Shire of Melton Dry Stone Walls Study

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SHIRE OF MELTON

Melton Dry Stone Walls Study

Prepared for the Melton Shire Council and
Department of Sustainability and Environment

By Planning Collaborative (Vic) Pty Ltd

SHIRE OF MELTON

Department of Sustainability and Environment

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Citation No. 1 - Mount Cottrell Dry Stone Wall Precinct

Melton Dry Stone Walls Survey Nos:	(See description)
Location:	Mount Cottrell
Critical Dates:	Construction of Mount Cottrell Road walls, c.mid-late 1850s; construction of Wall F96, c.1876; construction of wall F100, c.1879
Existing Heritage Listings:	HO111, HO104, HO110, HO105
Recommended Level of Significance:	LOCAL

Statement of Significance:

The Mount Cottrell Dry Stone Wall Precinct is a group of characteristic and distinctive Shire of Melton walls built c.late 1850s to 1870s. The precinct is significant at the LOCAL level for its contributory association with the geologically and historically significant Mount Cottrell; for its demonstration of rural settlement patterns; for its association with Victoria's seminal pastoral industry and in particular the Clarke family; for its association with several small farms whose wall styles and patterns contrast to those of Clarke; for its other historical associations, including post-contact conflict between the native and invading populations, gold-rush land speculators, Melton's first pound, and the issue of closed roads on pastoral estates; for its demonstration of skilled craftsmanship; and for its potential to provide both research and educative information regarding nineteenth century farming and pastoral practices on Melbourne's western plains. The precinct has significance for the views to and from the summit of Mount Cottrell over endangered volcanic grasslands, and remnant bushland to the west.

The Mount Cottrell Dry Stone Wall Precinct is historically significant at the LOCAL level (AHC A3, A4, B2, D2). It is associated with Mount Cottrell, a landmark for the Port Phillip explorers, named after one of the members of the Port Phillip Association, and was later infamous for the site of the murder of Charles Franks. The precinct demonstrates, in the arrangement of walls and farms, the early pastoral and farming settlement patterns of Melbourne's western plains. It is significant as probably the best collection of walls expressing the Shire's nineteenth century pastoral industry, and in particular the Rockbank station, part of the estate of WJT Clarke, and his son Sir WJ Clarke. Wall F96 is the most substantial dry stone wall associated with WJT Clarke. The Mount Cottrell Road walls are of historical significance for their association with George Scarborough, and the first pound in the Melton district which operated between 1854-57.

The precinct is also expressive of the role of gold-rush land speculators in the early development of the Shire; the walls constitute the only remaining evidence of the subdivision patterns established by these speculators. Most of the precinct's walls are composite stone and post & wire, and express the historical diversity of dry stone wall construction in Victoria, and are representative of the dominant type of wall in Melbourne's west. The partly dry-stone-wall lined dam on Mt Cottrell Road is a characteristic feature of the Shire of Melton.

The Mount Cottrell Dry Stone Wall Precinct is aesthetically significant at the LOCAL level (AHC E1). The commanding views from Faulkners Road and the summit of Mount Cottrell across the grassland plains to Port Phillip, is evocative of the C19th cultural landscape which drew settlers to the area. The dry stone walls which cross the landscape in regular enclosure

patterns make a fundamental statement about human interaction with the volcanic landscape of which they are a part. Some of the individual walls, in particular Wall F96, on Faulkners Road, have excellent sculptural qualities, and are expressive of the skilled craftsmanship of their builders. Wall F96 is the most finely built and intact all-stone wall of orthodox construction remaining in the Shire. The broad slopes of Mount Cottrell are a dominating feature of the plains landscape as far away as Tarneit to the south and Melton to the north-west. The volcanic grassland plains and the dry stone walls preserve flora and fauna which is regionally rare and endangered. The remnant areas of bushland to the west in Bushs paddocks and Pinkerton forest, in combination with the grasslands and dry stone walls, preserve elements of the C19th pastoral landscape which is becoming increasingly rare.

The Mount Cottrell Dry Stone Wall Precinct is scientifically significant at the LOCAL level (A1, C2). The precinct demonstrates the volcanic origin of the landscape, and is associated with Mount Cottrell, which is the best example in Victoria of a lava shield volcano with a lava cone forming its summit. The walls have the potential to yield research information regarding wall construction techniques, nineteenth century rural settlement patterns and farm management, on Melbourne's western plains. The remnant volcanic grasslands and bushland retain landscapes which are under threat and preserve flora and fauna which is increasingly rare and threatened.

The Mount Cottrell Dry Stone Wall Precinct is socially significant at the LOCAL level (AHC G1). The precinct has the potential to educate the community in regard to wall construction techniques, and also nineteenth century farm management, settlement patterns, and ways of life on Melbourne's western plains. Both Wall F96, and the former Scarborough farm complex on Mount Cottrell Road were identified as being of the highest significance in a pioneering 1990 heritage study of dry stone walls in Melbourne's west.

Overall, the Mount Cottrell Dry Stone Wall Precinct is of LOCAL significance.

The following extract from Council's GIS provides a list of all the walls in the Mount Cottrell precinct:

WALL NO	NEAREST ROAD
C185	Greigs Road
C49	Mount Cottrell Road
C50	Greigs Road
C51	Mount Cottrell Road
C52	Faulkners Road
C55	Greigs Road
C56	Faulkners Road
C57	Faulkners Road
C58	Greigs Road
C59	Greigs Road
C60	Faulkners Road
C61	Greigs Road
C62	Faulkners Road
C63	Faulkners Road
C64	Harrison Road
C65	Greigs Road
C66	Greigs Road
C67	Greigs Road
F100	Faulkners Road
F101	Faulkners Road
F102	Mount Cottrell Road
F103	Mount Cottrell Road
F104	Mount Cottrell Road
F105	Mount Cottrell Road
F106	Mount Cottrell Road
F107	Mount Cottrell Road
F108	Mount Cottrell Road
F109	Mount Cottrell Road
F110	Boundary Road

F111	Faulkners Road
F113	Mount Cottrell Road
F112	Mount Cottrell Road
F114	Mount Cottrell Road
F182	Boundary Road
F183	Boundary Road
F184	Boundary Road
F93	Downing Street
F95	Riding Boundary Road
F96	Faulkners Road
F97	Middle Road
F98	Faulkners Road
F99	Faulkners Road
G90	Downing Street
G91	Downing Street
G92	Downing Street
K154	Greigs Road
K157	Mount Cottrell Road
K158	Mount Cottrell Road
K159	Mount Cottrell Road
K160	Mount Cottrell Road
K162	Mount Cottrell Road
K163	Mount Cottrell Road
K167	Mount Cottrell Road
K168	Boundary Road
K173	Mount Cottrell Road

Description:

The centre of the precinct, and the source of the fieldstone used in the construction of its walls, is Mount Cottrell, one of about 400 inactive eruption points that have been identified on Victoria's western volcanic plains. Although a very broad 'shield' volcano, like many of the volcanoes on these plains, which stretch from the Darebin Creek to near the South Australian border, Mount Cottrell lends a dramatic and distinctive character to an otherwise flat landscape. The precinct is characterized by the extensive views of grasslands to the south and east and rare remnant grey box forest to the west, which follow the pattern of lava flows.

Mount Cottrell itself was built up by a succession of lava flows over its life. These broad flows of lava radiated from Mt Cottrell in all directions, the longest being to the south. The lava flows changed the drainage lines and caused the present courses of the Werribee River to its west, and the Kororoit Creek to its north. The eastern extent of these lava flows is an unnamed gully which marks the boundary between the Mt Cottrell and the (younger) Mt Atkinson flows.[1] Its tongues of lava were effusive and slowly cooling, producing a denser basalt, in contrast to explosive eruptions, or quickly cooling flows, which produced a more vesicular scoria or tuff. While the vesicularity of the basalt extruded from Mount Cottrell varies, the dominant surface stone is a grey basalt,[2] which is evident in the round dense stones that feature in the dry stone walls of the precinct.

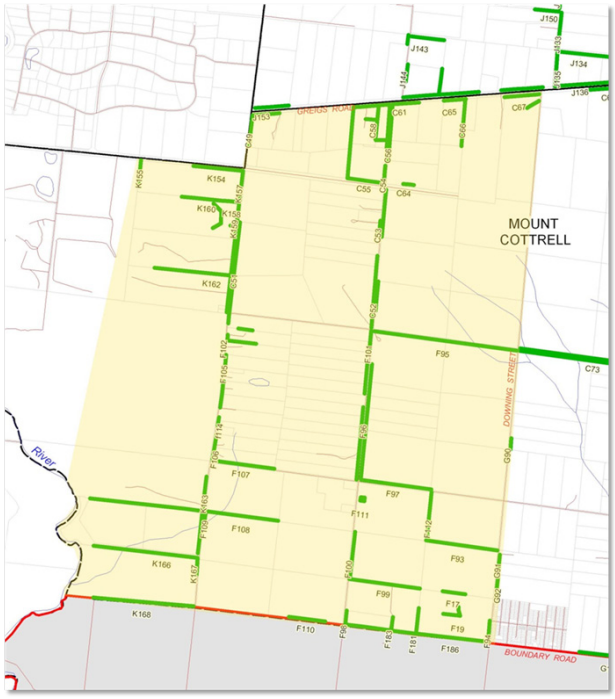
1 Stewart, G, 'The Newer Volcanics lava field between Deer Park and the Werribee River', *Geological Survey of Victoria, Unpublished Report* 1977/26, 1977, pp.4, 7.
2 *ibid*

The British surveyors divided the extensive plains into square mile allotments, and created roads on a massive grid. Most of the area was eventually incorporated into the Clarke's vast Rockbank pastoral estate, which closed off many of these roads. Some (eg Faulkners Road) have since been opened, but the precinct includes several that are still closed. These roads – Middle Road and part of Greigs Road – intersect Faulkners Road, and are marked by dry stone walls.

Both Faulkners Road and Mount Cottrell Roads are aligned north-south over the lower slopes of Mount Cottrell, providing long views to the east and west. The views from Faulkners Road across the still essentially undeveloped plains of Port Phillip, to the looming skyline of the city whose creation was the consequence of these same sheep pastures, is an integral part of the cultural landscape.The grasslands to the west and south of Mount Cottrell are now rare and have been identified for protection. To the west of Mount Cottrell are two areas of remnant bush, which also have dry stone wall structures within them.

The precinct comprises most of the walls on Faulkners Road and some of those on Mount Cottrell Road, Some walls on the north side of Boundary Road and some to the south of Greigs Road. In common with most old dry stone walls on Victoria's western volcanic plains, while often retaining sections in near original condition, most walls are generally in a deteriorating condition. However there are two important exceptions in this precinct, which contain walls in good-excellent condition: the wall on the east side of Faulkner Road (Wall F96), and the former Scarborough farm, or the Mount Cottrell Road Stock Yards and Ruins complex.

Mount Cottrell dry stone wall precinct



History:

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

Historically, Mount Cottrell was a landmark for early explorers of Port Phillip. It was one of the points marked on Batman's plans, and was named after one of his sponsors, Port Phillip Association member Anthony Cotterell.[1]

Charles Franks

Mt Cottrell was one of the early landmarks of John Batman in his trek from the Bellarine Peninsula across the area north of Melbourne and then back to the Yarra River in 1835. The volcanic peak assumed the name of Dr Cotterell, a member of the Port Phillip Association, to whom this area was later allotted by the Association.

As the scene of the murder of squatter Charles Franks and his shepherd by Aborigines in early July 1836 Mt

1 It is shown on 1835 maps associated with Port Phillip Association members JH Wedge and JT Gellibrand (JS Duncan, 'The Port Phillip Association Maps', *The Globe*, No.32, 1989); Governor Bourke referred to it in his journal account of his trip around Port Phillip in March 1837 (M Cannon (ed), *Historical Records of Victoria*, Vol.1, Victoria Government Printer, Melbourne, 1981, p.105).

Cotterell was to become notorious in the fledgling Melbourne settlement. Historians of early Port Phillip, Robert Spreadborough and Hugh Anderson, mapped the location of Franks' station on Faulkner's Road at the present dry stone walls.[2] Franks' murder appears to have been a watershed in Port Phillip's early European-Aboriginal relationships. Franks had only been on his sheep-run for a few weeks when he and his shepherd were found killed by tomahawk blows to the head; their supplies had been pilfered. The incident inflamed the community; the whole of the fledgling Melbourne settlement attending their funeral.[3] For some time 'Mt Franks' was an alternative name for 'Mt Cotteril'.[4]

On 28th July, prominent squatter George MacKillop advised the Colonial Secretary that unless the Government intervened, he feared 'there will be a war of extermination at Port Phillip, like what took place here some years ago.'[5] Although Spreadborough and Anderson map Franks' station on Faulkner's Road, there is no documentary source provided for this location.[6] Given that Franks was only at Mt Cottrell for a few weeks the exact site of the murders may never be known, beyond having taken place 'near Mount Cotteril on the Werribee River'.[7]

2 Spreadborough, R, Anderson, H, *Victorian Squatters* (Red Rooster Press, Ascot Vale, 1983), map.
3 Anderson, H (ed), Gurner, HF *Chronicle of Port Phillip Now the Colony of Victoria from 1770 to 1840* (Red Rooster Press, Melbourne, 1978), p.30
4 See, eg, CPO Map Rail 19 (March 1856)
5 Canon, M (ed.) *Historical Records of Victoria, Vol.2A, The Aborigines of Port Phillip, 1835-1839* (VGPO, Melbourne, 1982), p.40
6 Robert Spreadborough died in the mid-1990s, and Hugh Anderson does not know the location of the Franks murder.
7 George Smith, in Cannon, Historical Records of Victoria, Vol.2A, p.43. This is the best description of the general location of the site by someone who had actually seen it.

Fencing in Nineteenth Century Rural Victoria

- **Fencing the Wilderness, 1850s-1870s**

The majority of dry stone walls in Victoria appear to have been built in the 30 year period from the 1850s to the 1880s.

In 1826 rural affairs commentator James Atkinson reported that he knew of no example of dry stone walling having been erected in the colony of New South Wales.[8] Initially pastoralists employed shepherds to look after sheep. They guided the sheep to pasture during the day, and in the evening returned them to folds, constructed of wooden hurdles or brush fences, near their huts (or outstations). There are several dry stone walls on Melton's Kororoit Creek that are thought to have been associated with early pastoralists: an outstation associated with Yuille at Caroline Springs, and the remnants of a wall that are thought to have been associated with a shepherd's enclosure.[9] Other fencing was used on the squatters' homestations:- the 'home paddock' (likely for the squatters' precious horses) and the 'cultivation [or kitchen] garden'. Early fences were also required to separate stock for breeding purposes. These fences were usually of post & rail, vertical timber slabs or other primitive paling material.[10] (However at *Greenhills* in Toolern Vale there are some remains of a dry stone wall that would appear to be the remnants of an original homestation garden.[11])

Two major and related events in the early 1850s radically changed this situation. Firstly, the exodus to the gold-rushes made it difficult and expensive for squatters to retain labour for shepherding. And secondly, the extensive survey, subdivision and sale of Crown land in the early 1850s provided security of tenure to pastoralists, and incentive for them to invest in major improvements, including permanent fences on their stations. Pastoralists were also encouraged to fence their land to ensure that neighbouring farmers didn't allow their stock to stray upon the open expanses of their stations.

8 Kerr, JS, 'Fencing, a brief account of the development of fencing in Australia', *Australasian Society for Historical Archaeology Newsletter*, Vol. 14.No.1, March 1984, pp.9-16.
9 Melton Heritage Study Place Nos. 467 and 81.
10 Kerr, *loc cit*; Allan Willingham, 'The Dry Stone Walls in the Corangamite Region: A Brief History', in Corangamite Arts Council Inc, *If These Walls Could Talk, Report of the Corangamite Dry Stone Walls Conservation Project*, Terang, 1995, p.44
11 Melton Heritage Study, Place No.055

Nevertheless, until the 1860s extensive fencing of properties remained the exception rather than the rule. The first boundary fences in the Barrabool Hills of Victoria were only erected in 1854, and boundary and paddock fencing 'only gathered momentum after the mid 1850s.'[12] This was no doubt due to the extensive sale of Crown Land as freehold in the 1850s, as well as the increasing availability of capital due to the gold boom, and the increasing availability of labour including professional stone wallers as alluvial gold declined in the late 1850s.

Slowly, fences began to replace shepherds on the pastoral estates. Early maps of Melton Shire show that pastoralists built walls and fences relatively sparsely – only on property boundaries and to enclose huge paddocks (about 5-10 square kilometres in the south part of Clarke's Rockbank estate).[13] In dramatic contrast the same historical maps (and the mapping survey undertaken as part of this Study) show concentrated patterns of walled paddocks established on farms in the same areas at the same time. The creation of small paddocks enabled mixed farming, by securing crops and gardens from stock, and managing stock for breeding. This Study shows that, in the south of the Shire, virtually all of these fences were dry stone walls. Dry stone walls were also used to protect the homestead from stock, to construct stockyards, fowl houses and pigpens, and possibly, on a few of the larger farms, to provide aesthetic effect.[14]

Given the expense of establishing a farm from nothing in a wilderness, and the experience of many small farmers as agricultural labourers before coming to Australia, it is almost certain that the walls on all but the largest farms would have been constructed by farmers themselves rather than by professional wallers. For example, general hand William Ison and his wife arrived on a Werribee farm in the mid 1850s, and found there a small wooden cottage and a young German in charge, 'who had already done some clearing of the stones which covered the land … We set to, and cleared about 10 acres, and had it fenced in with stones by the next sowing time.'[15] The quality of wall construction would have depended on the experience of the farmers and their seasonal hands at the craft. William Robinson who settled in the Tarneit area in 1872, was a stonemason who turned his skills to fieldstone, building a house (which does not survive) of the material and numerous fences (some of which do survive along Robinsons Road).

The outbreak of the highly contagious sheep disease, 'scab', which reached epidemic proportions in the 1850s, hastened enclosure of the pastoral estates.[16] Western District squatter Neil Black quickly enclosed his Glenormiston run, and in 1854 George Russell ordered five miles of wire: '…the importance of fencing is becoming every year more apparent.'[17]

Likewise, the appearance of pluero-pneumonia in Australian cattle in the early 1860s impressed cattle-men of the need to isolate their properties from travelling or straying stock.[18] That 'dreadful disease' also encouraged the erection of property fences by Melton dairy farmers (and was responsible for less use of local Commons by Melton's farmers).[19]

The construction of fencing that was encouraged by sheep scab and cattle pleuro pneumonia was also fostered by legislation. At the beginning of the pastoral period in Victoria, common law held that, generally, a landowner was under no obligation to construct or maintain boundary fences, or fences adjoining a public road. However, as a result of Australia's rapidly expanding pastoral industry, trespass of stock, and the need for security, the Victoria's *Fences Statute 1865* gave landowners the right to claim equal contribution towards the construction or repair of boundary fences from the owners of adjoining lands.[20]

12 Kerr, *loc cit*
13 Shire Map Series (1892); Army Ordnance Map, 1916: 'Sunbury'.
14 Alan Marshall, asking an old waller why the walls on a particular property were so high, was told that ostensibly the reason was to keep steers in (they jumped fences), but the real reason was 'just so that he could say he had the best walls in the Western District, the biggest and the best, and bugger you.' (cited in Corangamite Arts Council, 1995, p.114). On Melbourne's western plains district however, such finely constructed walls were generally associated with formal gardens on only the largest properties, such as the Ha Ha walls on the Eynesbury (Melton Shire) and Werribee Park (Wyndham Shire) pastoral estates, or Greystones (Moorabool Shire).
15 Murray, E, *The Plains of Iramoo*, Henwood & Dancy, Geelong, 1974, p.111. (Murray notes that in 1974 these walls were still standing.)
16 Kerr, *loc cit*
17 Willingham, *op cit*, p.45
18 Kerr, *loc cit*
19 Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 1864, p.94 ; John Chandler, Michael Canon, *Forty Years in the Wilderness* (Loch Haven, Main Ridge, 1990), p.175
20 Lawlink: New South Wales Law Reform Commission website: 'Report 59 (1988) – Community Law Reform Program: Dividing Fences'; Parliament of Victoria website: Law Reform Committee, 'Review of the Fences Act 1968'

By 1876 the presence of 'substantial stone walls' appears to have been hallmark of a good farm in the Melton district, the *Australasian*'s 'Travelling Reporter' making sure to note these on the farms of Ralph Parkinson, George Missen, John Moylan and Isaac Gidney.[21] However little is known of dry stone wallers who worked in the Shire at the time: Irish brothers John and George Funston worked in the Toolern Vale area from the 1850s; Patrick Connor worked on Mount Aitken in the 1860s; and Dick (the mason) Mitchell, and Arcoll (Arkell) worked in the Mount Cottrell area before 1872.[22]

- **Types of Fencing in the Nineteenth Century**

The great variety and combination of nineteenth century fencing arose 'as much from material shortages and the need to use what was procurable as from a desire to improve the utility and durability of fencing.'[23] As is the case with the rest of the Shire, most of the walls in the Mount Cottrell precinct are 'composite' stone and post & wire, rather than all-stone.

The *Fences Statute 1874* lists numerous types of fences, including 'walls' (stone walls) and 'combination' type fences. Walls that divided properties had to be a minimum of 4 feet high (1.22 metres), with a base of 'not less than 2 feet wide at the bottom', and '9 inches at the top'.[24] Although the specifications for road boundary fences were not given (the Crown being exempt from the legislation) it could be expected that the walls on these public boundaries would be at least as high as those that divided neighbouring properties.

