Royal Oak Hotel. The late 1850s however saw advertisements referring to 'Blackwell's New Yards' suggesting he had moved them to his new hotel.

Blackwell, clearly an entrepreneur, keenly capitalised these markets which were the cornerstone of the rural economy of the area. The move of the markets to the Melton Mowbray Hotel further strengthened that site as the hub of the wider community and would no doubt have drawn widespread attention to the hotel and area.

Thursday. 4th August.

Important Stock Sale at

MELTON MOWBRAY.

Cross Marsh.

BRENT & WESTBROOK

Are favoured with instructions to Sell by
Auction, at Blackwell's new Yards,
MELTON MOWBRAY, on THURS-
DAY, August 4th, at 12 o'clock,

THE UNDERMENTIONED CAP-
ITAL COLLECTION of STOCK,
viz.,

- 500 Prime fat wethers
- 300 Ditto ditto
- 16 Ditto Leicester wethers
- 20 Ditto half-bred ditto
- 300 Two-tooth wethers
- 200 Fine lambs
- 6 Fat pigs
- 22 Ditto porkers
- 3 Very prime calves
- 10 Head prime fat cattle
- 14 Fine steers, fit for the knife
yoke
- 8 Superior milch cows to calve in
all August
- 6 Ditto ditto in all September
- 6 Ditto springing to calve
- 10 Very fine heifers ditto
- 4 Pairs working bullocks

AND

- 3 Very fine heavy cart mares, rising
3 and 4 years by Emperor and
Gold Digger.

Terms as usual.

The Hobart Daily Mercury, 2/8/1859:4.

Blackwell's Later Life

Blackwell purchased the Melton Vale property surrounding his hotel where he spent the later years of his life. The obituary for Samuel Blackwell was printed in the *Tasmanian Mail* on the 18th of July 1885.

Sportsmen throughout Australasia - and even in the old country - will experience a sincere feeling of regret upon receipt of intelligence of the death of Mr. Samuel Blackwell, Sen., which sad event occurred at the deceased's late residence, Melton Mowbray, on Sunday, 12th July 1885. In racing circles few men were more popular, and certainly no straighter-going colours were ever borne to victory or defeat on the colonial turf than the "pink jacket and black cap" of the old squire. Long ere he settled in the Antipodes - some 40 years back - Mr. Blackwell took a lively interest in turf matters, and his name being associated in the sport with the names of Messrs. Dry, Gee, Hardwicke, Yeend, Rose, and others, he might be classed among one of the oldest sportsmen in Southern Tasmania. As far back as 1853 he opposed Messrs. Yeend and Rose in the Town Plate run at New Town, but previous to this horses owned by him were competing on the old Green Ponds course. After engaging in business in one or two townships in the Colony, Mr. Blackwell sought his fortune in Victoria, ultimately settling down at Melton Mowbray, an English like village situate about 30 miles from Hobart. Indeed, the very name of Melton Mowbray has a true sporting ring about

it, reviving memories of those who may have followed the hounds in the essentially hunting county of Leicestershire, and if the deceased gentleman did not originally give the place its name, some early colonist, with sporting proclivities, implanted a lasting recollection of the thriving little township situate in the county where the renowned Lyme harriers have followed the game for years past. In the ancient coaching days, where time permitted, few would continue the journey to Launceston without stopping a day or two to partake of Host Blackwell's hospitality, and the typical English gentleman was just as ready to converse about the sport he so dearly loved as his guests were gratified in having the opportunity of granting him an audience. As landlord of Melton Mowbray Hotel, Mr. Blackwell gained countless friends outside the racing world. Adjacent to the hotel was the racecourse which the worthy host always placed at the disposal of the promoters of the annual race gathering held here; and out of respect to their genuine friend, the meetings of 1883 and 1884 were brought off as complimentary to and in honour of Mr. S. Blackwell, sen. Deceased in his younger days was a clever horseman, a good shot, and his knowledge of a horse increased as decades went by. For many years the deceased was master of the Southern Hounds, and he may be said to have literally breathed his last in the saddle, as an attack of paralysis, which seized him on the 20th ult., during

a run with the hounds, caused a prostration which eventuated in his death.

