

Montgomery tipped to buy Glenormiston



The historic Glenormiston Homestead, built in 1847, is believed to have been sold to the owner of the Fletcher Jones site, Dean Montgomery. Image: Heritage Victoria.

A BLUESTONE EXCLUSIVE:

Words by Carol Altmann

The owner of the former Fletcher Jones factory in Warrnambool, **Dean Montgomery**, is expected to be announced shortly as the new owner of the former Glenormiston Agricultural College.

Bluestone Magazine has learned that Mr Montgomery is the frontrunner to take over the 300ha college site and historic Glenormiston Homestead, near Terang, which has been vacant for two years following the departure of TAFE.

The site has since been under caretaker control of the State Government, which earlier this year launched an Expression of Interest process to try and find a new owner.

Previous attempts by the former Coalition Government to secure a new tenant fell over in 2014 and it was also unable to find a buyer for the site.

The Andrews Labor Government, however, is expected to announce shortly that Mr Montgomery, who is based in China, is the successful buyer following an extensive negotiation process. Mr Montgomery could not be reached for comment.



A detail of the exquisite staircase panels carved by Robert Prenzel that are expected to be included in the sale. Image: [Weekly Times.](#)

Bluestone has been told that the sale is expected to include the multi-million dollar wooden staircase carved by colonial woodcarver and cabinet maker **Robert Prenzel** for the original owners of the homestead, the Black family, in 1909.

Wealthy pastoralist **Niel Black** built the five-bedroom mansion in 1847 and the Black family owned the property until 1949

when it sold it to the State Government for use as an agricultural college, although Glenormiston Agriculture College did not start until 22 years later.

The 35 Prenzel wooden panels along the staircase [had been the subject of some dispute over just who owned them](#), having been removed by the Black family and donated to Melbourne University, which later returned them to the property and included them in the transfer to TAFE in 2005.

The homestead is considered of architectural and historical significance to Victoria because of its design, but also its reflection of how south-west Victoria was colonised.

Heritage Victoria makes the point that, prior to Niel Black arriving at the site, it was the scene of an aboriginal massacre and “as on many other Western District estates, violence towards aborigines was used to consolidate the property”.

“Glenormiston’s origins, thus, are intimately bound up with the violence that accompanied the early expansion of the Western District frontier in the 19th century,” its Victorian Heritage Database listing says.



The owner of the former Fletcher Jones factory, Dean Montgomery, is expected to be announced as the new owner of the Glenormiston College site. Image: Bluestone Magazine.

The expected purchase of Glenormiston College is one of several prominent property purchases by Mr Montgomery in the recent years.

The Geelong-born businessman bought the former Fletcher Jones site in Warrnambool in 2014 with a view to establishing the [Warrnambool Motor Museum](#) that is now under construction. He has also purchased the T&G building in Geelong, the Leura Hotel in Camperdown and the historic Motang homestead on Hopkins Point Road, Warrnambool.

At this point we can't confirm what the Glenormiston College site will be used for under Mr Montgomery's ownership, although the State Government had stipulated in the EOI process that at least part of it continue to be used for education and training.



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