Post and rail fences were the most common early fence type in Australia, no doubt due to the prevalence of forests and woodlands, in contrast to stony land, across Victoria. They appeared early and were prominent in the study area. In 1854 William Westgarth, on his way to the goldfields Royal Commission in Ballarat, recorded that he 'struck west through post and rail fences onto the Keilor Plains'.[25] By the 1860s timber fencing, probably from the Grey Box forest in the west and south-west of the Shire, was common in the vicinity of Melton. But as local farmer John Chandler recorded, such fencing was prone to loss in the bushfires that swept south from the ranges over the plains.[26] Even in the volcanic area near Aitkens Hill to the north of the Shire, nearly 80% of squatter John Aitken's fencing was either 'post & rail' (either 2 rail, the most common, or 3 rail), or 'post & 2 rails with (2 or 3) wires', or 'post & rail with 5 foot palings'. The balance was 'stone walls'.[27] These figures might reflect squatters' early preference for timber fencing, and an early dearth of professional dry stone walling skills, not remedied until after the gold rushes. In 1868 on the same property Henry Beattie erected much more stone walling, but also built nearly twice as much '3-rail fence' in the same year.[28]

Post and wire fences were first introduced into Victoria in the 1850s, but the price of the metal posts (which could often not go down into the dry hard ground in Victoria) made them 'exceedingly expensive'.[29] The very thick and soft 'black bull wire' was soon superseded by galvanised steel wires which, with droppers to keep the wire stable, allowing greater distance between fence posts, reducing the costs.[30] With progressive improvements, including local production of wire, use of timber posts, and winding and straining devices, by at least the early 1870s wire was the cheapest type of fence.[31] The invention of barbed wire in the 1870s, and its widespread use in Victoria in the 1880s meant that it could secure cattle as well as sheep, and it became the standard fence type from this time.[32]

21 The *Australasian*, October 1876.
22 Bilszta, JA, 'Dry Stone Wall: Faulkners Road, Mt Cottrell, Shire of Melton', 9/9/1990, unpublished paper
23 Kerr, *loc cit*
24 The Fences Statute 1874 (Fences Amendment Act, November 1873), Clause 4 (i-xi). Other types of early fencing are described in Michael Cannon's *Life in the Country: Australia in the Victorian Age: 2*, Nelson, West Melbourne, 1978, pp.89-90; and Graham Condah's *Of the Hut I Builded*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1988, p.89.
25 Lack, J, Ford, O, 'Melbourne's Western Region: An Introductory History' (Melbourne's Living Museum of the West Inc, Melbourne Western Region Commission, 1986), p.27
26 Chandler, J, Forty Years in the Wilderness, Loch Haven, 1990, p.174
27 Map, 'Index of Fences' on John Aitken's Mount Aitken property (after Crown Land sales). PROV 460/P0/39365. (The stone walls would appear not to survive.)
28 Beattie, Steward K, *The Odd Good Year: Early Scots to Port Phillip, Northern Australia, Gap, Gisborne and Beyond*, Southwood Press, Marrickville, 1999, p.63
29 Willingham, *op cit*, pp.45-6
30 Cannon, 1978, *op cit*, pp.89-91
31 Survey of 21 Selectors in the Holden – Mount Cottrell districts.
32 Willingham, *op cit*, p.46; Kerr, *loc cit;* Cannon, 1978, *loc cit*

- **Dry Stone Walls**

In 1856 a government agricultural reporter travelling through the eastern part of Melton Shire (the Parish of Maribyrnong) commented that: 'A few good stone fences the only improvement worth noting.'[33]

A dry stone wall was the best solution: - 'Where stone was abundant, timber scarce, transport of fencing material expensive, skilled labour available, and where cheaper alternatives were unavailable.'[34] From about the mid-late 1850s, when freehold ownership exploded and the price of labour declined, and through the early 1860s when the price of labour remained cheap, the labour-intensive construction of stone walls remained very competitive.

Stone walls were built wherever stony ground made them possible, or necessary. While most farmers built their own walls to clear stony ground and manage stock and crops, pastoralists could afford professional wallers.[35] In the mid 1850s brothers John and George Funston, stone wallers and farm labourers from Ireland, are known to have been erecting walls on the Mount Aitken and Gisborne Park estates.[36] The Mount Aitken station accounts in 1868 showing the employment of a John Starkie for four weeks to help Henry gather and cart stones, and the engagement of 'Paterick [sic] Connor, Stone Wall Fencer' to erect 34 chains of stone walling at the very low rate of only 8 shillings per chain.

The popularity of stone walls with farmers is evident in the Lands Department files relating to the 1860s Selection Acts, which record the type, length and price of fencing 'improvements' made by each selector. A detailed examination of 21 selections in the Mount Cottrell, Rockbank, Mount Kororoit and Diggers Rest–Holden areas reveals that stone walling constituted by far the largest proportion (60%) of the 32.3 kilometres of fencing built on those properties by c.1875, despite the fact that it was the most expensive. Post & wire fences, one of the cheapest types of fencing then available, comprised only 6% of all fences erected. Post & rail fences, a little cheaper than the best stone walls, and a little dearer than the cheapest, constituted 9% of the fences. (Note that many other 'composite' varieties of fences were constructed from these three primary materials. There were also a small number of 'stub' or picket, and 'log' fences.[37])

Stone walling resolved two problems: the need to clear the land of rocks, and the need for fencing. Unquestionably, as was the case elsewhere, the key reason for the preference for dry stone walls on Melbourne's western plains by selectors was the need to clear stony land to enable cropping and grazing (dairying).[38]

Apart from the relatively small areas that were sold under the Selection Acts, there were many other areas of dry stone walling in Melton Shire. It is estimated that there were 23 miles of fencing on the Moylan brothers' Mt Kororoit property by 1876, and from the extensive walls that survive today it is evident that much of this was dry stone wall construction.[39] Property sale advertisements in the local paper suggest that the properties on the Keilor Plain east of Toolern Creek were almost entirely walled.[40] Advertisements for stone wallers in the Buttlejorrk, Diggers Rest and Rockbank areas appeared regularly until 1890. Between Toolern Vale and Diggers Rest the Beaty family built many kilometres of medium sized stone walls along boundaries, and a few larger walls inside their properties for stock. Other walls, including one of substantial composition (on the former Campbells' *Toolern Park* property), are scattered lightly around Toolern Vale. The highest concentration of walls is situated in the southern plains of the Shire: the 1850s small farming communities of Mt Cottrell and Truganina, and the paddock and boundary fences of WJT Clarke's *Rockbank* station.

33 Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 'Statistics of Victoria for 1856', Appendix No.1, p.46

34 Vines, G, 'Comparative Analysis of Dry Stone Walls in Victoria, Australia and Overseas', in Corangamite Arts Council, 1995, op cit, p.56

35 Ann Beggs-Sunter, 'Buninyong and District Community News', Issue 211, August 1996

36 Judith Bilszta, Melton Heritage Study Research, Place No.029 (3/8/2005)

37 Research of PROV VPRS 625 (Selection Act files) for the Keneally, Slattery, Reddan J, Reddan M, Tate, Rhodes C, Rhodes, McKenzie, O'Brien P, McLeod, O'Brien J, Moloney, White, Mangovin, Carrige, Moylan Mary, Moylan Margaret, Parry, Moylan, MP, Moylan T, and Watts selections. This sample is primarily of selectors on stony country, Hannah Watts, in the forest off Chapmans Road Toolern Vale being the only exception; interestingly, the cost of her post & rail fences were half the price of the others, no doubt reflecting the relative proximity of materials, with none of the other properties having ready access to local timber. Another possible bias of the sample is the over-representation of Moylan properties. But it remains a good sample of fences built in stony country in the period late 1860s to mid 1870s.

38 Selectors were in fact obliged under the Selection Acts to cultivate 10% of their land area.

39 *The Australasian*, 28th October 1876

40 Bilszta, 1990, *op cit*.

According to Vines the dry stone walls of the Keilor-Werribee Plains 'form a reasonably distinct regional style quite different from either the interstate examples or the Western District walls'. This regional style is characterised by:-

> *'… walls constructed using the local rounded, smoothly weathered, basalt field-stone of variable size. They are generally fairly low walls, averaging 1.2 metres with a width at the base of an average of 0.83 metres and battered sides on a slope of about 5-10 degrees off the vertical. Coursing is uncommon although coping is almost always found on intact walls and through stones can usually be identified at regular intervals of about one metre. The coping stones are often quite large, rounded boulders of a maximum dimension of 400-500 millimetres. Because of their rounded shape the stones are rarely suited to the close-fitting construction seen on the Western district walls, either for the main part of the wall or the coping. As a result, the rabbit proofing techniques involving close plugging, overhanging coping, or other methods are never found in this region.'*[41]

These regular round stones lack interlocking, and often surface friction, and were never the ideal building material. The author of the 1848 'Rural Cyclopedia' considered round stones objectionable 'as they are ever rolling off'. The small wedge stones which held these round stones in position were easily dislodged.[42] Similarly, the 'round stone fence' surmounted by turf was described in Loudon's 1857 guide to British agriculture as a 'very indifferent fence', whose only apparent benefit was that it cleared the land of stone and could be built by labourers. It was found to be unstable when built to a standard wall height. Stock could easily dislodged its copings, and 'great trouble and expense are annually required to keep it in repair.'[43] Despite this, as can be seen in an apparently scarce example of this type in Corangamite (the Foxhow Road Wall), a sturdy wall of very respectable height could be built by careful selection and coursing of stones, and the use of copestones and extensive plugging.[44]

The Fences Statute's specification of walls to be a minimum 4 feet (1220 mm) high seems to have been the 'average paddock height' for which tenders were called in sheep country.[45] Walls in cattle country were built higher 'to discourage the cattle from leaning over to reach greener pastures and dislodging coping stones'. While numerous Western District dairying walls are higher, 'walls enclosing cattle were generally at least 1.4 metres (4 feet 7 inches) high'.[46] This standard also seems to have been applied in Melton, where the Moylan's high walls on Mount Kororoit Farm measure 1400 mm.

Although there is no conclusive evidence of it in Melton Shire, elsewhere boundary walls were built higher than internal walls. Vines states that: 'In almost all the dry stone wall regions in Victoria, the … most substantial walls are located along the boundaries of properties. Subdivision of properties into fields was evidently a secondary consideration once the property had been fenced. Additional stone walls would be constructed to subdivide the property into paddocks if the field stone was so abundant as to allow these.'[47] Perkins (whose stone wall education was in Britain) states similarly that: 'Inner boundaries however were not built as high as the boundary fences, which are also known as March Dykes.'[48]

- **Composite Walls**

In the study area, and Melbourne's western plains area, most of the remnant early fences are a combination of low stone walls with split timber post with wire above (or more rarely, timber rail). Many, perhaps the majority, of 'half walls' in Victoria were constructed because of limited availability of fieldstone.[49]

Peel states what is likely to be the primary reason for their construction:-

> *'With increasing distance from a timber supply, less timber was used in fence construction and wire fences, or stone walls in the stony country, became more common. Again, where less stone was available, stone*

41 Corangamite Arts Council, *op cit*, p.58
42 Willingham, *op cit*, p.41
43 Loudon, JC, *Encyclopaedia of Agriculture*, 5th Edition (Longman Brown Green Longmans and Roberts, London, 1857), p.496
44 Corangamite Arts Council, *op cit*, p.28
45 Willingham, *op cit*, p.41. (The 1300 mm height was chosen as one of the categories for Study field survey. Almost all of the walls in the Shire had a base width of 700-800 mm.); Corangamite Arts Council, *op cit*, pp.49, 113
46 *ibid*, pp.17, 21, 130; Rod McLellan, 'The Dry Stone Walls of Victoria's Western District', *Historic Environment* Vol 7 No 2, 1989, pp.28-32
47 Corangamite Arts Council, *op cit*, p.60
48 *ibid*, p.130
49 Corangamite Arts Council, *op cit*, p.80

> *walls and wire fences were combined, with the stone wall portion consisting of anything from a single row of stones to a substantial wall three or more feet high with only one or two wires on top.'*[50]

For example, says Peel, timber for the Sunbury vicinity was sourced from the Mount Macedon area, but as Sunbury was also at the edge of stony country, split timber, stone and wire were all used, commonly in the same fence.[51] And, as Vines has shown, the 'combination' fencing is also common on the Keilor and Werribee plains.[52] The reason for part stone wall - part wire fences of the Melton Shire study area relates to the quantity of stone in the area. And so the most typical stone fence of the study area is a vernacular construction which reflects the particular geography and history of the Melton Shire.

Many other of Victoria's composite stone walls would appear to be the remnants of original all-stone walls that were later repaired by part-demolition and incorporation of post & wire fencing, or else just built up to a 'workable height' by the addition of post & wire fencing (perhaps to accommodate a transition from sheep to cattle).[53] Mitchell states that 'Stone walls … have since been electrified or had post and wire worked into their construction'.[54] Other examples of such walls have been recorded.[55]

Some 'composite' stone walls were definitely not built as such. Farmers sometimes gathered 'floaters' as they appeared, stacking them under fences, making a rubble stone fence, rather than a professionally built 'dry stone wall'. Melton farmer Mary Tolhurst had stone walls on her childhood property, but also tells how, prior to sowing a crop, the men would take the horse and dray and pick up stones and place them along and under the property's post & wire and post and rail fences.[56]

However the construction of half stone walls was not always simply an accidental by-product of the amount of fieldstone available, or deterioration of original walls, or need to increase wall height, or the need to progressively clear land. An 1861 treatise on fencing by a Scottish manufacturer includes a diagram showing wire fencing on top of stone walls.[57] And experiments with combining fencing materials to most economic effect were undertaken early in Australia. In 1851 John Learmonth in the Western District erected a boundary fence in which the lowest rail was replaced by a stone dyke (or wall).[58] It appeared to Learmonth: 'that in some part this would add little to the expense, and at the same time would add to the durability and safety from fires.' Contracts for the same fences were being deliberately let in 1927:, where a 'two foot walls with cope stone on a 2'6" base, with barb wire' was built at *Turkeith* near Birregurra.[59]

In the Shire of Melton 'half-stone walls' – with the stone less than 18 inches high – were also built deliberately. The exact reasons are probably lost to time, but present farmers know that they had benefits in terms of preventing sheep crawling under the lower wire, and in preventing draught horses from scratching itch mites in the hairs of their legs.[60]

Many of the Melton composite stone and wire walls have neat coping stones intact. These all appear to have been built in the traditional manner in relation to base width and double wall construction (perhaps to comply with the Fences Act definition of a 'sufficient' wall). Other composite walls are less neatly constructed. These generally have a higher percentage of round-shaped stones, and consequently a higher wall batter and a more pyramidal, less vertical, shape. While some of these have obviously had posts inserted into them, it is also possible that some might have always been composite walls. The relative instability of stone walls built with the 'round stone' that predominates in Melton Shire may also have encouraged the original wall constructions to have been kept low, and topped up with wire.[61]

Our natural association of 'the richest areas for dry stone walls'[62] with areas where fieldstone is most abundant is not the complete explanation for the different extent

50 Peel, LJ, *Rural Industry in the Port Phillip Region 1835-1880*, MUP, 1974, p.108
51 Peel, *op cit*, p 108.
52 Vines, G, *Built To Last; An Historical and Archaeological Survey of Dry Stone Walls in Melbourne's Western Region* (Living Museum of the West Inc, 1990).
53 Vines, 1995, *op cit*, p.60
54 Mitchell, H, 'Building Dry Stone Walls', *Grass Roots*, No.48, April 1985
55 Richard Peterson, Daniel Catrice, 'Bacchus Marsh Heritage Study', 1994
56 Mary Tolhurst, February 2002.
57 Willingham, o*p cit*, p.46
58 Kerr, *op cit*. (Dyke was the Scottish word for stone wall.)
59 Mary Sheehan (author of Colac Otway Heritage Study), 11/8/2005
60 Personal conversations, John Morton, and Charlie Finch.
61 Loudon, *loc cit*
62 Eg, Vines, 1995, *op cit*, p.58

and quality of stone wall construction in different areas. While the availability of stone is the 'supply' side of the equation, there is also a 'demand' side: the need for fencing; and the economic feasibility of clearing land and building walls.

As mentioned previously, both historical and present maps of dry stone walls in Melton Shire show strikingly greater densities of walls in farming areas than on large pastoral properties. This is despite the fact that in this Mount Cottrell Precinct (in the Parish of Pywheitjorrk) and also in the adjacent Parish of Derrimut, both the pastoral and farming land-uses are situated in exactly the same volcanic landscape. So, while the greatest numbers of extant walls in the Shire were built as part the Clarkes' vast Rockbank pastoral estate, the greatest concentrations are situated on medium and small sized farms. Another contrast between pastoral and farming properties evident in the fieldwork undertaken for this Study is that in all but one case (Clarke's boundary wall No.F96 on Faulkners Road) the most substantial stone walls – the most 'all-stone' and the highest walls – are also to be found on farms and small grazing properties rather than on the large pastoral estates.

Farms had a greater need for fencing, in order to separate stock from crops, and for construction of dairy yards, small dams, pigsties and cowsheds, than did large sheep-runs, which only required fencing of boundaries and large paddocks. This more intensive use of the land would also have meant that it was worth investing more in the land, including clearing the property of fieldstone. Whereas land needed to be cleared for crops, and to maximise grass for cattle on small farms, less complete (if any) clearing of land was required to make huge flocks of sheep economical. For example, in the 1890s parts of the Chirnside Brothers great Werribee Park pastoral estate were let to tenant farmers: 'The Chirnsides retained the "rocky" country, which was not fit for cultivation, but which was quite good grazing country, growing a nice quality of wool.'[63] And there was comparatively little demand for fencing on the vast paddocks in the southern part of the Clarkes' Rockbank estate. While the evidence of the nearby small farms indicates that there was sufficient stone to build at least some substantial all-stone walls, it was not economical (or perhaps necessary) to build such walls for sheep paddocks.

63 Morris, G, 'Centennial History, Werribee', extract obtained from *Werribee Banner*, 5th April 1962.

The situation was different for farmers. At least three of the 21 selectors examined in the district (the Holden area) had stone coverage that was too expensive to clear. The Land Department inspector reported on Ellen Slattery's selection, which appears to have been the worst: 'I consider the land to be unfit for cultivation; it would cost from £20 to £30 per acre to clear some part of it, as it is a mass of rock.'[64] While most of the volcanic plains would have cost much less than this to clear, even with a very conservative estimate of only £1 or £2 per acre, stone clearing would still have been a substantial cost likely to have been economical only for the more intensive land uses; that is, for farming rather than pastoralism.[65] Being unskilled work, farmers (and their sons and itinerant labourers) would also be in a position to do it themselves cheaply.

So even if there was sufficient fieldstone to build substantial stone walls, it was not always economical to clear it. In Australia the comparatively large size of landholdings, the high cost of fencing from scratch, and the predominantly pastoral land use, is likely to have had a significant influence on the form of stone wall built. Whereas in Europe there is a high proportion of high all-stone walls, in Australia paddocks with enough stone to build high all-stone walls may not have been economical to clear.[66] In the Melton Shire exceptions to this occurred in the larger and more successful mid-nineteenth century farms and small grazing properties (such as the Moylan, Beaty and Hopkins properties), on which some substantial stone walls (generally near the homestead) were constructed. The other major exceptions in Melton are the large and finely built Clarke dry stone wall dams. These, together with the magnificent boundary walls built by the Manifolds in the Western District to protect against rabbits, also support a conclusion that the use of stone was related not just to its quantity (the supply), but also to the special needs of the owners (the demand): for farming; or to countervail the peculiarly dry climate on Melton plains; or to combat the devastating rabbit plague on the Stony Rises. Cultural circumstances, for example, the local pool of skills in the Western District, and local traditions (such as belief in stone walls as a fire

64 PROV VPRS 625 Unit 304 (20712), Inspector Yeoman, 10/9/1875

65 Figures provided by selector Alexander McLeod, whose density of rocks appears to have been unremarkable and may have been light, suggest that he spent approximately £1-2 per acre on 'clearing stone and sundries' (PROV VPRS 625, Unit 273 (18276)).

66 Gary Vines, posting in Heritage Chat, 11/8/2005

retardant), no doubt also played a part.[67]

Analysis of the 21 Selection Act files provides some grounds for arguing that the composite walls, such as 'post & wire and stone', may in fact have been particularly associated with the Melton district. The printed forms upon which selectors were asked to mark the improvements to their properties included 11 types of fences. However, these 11 options did not include categories for the most common type of fence in the district:- the composite 'post & wire & stone' (or 'post & rail & wire & stone') fences. Yet at least 5 of the 21 selectors in the district describe these types of fences on their selections, marking additions such as 'stone bottom' to the 'post and wire' category (Patrick O'Brien). It is likely that the lack of category meant that others again (in addition to these five) simply selected one of the given types to describe their composite walls; some probably called their 'half stone' fences either 'stone walling' or 'post & wire' or 'post & rail' fences. (As such, it is likely that much of the fencing described as 'stone' and other categories was actually composite post & wire and stone. The price of the different type of walls would support the possibility that some 30% of the fencing built by these selectors was in fact post & wire and stone.)

One conclusion that could be drawn from the Selection Act pro-formas is that, composite 'post & wire and stone' and 'post & wire & rail and stone' walls/fences were variants that were particularly associated with Melbourne's western plains. Alternatively, they may have been variants that became more common throughout the whole of Victoria around the time of the Selection Acts.

Composite stone and post & wire walls appear to characterise Melton Shire in a way that they do not elsewhere. But they are not confined to Melton Shire or Melbourne's western and northern plains. Examples are to be found in virtually all of the stone wall districts of Victoria, although they would appear to be small minority in some districts. There are also known to be many in New Zealand's Otago area, at least some in North America, but virtually none in Europe. The questions that remain, and can only ultimately be answered by further studies in other regions, is whether they are in fact the most common type of fence in Victoria as some claim, and whether they are more concentrated and numerous in Melton Shire and the Melbourne fringe than elsewhere.

67 While it has not been analysed, it would seem that many of the large stone walls in the Western District (eg, the Kolora, Derrinallum and Purrumbete areas) were built by farmers c.1900 (Corangamite Arts Council, 1995, pp.76-142 and *passim*). The primary reason for the farmers' high walls, no doubt, was the amount of stone on the properties. But the 'demand' side may also have contributed. This was a period when dairying was transforming from a cottage to an export industry: the quality of the soil, or the rainfall, might have made this investment in the land worthwhile at this time, whereas it did not in Melton Shire. This is clearly very speculative, but perhaps demonstrates a need for more general research on the relationship between economics of farming and fence construction.

The Rockbank Estate

On the 24th August 1850, WJT 'Big' Clarke, through the administration of Port Phillip into turmoil by applying to purchase 20,000 acres of Sunbury land under a previously unused statute of the Imperial Land Act. He gained control of most of the stations of earlier squatters in the whole Melton region from Diggers Rest to Konagaderra, and set about adding to this estate at the 1850s Crown land sales in the Shires of Melton and Wyndham. He came to be described as the largest landholder in Australia. Clarke apportioned this vast estate into different stations including *Bollinda Vale*, *Red Rock* (including *Rupertswood*) and *Rockbank*.) The *Rockbank* station had originally been established in the early 1840s; the headstation of its previous owner, WC Yuille, had been at the Beatty's Road crossing of Kororoit Creek, the location of the former Rockbank Inn.

Over the next 30-40 years Clarke and his son WJ Clarke (later to become Australia's first baronet) added greatly to their estate by buying adjacent properties, many of which had been abandoned by impoverished farmers during times of droughts or agricultural disease. Upon Big Clarke's death in 1874 WJ Clarke inherited his Victorian estate, including 136,310 acres in the Melbourne vicinity, stretching in an arc from about Sunshine, Tarneit, Balliang, Rockbank, Diggers Rest, Sunbury, Bolinda Vale and across to the Hume Highway.[68] By 1892 Sir WJ Clarke owned the vast majority of the Parish of Pywheitjorrk, which together with his similarly extensive Parish of Derrimut landholdings, comprised most of the southern part of his immense *Rockbank* estate.[69]

68 Peel, *op.cit*., pp.130-1; Michael Clarke, *'Big' Clarke* (Queensberry Hill Press, Melbourne, 1980) Clarke (1980), opposite p.247

69 SLV Map 821.1A (1892), Parish of Pywheitjorrk; also PROV VPRS 460/P0 (35850).

But by the end of the nineteenth century historical changes were afoot. In addition to new taxes and the inherent difficulties of the pastoral industry, a new generation of farmers was restlessly surveying the vast pastoral estates about them. In the 1860s local Melton farmer Anders Hjorth had observed that 'the village was surrounded by large pastoral estates on three sides.'[70] There had long been a belief in Melton that these estates were thwarting the development of the town. As early as 1883 the situation enraged radical liberal politician John Quick:

> *'What a monstrous and barbaric law that must be, under which the splendid land between Melbourne and Sunbury, and between Melbourne and Geelong, capable of giving homes and existence to a teeming population, is locked up in pastoral solitudes …'*[71]

As the 1890s depression deepened popular discontent intensified, with calls for the repurchase of good pastoral lands for subdivision into small farms. The language was as it had always been: 'the plough' versus 'the sheepwalks'. The 'yeoman ideal', and the associated wrestle for the land between the rich and the poor had been a long-running and major theme in Australian history, evident in the diggers' movements to 'unlock the land' in the 1850s and 60s, the 'Closer Settlement' Acts at the turn of the century, and the early-mid twentieth century 'Soldier Settlement' Acts.