Mr. Blackwell's name was principally rendered famous from the fact of his having originally owned the thoroughbred sire Panic, acknowledged on all hands to be the most useful sire that ever left England for the colonies. "Useful" would not be all that the defunct son of Alarm was entitled to, but for the reason that it was years before the horse was given a chance. One of the first of Panic's stock was the popular equine, Strop, a quadruple Launceston Cup winner; later on Nimblefoot, a Melbourne Cup Hero, who was Mr. B's property for a few months prior to his big Victorian coup; and in the present day is Commotion, who may be said to be the most consistent performer that ever trod the turf in the Southern Hemisphere. As a steeplechase sire, Panic had no equal. Panic himself was successful as a racer, his Champion of '65, and his second in the Melbourne Cup, to wit. About that year the Panic Produce Stakes was run, Mr. Blackwell contributing the bulk of the prize. Shillelagh and Modesty were other good performers owned by the departed squire; also Touchstone, whose portrait has hung in the snugger of the Melton Hotel for so long past. The ever welcome "pink and black" was frequently carried to victory over cross-country, and among this latter class owned by the deceased gentleman may be mentioned Black Prince, Beaufort,

Blackthorn, etc., and among platers the names of Spaniard, Sweetlips, Tit-bit, John Peel, and Donnybrook. It was owing to the defeat of this latter horse at Clarence Plains that the memorable Panic v. Minstrel match was arranged, which ended in such confusion, owing to the followers of Minstrel declaring forfeit. Of late years Mr. Blackwell owned Edward, the steeplechaser, and the day the old grey beat Echo at the complimentary meeting on the Melton course was such another to the old gent as when Panic won the Champion. Nicholas was a good average cross-country horse, and won some capital races for his owner and breeder. From Princetta, a mare by Gotherstone, from Young Princess, by The Swede, Mr. Blackwell became possessed of Nicholas, Moss Rose, and Nora, each by Horatio, and a filly by The Assyrian. The mare and foal were sold a few months back, which left their late owner, for about the only time without a racer. Deceased leaves a widow, and also two sons, Samuel and William. As a genuine sportsman, the same may be said of honest Sam Blackwell as has been uttered in memory of other turfites of his manly character who have passed from us.

Deceased was laid in his last resting-place on the 16th July, 1885, in the plot of ground at the rear of the little chapel which was built principally through the exertions of his surviving widow. Upwards of

200 persons, representing Hobart, Oatlands, Bothwell, Green Ponds, etc., attended the funeral.

His son, Samuel Blackwell jnr. continued to operate the Melton Mowbray Hotel until around 1900, when the hotel was purchased by the Bisdee family as part of the neighbouring Melton Vale estate (Bisdee family). Licensees for the first quarter of the twentieth century were Mr. Chappell, Mr. Preuss and Mr. De Jersey respectively. De. Jersey added the southern wing to the hotel in around 1924 to cater for an increase in patronage due to the increase in motor transport along the highway.



The Melton Mowbray Hotel, c1910. Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Q14462.



The Melton Mowbray Hotel c1920s with DeJersey's new enclosed balcony and veranda. Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office.



Photograph of the Melton Mowbray Hotel c1980. Photographer unknown – Private collection.



Photograph of the Melton Mowbray Hotel 2007. Photograph by John Immig, State Library of Tasmania NS2937-1-551.

A Military Station on the site?

