

Montgomery buys a slice of 'Motang' history



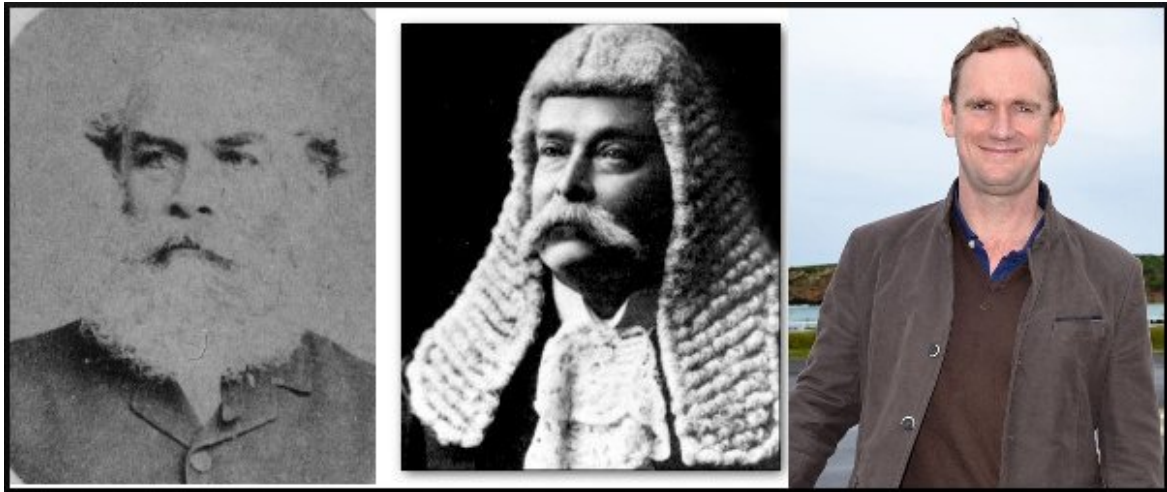
The original sharefarmer's cottage on the 'Motang' estate, Hopkins Point Road, which has been bought by Fletcher Jones factory owner, Dean Montgomery. Image: Bluestone Magazine.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #8F9F59;"] Having changed the future of one Warrnambool landmark with his [purchase of the former Fletcher Jones factory](#), Hong Kong-based businessman **Dean Montgomery** has bought another significant property.

Bluestone has learnt that Mr Montgomery is the new owner of the 140-year-old 'Motang' stone house and surrounding 58-acres that occupies a slice of prime land between the beach and Hopkins Point Road, at the eastern entrance to Warrnambool.

The homestead dates back to the 1870s and was originally owned by the pioneering **Thomas Manifold**, who in the 1850s bought several hundred acres that made up the 'Motang' estate on both sides of Hopkins Point Road.

According to historians Helen Doyle, Louise Honman and Richard Aitken*, Thomas and his wife, **Jane Manifold**, may have used the property as a summer retreat, but the house itself was most likely built by a sharefarmer tenant at the Manifold's expense, as was a common arrangement at the time.



Dean Montgomery, right, may have to grow a handlebar moustache if he wishes to follow the tradition of former 'Motang' owners Thomas Manifold, far left, and son, Sir Walter. Images: Australian Dictionary of Biography/Bluestone Magazine.

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[/dropcap]ir **Walter Synnot Manifold**, the son of Thomas, inherited the property after the death of his parents, but apparently never lived there.

He instead resided in the family home at Wollaston, from where he maintained his busy life as a state politician representing the Western Province in the Legislative Council. Like Sir Fletcher Jones, Sir Walter was a man of the people and well-respected for his inclusive approach to business.

Sir Walter, who died in 1928, put the entire 'Motang' estate up for auction in 1906 at a reserve of £40 an acre. It was passed in, but sold shortly after to **John Wilson Younger**, from Younger's store fame in Warrnambool, who was also a former mayor.

The property has since been progressively divided up and held by different owners over the years, with farming brothers **Edward** and **William Tomlinson** among those to own the portion that included the eight-room homestead and outbuildings.

They auctioned off 100 acres in 1934 to the Ryan family, when the asking price for the “marine frontage” was £1 an acre! The Ryan family later used the property to raise racehorses.



A magnificent sandstone wall is about all that remains of the original barn on the property. Image: Bluestone Magazine.

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[/dropcap]r Montgomery could not be contacted for comment, but it is understood he intends to retain and restore as much of the original homestead and outbuildings as possible.

The white-washed homestead is derelict and, like the Fletcher Jones building, has suffered at the hands of squatters, but still retains much of its character.

Historians suggest it was modelled on Scottish/Irish

farmhouses of the time, and built from stone quarried on the land.

A sandstone wall is just about all that remains of the original barn, but it also still captures the building techniques of the period.

As it happens, another significant chunk of the Manifold's original 'Motang' property [is for sale across the road](#) from Mr Montgomery's purchase.

That 70-hectare property is owned by the family of the late **Dan Madden**, a Warrnambool solicitor, and – unlike the homestead portion – falls within the town boundary for subdivision.

The asking price is believed to be around \$20 million: a little more, to say the least, than the £40 per acre that Sir Walter was asking for...



The derelict stone house has been vacant for many years, but will eventually be restored. Image: Bluestone Magazine.

[box]*Helen Doyle, Louise Honman and Richard Aitken, 'Warrnambool Heritage: A report on selected sites in Allansford, Bushfield, Farnham and Woodford', prepared for Warrnambool City Council, November 2001.[/box]

Bluestone Magazine would like to thank historian [Dr Helen Doyle \(Context\)](#) and Steve Myers (Warrnambool City Council) for their invaluable help in retrieving a copy of the above report which provided the historical information for this story.

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