In fact, financial pressure on the grand lifestyles of many of the landed gentry had been building from the late nineteenth century as Victorian radicals introduced death duties (1870), land tax (1877) and income tax (1895). These were augmented by new Commonwealth taxes and duties in the early twentieth century. These taxes had considerable impact in breaking up large estates over a long period, 'particularly during times when rural incomes fell out of balance with the assessable worth of the properties.'[72] The pressure built as a result of a drought, which began in 1895 and lasted for seven terrible years.

After Sir WJ Clarke's death in 1897, his son Sir Rupert Turner Havelock Clarke inherited his title, estate and seat in Parliament. In that year he mused in Parliament about cutting up 40,000 acres of the Clarke estate to lease to dairy farmers. He was under some local pressure to make land available for farming, and declared himself keen not to 'disappoint public expectations.'73 The Victorian Municipal Directory 1898 entry for Melton Shire made the first of a series of unprecedented reports on movements by big local landholders such as Rupert Clarke, Harry Werribee Staughton, and Harvey Patterson to sell and lease (often under the 'share system') large portions of their estates to small farmers and graziers.74 The State also played a major role through the Closer Settlement Acts, which enabled the Crown to repurchase pastoral estates and subdivide and sell them (on terms over 30 years) for small farms. William Taylor's Overnewton Estate, and HW Staughton's Exford Estate, were two of the Closer Settlement Board's earliest and best known estates.

This early twentieth century 'break-up' of the large estates was a milestone in Australia's history. It coincided with major developments in farming in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, as new science, technologies, fertilisers, transport and markets enabled huge productivity increases. With inventions such as the Babcok separator, the development of local co-operative creameries and butter factories, and advances in refrigeration creating new export markets, dairying in particular boomed. In 1901 there were 42,000 rural properties in Victoria. By 1914 this number had jumped to 70,500, and by 1923 to a peak of 80,500.[75]

And so the beginning of the twentieth century marked a watershed in the history of Melton Shire. In c.1900 Sir RTH Clarke began subdividing and disposing of the vast *Rockbank* estate (and most of *Rupertswood-Red Rock* and *Bolinda Vale* estates) that had been so carefully acquired and tended by his grandfather and father.[76] While much of his land was purchased by established neighbouring farmers and smaller graziers, it also provided the opportunity for new farming families to make a living in the district.[77]

70 Hjorth, *op cit*. Also, MDHS (1905 Melton Express), *op cit*, which refers to these three stations, plus Taylor's *Overnewton* Estate.
71 Cited in Lack, Ford, *op cit*, p.32
72 Cannon, 1978, *op cit*, p.145
73 *Sunbury News*: 31/7/1897, 7/8/1897, 4/9/1897.
74 *Victorian Municipal Directory*, 1898, and following years.
75 Dingle, *op cit*, p 193.
76 Clarke (1980), *passim*; Sir RTH Clarke Bart. sold the vast section of the Rockbank Estate that lay south of the Western Highway in November 1906; it would appear that he sold the northern portion about a year earlier. (PROV VPRS 560/P0, 35850); also CT Vol.3211 Fol.642206, pertaining to an 8000 acre portion south part of this estate; and also Shire of Melton Ratebooks from 1905-06 which record local farmers as owners of parts of the *Rockbank* estate.)
77 Melton gained one of its most famous sons, Hector Fraser, international trap shooter, when his father John Fraser came to

Most of the new farms carved out of the pastoral estates were small, and many double fronted weatherboard homes typical of the period were built over the central and northern parts of the Shire as a result. In the dry south however, allotments were sold in much larger parcels, and the rural properties that established were typically sheep grazing properties.

On Saturday 17th November 1906 the southern part of the *Rockbank* estate, comprising 21,306 acres (over 33 square miles, or c.85 square kilometres) was put up for auction by agent WS Keast & Co on the property at Deer Park.[78] Grazier and investor EV Goller purchased two square miles (1280 acres) on the west side of Faulkners Road (later acquired by the Holden family of graziers, and developed as the *Mount Cottrell* homestead and shearing shed). Seven parcels of the cheaper land on the east side of Faulkners Road, a total of nearly 5000 acres, were purchased by William, George and James Troup. William Troup built a homestead, now known as *Stoneleigh*, on east side of Troups Road, near Boundary Road.

History of the Place

Virtually the whole of the Parish of Pywheitjorrk was sold by the Crown in 1854. All of the land on both sides of Faulkners Road was sold in February of that year.79 WJT Clarke bought 8 of the 19 parcels of land fronting Faulkners Road at these sales; by 1892 he owned 12 of these 19 properties.80 The parcels that Clarke acquired included Crown Allotments 1, 3 & 5, Section 8, on which Wall F96 is now situated. A W.O'Neill had purchased these allotments from the Crown on 2nd June and sold them to Clarke 13 days later, no doubt at a significant profit.81 Section 8 was obviously of considerable strategic value to Clarke, who owned virtually all of the surrounding land.

the area 'when the Rockbank station was cut up into farms (Alex Cameron, 'Melton Memoirs', Melton & District Historical Society, unpublished typescript, nd, p.20)

78 PROV VPRS 560/P0 (35850)

79 Parish Plan, Parish of Pywheitjorrk

80 Shire Map Series (1892), Parish of Pywheitjorrk

81 VPRS 460/P/35850. Schedule of Documents attached.

- **Dry Stone Walls on the Rockbank Estate**

The estates of the pastoralists – particularly the Clarkes, Staughtons, and Taylor – dominated Melton Shire in the nineteenth century. Of the 165 kilometres of dry stone walls identified in the Shire in this study, 73.7 kilometres, some 45%, appear to have been erected by the Clarkes' (WJT Clarke, Sir WJ Clarke, and Sir RTH Clarke) on the *Rockbank* Estate. There are almost no drystone walls remaining that were associated with the Staughtons or William Taylor.

Little is known of when most of the Clarke walls were constructed.[1] Most of the information presently available constitutes the documents associated with RTH Clarke's applications for Torrens titles in preparation for selling the land in the early years of the twentieth century. In particular, statutory declarations attached to these applications (held at the PROV) sometimes describe the age and position of existing fences, and field notes for survey plans (held at Lands Victoria) often mark the walls and fences. Also, from the first edition of the Bacchus Marsh *Express* newspaper in 1866 until about 1890, there were periodic advertisements seeking stone wallers for specified lengths (miles) of walling. For example, in 1880 Clarke advertised for 'Stonewallers on Rockbank Station'; applicants were advised to apply at either the Raglan or Monmouthshire Hotels.[2] These advertisements – 'apply Monmouthshire Hotel Diggers Rest' or 'Rockbank Inn', or 'Rockbank Estate' – appear at regular intervals, together with warnings that trespassers pulling down walls would receive summary justice.[3] Although some walls are known to have been built later, it is likely that most stone walls on the *Rockbank* estate were built between the late 1850s and the early 1880s, after which period post and wire fencing would have been the major type of fencing built throughout area, as it was throughout the State.

Unlike farming properties, the vast majority of Rockbank estate walls erected were boundary walls. There were relatively few internal paddock walls. It could be conjectured that *Rockbank* estate boundary walls such as Wall F96 were more substantial due to their purpose in providing security. However a more detailed study

1 Any Clarke family papers relating to the period might include such information in the form of account records, correspondence between managers and owners, maps, photographs etc. Such papers have not been located at this stage.

2 The Bacchus Marsh *Express*, 6/3/1880

3 Bilszta, 1990, *op cit*.

would be required to confirm this. Indeed most of the boundary walls are of much less quality than Wall F96. In fact the style and quality of dry stone walls on the Clarke estate varies considerably. This would related at least in part to the range of wallers used over the long period of their construction, and to the availability and quality of stone on different parts of the estate.

- **The Clarke Wall on Faulkners Road (F96)**

During the 1860s many of the surveyed roads on the square-mile grid on the southern plains had been closed, incorporated into the immense *Rockbank* estate. In 1871 the only open roads were Boundary Road, Greigs Road, Mt Cottrell Road, and Mt Atkinson Road.[4] In the Parish of Pywheitjorrk alone there were 23 miles (35 kilometres) of enclosed roads by 1877.[5] The small Mt Cottrell community was isolated, remote not only from the nearest railway (Melbourne-Geelong), but cut off further by the closed roads on pastoral estates.

In 1878 a Royal Commission into Closed Roads had been established following 'public uproar' over widespread closure of roads by squatters.[6] Closure of roads had caused considerable inconvenience to travellers, including drovers with livestock, who had to pass through systems of multiple gates. A farmer giving evidence to the Royal Commission attested that to get to his rented farm there were 'seventeen gates to open, I and my boys going with young horses whether it is day or night'.[7] Alternatively, if the gated fences were many miles apart, travellers (especially strangers) invariably became lost, as the roads were unmarked by fences.

Farmers in neighbouring Wyndham Shire who gave evidence to the Commission (Melton Shire was not one of the 22 municipalities investigated by the Commission) also complained of more serious problems. These included long detours to markets, and of being denied access to water reserves and other public reserves by the closed roads of the Chirnsides (primarily) and the Staughtons.[8]

The primary beneficiaries of closed roads were the large pastoralists, who would 'escape the cost of fencing their property, which would in most instances amount to very large sums, and would also involve a heavy annual charge for maintenance and repairs'; and who also obtained 'free use of the grass growing on the road reserve'.[9] But they had allies in their municipalities, which were of the view that opening the roads would significantly increase their expenditure in making the roads passable, and that most closed roads were not required by the public in any case. On the other hand farmers gave evidence to the Commission alleging that the pastoralists had inordinate influence over Wyndham Council (of which two Chirnsides were members), and also over Wyndham ratepayers, a great many of whom rented land from or were employed by the Chirnsides, or were allowed to graze a few cows or horses on their land for free especially prior to municipal elections.[10]

The Royal Commission into Closed Roads agreed that local government was inordinately influenced by large pastoralists, who had a conflict of interest in regards to closed roads. It could not see why large landowners were not required to fence their road boundaries, as were small farmers. It recommended that the Minister of Lands not sanction the use of gates on public roadways; squatters were then forced to permanently fence off many road reserves, at great expense.[11]

In 1907 RTH Clarke, and also retired neighbouring farmer Alfred Austen (or Austin) who had lived nearby for 40 years, made statutory declarations relating to the fencing on the *Rockbank* estate. Sections 4, 7 & 8, Parish of Pywheitjorrk, they attested, 'form one paddock and are enclosed together by stone walls'. Wall F96 is situated on Section 8, Parish of Pywheitjorrk, and formed the western boundary of this huge three square miles (7.8 square kilometres) single paddock. The stone walls and fencing being the boundaries of this paddock had been 'erected and maintained' for 'upwards of 31 years', said Clarke and Austin.[12] Access to the paddock was by means of slip panels and gates.

Wall F96 was then built c.1876, most likely as part of the opening of Faulkners Road by Clarke, a few years prior to the establishment of the 1878 Royal Commission

4 Ford, *op cit*, p.236, 239
5 Ford, *op cit*, p.236
6 If These Walls Could Talk, *op cit*, p.51
7 Royal Commission into Closed Roads, Progress Report (containing minutes of evidence etc), Victorian Parliamentary Papers 1878 (No.72), p.22
8 *ibid*, pp.14-23
9 *ibid*, p.viii
10 *ibid*, pp.8-23. (It should be noted however that in Melton Shire WJ Clarke had a statewide reputation as friend of the needy, and Councillor HW Staughton was also a beneficiary of various local causes.)
11 If These Walls Could Talk, *loc cit*
12 PROV VHRS 460/P/35850: Statutory Declarations, Sir RTH Clarke, 5/3/1907, and Alfred Austen, 19/2/1909.

into Closed Roads. But as the Commission reported, from the time the subject engaged the attention of the Victorian Parliament 'a large number of roads hitherto closed have been opened'[13]; Faulkners Road may have been one of these.

The Faulkner's Road Wall F96 then was erected in the pastoral period. The three square mile paddock described by Clarke stretches between Faulkners Road in the west and Troups Road in the east. Most of its walls survive today, although none in such good condition as the Faulkners Road portion.

The wall towards the southern end of Faulkners Road is also associated with some interesting historical sub-themes of the district.

- **Gold Rush Land Speculation**

When prices of everything including land soared during the gold-rush of the early 1850s, speculators purchased lands at Crown sales, apparently anywhere they could, including on the shallow soils of the flat, treeless, dry and isolated Melton-Werribee plains. They were particularly busy in the parishes of Pywheitjorrk and Derrimut. Travelling on the badly marked road from Geelong to Melbourne in 1854, William Westgarth encountered only 7 people (most near Melbourne), but was glad to see the plains in the process of survey. While hoping that men of modest financial means would be able to acquire it, he remained sceptical:- 'Already the speculators are pouncing upon it – buying it all up as fast as it is sold, and letting it lie in hope of an augmented price.'[14] But many of the speculators were not content to let their blocks 'lie', instead conjuring up audacious schemes to expedite and inflate their returns. The present day Boundary and Greigs Roads, and the Western Highway, as minor alternative routes between Melbourne and Ballarat, inspired the boosters to subdivide villages along them, creating so-called townships such as 'Middleton', 'Staughtonville', and 'North Uxbridge'. Scores of allotments, of size ranging from about half to five acres (2 hectares), were created in these subdivisions.

If, as some proposed, the intention of the subdivisions was to facilitate the establishment of small yeoman farmers, these floats proved utter failures. No evidence of actual development, and only the barest fragments of their histories, remain today. It is highly likely in fact that many purchasers of the small rural and township blocks so created were themselves aspiring speculators. Most probably bought their properties on the strength of the representation of the 'developer', without having bothered to actually visit the properties. The boom appears to have amplified each whisper from every plausible source into an urgent din that many urban professionals and small businessmen found difficult to resist.

All the evidence is that purchasers lost heavily. Some, apparently visiting their blocks for the first time, dispensed of them within weeks of purchase. As the years passed blocks invariably ended up being sold into the *Rockbank* estate. But most purchasers just walked away.

The Faulkners Road subdivision of Crown Allotment 3 (and also part of CA2), Section 3, Parish of Pyweitjorrk, was advertised as being near (to the east of) the 'Township of Staughtonville'. CA 3, a little over 100 acres, was granted by the Crown to TH Jones on 29th May 1854.[15]

The Faulkners Road subdivision would have been abandoned by the late 1850s, as soon as the major gold-rushes ended and the land boom went bust. Its small blocks were progressively incorporated into the adjacent dairy farm of James Kerr, and also the Clarkes' adjacent Rockbank empire. (Kerr rented some parts that had been acquired by Clarke.) His 'extensive' dairy farm at Mt Cotterill also included Allotments 4 & 5 of Section 3, on which the ruins of his homestead, dry stone walls, dairy and dams, are extant.[16] The walls that he built reflect the property boundaries and land subdivision pattern established by the gold rush era property speculators.

13 Royal Commission into Closed Roads, *op cit*, p.ix
14 Cited in John Lack & Olwen Ford, 'Melbourne's Western Region: An Introductory History' (Melbourne's Living Museum of the West, Melbourne Western Region Commission, 1986), p.30
15 PROV 460/P/35380 (Torrens Application 35850). Application to bring Land under the operation of the Transfer of Land Act: Schedule of Documents Included.
16 Melton Heritage Study, Place No.359

- **Subdivision on the south-east corner of Greigs Road and Faulkners Road.**

Although situated on Greigs Road, this subdivision is within the Mt Cottrell Dry Stone Walls Precinct. Crown Allotment 8, Section 19 Parish of Pywheitjorrk was one of two adjacent allotments purchased by John O'Grady in February 1854. O'Grady's partner W.Craig had purchased the two adjacent Greigs Road allotments on the west side.[17] Although we only have information relating to one of these allotments, it is possible that all four were subdivided into small allotments during the mid 1850s.

At least one unnamed road, running north-south, was created in the subdivision of CA 8 Section 19. Like most of the many speculative subdivisions that occurred at this time, relatively few of the small allotments appear to have been sold. One hundred years afterwards surviving allotments were in the order of 3-6 acres in size, although these may have been amalgamations of smaller original allotments.[18] This was amongst the first land purchased by local identity Mark Paine in the district 1863;[19] it is possible that the small speculator's allotments provided Paine with his initial opportunity to settle in the district. He later built a bluestone dwelling on the allotment diagonally opposite and became a long-serving Councillor of the Shire of Braybrook.

- **The Kerrs: Life on the Melton Plains**

When the Mt Cotterell School opened in 1865 five of the Kerr children were enrolled; in 1868 six Kerrs were enrolled (with exceptional attendance records). A few years later there was only one Kerr at the school.[20] In 1868 James Kerr, aged 11 years, had drowned in a dam on the property.[21] Then further tragedy struck at Christmas 1870. The newspaper of 1870 recounts:-

> *'A very distressing case of that fatal disease diphtheria occurred this week between here and Wyndham when four children, being a majority of the family of a farmer named Kerr, fell victims to its remorseless claims. One of them was buried in Melton cemetery on Friday last and the other three on Tuesday, leaving an interval of only four days between the whole of their deaths. Their ages were respectively 16, 7, 5, 2½; two others of the same family were taken to the Melbourne Hospital dangerously ill from the same complaint, whereupon at their arrival, it was discovered that the father was also affected and he was detained to be treated with his children although having left his wife and an infant 3 weeks old on a bed of sickness at home. The family was attended by Dr Figg of Williamstown.'*[22]

The four are buried in the Presbyterian section of the Melton cemetery. The day of the funeral the rain poured down and flooded into the grave. Less than two weeks later the paper carried another report on the family:-

> *'Two more of Mr Kerr's unfortunate family have succumbed to the effects of diphtheria, being the infant who was only three weeks old and the boy who was taken to the Melbourne Hospital. The mother also, from sheer exhaustion and other complaints connected with the loss of her family, had to be taken to the above institution where now are lying the whole of the remaining members of a once prosperous and happy family who are now absent from home.'*[23]

The newspaper reported that neighbouring families, Minns and Shaw, had gratuitously undertaken to manage the Kerr's dairy, which was 'by no means a limited one'.

The melancholy scene of the multiple funerals became part of the memory of the Melton community.[24] Two children whose names do not appear on the Melton Cemetery grave are thought to be buried on the farm. A relative visited the property in the 1980's and from family papers was able to identify the gravesite.[25]

Diphtheria was one of the most common causes of death in children in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. There were further cases, and deaths from diphtheria among Mount Cotterell families in 1875, including consecutive deaths of two children in each of the Moloney and Wood families. The Killeen family to the east also lost four children under the age of 6 years, and two aged about 19 years (although the causes of

17 Parish Plan, Parish of Pywheitjorrk
18 Lands Victoria, Survey Plan, TA 52279 & TA 29390
19 Ford, *loc cit*
20 Ford, Olwen, 'Voices From Below: Family, School and Community on the Braybrook Plains 1854-1892' (M.Ed Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1993), p.240.
21 The Bacchus Marsh *Express,* 7/3/1868
22 Melton *Express* 13-12-1870
23 Melton *Express* 24-12-1870
24 Recorded in Cameron's memoirs, for example.
25 Judith Bilszta, Melton & District Historical Society.

these deaths are unknown).[26]

In addition to the very limited understanding of the disease at the time, the isolation of the Mount Cotterell farmers from medical help appears to have been a component of the tragedies. A local explained later that it was not realised at the time how dangerous diphtheria was, and that as there was 'no doctor near' the Kerrs, they and other parents in the area hoped that it would clear up.[27] Further, a contemporary noted that there had been several cases in Mt Cotterell 'where the medical men had refused, unless their fees were paid in advance, to attend patients who had subsequently died'.[28] The inconvenience to doctors and others in travelling to the isolated Mt Cotterell community, especially at night, can be gathered from the frustration of school inspector Sasse as he travelled the area in 1871:- 'It was 2 o'clock when I left the Cambridge [Rockbank] school No.919, after travelling 9 miles on an indifferent road having to open and shut gates I found myself at the door of the Mount Cotterell school.'[29]

In statutory declarations given in 1918 and 1919, the Kerrs' two surviving daughters Mary Cropley and Helen Pitson declared that the boundary fences of Allotments 1 and 3 of Section 3 had been erected by James Kerr about 40 years ago (ie in c.1879), and maintained by him until he sold those allotments to Stephen Volant the elder in 1896, after which time Volant maintained them. Stephen Volant junior also attested this, as did Walter J Minns, who recalled chatting to James Kerr while he was repairing the wall in 1882.[30]

So the fences on the east side of the south of Faulkners Road (Wall F99, F100) were built by James Kerr in c.1879, just a few years after Wall F96 had been built by Clarke. This date supports the likelihood that it, and all the Faulkners Road walls, were built as a consequence of an opening of Faulkners Road in the late 1870s, which in turn was likely associated with the general agitation in the colony regarding closed roads.

26 PROV VPRS 460/P/36721; Ford, *op cit*, p.233-34
27 Cameron, *op cit*, p.8
28 Ford, *op cit*, p.245
29 Cited in Ford, *op cit*, p.236
30 PROV 460/P/43186 (Torrens Application 43186). Statutory declarations.

- **Greigs Road to Faulkners Road**

The corner of Greigs Road and Faulkners Road, part of Crown Allotment 8, still retains today a number of dry stone walls. The entire Greigs Road frontage of this block was drawn as a stone (or part stone) wall in 1905,[31] and marked as 'stone wall' in 1921,[32] and 'post and wire and rock fence' in 1977.[33] Remnants of this fence survive today as Wall Nos. C50 and C59. In 1893 the Faulkners Road end of the Greigs Road wall (C59) was marked as 'low stone wall and posts', indicating that it was a composite stone wall and post & wire fence.[34] These plans indicate that this frontage was a composite stone and post & wire fence at least by 1893, and probably built c.1850s-70s.

The frontage of Faulkners Road near Greigs Road was described in 1893 as a 'stone wall and fence', clearly another composite wall. This is todays Wall C56. The western and southern boundaries of this allotment (Crown Allotment 8, Section 19, Parish of Pywheitjorrk) were described in 1893 as 'stone wall'. These walls survive today as Wall C55.