Early newspapers make reference to a Cross Marsh Military Station which apparently operated from c1822-1829. Further research on that subject failed to determine the location of that station in relation to the hotel, noting that the Cross marsh area was large therefore it is not necessarily valid upon that reference to definitively place the station near the hotel. However, an article in *The Colonial Times* (4/12/1828:2 makes reference to the Cross marsh Military Station at 'Bentfield' (now 'Woodlands') Cross Marsh, which does narrow the possible area closer to the hotel, and rules out other known military/convict establishments in the area such as Green Ponds and Picton. An article from the 1920s (*Mercury*, 1/11/1913:11) describes the foundation of huts near the hotel used 'by convicts in the construction of the road', which may represent early buildings used by the military (the Southern Midlands Convict Sites Project did not identify any convict sites near Melton Mowbray – the road gang more likely being housed at nearby Picton, therefore it is possible that these may have been remains of the military station – i.e. not necessarily a 'convict' site). Further research, both historical and archaeological may assist in determining the location of the Cross Marsh military station and/or what the 'huts' were observed near the hotel in the 1920s.

The Stables

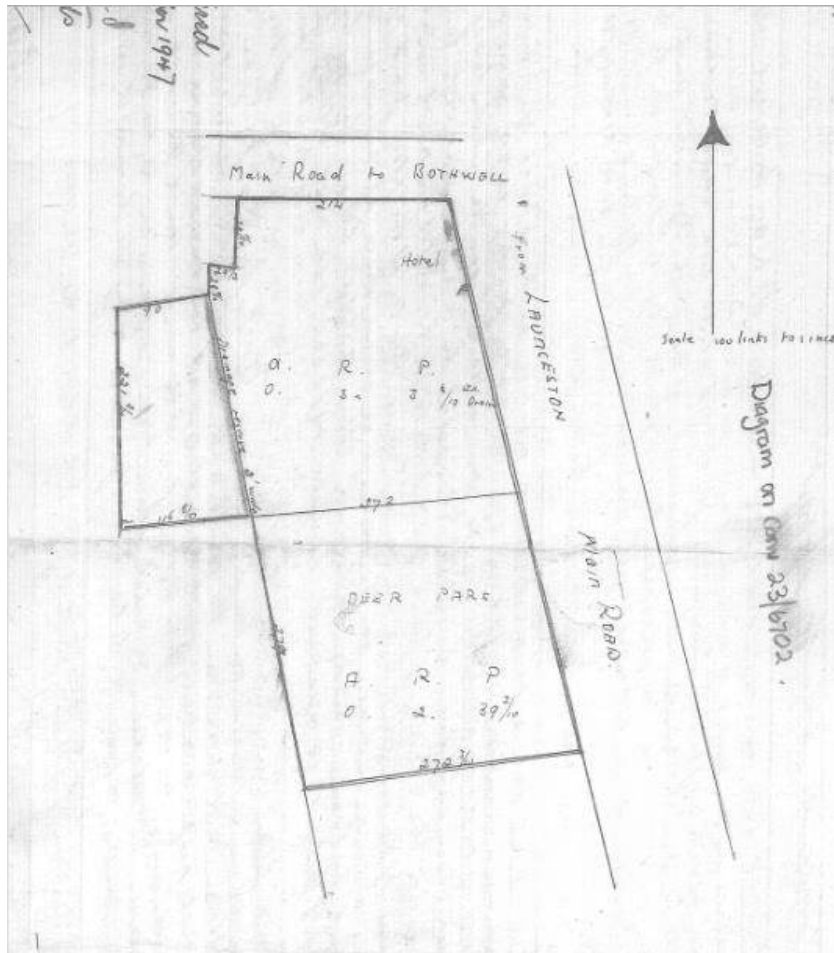
The call for tenders by Thomson and Cookney for the construction of Blackwell's establishment in 1858 included 'stables and outbuildings'. It is unknown whether the original plans of the hotel complex still exist, however it is clear from both on-site evidence and historical sources that the hotel had extensive stabling – and Blackwell's known racing, horse breeding and other supporting activities would have required ample space. Articles on the hotel from the 1920s describe these extensive stables and their importance in demonstrating Blackwell's interests in horses, thoroughbred breeding, hunting and racing.

Clifford's c1870s photograph of the side of the hotel shows part of this complex, encompassing a large walled courtyard at the rear of the hotel – part of which wall remains today, as well as the main stables block. These (and other) buildings can also be seen on the 1947 aerial photograph of the area, with the footprints being superimposed over a recent aerial photograph below.

With the decline in coach transport with the advent of the main line railway in the 1870s, it is likely that the use of the stables for their original intended purpose declined and early-mid twentieth-century accounts describe their conversion to uses such as motor garages as well as a residence and post office.

Currently, a portion of the stables has been excised from the hotel title, which has been the case since the 1950s or earlier. Only one

stables building remains, however archaeological evidence of the other stables and other buildings can be discerned at certain times of the year around the site.



A

c1950 conveyance diagram of the hotel, showing that the rear portion of the stabled had been excised by that time. Note the notation to 'deer park' at that time. C/T 23/6702



Melton Mowbray Hotel Main Line of Road.

Photograph of the Melton Mowbray Hotel by Samuel Clifford c1870s. State Library of Tasmania NS2937-1-551, W.L. Crowther Collection AUTAS00112485018



An excerpt from a 1946 aerial photograph of the area, showing the hotel, grounds and outbuildings. DPIPWE 1947 Oatlands 285-42.



Footprints of main outbuildings and other evident site features from the 1947 aerial photograph (red) over the recent site configuration.

The Melton Mowbray Trough

For at least 150 years, a large sandstone horse trough stood outside the Melton Mowbray Hotel. It is unknown when it was first located there, but appears in the c1865 Clifford photograph across the road from the hotel. It is presumed that the trough was part of the establishment of the hotel – being placed in front of the hotel for the benefit of watering the horses of the travelling public and encouraging people to stop at the hotel.

The biography of James Thomson, the architect of the hotel, attests to his interest in the architecture of water procurement and it was not uncommon for both hotel owners and public authorities of the time to establish troughs for public use. These were common in front of public houses, near railway stations, major intersections/landmarks etc.

The Melton Mowbray trough appears in at least three locations in historic images of the hotel, all of which were within the road reserve, suggesting the intent of servicing the public and hotel patrons, the earliest being more distant from the later locations, being across the road from the hotel. Later depictions place the trough just to the south of the hotel, within the road reserve, and much later depictions (up to c2010) place the trough in front of the c1910 extension to the south of the hotel.



Excerpt from the c1865 Clifford photograph (above) showing the trough in front of the hotel.



The Melton Mowbray Hotel c1920s. Photographer unknown - State Library of Tasmania PH40/1/2643.



Photograph of the Melton Mowbray trough, c1930s. Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office NS/2217/1/403).



Photograph of the Melton Mowbray Hotel and Trough taken between 1948 and 1972. Photographer – Jack Thwaites - State Library of Tasmania NS3195/1/2369.

Historically, the trough has been seen as a curiosity associated with bygone days of coaching along the Midlands Highway and hunting at Melton Mowbray, there are a number of newspaper articles making reference to the trough from the 1910s through to the 1950s, including:

Melton Mowbray, Events of Early History, Hunt Club's Foundation, Mr. S. Blackwell's Interesting Career..... An interesting hotel..... A huge stone water trough in front of the hotel is an interesting relic from bygone days. It is 12ft long, 4ft wide, 3ft deep and weighs several tons. For three-quarters of a century this fine old building has stood four-square to the Midlands breezes and it speaks well for the material and workmanship put into it..... The Mercury, 25/6/1926 p5.

Australia - Tropical, Reminiscent, Historical. A gigantic water trough..... Outside the Melton Mowbray Hotel, 40 miles from Hobart, on the Hobart-Launceston Road, is an enormous water trough, hewn out of solid stone. It is 12ft long, 4ft wide and 3ft deep and weighs several tons. The hotel was built over 70 years ago, and, presumably, the water trough is of the same age. The World's News (Sydney), 14/8/1926 p8.

An ancient Highway - Tasmanian Road's Romance. Relics on the Roadside..... "at Melton Mowbray, once a famous hunting ground, is a drinking trough, weighing two to three tons, which was hewn from a solid block of stone, and in adjoining paddocks, discernible only to eyes that seek them, are the grass and scrub covered foundations of the buildings in which prison gangs were accommodated during the construction of the road". The Mercury, 1/11/1930 p13.