There were also five internal walls in Crown Allotment 8 in 1893 which were described as 'line of stone'.[35] In 1955 two of these walls survived, at that time described as 'post & wire & stone fence'. This plan also makes clear that the position of these fences was determined by an early subdivision.[36] This subdivision, which contained at least one unnamed road, was a mid-1850s creation of notorious speculators John O'Grady and his partner W Craig who in 1854 had purchased from the Crown all of the allotments to the south of Greigs Road between Mt Cottrell and Faulkners Roads.[37] These walls survive today as Wall Nos. C58 and C311.

The origin of the other internal walls in CA 8 – Wall Nos. C57 and C185 – is not certain, but they may date to the late twentieth century. They may appear in the rather unclear 1893 plan, but definitely do not appear in the very clear 1955 plan.

While the western three quarters of these properties were owned by the Clarkes' in 1892, the allotment

31 Lands Victoria, Survey Plan TA 35817
32 Lands Victoria, Survey Plan, TA 44367
33 Lands Victoria, Survey Plan, TA 57226
34 Lands Victoria, Survey Plan, TA 29390
35 *ibid*
36 Lands Victoria, Survey Plan, TA 52279
37 Parish Plan, Parish of Pywheijorrk

bordering Faulkners Road was owned by Mark Paine.[38] It is likely that most of the surviving walls were built by Mark Paine, and perhaps other owners who acquired land at the time of the original speculative subdivision. The Faulkners Road walls were probably not built until the road was opened in the 1870s.

- **Faulkners Road to Downing Street**

In 1893 the east side of Faulkners Road near Greigs Road was described as 'stone wall'.[39] It is also marked as a stone wall in 1904. Most of this wall survives today as Wall C60. The Greigs Road frontage is described as 'stone wall' in 1904, and again in 1921.[40] Parts of this survive today as Walls C61, C65 and C67.

Wall C64, on Harrisons Road, similarly appears to be a relic of the 'stone wall' marked in 1904.[41]

Wall C66 also appears on the 1904 survey plan.[42] It is of interest as the eastern boundary of the 1850s suburban allotment subdivision of the notorious speculator TH Jones.[43]

The walls on the western part of this section of Greigs Road were likely built by farmers, particularly Mark Paine, who acquired the land after the departure of the 1850s land boomers. The Faulkners Road walls were probably not built until the road was opened in the 1870s.

Wall C67 was situated on land that was in the ownership of the Clarkes from 1854 until the early twentieth century, so would have been built as part of the Rockbank estate. Wall C66, the perpendicular wall between the original Clarke purchase and TH Jones, was also likely to have been built by Clarke, perhaps shared with Jones or a later farmer. Wall C68 does not appear on any of the historical documentation found at this stage. It may be associated with the early twentieth century Rockbank Beam Wireless Station (MHS Place No.311).

38 Parish Plan: Parish of Pywheitjorrk; Shire Map Series (1892): Parish of Pywheitjorrk
39 Lands Victoria, Survey Plan, TA 29390
40 Lands Victoria, Survey Plans TA 35850 and TA 44367
41 Lands Victoria, Survey Plan, TA 35850
42 *ibid*
43 Parish Plan, Parish of Pyhweitjorrk; Lands Victoria, Survey Plan, TA 52279

- **The Walls to the North of Faulkners Road and on Greigs Road**

The greatest number of speculative subdivisions in the Shire occurred along the Greigs Road – Western Highway goldrush route. The four southern portions of Greigs Road between Faulkners Road and Mt Cottrell Road were purchased from the Crown c.1854 by two of the most notorious speculators in the Shire: W Craig and John O'Grady. The easternmost of these, on the corner of Faulkners Road, Crown Allotment 8, Section 19 Parish of Pywheitjorrk, was one of two adjacent allotments purchased by O'Grady in February 1854.[44]

At least one unnamed road, running north-south, was created in the subdivision of CA 8 Section 19. Like most of the many speculative subdivisions that occurred at this time, relatively few of the small allotments appear to have been sold. One hundred years afterwards surviving allotments were in the order of 3-6 acres in size, although these may have been amalgamations of smaller original allotments.[45] This was amongst the first land purchased by local identity Mark Paine in the district 1863;[46] it is possible that the small speculator's allotments provided Paine with his initial opportunity to settle in the district. He later built a bluestone dwelling on the allotment diagonally opposite and became a long-serving Councillor of the Shire of Braybrook.

While the western three quarters of these properties were owned by the Clarkes' in 1892, the allotment bordering Faulkners Road was owned by Mark Paine.[47] It is likely that most of the surviving walls were built by Mark Paine, and perhaps other owners who acquired land at the time of the original speculative subdivision. The Faulkners Road walls were probably not built until the road was opened in the 1870s.

- **The Other Walls on Faulkners Road**

All except the most northerly walls, which were on Mark Paine's property, were associated with the Clarkes who owned three quarters of the length of Faulkners Road. All of the walls on both sides of the middle and northern parts of Faulkners Road had been built by 1905.[48] The

44 Parish Plan, Parish of Pywheitjorrk
45 Lands Victoria, Survey Plan, TA 52279 & TA 29390
46 Ford, *loc cit*
47 Parish Plan: Parish of Pywheitjorrk; Shire Map Series (1892): Parish of Pywheitjorrk
48 Lands Victoria, Field Notes of survey Claude Purchas associated

Paine walls likely date to the 1850s sale of the land by the Crown, and its establishment for farming purposes soon after.

At the south of Faulkners Road, and further south again in the Werribee Shire – a small island within the vast *Rockbank* estate – was a group of small farms which comprised the 'Mount Cotterell' district. While in 1871 the only open roads in the parish are said to have been Boundary Road, Greigs Road, Mt Cottrell Road, and Mt Atkinson Road, by 1905 Mt Atkinson Road had been closed, while Faulkners Road had been opened and all its walls built. This change appears to reflect the density of adjacent farming populations, and no doubt occurred to provide better access for the Mount Cottrell farmers at the south end of Faulkners Road.[49]

Apart from Wall F96, there is no documentary knowledge of the date of these walls, but it is very likely that they were built at around the same time (mid 1870s) for the purpose of opening Faulkners Road.

At the time of the Troup family's ownership, the land to the east of Wall F96 had apparently been a focus for the farm operation, with a yard, and apparently also a stable located there.[50] Sometime between 1916 and 1938 the Faulkners Road land which included Wall F96 was sold by the Troup brothers, apparently to Dr Heath, who built *Kintbury*.[51] In about 1990 the northern part of Wall F96, about 400 metres of the original 1700 metres, was removed by its owner.[52]

Around the turn of the twentieth century neighbouring farmer Stephen Volant purchased the small TH Jones subdivision allotments on Crown Allotment 3, Section 3 which Clarke had acquired over the years.[53] In 1920 JA Morton acquired CA 3, Section 3 under the Soldier Settlement Act.[54] (The complications of the title may have delayed the actual Volant transaction.) JA Morton's Volant relations later sold their surrounding holdings to him, and his son John still lives and farms the property, called *Peterleigh*, today.

- **The Former Scarborough Farm and Other Walls on Mount Cottrell Road**

The Mount Cottrell Road dry stone walls, stock yards, dam and bluestone house ruins are situated on Crown Allotments 2 and 3, Section 11 Parish of Pywheitjorrk, 222 acres purchased in September and October 1854 by a George Scarborough 'of Braybrook'.[55]

George Scarborough was one of Melbourne's very earliest settlers, having arrived in the fledgling township of Melbourne in November 1835.[56] Early records show that he purchased land (CA 5 Sec.12, Town of Melbourne) at the first government auction on 1st June 1837.[57] He had obtained the position of the Yarra Yarra (Melbourne) pound-keeper by June 1840.[58] This was an important, and lucrative, position in a pastoral and farming settlement, and Scarborough is recorded as a respected and active citizen in various other realms of society over the following years

Until all the boundary fences of the new freehold rural landholdings had been constructed, straying stock remained a problem. Reserves for impounding stray stock had been established early: 'by early 1851 a poundkeeper's hut or house and a couple of fenced paddocks near a water supply had been established at more than forty inland sites.'[59] Pounds became gathering places, frequented by bullock drivers, carriers and pastoralists in search of strayed beasts.

Government Gazettes show that in 1854 George Scarborough 'of Mount Cottrell' was appointed the Melton pound-keeper.[60] As impounded stock would have needed water, it is possible that the stone beached dam on the property dates to this period. Scarborough resigned in 1857, and the pound was moved to nearer

with Torrens Application No.35850.

49 *ibid*.

50 Army Ordnance Map (1916): Sunbury; also personal conversation, Leo Tarleton, 2001.

51 Army Ordnance Map (1916): Sunbury; Army Ordnance Map (1938): Sunbury; personal conversation, Mr Rollo, 20/2/2002. Dr Heath was apparently a prominent early twentieth century abortionist.

52 Gary Vines, Note to National Trust, 7/7/1990; Bilszta, Faulkners Road, *op cit*, 9/9/1990

53 VPRS 460/P/35850. Statutory declaration by William Howat, 13/5/1907, and Certificate of Title Vol 3211 Fol 642206.

54 Parish Plan, Parish of Pywheitjorrk; personal conversation, J Morton, 22/2/2002

55 Registrar General's Office, General Law Memorial of land purchases (in AP 108758K). These two allotments have been a 'pair' - held by the same owners - until very recent times.

56 Date given with his signature on the Loyal Address presented by the 'Victorian Pioneers' to the Duke of Edinburgh in 1867. (All of Scarborough's pre-Melton biographical details have been researched and provided by Mr Ken Smith of the Port Phillip Pioneers.)

57 Registrar-General's Office, Memorial 'Sydney 319'.

58 *Port Phillip Gazette*, 20/6/1840

59 Priestley, Susan, *The Victorians: Making Their Mark* (Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, McMahons Point, 1984), pp. 68-9

60 Government Gazette 1854

to Melton (The *Willows* homestead) following agitation from local farmers.[61]

Although they had no stream frontage, Scarborough's Mount Cottrell allotments had not been cheap, purchased as they were at the height of gold-rush inflation, and in competition with big pastoralists. Immediately to his west was Simon Staughton's pre-emptive right, and Simon Staughton had purchased the property on his southern boundary and all the land to his east (across Mt Cottrell Road). The allotment to his north had been purchased by WF Tulloh as part of his *Strathtulloh* estate. WJT Clarke and his son Sir WJ Clarke soon acquired all the land on the opposite side of Mt Cottrell Road, and much land to the south of Scarborough, as part of the massive *Rockbank* estate.

The large pastoralists may have made Scarborough offers for his property, but he was one of very few farmers in the whole Parish of Pywheitjorrk to remain on the land throughout the nineteenth century. With M Moloney and I&A Moss, both to his south, he was probably the only original Crown grantee to remain on his land. Others in the 'Mt Cottrell' farming community who had managed to hold on and raise families in the area were James Kerr to the south-east (see above), and M Paine, G Missen and (the much larger) Isaac Gidney to the north.[62]

In 1873 George Scarborough conveyed the 222 acre Mt Cottrell Road property to his son Henry for the nominal sum of £200.[63] George died on 23rd September 1880. Local memorialist Alex Cameron records that Henry and his wife Mary Ann carried on 'dairying and grazing for many years at Mt Cotterell, before moving to Melbourne'.[64] By 1888 (the oldest extant ratebook for this site) the 222 acre property is recorded as having been 'fenced' (no doubt with the dry stone walls that remain today on the property boundary); its 'House etc' was leased to a James Walker 'dealer'.[65] Walker may have been associated with the nineteenth century Newmarket stock agent JC Walker & Co.[66] He occupied the property until at least 1892,[67] although he may have lived elsewhere.

By 1910 Henry Scarborough was again paying the rates for the property, although by this time his residence was 'Frankston'.[68] Other information reveals that he had lived in Flemington before taking up a farm in Cranbourne Road, Frankston. In 1918, shortly before his death, he was still listed as being a 'farmer' in Frankston.[69] He was over 80 years of age when he died, and together with a former Brunswick Councillor William Fleming JP, was thought to have been one of the oldest two native born residents in Victoria at the time.[70] From various General Law land records it can be deduced that Henry died sometime between the years 1918 and 1923, so he would have been born c.1840.

The house would appear then to have been untenanted when in 1911 Scarborough sold the 222 acres, with 'house etc', to John and Patrick Francis Murphy for £1554.[71] The continued presence of the house on the property at this time is confirmed by a 1916 map.[72] On 22nd August 1918 Patrick Murphy died 'at his residence, Rockbank'. The probate papers show his property to have included 'crops, livestock, farming implements, carriages, harness and saddlery, plant tools etc', and an interest of the brothers' ownership of the 222 acre property.[73]

Amongst the small crowd gathered at the bedside of the dying Murphy were F Charles Holden JP (the owner of the c.1400 acre 'Mt Cottrell' property on the opposite side of the road), and Stephen Volant, a farmer to his south (by this time the owner of James Kerr's former property). They later made affidavits declaring that they knew Murphy well, and that his Will stated his intention to leave all of his property to his 'wife and children', and for his brother John to be sole executor.[74]

It appears that in December 1918, when probate on Murphy's Will was granted, John Murphy sold the property to Frederick Charles Thomas Holden for £1970.[75] In 1923 Holden mortgaged the 222 acre property for £1700.[76]

61 Government Gazette 1858
62 Parish Plan, Parish of Pywheitjorrk; and SLV Map 821.1A (1892), Parish of Pywheitjorrk.
63 RGO, General Law Memorial: Book 235, No.25.
64 Cameron, *op cit*, p.13.
65 Shire of Braybrook Ratebook, 1888-89.
66 Peck, HH, *Memoirs of a Stockman* (Stock and Land Publishing Co, Melbourne 1972), pp.18, 25-26.
67 Shire of Braybrook Ratebook, 1888-92.
68 Shire of Braybrook Ratebook, 1910-11.
69 RGO, General Law Memorial: Book 457 No.299; Book 517 No.904.
70 Cameron, *op cit*, p.13.
71 RGO, General Law Memorial: Book 457 No.299; also Shire of Braybrook Ratebook, 1910-11.
72 Army Ordnance Map: 'Sunbury', 1916.
73 PROV, VPRS 28/P3, Unit 870 (160/765)
74 *ibid*; and PROV VPRS 7591/P2, Unit 592 (160/765)
75 RGO, General Law Memorial: Book 517 No.905; also Shire of Melton Ratebook, 1918-19.
76 RGO, General Law Memorial: Book 517, No.906

Throughout this time the ratebooks describe the property as having a 'house', or sometimes, 'buildings'. It may or may not have been occupied; Holden would have lived in the Mt Cottrell property opposite, and while the ratebooks record that he did not lease the property, he may have let the house out (without the land), perhaps to one of his farm workers.

The depression may have been responsible for the next change of ownership. Holden repaid his mortgage on the Mt Cottrell property (and probably others) in March 1930.[77] On the same day as he discharged its mortgage he sold the 222 acre property to Bertie Albert Thomas, of 'Deer Park', 'grazier', for £2775.[78]

In 1945 when Thomas, described as a 'grazier and wholesale butcher', sold the property, his address was still Deer Park.[79] Thomas then did not live at Mt Cottrell Road. Although a 1933 map still shows a house on the site, it would have been very old by this time, and may not have been occupied at all, or perhaps occasionally by Thomas (on visiting the property) or a tenant.[80] While the property was still listed in the 1931 ratebook as including 'buildings', by 1938 the ratebook no longer referred to any building or house on the property.[81] The house may have been derelict, and perhaps demolished, during this period.

In July 1945 Thomas sold the property to Mt Cottrell Road farmer William Collins for £2220, considerably less than he had paid for it in the depression years.[82] Throughout this period the Shire rate books did not list any buildings on the 222 acre allotment.[83] William Collins died on 24th May 1973, and in 1993 Allotment 2 (111 acres) was sold by his family to Oupan Resources, who immediately conveyed it to Darra Exploration Pty Ltd.[84] Readymix Holdings Pty Ltd obtained an interest in the property in 2003.[85]

77 The 1929-30 Shire of Melton Ratebook shows that he was living on a c.300 acre property elsewhere in Rockbank.
78 RGO, General Law Memorial: Book 533 No.619.
79 RGO, General Law Memorial: Book 580 No.359
80 Army Ordnance Map, 'Sunbury', January 1933.
81 Shire of Melton Ratebooks, 1930-31, 1937-38.
82 RGO, General Law Memorial: Book 580 No.359. Note: former local Albert Evans, in an annotated sketch map of the Rockbank - Truganina area 'To the 1969 fires', provides different information on the site in this period. His annotation for what appears to be this site is: 'Mick Cochrane general farming, sold out during the war'.
83 Shire of Melton Ratebooks, 1945-46, 1950-51
84 RGO, General Law Memorial: Book 894 No.95; Book 895 No.496
85 Titles Office, AP108758K

The dam and associated dry stone walls on the property has previously been identified as a possible sheep wash or sheep dip.[86] Sheep washing was an early pastoral practice, and our knowledge of sheep washes is far from complete. If it was the remains of a sheep wash, it would be of very high significance on the grounds of rarity alone. But also significant because the question of 'washing' (rather than shearing 'in the grease'), together with 'breeding', were the two great subjects debated by nineteenth century pastoralists.[87]

It is possible that the site was a small sheep wash, perhaps established by the Scarboroughs before a later change to dairying (as occurred throughout the Shire in the early 1870s). But circumstantial evidence does not support this possibility:- except for the Holden ownership c.1918-30, there is no evidence that the property was ever associated with a pastoral property of a size that would be expected to practise sheep washing; sheep washing was an early pastoral practice which had died out in the late nineteenth century and unlikely to have been practiced at the time of Holden's ownership; and, although the dam is situated on a drainage line, there is no creek or stream on the property, as was ordinarily associated with a sheep wash. At this stage no historical evidence has been found of a shearing shed having been built on the property adjacent to the sheep wash as would be expected. Mrs Mary Collins, of the family that owned the property c.1945-1973, is reported to have advised that in her time the property had simply been sheep yards rather than a sheep dip or wash; sheep-washing was not practised in the area in the twentieth century.[88]

While it is possible that the original Scarborough fencing was post and rail (from the nearby Box Forest), it is more likely that the present boundary walls on the property date from Scarborough's first occupation of the property in the mid 1850s. Not only was boundary fencing one of the very first improvements undertaken

86 Johnson, C, *Rural Heritage Study; Western Region of Melbourne* (Context Pty Ltd, Melbourne Western Region Inc, 1994), pp.117, 124-126. There is a little confusion as to whether this is actually the site considered in this study as M12, 'Stone Yards & Sheep Wash'.
87 Allom Lovell Sanderson Pty Ltd and Jessie Serle, 'Werribee Park Metropolitan Park: Conservation Analysis' (MMBW, December 1985), pp.115-117
88 John Beaty, personal conversation, 8/5/2002. John also suggested that William Collins sons may have built the walls. Also John Morton, personal conversation, 19/7/2006.

by farmers, but the use of the property as a pound would have made good fencing absolutely necessary. Scarborough was not an average farmer, and may have employed a professional to build his walls.

The reason for the unusually configured dry stone wall stock yards is not known. Archaeological investigation and further research among local farmers or descendents of owners of the site would likely reveal more information. The historical evidence to date is that the property was used for grazing, dairying, and perhaps cropping at different stages. It is likely that the long stone-lined dam at the end of a long stock race was simply a dam, built over a shallow gully below Mt Cottrell, and essential for the survival of pound stock or later dairy cattle on a property without stream frontage. The unusual stock race may have been necessary to control stock access to the dam, and perhaps link it with stock yards or milking shed near the home site.

Some of the internal dry stone walls appear to have been repaired (and possibly built originally) with roughly squared stones, and split stones, that may have been recycled from original buildings on the site. Neighbour Mr John Morton suggests that Bob Barkley, who lived about 400 metres south of the property, did a lot of stone wall repairing in the district around the 1950s (although not a trained or professional waller), and is likely to have had a hand in any work done about this time.[89] In 2006 a 10-15 metre length of one of these walls was repaired as part of a Workshop held as part of the present Study.

89 *ibid*

Thematic Context / Comparative Analysis:

Shire of Melton Historical Themes: 'Pastoral', 'Farming', 'Transport', 'Water'.

Comparable Places in Shire of Melton:

In a 1990 submission on behalf of the Shire of Melton to attempt heritage controls for the wall, Judith Bilszta on behalf of the Melton and District Historical Society regarded the wall as the 'longest extant section of wall remaining in the district, being more than ½ mile in length, in good to excellent repair and … an outstanding example of the dry stone waller's craft.'[1] The current survey confirms that the wall is indeed the longest and best example of an all-stone wall in the district.

In Vines' 1990 study of dry stone walls in the nine municipalities of Melbourne's western region, five walls were identified as being of the highest significance. The first two of these are in this Mount Cottrell Precinct: Place No.011 ('East side of Faulkners Road); and Place No.012 ('Mt Cottrell farm' walls).[2] In this study these walls are identified as Wall No. F96 (the Faulkners Road wall), and the Mount Cottrell Road Stock Yard and Ruins (or the former Scarborough Farm, Place No.293 in the Shire of Melton Heritage Study, and Wall Nos.K172, 154, 155, 157, 158, 159,160, 161, 162, 172 in this Study). The other walls in the precinct are of contributory significance.

In a letter to the National Trust in July 1990 Vines wrote that Wall F96 was under threat of destruction. He described it as '*by far the most intact and elaborately constructed of the farm perimeter walls which I have found in the region. [Melbourne's Western Region] A few homestead and garden walls are of a similar or higher standard but among the farms walls nothing like it has been found. It compares favourably to the walls of Yandoit and the Western districts in its sophistication of construction. When last seen (about April 1990) it was intact for a length of nearly two kilometres … '*. He also noted that '*The significance of the wall is very high. On soley stylistic and technical grounds it is among the finest of its type within 100 km of Melbourne and the best constructed of the walls on the newer volcanics of the*

1 Bilszta, 1990, *op cit*, p.2
2 Vines, G, Built to Last: *An historical and archaeological survey of Dry Stone Walls in Melbourne's Western District*, Melbourne's Living Museum of the West, 1990, pp.5-6

Keilor and Werribee Plains. As the smooth rounded stone of this district is very different to the vesicular basalt of the Western District it is not relevant to compare walls here with those of, say, Purrumbeet.'[3] The present Study confirms that Wall F96 is indeed one of the few substantially intact, long, and finely-built all-stone walls remaining in the district; it compares with the best Moylan all-stone walls, which are however very unusual in construction, and is thus the best traditionally constructed all-stone wall remaining in the Shire.

The comparable precincts of walls in the Shire of Melton are those centred on eruption points:- the Mount Kororoit Precinct, the Mount Atkinson Precinct, and the She-Oak Hill Precinct. It is also comparable, to a lesser extent, to the 'gateway' precincts, in particular the Greigs Road Precinct, the Western Highway Precinct, the Melton Highway Precinct, and the Robinsons Road Precinct.

Condition:

Overall the walls in the precinct are in Fair-Good condition.

Integrity:

The integrity of the walls in the precinct varies, from low, moderate to high. The extent to which many dry stone walls have been altered over their long life may never be known. The southern part of Wall F96 appears to have been subject to major repair, probably in the early twentieth century. One of the walls in the Scarborough complex in Mount Cottrell Road was half rebuilt in the Workshop undertaken as part of this Study.

Recommendations:

Individual walls are recommended for inclusion in the Melton Planning Scheme Heritage Overlay.

The precinct is recommended for inclusion in the Melton Planning Scheme Significant Landscape Overlay.

3 Gary Vines, 'Dry Stone Wall under threat: Note to National Trust Landscape Committee', 7/7/1990. Vines had not surveyed the former Moylan walls on Mt Kororoit.

Other Recommendations:

- Wall F96 is now the road boundary of four adjacent rural residential allotments. The full settlement of these lots will put the wall seriously at risk of partial demolition, and inconsistent and inappropriate maintenance. In addition, new plantations of trees along the different sections of the wall associated with the new rural residential allotments are already beginning to break down its unity. They will also severely damage the cultural landscape - the view over the plains to the city - and threaten the structure of the wall itself. This is one of a handful of the most important walls in the Shire of Melton: planning controls are critical if it is to survive.
- The walls in the precinct, especially the most significant examples, should be identified by the Shire of Melton as a high priority for future conservation works.
- The thick umbrageous planting on the Council reserve (east side of Faulkners Road) is out of context with the open landscape. If this became the norm, the present open grass plains and clear silhouette of Mount Cottrell – a landscape of geological and historical significance – will be obscured and largely lost. A more sympathetic landscape plan is recommended.

Wall K159. Mt Cottrell Road boundary wall of Scarborough's Mount Cottrell Road farm.

The wall is well built and in good condition. The timber posts are likely to have been added later.

Wall F96 (Faulkners Road, east side).
Detail showing construction. The rounded fieldstone (disparagingly called 'potatotoes' by todays dry stone wallers) make it difficult to maintain rough coursing and throughstones; however the stones on this wall are quite vesicular, contributing to the friction that has contributed to the wall's stability and vertical batter. The wall also incorporates unworked split stones. The uniform sized coping stones sit on a flat surface.

Wall F96.

The professional construction of the wall is clear in this view, which shows its perfect original alignment, and its consistent, relatively smooth and almost vertical wall face.

Wall F100 (Faulkner's Road, east side, south end).
The contrast with the professionally built F96 is evident in this wall built by farmer Kerr. Stones have been piled up rather than laid. Its present condition is also a product of 130 years of repairing a less stable original wall. The post & wire is likely to have been incorporated as part of this regular maintenance. Such walls are an historically significant type in the Shire of Melton, and a major relic of the early small farmers on the plains.

Wall F97 (perpendicular to Faulkner's Road, east side).
This is a typical Rockbank estate internal wall; part of a three square mile paddock. Although protected from stone theft by passers-by, it is in relatively poor condition. It was traditional practice for internal walls to be less substantial than boundary walls, and this seems to have occurred in the Rockbank estate.

Wall C53 (west side of Faulkners Road, north end).
This Clarke boundary wall is not as fine as CF96, but its appearance is significantly diminished by being partially obscured by roadside grass.

Wall C53.
The same wall seen from above.

Wall C63 (Faulkners Road, east side).
Another Rockbank estate boundary wall, lower than F96, with post & wire added. Although its condition varies, intact portions of coping stone are visible in this view.

Cultural Landscape relating to the foundation of European settlement in Port Phillip. View looking east from the lower slopes of Mount Cottrell, overlooking the stone walls on Faulkners Road, and across the open plains (still substantially intact) that were the subject of reports by Hume & Hovell and John Batman, and which in turn led to the settlement of the 'village' of Melbourne, which looms in the background.

Citation No. 2 - Mount Kororoit Dry Stone Wall Precinct

Melton Dry Stone Walls Survey Nos:	(See description)
Location:	Leakes Road, Mount Kororoit Road, Finches Road, Plumpton
Critical Dates:	Construction of dry stone walls: most c.late 1850s – late 1860s, with alterations c.1900; construction of dwellings and farm complex c.late 1850s – 1890s
Existing Heritage Listings:	HO144, HO146
Recommended Level of Significance:	STATE

Statement of Significance:

The Mount Kororoit Dry Stone Wall Precinct is significant as a collection of characteristic and outstanding dry stone walls in an intact cultural landscape, largely unchanged since the 1860s, which also includes a volcanic eruption point of geological and historical significance; a nineteenth century farm complex; and an 1860s selector's bluestone cottage. It is significant in terms of the number, variety, aesthetic and technical quality of its all-stone walls, which include types very rare in Victoria such as galloway-walls and distinctive double-single walls; for the quality and quantity of its former post & rail fences and composite walls. The precinct demonstrates nineteenth century rural settlement patterns, and has high potential to provide both research and educative information regarding mid-nineteenth and early twentieth century fencing practices within Victoria. The landscape qualities of the precinct includes the remnant riparian vegetation of the Kororoit Creek, and its winding passage through the precinct; the intact, rocky summit of the volcanic cone; views to and from the volcanic cone, the views provided by the C19th landscape of dry stone walls enclosing fields of crops and stock; and the C19th buildings of the farmstead.

The Mount Kororoit Dry Stone Wall Precinct is historically significant at the STATE level (AHC A3, A4, B2, D2). It is a cultural landscape arranged around Mount Kororoit, which is of state geological significance and was an early landmark for the Port Phillip explorers and pioneers. The precinct includes an important variety of wall types, including some that are important in the history of dry stone wall construction such as rare galloway-walls,double-single walls, and also composite 'half-walls' with post and wire. Many walls are distinctive for their use of large stones in the upper, rather than the lower courses which are instead constructed of tightly packed small stones. Some of the walls would appear to be unique for their use of massive longitudinal coverband stones (or rocks) at half height. All of the wall faces are uncoursed as a result of the characteristic shape of the fieldstone on Melbourne's western plains, and are excellent representative examples of this type of wall.

The precinct demonstrates early farming settlement patterns of Melbourne's western plains. It is historically significant for its association with the Moylan farming family, who were notable participants in the sporting, social, religious, and political life of the Melton district. The property also had close associations with Sir WJ Clarke's Diggers Rest Plumpton and the Melton Coursing Club, and early aviation. The precinct is enhanced by its historic and aesthetic integrity as a cultural landscape, which includes Mount Kororoit Farmstead, a highly intact nineteenth century farm complex part of whose layout is defined by dry stone walls; and an 1860s bluestone Selector's cottage directly associated with an

excellent dry stone wall of the same date.

The Mount Kororoit Dry Stone Wall Precinct is aesthetically significant at the STATE level (AHC E1). The dry stone walls which cross the landscape in regular enclosure patterns, make a fundamental statement about human interaction with the volcanic landscape of which they are a part. Numerous individual walls, including Walls A277, A275, A274, and A272 have excellent sculptural qualities and are situated in visually dramatic ways which is expressive of the farming history of the Shire, and the craftsmanship of their builders. The volcanic cone of Mount Kororoit can be seen from as far away as the Calder Freeway with views to and from Mount Kororoit taking in most of the Shire. It is a visually dramatic element in a largely flat plain, and has a summit which is not greatly compromised by new structures, which is rare in Melbourne's Western region. The reaches of the Kororoit Creek which lie within the precinct, has old-growth River Red Gums (some of the oldest in any part of the Creek), good instream vegetation and deep, rocky pools which preserve birdlife and other fauna. The creek corridor has steep banks and boulder outcrops which create a visual and spatial character of enclosure, which is in sharp contrast to the open landscape of plains beyond. Dry stone walls have been built down to the water line or along the banks of the creek, and a C19th dry stone ford crosses the creek to the north of the farmstead, affording glimpses of the history of the place, in an otherwise pristine natural landscape.

The Mount Kororoit Dry Stone Wall Precinct is scientifically significant at the STATE level (A1, C2). The precinct demonstrates the volcanic origin of the landscape, and is associated with the unusual geomorphology of Mount Kororoit, which is the best example in Victoria of a scoria volcano covered by later lava flows which have filled the crater and earlier scoria deposits. The walls also have potential to yield research information regarding nineteenth century rural settlement patterns and farm management, and ways of life on Melbourne's western plains. In particular they have high potential for research of mid nineteenth century wall construction techniques, and early twentieth century modification of these for changing farming practices.

The Mount Kororoit Dry Stone Wall Precinct is socially significant at the STATE level (AHC G1). The precinct has the potential to educate the community in regard to wall construction techniques, and also nineteenth century farm management, settlement patterns, and ways of life.

Overall, the Mount Kororoit Dry Stone Wall Precinct is of STATE heritage significance.

The following information from Council's GIS records all the walls in the Mount Kororoit precinct. (Note that through address idiosyncracies and the size of the main property, some walls that are situated on the west side of Kororoit Creek have a Leakes Road address.)

WALL NO	NEAREST ROAD
A259	Leakes Road
A260	Leakes Road
A261	Leakes Road
A263	Leakes Road
A264	Leakes Road
A265	Finchs Road
A266	Finchs Road
A269	Leakes Road
A270	Leakes Road
A278	Leakes Road
A279	Ryans Road
A280	Mt Kororoit Road
R242	Holden Road

Description:

The dominant feature of the precinct, and the source of the fieldstone used in the construction of its walls, is Mount Kororoit, one of about 400 inactive eruption points that have been identified on Victoria's western volcanic plains. Most were active between 4.5 million and 20,000 years ago. Like many of the volcanoes on these plains, which stretch from the Darebin Creek to near the South Australian border, Mount Kororoit lends a dramatic and distinctive character to an otherwise flat landscape.

Geologically Mount Kororoit is of State significance. It is the archetypal example of the small complex eruption points that occur on the plains between Melbourne and Woodend. It is an unusual scoria cone in that late-stage lava flows erupted from and filled the throat and crater of the volcano, covering earlier scoria deposits. The evidence of the lava flows is seen in the rocky outcrop of lava and lava agglomerate that cap the volcano.[1]

Apart from its geological context, and the walls and fences, the precinct includes buildings of considerable heritage significance in themselves. The Mount Kororoit Farm complex HO 62, comprising the homestead, detached kitchen/cottage, small outbuilding, stables, fowl house (or pigsty) and shearing shed, dating from the 1850s-1890s, is an important surviving example of a nineteenth century farm complex, within a rural setting enhanced by the layout and location of buildings and yards, and further distinguished by the dry stone walls, peppercorn and palm trees and the quarry faced sheep holding yard beside the Kororoit Creek. The late 1860s bluestone selectors cottage HO 61 is a rare intact property associated with the Selection Acts in the Shire of Melton. Of 113 Selections in the Shire of Melton this, and the less intact HO 38 at 189-193 Blackhill Road Toolern Vale, are the only 1860s places to survive. The significance of the cottage is enhanced by its relatively intact historical landscape context, including Wall A275.

The cultural landscape includes Mount Kororoit and the Kororoit Creek valley, making it one of the most undulating and attractive dry stone wall landscapes in Melton Shire. Although many of its walls are not visible from public roadways, it is the best precinct in the Shire in regard to the visibility of multiple walls from a variety of single points.

The only walls that are not on land that was by 1892 in the Moylan ownership are the few that were built on the Clarke pastoral estate (Wall Nos. R242, A259, A266).

The precinct contains a number of wall structural types that are unique in Melton Shire and rare in Victoria. These include:-

- Galloway-walls: walls that usually have a traditional double wall lower half, upon which is built a single width wall with substantial interstices, to create a crocheted, or filigree appearance. This type of wall was named after the walls built on the west coast of Scotland, but which were also built on the west coast of Ireland. Although useful in such windy locations, their primary purpose was to deter stock from attempting to jump such an unstable looking edifice. These are Wall Nos. A272 and A276.

- All-Stone Double-Single walls: constructed of tightly packed small stones in the lower half, and a single width of large stones on the upper half. Some of these walls are divided by huge long stones placed along the wall (rather than into the wall in the traditional style), forming a plinth (or 'coverband') for the upper course. Unlike the galloway-walls the upper half is tightly packed. These are Wall Nos. A277 and A274 (possibly built at the same time, and originally the same wall) and A273.

These are all historically important or visually outstanding all-stone walls. Another long high all-stone wall of which a substantial portion remains intact (although parts have collapsed completely) is Wall A275 (the wall in the foreground of the main photograph in this report). The significance of this wall is enhanced by its location between the Selection era bluestone cottage (and later derelict timber cottage) and the redgums of Kororoit Creek, and its excellent view over other walls to Mt Kororoit.

A general characteristic of the all-stone walls in the precinct is that there is no coursing, no doubt a result of the round shape of the local fieldstone. Another unique feature of many of the all-stone walls is that many employ massive stones, or rocks. Some of these may have been quarried, perhaps from the outcrops on Mount Kororoit, or the large quarry near the creek,

1 Rosengren, N, 'Eruption Points of the Newer Volcanics Province of Victoria: An Inventory and Evaluation of Scientific Significance', a report prepared for the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) and the Geological Society of Australia (Victorian Division), 1994, pp.21, 201

rather than obtained from the surface of the ground. The use of the largest stones at the top of most of these all-stone walls is the reverse of the usual dry stone wall, in which the heavy difficult-to-handle stones were placed at the bottom of the wall. The survival of these walls is a testament to the success of this method.

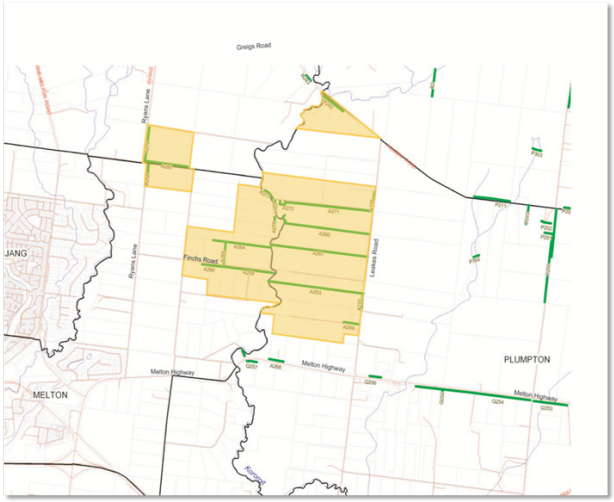
In addition to the impressive all-stone walls, there is a very good representation of the more common composite stone and post and wire walls, a number of which would appear to have originally been all-stone walls. However some, for example Wall Nos. A260 and A261, appear rather to be excellent examples of walls that were originally built as 'half-walls', with neatly-built stone bottoms and either post & rail (originally) or post & wire tops. Historical (documentary) evidence calls this initial observation into question, and suggests that some of these walls may have been deliberately modified.

The precinct is unique in the Shire for the large number of post & rail fences (posts only, no rails survive). The group includes one purely post & rail fence (Wall No.278), and several remnant composite post & rail and stone walls (Wall Nos.A260, and A271).

Another feature of the precinct, rare in the State and unique in the Shire, is the dry stone causeway over a gully on the west side of Kororoit Creek. It is a substantial structure, some 3 metres high at its highest point, and 14 metres long and 4 wide, with very well-built battered dry stone walls, with very large end stones, acting as a safety barricade to the wall of the structure. One of the two barricades or rails has however been removed to allow farm machinery to cross.

The former Clarke boundary walls on Finchs Road (Wall Nos. A259 and A266) have been severely affected by rural residential subdivision of its length. The different owners of the wall have kept it in various states of repair, with most repairs being unskilled and idiosyncratic, diminishing the unity and cohesion of the wall. The introduction of new boundary plantations alongside has also changed and broken down the walls' context and cohesion.

Mount Kororoit dry stone wall precinct



History:

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

Fencing in Nineteenth Century Rural Victoria

- **Fencing 1850s-1870s**

The majority of dry stone walls in Victoria appear to have been built in the 30 year period from the 1850s to the 1880s.

In 1826 rural affairs commentator James Atkinson reported that he knew of no example of dry stone walling having been erected in the colony of New South Wales.2 Initially pastoralists employed shepherds to look after sheep. They guided the sheep to pasture during the day, and in the evening returned them to folds, constructed of wooden hurdles or brush fences, near their huts (or outstations). There are several dry stone walls on Melton's Kororoit Creek that are thought to have been associated with early pastoralists: an outstation associated with Yuille at Caroline Springs, and the remnants of a wall that are thought to have been associated with a shepherd's enclosure.3 Other fencing was used on the squatters' homestations:- the 'home paddock' (likely for the squatters' precious horses) and

2 Kerr, JS, 'Fencing, a brief account of the development of fencing in Australia', *Australasian Society for Historical Archaeology Newsletter*, Vol. 14.No.1, March 1984, pp.9-16.
3 Melton Heritage Study Place Nos. 467 and 81.

the 'cultivation [or kitchen] garden'. Early fences were also required to separate stock for breeding purposes. These fences were usually of post & rail, vertical timber slabs or other primitive paling material.[4] (However at Greenhills in Toolern Vale there are some remains of a dry stone wall that would appear to be the remnants of an original homestation garden.5)

Two major and related events in the early 1850s radically changed this situation. Firstly, the exodus to the gold-rushes made it difficult and expensive for squatters to retain labour for shepherding. And secondly, the extensive survey, subdivision and sale of Crown land in the early 1850s provided security of tenure to pastoralists, and incentive for them to invest in major improvements, including permanent fences, on their stations. Pastoralists were also encouraged to fence their land to ensure that neighbouring farmers didn't allow their stock to stray upon the open expanses of their stations.

Nevertheless, until the 1860s, extensive fencing of properties remained the exception rather than the rule. The first boundary fences in the Barrabool Hills of Victoria were only erected in 1854, and boundary and paddock fencing 'only gathered momentum after the mid 1850s.'[6] This was no doubt due to the extensive sale of Crown Land as freehold in the 1850s, as well as the increasing availability of capital due to the gold boom, and the increasing availability of labour including professional stone wallers as alluvial gold declined in the late 1850s.

Slowly, fences began to replace shepherds on the pastoral estates. Early maps of Melton Shire show that pastoralists built walls and fences relatively sparsely – only on property boundaries and to enclose huge paddocks (about 5-10 square kilometres in the south part of Clarke's *Rockbank* estate).[7] In dramatic contrast the same historical maps (and the mapping survey undertaken as part of this Study) show concentrated patterns of walled paddocks established on farms in the same areas at the same time. The creation of small paddocks enabled mixed farming, by securing crops and gardens from stock, and managing stock for breeding.

4 Kerr, *loc cit*; Allan Willingham, 'The Dry Stone Walls in the Corangamite Region: A Brief History', in Corangamite Arts Council Inc, *If These Walls Could Talk, Report of the Corangamite Dry Stone Walls Conservation Project*, Terang, 1995, p.44

5 Melton Heritage Study, Place No.055

6 Kerr, *loc cit*

7 Shire Map Series (1892); Army Ordnance Map, 1916: 'Sunbury'.

This Study shows that, in the south of the Shire, virtually all of these fences were dry stone walls. Dry stone walls were also used to protect the homestead from stock, to construct stockyards, fowl houses and pigpens, and possibly, on a few of the larger farms, to provide aesthetic effect.[8]

Given the expense of establishing a farm from nothing in a wilderness, and the experience of many small farmers as agricultural labourers before coming to Australia, it is almost certain that the walls on all but the largest farms would have been constructed by farmers themselves rather than by professional wallers. For example, general hand William Ison and his wife arrived on a Werribee farm in the mid 1850s, and found there a small wooden cottage and a young German in charge, '*who had already done some clearing of the stones which covered the land … We set to, and cleared about 10 acres, and had it fenced in with stones by the next sowing time*.'[9] The quality of wall construction would have depended on the experience of the farmers and their seasonal hands at the craft. William Robinson who settled in the Tarneit area in 1872, was a stonemason who turned his skills to fieldstone, building a house (which does not survive) of the material and numerous fences (some of which do survive along Robinsons Road).

The tracks that wandered across the landscape gradually became straight roads, constrained within the boundary walls of freehold rural landholdings. Slowly but surely the wide open land became plotted and pieced with fences. However until the fencing of properties was completed, straying stock remained a problem. Reserves for impounding stray stock had been established early: 'by early 1851 a poundkeeper's hut or house and a couple of fenced paddocks near a water supply had been established at more than forty inland sites.'[10]

8 Alan Marshall, asking an old waller why the walls on a particular property were so high, was told that ostensibly the reason was to keep steers in (they jumped fences), but the real reason was 'just so that he could say he had the best walls in the Western District, the biggest and the best, and bugger you.' (cited in Corangamite Arts Council, 1995, p.114). On Melbourne's western plains district however, such finely constructed walls were generally associated with formal gardens on only the largest properties, such as the Ha Ha walls on the Eynesbury (Melton Shire) and Werribee Park (Wyndham Shire) pastoral estates, or Greystones (Moorabool Shire).

9 Murray, E, *The Plains of Iramoo*, Henwood & Dancy, Geelong, 1974, p.111. (Murray notes that in 1974 these walls were still standing.)

10 Priestley, Susan, *The Victorians: Making Their Mark* (Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, McMahons Point, 1984), pp. 68-9

The outbreak of the highly contagious sheep disease, 'scab', which reached epidemic proportions in the 1850s, hastened enclosure of the pastoral estates.[11] Western District squatter Neil Black quickly enclosed his Glenormiston run, and in 1854 George Russell ordered five miles of wire: '…the importance of fencing is becoming every year more apparent.'[12]

Likewise, the appearance of pluero-pneumonia in Australian cattle in the early 1860s impressed cattle-men of the need to isolate their properties from travelling or straying stock.[13] That 'dreadful disease' also encouraged the erection of property fences by Melton dairy farmers (and was responsible for less use of local Commons by Melton's farmers).[14] The construction of fencing that was encouraged by sheep scab and cattle pleuro pneumonia was also fostered by legislation. At the beginning of the pastoral period in Victoria, common law held that, generally, a landowner was under no obligation to construct or maintain boundary fences, or fences adjoining a public road. However, as a result of Australia's rapidly expanding pastoral industry, trespass of stock, and the need for security, the Victoria's *Fences Statute 1865* gave landowners the right to claim equal contribution towards the construction or repair of boundary fences from the owners of adjoining lands.[15]

By 1876 the presence of 'substantial stone walls' appears to have been hallmark of a good farm in the Melton district, the *Australasian*'s 'Travelling Reporter' making sure to note these on the farms of Ralph Parkinson, George Missen, John Moylan and Isaac Gidney.[16] However little is known of dry stone wallers who worked in the Shire at the time: Irish brothers John and George Funston worked in the Toolern Vale area from the 1850s; Patrick Connor worked on Mount Aitken in the 1860s; and Dick (the mason) Mitchell, and Arcoll (Arkell) worked in the Mount Cottrell area before 1872.[17]

11 Kerr, *loc cit*
12 Willingham, *op cit*, p.45
13 Kerr, *loc cit*
14 Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 1864, p.94 ; John Chandler, Michael Canon, *Forty Years in the Wilderness* (Loch Haven, Main Ridge, 1990), p.175
15 Lawlink: New South Wales Law Reform Commission website: 'Report 59 (1988) – Community Law Reform Program: Dividing Fences'; Parliament of Victoria website: Law Reform Committee, 'Review of the Fences Act 1968'
16 The *Australasian*, October 1876.
17 Bilszta, JA, 'Dry Stone Wall: Faulkners Road, Mt Cottrell, Shire of Melton', 9/9/1990, unpublished paper

- **Types of Fencing in the Nineteenth Century**

The great variety and combination of nineteenth century fencing arose 'as much from material shortages and the need to use what was procurable as from a desire to improve the utility and durability of fencing.'[18] As is the case with the rest of the Shire, most of the walls in the Mount Kororoit precinct are 'composite' stone and post & wire, rather than all-stone.