Holiday - Tasmania from a Pillion Seat:" [Melton Mowbray]... a delightful little roadside inn accommodated us that night and alongside it was a relic of Tasmania's coaching days - a watering trough weighing several tons and hewn by Port Arthur prisoners from a single block of stone...". Sydney Morning Herald, 27/12/1934 p.4.

Where Beauty Rubs Shoulders with Tradition - History on the High Road in Tasmania..... "At Melton Mowbray we are on the fringe of the midlands and the hunting country, where until the outbreak of war there was still a club which conducted point-to-point races. An appropriate hunting atmosphere is given here by a huge stone water trough outside the hotel, a colossal

contraption not unlike a stone sarcophagus, cut from one solid block and a good 12 ft long, 4 ft high and around 7 inches thick - a regular equine monument that could water a six-in-hand with ease." The Advertiser (Adelaide), 2/4/1938 p12.

The Examiner, 24/1/1953 p12: Our Royal Visitors May See This Historic Highway: Tasmania's Main Road Packed With Memories (article suggesting that HRH Queen Elizabeth and the Prince Consort tour the Midlands between Hobart and Launceston)..... "Convict Relics: An appropriate hunting atmosphere is given here by a huge stone water trough outside the hotel, a colossal contraption not unlike a stone sarcophagus, cut from one solid block and a good 12 ft long, 4 ft high and around 7 inches thick - a regular equine monument. That ancient monument once watered a six-in-hand with ease." (paraphrased from an earlier article).

The trough was moved to a public park established across the road from the hotel – a location more reminiscent of its earliest known location, with the aim of enhancing the public appreciation of the trough and preventing possible damage from vehicular impact, as well as to address safety concerns regarding people leaving the (then operating) hotel. The trough has since been removed to a location outside the district.



Photograph of the Melton Mowbray trough in the park opposite the hotel c2012.

Statement of historic cultural heritage significance

The following statements of significance are based on the national HERCON standard for statements of significance, based on the amount of information currently at-hand. Note that natural history values have not been assessed here, as these are beyond the scope of this assessment. This assessment has been based upon heritage industry standards, including the Tasmanian Government's *Assessing Historic Heritage Significance for application with the Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995*.

Criterion	Statement of significance
A. Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history.	<p>The Melton Mowbray Hotel and associated stables and trough are of historic cultural heritage significance as they represent the nucleus of a mid-late nineteenth century centre which has widespread connotations with several key historic themes of importance to the course of Tasmanian History.</p> <p>The complex represents an important colonial coaching inn, the evolution of which can be correlated with several key phases of the evolution of transport in the colony, from coaching, the railways and advent of the motor vehicle. The hotel was built by Blackwell to capitalise on his coaching service between the highway and Bothwell, establishing a link to the main highway through the colony. The advent of rail travel saw a downturn in the highway hotel industry, which had resurged in the early twentieth century with car travel. Changes in the fabric and uses of the site reflect this evolution, such as the use of the horse trough, conversion of the stables to a motor garage and extension of the hotel to cater for a resurgence in patrons all act to illustrate that aspect of Tasmania's history.</p> <p>The hotel was the nucleus of a range of sporting activities which represent the upper-end of colonial society's desire to recreate the lifestyle of the homeland. Being the base of the Midlands Hunt Club for over half a century, being recognised as the base for steeple chases, stag hunts etc. illustrates the importance of the hotel as a recreational hub for colonial society. The fabric of the place relating to these activities is of high significance, which includes the stables, trough and open space of the deer park etc.</p> <p>Blackwell's mercantile activities based at this site illustrate several important trade themes of colonial Tasmania. Blackwell's 'new' saleyards were an important trading venue for the producers of the Cross</p>

Marsh, Green Ponds, Apsley and Bothwell areas and provided an important meeting place for residents and traders of the district.

B. Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history.