The *Fences Statute 1874* lists numerous types of fences, including 'walls' (stone walls) and 'combination' type fences. Walls that divided properties had to be a minimum of 4 feet high (1.22 metres), with a base of 'not less than 2 feet wide at the bottom', and '9 inches at the top'.[19] Although the specifications for road boundary fences were not given (the Crown being exempt from the legislation) it could be expected that the walls on these public boundaries would be at least as high as those that divided neighbouring properties.

Post and rail fences were the most common early fence type in Australia, no doubt due to the prevalence of forests and woodlands, in contrast to stony land, across Victoria. They appeared early and were prominent in the study area. In 1854 William Westgarth, on his way to the goldfields Royal Commission in Ballarat, recorded that he 'struck west through post and rail fences onto the Keilor Plains'.[20] By the 1860s timber fencing, probably from the Grey Box forest in the west and south-west of the Shire, was common in the vicinity of Melton. But as local farmer John Chandler recorded, such fencing prone to loss in the bushfires that swept south from the ranges over the plains.[21] Even in the volcanic area near Aitkens Hill to the north of the Shire, nearly 80% of squatter John Aitken's fencing was either 'post & rail' (either 2 rail, the most common, or 3 rail), or 'post & 2 rails with (2 or 3) wires', or 'post & rail with 5 foot palings'. The balance was 'stone walls'.[22] These figures might

18 Kerr, *loc cit*
19 The Fences Statute 1874 (Fences Amendment Act, November 1873), Clause 4 (i-xi). Other types of early fencing are described in Michael Cannon's *Life in the Country: Australia in the Victorian Age: 2*, Nelson, West Melbourne, 1978, pp.89-90; and Graham Condah's Of the Hut I Builded, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1988, p.89.
20 Lack, J, Ford, O, 'Melbourne's Western Region: An Introductory History' (Melbourne's Living Museum of the West Inc, Melbourne Western Region Commission, 1986), p.27
21 Chandler, J, Forty Years in the Wilderness, Loch Haven, 1990, p.174
22 Map, 'Index of Fences' on John Aitken's Mount Aitken property (after Crown Land sales). PROV 460/P0/39365. (The stone walls would appear not to survive.)

reflect squatters' early preference for timber fencing, and an early dearth of professional dry stone walling skills, not remedied until after the gold rushes. In 1868 on the same property Henry Beattie erected much more stone walling, but also built nearly twice as much '3-rail fence' in the same year.[23]

Post and wire fences were first introduced into Victoria in the 1850s, but the price of the metal posts (which could often not go down into the dry hard ground in Victoria) made them 'exceedingly expensive'.[24] The very thick and soft 'black bull wire' was soon superseded by galvanised steel wires which, with droppers to keep the wire stable, allowing greater distance between fence posts, reducing the costs.[25] With progressive improvements, including local production of wire, use of timber posts, and winding and straining devices, by at least the early 1870s wire was the cheapest type of fence.[26] The invention of barbed wire in the 1870s, and its widespread use in Victoria in the 1880s meant that it could secure cattle as well as sheep, and it became the standard fence type from this time.[27]

- **Dry Stone Walls**

The Mount Kororoit cultural landscape includes three major types of dry stone walls: all-stone walls; 'galloway' walls; and composite walls. In 1856 a government agricultural reporter travelling through the eastern part of Melton Shire (the Parish of Maribyrnong) commented that: 'A few good stone fences the only improvement worth noting.'[28]

A dry stone wall was the best solution:- 'Where stone was abundant, timber scarce, transport of fencing material expensive, skilled labour available, and where cheaper alternatives were unavailable.'[29] From about the mid-late 1850s, when freehold ownership exploded and the price of labour declined, and through the early 1860s when the price of labour remained cheap, the labour-intensive construction of stone walls remained very competitive.

Stone walls were built wherever stony ground made them possible, or necessary. While most farmers built their own walls to clear stony ground and manage stock and crops, pastoralists could afford professional wallers.[30] In the mid 1850s brothers John and George Funston, stone wallers and farm labourers from Ireland, are known to have been erecting walls on the Mount Aitken and Gisborne Park estates.[31] The Mount Aitken station accounts in 1868 showing the employment of a John Starkie for four weeks to help Henry gather and cart stones, and the engagement of 'Paterick [sic] Connor, Stone Wall Fencer' to erect 34 chains of stone walling at the very low rate of only 8 shillings per chain.

The popularity of stone walls with farmers is evident in the Lands Department files relating to the 1860s Selection Acts, which record the type, length and price of fencing 'improvements' made by each selector. A detailed examination of 21 selections in the Mount Cottrell, Rockbank, Mount Kororoit and Diggers Rest–Holden areas reveals that stone walling constituted by far the largest proportion (60%) of the 32.3 kilometres of fencing built on those properties by c.1875, despite the fact that it was the most expensive. Post & wire fences, one of the cheapest types of fencing then available, comprised only 6% of all fences erected. Post & rail fences, a little cheaper than the best stone walls, and a little dearer than the cheapest, constituted 9% of the fences. (Note that many other 'composite' varieties of fences were constructed from these three primary materials. There were also a small number of 'stub' or picket, and 'log' fences.[32])

Stone walling resolved two problems: the need to clear the land of rocks, and the need for fencing.

23 Beattie, Steward K, The Odd Good Year: Early Scots to Port Phillip, Northern Australia, Gap, Gisborne and Beyond, Southwood Press, Marrickville, 1999, p.63
24 Willingham, *op cit*, pp.45-6
25 Cannon, 1978, *op cit*, pp.89-91
26 Survey of 21 Selectors in the Holden – Mount Cottrell districts.
27 Willingham, *op cit*, p.46; Kerr, *loc cit;* Cannon, 1978, *loc cit*
28 Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 'Statistics of Victoria for 1856', Appendix No.1, p.46
29 Vines, G, 'Comparative Analysis of Dry Stone Walls in Victoria, Australia and Overseas', in Corangamite Arts Council, 1995, *op cit*, p.56
30 Ann Beggs-Sunter, 'Buninyong and District Community News', Issue 211, August 1996
31 Judith Bilszta, Melton Heritage Study Research, Place No.029 (3/8/2005)
32 Research of PROV VPRS 625 (Selection Act files) for the Keneally, Slattery, Reddan J, Reddan M, Tate, Rhodes C, Rhodes, McKenzie, O'Brien P, McLeod, O'Brien J, Moloney, White, Mangovin, Carrige, Moylan Mary, Moylan Margaret, Parry, Moylan, MP, Moylan T, and Watts selections. This sample is primarily of selectors on stony country, Hannah Watts, in the forest off Chapmans Road Toolern Vale being the only exception; interestingly, the cost of her post & rail fences were half the price of the others, no doubt reflecting the relative proximity of materials, with none of the other properties having ready access to local timber. Another possible bias of the sample is the over-representation of Moylan properties. But it remains a good sample of fences built in stony country in the period late 1860s to mid 1870s.

Unquestionably, as was the case elsewhere, the key reason for the preference for dry stone walls on Melbourne's western plains by selectors was the need to clear stony land to enable cropping and grazing (dairying).[33]

Apart from the relatively small areas that were sold under the Selection Acts, there were many other areas of dry stone walling in Melton Shire. Apart from the Mount Kororoit walls, property sale advertisements in the local paper suggest that the properties on the Keilor Plain east of Toolern Creek were almost entirely walled.[34] Advertisements for stone wallers in the Buttlejorrk, Diggers Rest and Rockbank Estate areas appeared regularly until 1890. Between Toolern Vale and Diggers Rest the Beaty family built many kilometres of medium sized stone walls along boundaries, and a few larger walls inside their properties for stock. Other walls, including one of substantial composition (on what was formerly the Campbells' Toolern Park property), are scattered lightly around Toolern Vale. The highest concentration of walls is situated in the southern plains of the Shire: the 1850s small farming communities of Mt Cottrell and Truganina, and the paddock and boundary fences of WJT Clarke's *Rockbank* station.

According to Vines the dry stone walls of the Keilor-Werribee Plains 'form a reasonably distinct regional style quite different from either the interstate examples or the Western District walls'. This regional style is characterised by:-

> *'… Walls constructed using the local rounded, smoothly weathered, basalt field-stone of variable size. They are generally fairly low walls, averaging 1.2 metres with a width at the base of an average of 0.83 metres and battered sides on a slope of about 5-10 degrees off the vertical. Coursing is uncommon although coping is almost always found on intact walls and through stones can usually be identified at regular intervals of about one metre. The coping stones are often quite large, rounded boulders of a maximum dimension of 400-500 millimetres. Because of their rounded shape the stones are rarely suited to the close-fitting construction seen on the Western district walls, either for the main part of the wall or the coping. As a result, the rabbit proofing techniques involving close plugging, overhanging coping, or other methods are never found in this region.'*[35]

These regular round stones lack interlocking, and often surface friction, and were never the ideal building material. The author of the 1848 'Rural Cyclopedia' considered round stones objectionable 'as they are ever rolling off'. The small wedge stones which held these round stones in position were easily dislodged.[36] Similarly, the 'round stone fence' surmounted by turf was described in Loudon's 1857 guide to British agriculture as a 'very indifferent fence', whose only apparent benefit was that it cleared the land of stone and could be built by labourers. It was found to be unstable when built to a standard wall height. Stock could easily dislodged its copings, and 'great trouble and expense are annually required to keep it in repair.'[37] Despite this, as can be seen in an apparently scarce example of this type in Corangamite (the Foxhow Road Wall), a sturdy wall of very respectable height could be built by careful selection and coursing of stones, and the use of copestones and extensive plugging.[38]

The Fences Statute's specification of walls to be a minimum 4 feet (1220 mm) high seems to have been the 'average paddock height' for which tenders were called in sheep country.[39] Walls in cattle country were built higher 'to discourage the cattle from leaning over to reach greener pastures and dislodging coping stones'. While numerous Western District dairying walls are higher, 'walls enclosing cattle were generally at least 1.4 metres (4 feet 7 inches) high'.[40] This standard also seems to have been applied in Melton, where the Moylan's high walls on Mount Kororoit Farm measure 1400 mm.

Although there is no conclusive evidence of it in Melton Shire, elsewhere boundary walls were built higher than internal walls. Vines states that: 'In almost all the dry stone wall regions in Victoria, the … most substantial

33 Selectors were in fact obliged under the Selection Acts to cultivate 10% of their land area.
34 Bilszta, 1990, *op cit*.
35 Corangamite Arts Council, *op cit*, p.58
36 Willingham, *op cit*, p.41
37 Loudon, JC, *Encyclopaedia of Agriculture*, 5th Edition (Longman Brown Green Longmans and Roberts, London, 1857), p.496
38 Corangamite Arts Council, *op cit*, p.28
39 Willingham, *op cit*, p.41. (The 1300 mm height was chosen as one of the categories for Study field survey. Almost all of the walls in the Shire had a base width of 700-800 mm.); Corangamite Arts Council, *op cit*, pp.49, 113
40 *ibid*, pp.17, 21, 130; Rod McLellan, 'The Dry Stone Walls of Victoria's Western District', *Historic Environment* Vol 7 No 2, 1989, pp.28-32

walls are located along the boundaries of properties. Subdivision of properties into fields was evidently a secondary consideration once the property had been fenced. Additional stone walls would be constructed to subdivide the property into paddocks if the field stone was so abundant as to allow these.'[41] Perkins (whose stone wall education was in Britain) states similarly that: 'Inner boundaries however were not built as high as the boundary fences, which are also known as March Dykes.'[42]

- **Galloway Walls**

A type of all-stone wall that is rare in Victoria, of which good examples can be found in the Mount Kororoit cultural landscape, is a variation of the 'single' or 'crochet' wall, often also referred to as a 'Galloway dyke'. Its origins are the enclosures commenced in 1720 in south west Scotland, and which became 'well known and esteemed' throughout Britain, and recommended for the 'Western Isles' of Scotland.[43] Similar 'filigree' walls that stand up well to the wind' were also used on the wind-swept Clare and Galway coasts of Ireland.[44]

However the primary purpose of the galloway-wall was not to rebuff the wind. In 1812 it was described as: 'the rudest and the simplest in its construction … formed of large, ill-shaped stones' placed atop a standard double wall. The light showing through the wall frightened sheep and cattle from attempting to jump the walls. The Argyllshire Survey provides a clear description:

> *'The upper courses of galloway-dykes ought to be made as narrow and open as possible, to afford the least footing for sheep and to let them see through. And if the first course of single stones should project a little over the double wall, so much the better. Of all the dykes this is the most formidable for sheep. A double wall of twice the height will not turn them with equal certainty. The tottering appearance, and seeing light through the stones deters them from any attempt to scale it, together with the want of footing on the top. These walls may be made with the coarsest stone, and when they are properly made, with the centre of gravity resting on the stones below, they stand better than a double wall.'*[45]

The first galloway-walls were one stone thick for their entire height, but these were more difficult to build, and were modified to a single stone wall for the higher part only. The walls were said to be cheaply erected and repaired. The virtues of the 'superior Galloway dyke' were still being praised in Loudon's 1857 Encyclopaedia.[46]

The one known example in the Western District is primarily one stone in width, and features very large irregular stones in the upper part of the wall. Its serpentine plan is presumed to have provided additional lateral support in view of it being only one stone wide.

There are both variations of the galloway-wall in the Mount Kororoit cultural landscape:- the original style one-stone thick wall (albeit with more modest interstices); and the later double lower wall (using small stones) with a single 'crochet' wall above (using large stones).

In addition, there is another variation wherein small stones are used to build the lower wall, while the top portion is a single stone in width, tightly packed and plugged (with no interstices). (These walls are called here All-Stone Double Single Walls.) A very unusual feature of these walls is that all the large stones are situated on the top half of the wall (sometimes sitting above very large flat stones), while the small stones are used on the lower half. The only known walls that share some common characteristics with these walls (although lower, and apparently of lesser quality construction) are those built by Andrew Lamont at Dundonnell in the Western District.[47]

- **Composite Walls**

In the Melton Shire, and Melbourne's western plains area, most of the remnant early fences are a combination of low stone walls with spit timber post with wire above (or more rarely, timber rail). Many, perhaps the majority, of 'half walls' in Victoria were constructed because of limited availability of fieldstone.[48] Peel states what is likely to be the primary reason for their construction:-

41 Corangamite Arts Council, *op cit*, p.60
42 *ibid*, p.130
43 Colonel F Rainsford-Hannay, *Dry Stone Walling*, Stewartry of Kirkcudbright Drystane Dyking Committeee, Gatehouse-of-Fleet, Kirkcudbrightshire, 1972, p.104
44 *ibid*, p.85
45 *ibid*, p.103
46 Loudon, *loc cit*.
47 Corangamite Arts Council, *op cit*, p.73; also National Trust of Australia (Victoria) File No.5490, 'Dundonnell'
48 Corangamite Arts Council, *op cit*, p.80

> *'With increasing distance from a timber supply, less timber was used in fence construction and wire fences, or stone walls in the stony country, became more common. Again, where less stone was available, stone walls and wire fences were combined, with the stone wall portion consisting of anything from a single row of stones to a substantial wall three or more feet high with only one or two wires on top.'*[49]

For example, says Peel, timber for the Sunbury vicinity was sourced from the Mount Macedon area, but as Sunbury was also at the edge of stony country, split timber, stone and wire were all used, commonly in the same fence.[50] And, as Vines has shown, the 'combination' fencing is also common on the Keilor and Werribee plains.[51] The reason for part stone wall - part wire fences of the Melton Shire study area relates to the quantity of stone in the area. And so the most typical stone fence of the study area reflects the particular geography and history of the Melton Shire, and is important for this reason.

Many other of Victoria's composite stone walls would appear to be the remnants of original all-stone walls that were later repaired by part-demolition and incorporation of post & wire fencing, or else just built up to a 'workable height' by the addition of post & wire fencing (perhaps to accommodate a transition from sheep to cattle).[52] Mitchell states that 'Stone walls … have since been electrified or had post and wire worked into their construction'.[53] Other examples of such walls have been recorded.[54]

Some 'composite' stone walls were definitely not built as such. Farmers sometimes gathered 'floaters' as they appeared, stacking them under fences, making a rubble stone fence, rather than a professionally built 'dry stone wall'. Melton farmer Mary Tolhurst had stone walls on her childhood property, but also tells how, prior to sowing a crop, the men would take the horse and dray and pick up stones and place them along and under the property's post & wire and post and rail fences.[55]

However the construction of half stone walls was not always simply an accidental by-product of the amount of fieldstone available, or deterioration of original walls, or need to increase wall height, or the need to progressively clear land. An 1861 treatise on fencing by a Scottish manufacturer includes a diagram showing wire fencing on top of stone walls.[56] And experiments with combining fencing materials to most economic effect were undertaken early in Australia. In 1851 John Learmonth in the Western District erected a boundary fence in which the lowest rail was replaced by a stone dyke (or wall).[57] It appeared to Learmonth: 'that in some part this would add little to the expense, and at the same time would add to the durability and safety from fires.' Contracts for the same fences were being deliberately let in 1927:, where a 'two foot walls with cope stone on a 2'6" base, with barb wire' was built at *Turkeith* near Birregurra.[58]

In the Shire of Melton 'half-stone walls' – with the stone less than 18 inches high – were also built deliberately. The exact reasons are probably lost to time, but present farmers know that they had benefits in terms of preventing sheep crawling under the lower wire, and in preventing draught horses from scratching itch mites in the hairs of their legs.[59]

Many of the Melton composite stone and wire walls have neat coping stones intact. These all appear to have been built in the traditional manner in relation to base width and double wall construction (perhaps to comply with the Fences Act definition of a 'sufficient' wall). Other composite walls are less neatly constructed. These generally have a higher percentage of round-shaped stones, and consequently a higher wall batter and a more pyramidal, less vertical, shape. While some of these have obviously had posts inserted into them, it is also possible that some might have always been composite walls. The relative instability of stone walls built with the 'round stone' that predominates in Melton Shire may also have encouraged the original wall constructions to have been kept low, and topped up with wire.[60]

49 Peel, LJ, Rural Industry in the Port Phillip Region 1835-1880, MUP, 1974, p.108
50 Peel, *op cit*, p 108.
51 Vines, G, *Built To Last; An Historical and Archaeological Survey of Dry Stone Walls in Melbourne's Western Region* (Living Museum of the West Inc, 1990).
52 Vines, 1995, *op cit*, p.60
53 Mitchell, H, 'Building Dry Stone Walls', *Grass Roots*, No.48, April 1985
54 Richard Peterson, Daniel Catrice, 'Bacchus Marsh Heritage Study', 1994
55 Mary Tolhurst, February 2002.
56 Willingham, *op cit*, p.46
57 Kerr, *op cit*. (Dyke was the Scottish word for stone wall.)
58 Mary Sheehan (author of Colac Otway Heritage Study), 11/8/2005
59 Personal conversations, John Morton, and Charlie Finch.
60 Loudon, *loc cit*

Our natural association of 'the richest areas for dry stone walls'[61] with areas where fieldstone is most abundant is not the complete explanation for the different extent and quality of stone wall construction in different areas. While the availability of stone is the 'supply' side of the equation, there is also a 'demand' side: the need for fencing; and the economic feasibility of clearing land and building walls.

As mentioned previously, both historical and present maps of dry stone walls in Melton Shire show strikingly greater densities of walls in farming areas than on large pastoral properties. This is despite the fact that, as in the southern part of the Shire, both the pastoral and farming land-uses are situated in exactly the same volcanic landscape. So, while the greatest numbers of extant walls in the Shire were built as part the Clarkes' vast *Rockbank* pastoral estate, the greatest concentrations are situated on medium and small sized farms. Another contrast between pastoral and farming properties evident in the fieldwork undertaken for this Study is that in all but one case (Clarke's boundary wall No.F96 on Faulkners Road) the most substantial stone walls – the most 'all-stone' and the highest walls – are also to be found on farms and small grazing properties rather than on the large pastoral estates.Farms had a greater need for fencing, in order to separate stock from crops, and for construction of dairy yards, small dams, pigsties and cowsheds, than did large sheep-runs, which only required fencing of boundaries and large paddocks. This more intensive use of the land would also have meant that it was worth investing more in the land, including clearing the property of fieldstone.

At least three of the 21 selectors examined in the district (the Holden area) had stone coverage that was too expensive to clear. The Land Department inspector reported on Ellen Slattery's selection, which appears to have been the worst: 'I consider the land to be unfit for cultivation; it would cost from £20 to £30 per acre to clear some part of it, as it is a mass of rock.'[62] While most of the volcanic plains would have cost much less than this to clear, even with a very conservative estimate of only £1 or £2 per acre, stone clearing would still have been a substantial cost likely to have been economical only for the more intensive land uses; that is, for farming rather than pastoralism.[63] Being unskilled work, farmers (and their sons and itinerant labourers) would also be in a position to do it themselves cheaply.

So, even if there was sufficient fieldstone to build substantial stone walls, it was not always economical to clear it. In Australia the comparatively large size of landholdings, the high cost of fencing from scratch, and the predominantly pastoral land use, is likely to have had a significant influence on the form of stone wall built. Whereas in Europe there is a high proportion of high all-stone walls, in Australia paddocks with enough stone to build high all-stone walls may not have been economical to clear.64 In the Melton Shire exceptions to this occurred in the larger and more successful mid-nineteenth century farms and small grazing properties (such as the Moylan, Beaty and Hopkins properties), on which some substantial stone walls (generally near the homestead) were constructed. The other major exceptions in Melton are the large and finely built Clarke dry stone wall dams. These, together with the magnificent boundary walls built by the Manifolds in the Western District to protect against rabbits, also support a conclusion that the use of stone was related not just to its quantity (the supply), but also to the special needs of the owners (the demand): for farming; or to countervail the peculiarly dry climate on Melton plains; or to combat the devastating rabbit plague on the Stony Rises. Cultural circumstances, for example, the local pool of skills in the Western District, and local traditions (such as belief in stone walls as a fire retardant), no doubt also played a part.65

Analysis of the 21 Selection Act files provides some grounds for arguing that composite walls such as 'post & wire and stone' may in fact have been particularly associated with the Melton district. The printed

61 Eg, Vines, 1995, *op cit*, p.58

62 PROV VPRS 625 Unit 304 (20712), Inspector Yeoman, 10/9/1875

63 Figures provided by selector Alexander McLeod, whose density of rocks appears to have been unremarkable and may have been light, suggest that he spent approximately £1-2 per acre on 'clearing stone and sundries' (PROV VPRS 625, Unit 273 (18276)).

64 Gary Vines, posting in Heritage Chat, 11/8/2005

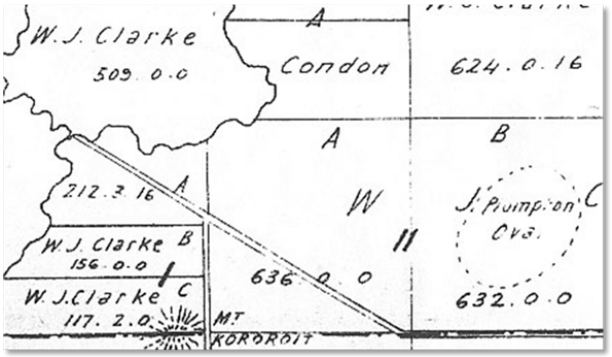
65 While it has not been analysed, it would seem that many of the large stone walls in the Western District (eg, the Kolora, Derrinallum and Purrumbete areas) were built by farmers c.1900 (Corangamite Arts Council, 1995, pp.76-142 and passim). The primary reason for the farmers' high walls, no doubt, was the amount of stone on the properties. But the 'demand' side may also have contributed. This was a period when dairying was transforming from a cottage to an export industry: the quality of the soil, or the rainfall, might have made this investment in the land worthwhile at this time, whereas it did not in Melton Shire. This is clearly very speculative, but perhaps demonstrates a need for more general research on the relationship between economics of farming and fence construction.

forms upon which selectors were asked to mark the improvements to their properties included 11 types of fences. However, these 11 options did not include categories for the most common type of fence in the district:- the composite 'post & wire & stone' (or 'post & rail & wire & stone') fences. Yet at least 5 of the 21 selectors in the district describe these types of fences on their selections, marking additions such as 'stone bottom' to the 'post and wire' category (Patrick O'Brien). It is likely that the lack of category meant that others again (in addition to these five) simply selected one of the given types to describe their composite walls; some probably called their 'half stone' fences either 'stone walling' or 'post & wire' or 'post & rail' fences. (As such, it is likely that much of the fencing described as 'stone' and other categories was actually composite post & wire and stone. The price of the different type of walls would support the possibility that some 30% of the fencing built by these selectors was in fact post & wire and stone.)

One conclusion that could be drawn from the Selection Act pro-formas is that composite 'post & wire and stone' and 'post & wire & rail and stone' walls/fences were variants that were particularly associated with Melbourne's western plains. Alternatively, they may have been variants that became more common throughout the whole of Victoria around the time of the Selection Acts.

Composite stone and post & wire walls appear to characterise Melton Shire in a way that they do not elsewhere. But they are not confined to Melton Shire or Melbourne's western and northern plains. Examples are to be found in virtually all of the stone wall districts of Victoria, although they would appear to be a small minority in some districts. There are also known to be many in New Zealand's Otago area, at least some in North America, but virtually none in Europe. The questions that remain, and can only ultimately be answered by further studies in other regions, is whether they are in fact the most common type of fence in Victoria as some claim, and whether they are more concentrated and numerous in Melton Shire and the Melbourne fringe than elsewhere.

Part of adjoinng Parishes of Holden (top) and Kororoit (below) in 1892, showing the three 'super-blocks' owned by 'Moylan', surrounded on the north, south and east by the estates of pastoralists WJ Clarke and William Taylor.



History of the Place

The Moylans at Mount Kororoit

Thomas, John and Michael Moylan were brothers from County Waterford Ireland.[1] John and Michael arrived in Melton c.1855, immediately after purchasing their first land at Mt Kororoit. Voters Roll lists both John and Michael as being registered in the Keilor A and Keilor Plains divisions, and each owning property of value exceeding £1000.[2]

- **The Moylans on the East Side of Kororoit Creek**

The Mount Kororoit Farm homestead (originally known as *Brookfield*), on Mount Kororoit Road, is situated on Crown Allotment B, Section 27, Parish of Kororoit. This parcel of 159 acres 2 roods and 8 perches was purchased from the Crown by 'T & J Moylan', on 9th June 1854 for

1 Alex Cameron, 'Melton Memoirs' (M&DHS), p.4
2 J Bilszta, M&DHS, Moylan family research notes.

£638.0.4 (c. £4/acre).[3] T & J Moylan also purchased the similar sized property immediately south - Crown Allotment C at the same time.

Crown Allotment B, Section 27 on which the homestead was established, and adjacent Crown Allotment C, were the first of numerous contiguous allotments that the brothers purchased from the Crown and from neighbours. In 1855 John Moylan purchased from George Morris the 102 acre allotment immediately north of his homestead on which Wall A277 is constructed.[4] In 1858 he purchased a 131 acre allotment that Martin Sullivan had just purchased from the Crown; this allotment, situated on the south east corner of Holden and Leakes Road, had no water frontage and was purchased for c. £3.10 acre.[5] In the same years 'John Moylan of *Brookville*' (the original name of Mount Kororoit Farm) also purchased two properties of total area c.280 acres (Allotments B and C, Section 1, Parish of Holden), which were also contiguous with his northern boundary.[6] In 1864 the Crown sold the allotments upon which Mount Kororoit was situated (Allotment D, Section 1 Parish of Holden, and Allotment E, Section 27 Parish of Kororoit): John Moylan was the purchaser of these allotments, c.179 acres in area.[7]

In the meantime Michael Moylan was purchasing additional small allotments to the immediate south of the main Moylan holdings. These lots were being off-loaded by purchasers of allotments created by the Victoria Freehold Land Society, which had subdivided of Section 22 and and part of Section 27 (Kororoit) into small and awkwardly shaped allotments. These purchases occurred as early as 1855 and continued until at least 1866.[8] In 1879 John Moylan (who the conveyancing document advises was 'illiterate and unable to write') sold to Michael Moylan several of the family allotments, including the Allotment C, Section 27, Kororoit, which was adjacent to the homestead that Michael had established from his previous purchasers.

3 Parish Plan, Parish of Kororoit; and Torrens Application files.
4 VPRS 460/P0/33210. Torrens Application (John Moylan): 5/1/1902
5 *ibid*
6 *ibid*
7 Parish Plan, Parishes of Kororoit and Holden.
8 VPRS 460/P1/32416, Torrens Application (Michael Moylan). Also TA No.2933. One of the persons who sold to Michael Moylan was a Mr Tudgey. Perhaps this was the 'Mr Tugby' who is thought to be buried on View Monte (Mr Charles Finch, personal conversation 24/1/2002). Tudgey may have stayed on to work on the property.

This bluestone property overlooking the Kororoit Creek and set in a terraced garden of large trees, named *View Monte* by Michael, is now in ruins. Many of its mature exotic ornamental trees remain.

The Moylans were building up a large farm and grazing property. It was apparently not all smooth sailing however. In 1870 John and brother Thomas let the Supreme Court resolve a dispute they had over the original two allotments in which they had an 'undivided moiety'. The court awarded the homestead allotment to John and that to the south (allotment C) to Thomas. In 1874 (through intermediary William Sincock), John purchased allotment C from Margaret, the widow and administrator of Thomas' estate.[9]

In 1871 John Moylan had taken out a mortgage of £500 on his homestead block; this was discharged just a few years later - in 1874.[10] It is possible that, as often occurred, this mortgage was used in part for property improvements, including construction of the weatherboard homestead that remains on the site today. Cameron records that John Moylan had a family of five sons and two daughters.[11]

In 1876 the *Australasian* 'Travelling Reporter' provided a lengthy description of the activities and development of the property:-

> *'… we pass along the foot of a lofty hill called Mount Kororoit, and after travelling for about a mile and a half arrive at the fine grazing farm belonging to Mr John Moylan, who is resident of about 21 years standing. This property contains about 2000 acres and it is divided into 17 paddocks, the total length of fencing being 23 miles. Though now this farm is used entirely for grazing, a few years back it was usual to have 60 or 70 acres under crop every season and good returns were generally obtained. Within the last few years however it has been found more profitable to feed sheep and cattle, a less outlay being required for labour and the return being more certain.*
>
> *The number of sheep kept is 2500, principally crossbred between merino ewes and Leicester rams. Mr Moylan is gradually working to the pure long wool class and has for several years been using imported Tasmanian rams from Mr Field's celebrated flock, many of the sheep at*

9 VPRS 460/P0/33210. Torrens Application (John Moylan): 5/1/1902
10 *ibid*
11 Cameron, *loc cit*

the present time being nearly pure Leicesters. Some few years back, a trial was made with Oxford and South Downs, but though they were found to be very hardy and gave a good carcass, the wool was much shorter and less valuable than that obtained from animals with the Leicester blood in them. According to Mr Moylan's experience Leicesters are the most profitable kind of sheep being hardy in their constitutions yielding a large quantity of wool and producing a heavy carcass for the butcher.

There are about 90 head of cattle, a mixed herd but the Hereford breed predominating as this class is found to be more hardy and better adapted to the locality which is very much exposed, than shorthorns or other breeds. A good proportion of the herd are milking cows and dairying is carried on to some extent, buttermaking being the specialty.

About 70 acres of the pasture has been improved by the sowing of rye grass and white clover and it is the intention of the proprietor to lay down more land with them every season.

The proprietor's residence is a neat and commodious building, very pleasantly situated, the various outbuildings being substantial and conveniently arranged. In front of the residence is a garden and orchard of about two acres planted with a good variety of fruit trees, a belt of blue gums and native oaks [casuarinas] which are doing very well and answer the purpose admirably. Provision is made for a good supply of water by means of a large underground tank, measuring 16 feet in diameter by 18 feet in dept, bricked and cemented, which is never dry.'[12]

This report confirms that the present homestead (built by John Moylan c.1872-1876), as well as the property's extensive fencing, were built by 1876.[13] Most of the 23 miles (37 kilometres) of fencing referred to would have been dry stone walling, as 13 kilometres of walling remains in the precinct today, despite much having been removed.

The *Australasian* reporter then went on to note Michael (the brother of John Moylan) Moylan's farm immediately to the south:-

'The adjoining farm belongs to Mr Michael Moylan; a brother to the owner of the last mentioned one and has been occupied by him for about 21 years. About 45 acres are under cultivation this season, but formerly it was usual to have about twice as much cropped every year. The land is subdivided into several paddocks by substantial fences and with the exception of the area under crop is all used for grazing. About 70 head of cattle are kept at the present time – a mixed herd with a good proportion of cows amongst them, whose produce is made into butter. There are several very good farm horses amongst them being a promising colt by Mr Lyle's Young Lord Clyde and another by Mr Fell's Scottish Chief.

An acre has been sown to lucerene which is doing very well and furnishes a good supply of food for the pigs who [sic] thrive upon it, receiving scarcely anything else except the refuse from the dairy. There is a very comfortable residence on this farm attached to which is a small garden; the various outbuildings are of a substantial description.'[14]

This farm (*View Monte*) was at that stage smaller than John Moylan's, and comprised (at least) Crown Allotment D, Section 27, and CA A Section 21, Parish of Kororoit. This land includes Walls A261 and A263. These are not the high stone walls that are usually associated with cattle, although the above report notes that the property ran cattle and horses. (However, many walls on this property were removed by a later owner, and these may have included higher walls.)

- **The Moylans on the West Side of Kororoit Creek**

According to local memorialist Alec Cameron, writing in the early twentieth century, two of the three elder brothers owned farms on the east side of Kororoit Creek, while the farm of one (obviously Thomas) was on the west side of the creek.[15] Thomas, despite his share in the Mount Kororoit Farm land, always gave his address as 115 Little Lonsdale Street West (Moylan Lane was named after him).[16]

During the mid 1860s the Moylan family had been busy staking out c.80 acre allotments on the opposite (west) bank of the Kororoit Creek that had been opened up for selection. The several Moylan families were large

12 The *Australasian*, 28th October 1876
13 See also Shire of Melton, *Ratebooks*, 1872-1899, re the homestead.
14 *ibid*
15 Cameron, *loc cit*.
16 VPRS 460/P0/33210. Torrens Application (John Moylan): 5/1/1902

(John Moylan had five sons and two daughters[17]) and many of their Christian names were repeated, especially between generations, so it is very difficult to know exactly which Moylan family was actually purchasing these allotments. (Some allotments also appear to have been later transferred between families.) However, five of the eight allotments with frontage to the west bank of Kororoit Creek were selected by Moylans.[18] These included MP (Michael Patrick) and T (Thomas) Moylan, who may have been the elder brothers themselves (who had somehow contrived not to have owned other land). Others however were definitely second generation family members:- MH (Michael Henry), M (Mary), and Margaret who was the sister of 'Michael' (although it is not known which Michael).[19]

By 1892 the ownership of all of the 8 contiguous c.80 acre selection allotments with frontage to the west side of Kororoit Creek was given as 'Moylan'.[20] On one of these allotments is a small and substantially intact bluestone cottage overlooking the Kororoit Creek, with the excellent Wall No.A275 in front of it. On 31st May 1866 a Selection licence for this property was issued to John Mangovan (possibly Mugavin), who described himself as a 'farm servant' who owned no land. He duly obtained freehold possession of it on 3rd April 1871.[21] Fortunately this property, Crown Allotment 2A, Section 17, Parish of Kororoit, is one of the best documented of the selection properties on the west side of the creek, which provides some background into the Moylan interest in it.[22]

How the Moylans came by Mangovin's property, and perhaps some others (M Carrige, and S Parry also originally selected two of these 8 allotments), might have been by a widely practised abuse of the Selection Acts. Of the eight adjacent allotments with Kororoit Creek frontage that had been put up for selection, two pairs had virtually consecutive application numbers, suggesting that they were applied for at the same time. These were application number 6242 by MP Moylan, which allotment was adjacent to that obtained by application number 6244 of an S Parry. Application number 5860 by T Moylan was adjacent to application number 5861 by John Mangovan. In 1871, the conditions for improvement having been complied with, Crown Bailiff H McCann approved Mangovan's claim to freehold for the allotment, but not without reservation. While reporting that he was 'not aware of any objection to sale', he reported on 7th July 1871 that:-

> *'I think there is hardly a doubt but this allotment was selected in Mungovan's name as a dummy of John Moylan as he was not in the district at the time it was pegged out and applied for; but a dispute having arisen between the parties Mungovan has continued to hold the land and reside on it.*
>
> *In my previous report respecting improvements etc I have made a slight mistake owing to the fencing on the south side of the block not being on the boundary line of the block held by Thomas Moylan. I have sketched of the plan the situation of the house and fencing; the house being on the boundary line of the adjoining block. I now value the fencing and half house and gardens at £225.*
>
> *As the statements about the fencing on the north side of the block are so conflicting I have given Mangovan one half and Mary Moylan [on the north side] the other, as I do not see any other way of settling the matter.*
>
> *I may also state that I believe Mangovan is only holding this land for Thomas Moylan but the whole affair is so mixed up that it is impossible to arrive at any definite conclusions.'*[23]

The map that McCann appended to his report shows the existing bluestone cottage. However the cottage straddled the boundary of Thomas Moylan's lease on Crown Allotment No.3 to the south. Although the bailiff suspected that Mangovan was a dummy for John Moylan, the evidence of their consecutive application numbers, and the house being built across their boundary, suggests that it might have been Thomas Moylan (who was in dispute with John at the time) with whom Mangovan had been working from the beginning. In fact it is not apparent that any other member of the John Moylan senior family selected these allotments. Indeed, when John Moylan senior transferred and bequeathed his estate to his family in 1879 and again in 1888, none of his property was situated on the west side of Kororoit Creek.[24]

17 Cameron, *loc cit*
18 Allotments 1B, 2, 3, 3A, and 4B.
19 PROV VPRS 627/P/42 (File 4136/31)
20 Shire Map Series (1892), Parish of Kororoit
21 *ibid*; PROV VPRS 627/P0/61, Application No.5861, Section 31 Land Act 1869.
22 Parish Plan, Parish of Kororoit.
23 PROV VPRS 627/P0/61 (File 5861/31)
24 VPRS 460/P0/33210. Torrens Application (John Moylan):

So, while by 1892 the Mangovan selection was in the ownership of 'Moylan', which particular Moylan family this is is uncertain. In 1873 the executors of the late Thomas Moylan advertised the sale of 461 acres of 'superior agricultural and grazing land situated on the Kororoit Creek', and 'comprising cottage, dairy etc'.[25] This was likely the Mangovan cottage. In 1901 when Mount Kororoit Farm (the John Moylan property) was surveyed, the survey still did not include any land on the west side of the creek, so it is likely that the property was purchased by Michael Moylan.[26]

Ratebooks indicate that by 1899 an Arthur Moylan was resident in the former Mangovan cottage.[27] Michael Moylan had a son Arthur;[28] it is possible but unlikely that John or Thomas also had a son by that name. In 1905, when Frederick Finch purchased the late Michael Moylan's *View Monte*, Irishman Steve O'Callaghan, who was building stone walls for the Moylans, was reported to be living in the bluestone cottage that had previously been occupied by Arthur Moylan.[29] It is likely that Arthur Moylan constructed the adjacent weatherboard cottage (now derelict) either in the late nineteenth century or very early twentieth century. Today the property is once again part of the larger Mount Kororoit Farm.

- **The Last Years of the Moylans**

Thomas Moylan died in 1871 (his farm on the west side of the creek was put up for sale in November 1873[30]), and Michael Moylan of *View Monte* died in 1882. In 1879 and again in 1888 John Moylan senior transferred his farm to his sons Michael (the mechanic mentioned above) and John junior. John senior's wife Margaret died in 1885 aged 68.[31] John senior died in 1893, aged 83 years. He had been a Melton Shire Councillor, and a Trustee of the Melton Cemetery. He was described in the local paper as being 'highly respected'.[32]

By 1892 the several branches of the family owned most the land north of Finches Road, south of Holden Road, west of Leakes Road and east of Ryans Road.[33]

His sons, bachelor brothers Michael and John junior shared the house with their unmarried sister Elizabeth. The *Express* carried the following report on the property in 1899:-

> *'Brookville the residence of Messrs Moylan Brothers is situated on the east bank of the Kororoit Creek and at the foot of Mount Kororoit. It is a beautiful wooden building containing eight rooms with about an acre of garden which is tastefully laid out near the house with flowers and fruit trees.*
>
> *There is a plantation of pine and blue gums. Some of the pines were killed during last summer's heat.*
>
> *The outbuildings which consist of stable, buggy shed, carpenter's shop, store room, etc., are all well worth looking at. There is a place for everything and everything is in its place.*
>
> *Mr Moylan has had a new wool shed erected which, I am sure may be termed the model shed of West Bourke. Everything that could be thought of is there to lighten the labour of the shearers.*
>
> *The wool press I may mention can be worked easily by one young man through some patent invention of Mr Moylan's own handiwork.*
>
> *Mr Moylan keeps to sheep but he also has some cattle. I saw two young shorthorn heifers just calved and had been reared in Gippsland. All would tip the scale at between 9-10 hundredweight.*
>
> *There is a splendid view in every direction.*
>
> *The Messrs and Miss Moylan are noted for their hospitality and I am sure they would give anyone a cordial welcome who wished to see their beautiful homestead.*

Their paddocks are also the favourite hunting grounds in Victoria.'[34]

In addition to its size, the beauty of its redgums, mount and creek, and the hospitality of its owners, the property's many substantial dry stone walls would have contributed greatly to its popularity amongst hunt clubs.

5/1/1902
25 The *Express*, 22/11/1873
26 Lands Victoria, Torrens Application 33210, Plan of Survey (11/10/1901)
27 Shire of Melton, *Ratebook*, 1899
28 The Melton *Express*, 21/12/1918
29 Mr Charles Finch, personal conversation, 24/1/2002.
30 The *Express*, 22/11/1873
31 The *Express*, 31/10l/1885
32 Melton *Express*, 29/7/1893
33 Finch, *op cit*; the Shire Map Series (1892), Parish of Kororoit. A few of the northern allotments were owned by WJ Clarke by 1892.
34 The *Express*, 30/9/1899

Michael (a locally renowned mechanic/inventor[35]) died in 1901 after three days illness, and transferred his substantial real and personal assets to his brother John.[36] He was 40 years old. In recording the death, the Melton *Express* commented that:-

> *'The deceased had good mechanical ideas and had many things about the place made to his design amongst which was a wool press which one man could operate easily, also self operating gates, etc and also many other things which would take a more able pen than mine to particularize. He was unmarried and resided with a brother and sister up to the time of his death which took place on Monday.*

He was also an ex-Councillor of the Melton Shire Council and was much respected by all who knew him.'[37]

As with all of the John Moylan family, he was interred in Melbourne.

In 1905 Margaret (widow of Michael senior), sold *View Monte* to Frederick Finch, a Beaufort labourer who had struck it rich in the 'Sons of Freedom' mine at Eurambeen.[38] She died at her son-in-law's residence in Newmarket in 1918, aged 88.[39]

Spinster Elizabeth Moylan died at 'Mount Kororoit' in 1917, aged 66 years.[40] Her bachelor John junior died in 1924, after which a sale notice for the 'Mount Kororoit Estate, Melton' appeared in the *Express:*-

> *'… Mt Kororoit comprises the richest volcanic and red chocolate soils, the greater portion being level to slightly undulating, with nicely sheltered creek gullies. Portions of the land have at times been cultivated and the whole estate is in great heart, thoroughly cleaned up for grazing and carrying luxuriant pasturage.*
>
> *… The Homestead on No.1 Lot comprises comfortable weather board dwelling of six rooms, kitchen, extensive outbuildings, substantial woolshed and wool press, stabling, machinery and buggy shed etc., all well planned in the homestead yard. Stock yards, large underground tank, garden, ornamental trees, etc.'*[41]

The accompanying Melton Report notes the estate has been in the hands of the family for over 75 years. The Clearing Sale notice lists the estate's interest in Border Leicester sheep. John Moylan had bred from ewes of the Sutherland, Staughton and Hodge flocks while a number of Shorthorn cattle and dairy cows were also featured.

And so ended the Moylan families' associations with the area. By the end of the century the family had also acquired the balance of the allotments originally taken up by the seven other selectors west of Kororoit Creek, as far as Ryans Road.[42] Nineteenth century ratebooks indicate that there had been approximately five separate dwellings on the property during the nineteenth century. By 1916, as now, there were three: *Mount Kororoit Farm*, *View Monte* (ruinous), and the adjacent bluestone and weatherboard cottages (MHS Place No.144).[43]

During their time the Moylans had been leading participants in Melton sporting, social, religious, and political life. They were noted sportsmen, participating in Melton's early Queen's Birthday sports (Michael was one of three foot runners in a hurdle race to break a leg). The family had long been associated with the development of the Catholic Church in the locality.[44] John senior and Michael junior (son of John) had both been Shire of Melton Councillors. John was described as 'highly respected',[45] and Michael had been noted locally for his inventiveness.