Several attributes of the hotel complex are of historic cultural heritage significance as they represent rare and uncommon aspects of our cultural history. The massive horse trough is locally unprecedented in its size and is a rare example of a sandstone horse trough associated with a hotel. No trough of this size is known in Tasmania and there is only one stone horse trough known in Tasmania that is still associated with the hotel which it was used in proximity to (Richmond).

Any remains of the deer park (including open space) represent the rare occurrence of a deer park being associated with a colonial hotel and associated with the first person to import deer to Australasia (John Bisdee) – this probably being only the second deer park in Australasia (after Hutton Park). No other Tasmanian colonial hotel is known to have had such a park associated.

C. Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history.

It is known that there were a number of outbuildings associated with the Melton Mowbray Hotel which are no longer standing as well as other site infrastructure such as the racetrack, deer park etc. Subsurface remains of these buildings and associated infrastructure have the potential to yield information about the place, which may contribute to understanding and demonstrating other aspects of the significance of the place. Such information may contribute to thematic, regional and temporal research into the key historic themes of the place

Whilst further research would be required to effectively frame a research design, it is possible that the site may yield information on the early military presence in the area – noting that at this stage there is little more than anecdotal evidence of such association.

D. Important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of

The Melton Mowbray Hotel, stable, horse trough and curtilage are of historic cultural heritage significance as they collectively represent a substantial mid-nineteenth century hotel complex, one which was

cultural or natural places or environments.

associated with a diverse range of activities from saleyards, hunting, recreational pursuits, racing etc. This is demonstrated by the hotel building itself as a fine example of a substantial country hotel (albeit extended and modified) with extant service wings, the stables as the remnant of a much larger stables complex and other site features associated with the hotel and its functions, such as the courtyard walls, horse trough etc.

E. Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics

The Melton Mowbray Hotel is not considered to exhibit any particular aesthetic characteristics, although the general setting of the place does contribute to an understanding of some significant attributes of the place such as the deer park.

G. Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions.

The Melton Mowbray Hotel is of historic cultural heritage significance as the development which established the township of Melton Mowbray. Prior to Blackwell establishing the hotel, the wider area of Cross Marsh comprised of sparsely spread farm complexes set back from the main road. The establishment of the Melton Mowbray Hotel lent its name to what was to become a small township on the highway, still known by that name today. The hotel was the social and sporting heart of the wider community and its location at the intersection of two major highways has made it a landmark for generations.

The Melton Mowbray Hotel and associated infrastructure, in particular the stables and horse trough are of historic cultural heritage significance to the horse racing community. As early as the 1920s, and through the 20th century, there was media interest in the hotel as the place of breeding of a Melbourne Cup winner, a four-time Launceston cup winner and sire of a renowned line of thoroughbreds. Any association of the place with the breeding, training and care of horses contributes to this significance. Similar sites of such associations include the Waverley cottages and Assyrian (Melbourne cup winner) stables and grave at Oatlands. Aspects relating to horses, such as the stables and trough are tangible links to these associations.

H. Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history.

The Melton Mowbray Hotel and associated structures and features are of historic cultural heritage significance because of their association with a number of prominent early Tasmanian identities.

The brainchild of Samuel Blackwell, who was well known in southern Tasmanian colonial society as a hotelier, horseracing identify, merchant and sportsman. His obituary published in the Tasmanian Mail on the 18th July 1885 attests to his character and popularity in the colony.

The hotel was designed by John Thomson, a former convict who made-good as a superintendent of the colonial Public Works Department then to establish a successful architectural practice in Hobart. The hotel is an example of his work, and bears some stylistic resemblance to other works by Thomson such as Lauderdale Cottage (New Town).

The deer park has strong associations with John Bisdee – the first person to import deer into Australasia and the second generation of the important midlands Bisdee family, many descendants of whom still farm in the district.

With further research, stronger associations may be made with other prominent persons who visited/frequented the hotel, such as Governor Weld and the Duke of Edinburgh, and although merely anecdotal at this stage, the alleged association of Blackwell with the British Royal family has the potential to add to the significance of the place if further research could corroborate that story.

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