The Mount Kororoit Farm Moylans were always known for their hospitality.[46] They had been associated with the Hunt Club meets on the Keilor Plain, and John senior entertained the Vice Regal party at the Mount Kororoit Farm homestead.[47] John junior was also interested in racing and owned several jumpers.[48] Along with a great number of the male population of the Melton district, they had also enjoyed greyhound coursing. The Plumpton Paddock was developed with their assistance, coursing dogs having being bred on the property.[49]

35 Cameron, *loc cit;* the *Australasian*, 28th October 1876. It seems that several of the Moylans had a gift for ingenuity, which may have been a factor in the unorthodox construction of many of the walls on the property (which have stood the test of time).
36 VPRS 460/P0/33210. Torrens Application (John Moylan): 5/1/1902
37 The *Express*, 1/6/1901
38 Finch, *op cit*
39 Melton *Express*, 21/12/1918
40 The Melton *Express*, 15/2/1917
41 The Melton *Express*, 29/11/1924
42 Shire Map Series (1892), Parish of Kororoit.
43 Army Ordnance Map 1916: Sunbury
44 Bilszta, *op cit*.
45 The *Express*, 29/7/1893
46 Cameron, *loc cit*
47 *ibid*
48 Cameron, *loc cit*
49 Bilszta, *op cit*

Later, John junior was President of the Melton Coursing Club; Club meetings were held on his property, and he donated several cups as prizes.[50]

John Moylan junior appears also to have been active, at least as a host, in the introduction of early aviation in Victoria. A combination of the Moylans' technical mindedness, their hospitality, and Houdini's first controlled sustained Australian flight at nearby Diggers Rest in 1910, were probably the background to a major early aviation gathering held at Mount Kororoit Farm. Photographs dated 1913-14 record the 'Austin Equitorial Balance Aeroplane camp' on 'John Moylan's Mt Kororoit estate'. This event was probably associated with a local historical record that a plane flew off the top of Mt Kororoit in 1913.51

(J.T. Collins Collection, La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria)

John Moylan's 'Mt. Kororoit' estate, Melton, 1913-1914.

(Houdini's plane had been housed in a similar tent a few years before.)

In 1973 photographer John T Collins took a series of photographs of the Mount Kororoit Farm homestead buildings which would serve as a guide for any future restoration work of the buildings.[52]

The complex of early farm buildings on Mount Kororoit Farm is itself of borderline State heritage significance. Their significance is enhanced by their broader cultural landscape setting, which includes the 1860s bluestone selector's cottage, and an outstanding legacy of dry stone walls set underneath their source, Mount Kororoit.

Mount Kororoit Farm was identified as being of significance at a community workshop held in association at Dunvegan, Melton, on 7th September 2001.

The Dry Stone Walls

Most of the walls in this precinct were built on the Moylan properties, and the balance on the Clarke estate. The Melton Dry Stone Walls Heritage Study has shown that approximately 45% of the dry stone walls surviving in the Shire today were erected as part of the Clarke Rockbank pastoral estate. Of the balance, it is estimated that three larger farmers – the Beatys on Blackhills Road (8.5%), Hopkins & Farragher on Hopkins Road (7.4%), and the Moylans on Mount Kororoit Road (5.6%), between them built another 21.5% of the remaining walls. The residual one third of the walls in the Shire were built mainly by smaller farmers and selectors.

- **The Moylan Walls**

Most of the 23 miles (37 kilometres) of fencing that is noted on the Moylan property in 1876 would have been stone walling. Some 13 kilometres of dry stone walling remains today, despite the fact that much is known to have been removed.

One of these walls (Wall A273) would certainly be that which protected the garden and orchard referred to in 1876. It is the main legacy of this garden, of which only one or two ornamental trees, and nothing of the orchard, survives. In addition to its structural qualities, it is therefore also significant as an unusually substantial legacy record of nineteenth century farm practice. A significant proportion of the walls that survive on the property are higher walls (c.1400 mm) that are associated with cattle (as disctinct from sheep) in the Western District, and this was almost certainly their purpose on this property.

On the west side of the creek Crown Bailiff McCann's 1871 drawing of the Mangovan selection showed nearly 2 kilometres of 'stone wall', a portion of which remains today as Wall A275.[53] This wall then was built between

50 Cameron, *loc cit*
51 Australian National Library 'Picture Australia', State Library of Victoria photograph 1093259.
52 State Library of Victoria: 'Melton: Mt Kororoit' (2/3/1973)
53 Some 90 chains of these walls were credited to Mangovan, as

1866 and 1871. It is a well-constructed high wall is in the orthodox style, very different to the walls on the east side of the creek (John Moylan's Mount Kororoit Farm) which are either double-single walls, with heavy stones above smaller ones, or composite stone and post & wire(rail). Wall A275 thus appears to have been constructed by a different builder than most of the walls on the property. While Mangovan may have been this builder, his description of himself as a 'farm servant' rather than a professional waller, and the professional construction of the wall, suggests that he was not.

The fieldnotes of surveyor John Jenkins who surveyed the John Moylan property in 1901 describe the boundary fencing, and also show parts of a number other fences:[54]

- Near the homestead on Mount Kororoit Road Jenkins marks 'stone walls' in the position of those identified as in this Study as Wall Nos.A277, 274, 273, 272. These are the major walls double-single walls at the western end of Mount Kororoit Road.

- At the east end of Mount Kororoit Road (southern side) is marked: 'Post & Rail fence'. This is the wall marked as A271, which is now mostly post & wire and stone, with sections of the original post and rail and stone remaining. So, either Jenkins did not mark the stone wall, perhaps because it is very low, or else the stone was or added later.

- Parallel and to the south of A271 the long internal paddock wall A260 is marked as 'stone wall' (only the east end of this wall is recorded). Today this wall is a well built composite stone wall, with post & wire (or mesh) today, but previously with post and two rails. This inconsistency is a mystery. Further archaeological investigation of the wall (including comparison of the stone base with that of the all-stone wall further west) is likely to provide useful information regarding fencing practices, including the alteration of walls, in the Melton district (and perhaps more widely) at the turn of the century. It is also possible that the inconsistency is the result of a mistake by the surveyor, who perhaps presumed that the all-stone wall at the west end of A260 continued to the east, or else that the stone base was the basis of him describing it as a 'stone' wall (unlikey given his other description). Presuming that it was not a mistake, it must have been that the wall was demolished, or mostly demolished, and a post and rail (and wire) fence added after 1901. This would contradict other information regarding post & wire being cheaper than post & rail at that time; such a decision may have been influenced by the obvious tradition of post & rail on the property. A proof that walls were altered in this way at this time, and the possible reasons for such, would also be very useful.

- Parallel and to the south of A260 the property's long southern boundary fence A261 is described in 1901 as being:- 'wire fence' at its eastern end, 'post & rail & wall' in its middle part, and 'stone wall' at west end. Currently Wall A261 is a post & wire & good (quite high and well built) double wall. The stone wall has neat and uniform coping that would indicate a discrete job, a purpose-built 'half-wall', rather than a gradual accumulation of stones to clear fields (as is recorded as having taken place elsewhere). It is highly unlikely that the surveyor made a mistake in this case, as he so meticulously described the three different types of fencing that made up this boundary wall.

  If, as seems likely, the stone wall was added later to the base of the fence, this again raises questions of interest regarding contemporary fencing, and changes to fencing. Building such a neat wall, indicating a distinct job, implies a specific purpose; perhaps to keep sheep from crawling under the wires. Possible evidence of separate wall and fence construction is evident in that the wall in some places infringes on the lower wire. But again there is opportunity for more detailed archaeological examination providing significant information regarding the staging and form of fence/wall construction, and changes in construction c.1900.

- Jenkins marked the western side of Leakes Road to the north of Mount Kororoit (at that time owned by Clarke) as having a 'stone wall'; this wall no longer exists. On the same alignment to the south of Mount Kororoit he marked a 'P&R fence'. This post & rail fence partly survives today (its posts largely intact, but without any rails) as fence A278.[55]

some were shared with the Mary Moylan selection to his north. They were valued at 30 shillings per chain, the standard rate of building stone walls at the time.

54 Lands Victoria, Torrens Application 33210, John Jenkins' Field Notes, 11/10/1901

55 This 1901 post & rail fence had been designated a 'stone wall' by surveyor Claude Purchas in 1899. Either Purchas was wrong, or this is further evidence of wholesale conversion of stone walls

Part of 1916 Ordnance Map (Sunbury), showing the location of walls in the Mt Kororoit Dry Stone Walls Precinct at that time. The walls identified in this Study are highlighted in yellow; it can be seen that these comprise the majority of the original walls. (In addition several walls that were mistakenly omitted from the 1916 Map have also been marked in yellow.)

Charles Finch reports that Irishman Steve O'Callaghan was building walls for the Moylans when his father purchased the property in 1905. His son Steve met Frederick Finch during World War One. In 1905 O'Callaghan was camped in the bluestone cottage that had previously been occupied by Arthur Moylan, and originally John Mangovin.[56] It is presumed that O'Callaghan was working on the former Michael Moylan senior property, and building new stone walls. He may have been responsible for conversions such as that which perhaps took place on Wall A261 (which was the boundary fence between the original John and Michael Moylan properties).

It is also possible that O'Callaghan built some of the other all-stone walls on the property today. He may have built, or repaired/rebuilt, Wall A275 in front of the bluestone cottage in which he was living (it is after all the only one of the original Mangovin walls to have survived). Similarly, it is possible that he built other Moylan stone walls on the west side of the creek, such as A264, A265, or the stone causeway in that paddock.

The dry stone wall causeway built over a gully on the west side of the creek has had one of its dry stone wall barriers/balustrades removed by Charles Finch in order to move large modern farm machinery across it.[57] This was one of the common reasons for the loss of dry stone walls in the mid twentieth century. Also at this time Mr Finch put the stone wall on the '50 acre paddock', on the northern boundary of *View Monte*, through the stone crushers. (The western end of Wall A261 was an all-stone wall.) The dry stone walls (light honeycomb stones) on the west side of Leakes Road shown on turn of the century plans were similarly crushed for road stone, and also used for landscaping for the original Chadstone shopping centre (in turn removed in a later redevelopment).[58]

- **The Clarke Walls**

Unlike farming properties, the vast majority of *Rockbank* walls were boundary, rather than internal paddock, walls. Three of the walls in the precinct are in fact such walls: Walls A259 and A266 were built on the road which divided the Clarke and Moylan properties; and Wall R242 was built on the Clarke Holden Road boundary.

We have a record of R242. On 8th August 1899 it is marked as a wall (as distinct from a fence) on the field notes for the survey of the adjacent Clarke estate.[59] Henry Rendall of Rockbank, Station Overseer, attested in a statutory declaration that 'the fences or walls' shown on the plan had been erected and continuously maintained 'for the period of 15 consecutive years … at the least' (the time of his residence in the area). So, the boundary wall had been erected by 1885 (and probably considerably longer).[60]

The only other known historical record of a Clarke wall in the vicinity is the west side of Leakes Road, south of Holden Road, which was marked as a 'wall' by Purchas in 1899.[61]

to post & rail fencing by the Moylans c.1900.

56 Charles Finch, personal conversation, 8/9/2006; Melton *Express*, 21/12/1918. This is likely to have been Michael Moylan's son Arthur. (Although it is also possible that Thomas had a son by the same name).

57 Charles Finch, personal conversation, 21/1/2002

58 *ibid*

59 Lands Victoria, Torrens Application AP32123, Claude Purchas' Field Notes, 8/8/1899

60 PROV VPRS 460/P/32123, Henry Rendall, 14/7/1900.

61 Lands Victoria, Torrens Application AP32123, Claude Purchas' Field Notes, 27/7/1899. Note that on consolidated plan of 12th August 1899 Purchas shows it as a fence.

Thematic Context / Comparative Analysis:

Shire of Melton Historical Themes: 'Pastoral', 'Farming'.

Comparable Places in Victoria:

There are very few dry stone walls on the Victorian Heritage Register, the most notable being the Bessiebelle Sheep Washes and Yards (H2033). While even this is dry stone wall whose significance is related partly to its special (now rare) purpose, all other dry stone walls on the VHR appear to be subsidiary to places identified for other reasons, such as homesteads, cemeteries or other reserves. The most comparable type of dry stone wall on the VHR would be associated with the Wuchatsch Farm (H0950), but again, the dry stone wall is a subsidiary part of the ethnic architectural and broader historical values of the place, without any other special or intrinsic qualities. There are many dry stone walls included in the Victorian Heritage Inventory, but these are not generally researched, compared, or assessed, in terms of their significance as dry stone walls.

The National Trust has classified the Stony Rises (L10273) essentially for its geological and natural landscape values rather than the cultural value of its dry stone walls. Otherwise (apart from the Bessiebelle Sheepwash), the most comparable place recorded by the National Trust is the Woolert Village Reserve (B7161), which is the boundary of an early township reserve preserved by a remnant dry stone wall in poor condition, and the nearby Clonard Homestead (B7162), which similarly includes a few modest dry stone walls in fair-poor condition. Otherwise, as with Heritage Victoria, the dry stone walls on its register are associated with pastoral homesteads (often as garden walls), or part of other complexes such as lighthouses.

A number of individual walls have been identified in more recent municipal heritage studies, including Hume, Wyndham, Moorabool, Colac-Otway, and Southern Grampians.

The two previous specific studies of dry stone walls undertaken in Victoria provide the best foundation for comparative assessment. These are the Gary Vines / Living Museum of the West study, *Built To Last; An Historical and Archaeological Survey of Dry Stone Walls in Melbourne's Western Region* (1990); and the survey undertaken by the Corangamite Arts Council in 1992 which was used in its publication *If These Walls Could Talk*, first published in 1995. Neither of these studies was intended to be comprehensive, but rather to canvass a cross section of walls in their districts, describe different types, and identify the most outstanding examples.

Thus the possibility of categorical comparison of the Mount Kororoit Precinct at a statewide level is limited by the *ad hoc* identification of most dry stone walls by heritage agencies, and the limited extent of previous dry stone wall typological studies in other parts of Victoria. However the two studies that have been done do cover the principal dry stone wall region in Victoria and Australia – the Camperdown (Pomborneit, Kolora and Derrinallum) region – and Melbourne's western region, another major region of dry stone walls in Victoria, and the region which enables the most direct comparison with the walls in the Melton Study.

From all this comparative information it is evident that the Mount Kororoit Precinct contains excellent examples of some of the most rare or most historical types of walls in Victoria: the galloway-wall (or galloway-dyke, dyke being the Scottish word for dry stone wall), and 'double-single' walls. It also has a dry stone causeway, of which only one other example is known in Victoria.

- Galloway Dyke (Wall). No other example of this historically important type of wall was identified by Vines. One example of a pure galloway-wall was identified in the Corangamite Arts Council survey, at Pomborneit, where it was described as a 'Single Wall', being built one stone thick over its length of 300 metres, and 1400 mm high. This wall is also distinguished for its serpentine plan, which is presumed to have added lateral strength. It is sometimes referred to locally as 'the crochet wall' due to its very open structure.[62]

  Walls A272 and A276 in the Mount Kororoit Precinct are variations of the galloway-wall. The former, in only fair condition, is rare in that, like the above wall, parts of it are single wall. It is longer than the Corangamite wall, but its structure is not as open, it is not as high, and it does not have a serpentine plan. Wall A276 has a double lower wall, but its interstices are open as in a galloway-wall.

62 Corangamite Arts Council, *op cit*, pp.12-13, 23.

- Double-Single Walls. Two Derrinallum walls are identified as 'Galloway Dykes' in the Camperdown survey.[63] They appear closer in form to the type of walls described as 'Double-Single' walls in the Mount Kororoit Precinct (Walls A277, A274, A273), in that they have a double lower wall and several courses of single upper wall, but without interstices as is the defining characteristic of a galloway-wall. The Derrinallum walls are 300 and 500 metres long, and 1600 mm high, which compares to the two most intact Mount Kororoit examples, which are 500 and 400 metres long, and 1400-1500 mm high. Some of the Mount Kororoit Precinct walls of this description are distinguished by massive coverband stones that divide the double from the single parts of the wall.
- Causeway. A similar dry stone wall structure to the Mount Kororoit Precinct causeway is identified at Stoneyford in the Campberdown study.[64] The Stoneyford causeway is larger than that in the Mount Kororoit Precinct. The Mount Kororoit Precinct causeway has a dry stone wall balustrade/barrier (one missing) which the Stoneyford causeway does not, and also has a slight curve.

The fact that two of the four photographs on the cover of *If These Walls Could Talk* are the 'Galloway Dyke' and 'Single Wall' is indicative of the significance fo these types of walls within the outstanding Western District dry stone wall oeuvre.

In conclusion the Mount Kororoit Precinct contains an excellent group of rare types of walls, as well as some outstanding examples of all-stone and composite dry stone walls, in a single compact cultural landscape which also includes a volcanic eruption point of high geological significance, a highly intact and significant farm complex, and an intact selector's stone cottage in a landscape context of high integrity.

Comparable Places in Shire of Melton:

The precinct is one of the densests concentrations of dry stone walls in the Shire of Melton. It is unique in the Shire in terms of the number, variety and quality of its all-stone walls, for the quality of its composite walls, and for its quantity of former post & rail fences and composite walls.

63 *ibid,* pp.12-13, 25; see also pp. 71, 73. See also National Trust of Australia (Victoria) File No.5490, 'Dundonnell'.
64 *ibid*, p.32

The most comparable precincts in the Shire of Melton are those precincts centred on eruption points:- the Mount Cottrell Precinct, the Mount Atkinson Precinct, and the She-Oak Hill Precinct. It is also comparable, to a lesser extent, to the 'gateway' precincts, in particular the Greigs Road Precinct, the Western Highway Precinct, the Melton Highway Precinct, and the Robinsons Road Precinct.

The precinct contains the largest collection of remnant post & rail fences (posts only, no rails survive) in the Shire. The only more intact example identified in Stage One of the Melton Heritage Study in 2002 was a length of about 750 metres on Riding Boundary Road, which retained several short bays with remnants of rails (MHS Stage One Place No.429).

The walls in this area were not surveyed in Vines' 1990 study of dry stone walls in the nine municipalities of Melbourne's western region.

Condition:

The walls in the precinct are generally in good condition.

Integrity:

The integrity of the walls in the precinct varies, from low, moderate to high. Archaeological investigation would help to establish the extent to which the structural type of many dry stone walls (especially from all-stone to composite walls) have been altered over time.

Recommendations:

Precinct recommended for nomination to Victorian Heritage Register

Individual walls are recommended for inclusion in the Melton Planning Scheme Heritage Overlay.

Precinct recommended for inclusion in the Melton Planning Scheme Significant Landscape Overlay.

Other Recommendations:

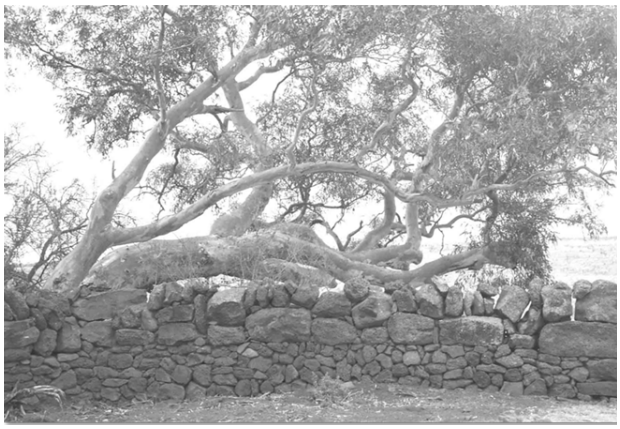
It is recommended that a Dry Stone Wall Conservation Management Plan be conducted for the precinct as a matter of the highest priority. While it might be seen fit to conduct this jointly with a broader CMP that includes the buildings on site (the Mount Kororoit

Homestead is highly significant; the bluestone cottage also important), the dry stone wall component should be undertaken with the assistance of a professional dry stone waller who would assess threats to the walls (especially from rabbit burrows), and help to develop a feasible conservation program. It would also propose a management regime for walls that are now in multiple ownership. The CMP might include an education component, and incentives for works by owners. The CMP could also undertake preliminary assessment of the fabric of the walls in order to provide further information about fence and wall construction and change in the mid nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Wall A277.
An outstanding Double-Single All Stone Wall: long and high, and in excellent condition.

Wall A277.
The stones below are very tightly packed (other sections of the wall have even smaller stones more tightly packed). Stones on this side of the wall are more covered in moss; on the opposite other side some 10-15% of the surface is exposed quarried stone surfaces.

Wall A277.
A union of Mt Kororoit stone and Kororoit Creek River Red Gum. Built in the distinctive Double- Single Wall style used by the Moylans, with courses of massive single stones atop a double wall of closely packed small stones.



Wall A277.
Some gate openings were constructed of massive coarsely shaped stones.

Wall A272.
This part of the wall is entirely of single stone width, in a crochet or filigree pattern, in the style of the original Galloway Wall.

Wall A272.
A rare solid stone vertical gatepost, a traditional style. This is one of only two known examples remaining in the Shire.

Wall A272.
This part of the wall has a lower half of small double stone, with massive blocks at half height forming a base or coverband for a course of large, mainly vertically positioned, stones, in a style resembling the more common (half) Galloway wall. Mt Kororoit Farm homestead in the background.

Wall A272.
With Wall A273, in the distinctive Moylan style, perpendicular to it. (Wall A273 was almost certainly the orchard / garden wall referred to in 1876). Not visible here are blackthorns which overgrow portions of Wall A272, and which might be vestiges of original wall planting.

Wall A275.
This wall features in the foreground of the cover photograph of this citation. Built by or for selector John Mangovin in the late 1860s. It is a well-built orthodox double wall, but (in the manner of most walls built of local round stone) without coursing. Extensive portions of the wall are intact, but other portions are dilapidated.

Wall A275.
Showing one of the causes of its deterioration: undermining by rabbit burrows.

Wall A274.
Double-Single All Stone Wall, although separated by shearing and farm yards, is on the same alignment as Wall A277, and may have been built at the same time.

Wall A276.
Another Double-Single Wall with Galloway upper half. With the quarry face behind (perhaps the source of some of the stone used on the walls on the property) it forms a stock paddock.

Wall A279.
Ryans Road. A modified All Stone Double wall. Mt Kororoit in background.

Wall A258.
Ryans Road. A composite Post & Rail & Stone Wall, with low double wall carefully built with large coping stones. (Destroyed in 2009).

Wall A260.
Running west from Leakes Road. Excellent example of a composite Post & Rail & Stone Fence. The low wall appears to be professionally built.

Wall A260.
The opposite (western) end of this long wall is of All Stone Double construction.

Wall A261.
Running west from Leakes Road. An excellent original Post & Wire and Stone wall. Its large coping stones are uniform and placed at a vertical angle.

Wall 259.
Finches Road. Part of now fragmented Clarke Rockbank Estate boundary wall.

Wall A271.
Mt Kororoit Road. The remnant original Post & Rail & Stone wall with rabbit netting (top) has been converted into a Post & Wire & Stone wall (bottom). The wall base is a traditionally built double wall construction.

This rare dry stone causeway over a gully (near Wall A264 north of Finches Road) has a slight curve. Its upper courses are in fact barriers to prevent vehicles running over its side. The opposite side barrier was pushed over to accommodate larger farm machinery.

Typical early Melton small dry stone beached dam, on Ryans Road at junction of Walls A279, 280 and 258. The dam is marked as 'Water Hole' on a 1916 map of the district.

1860s Selectors Cottage, with derelict later weatherboard cottage. Wall A275 is in behind the camera.

Citation No. 3 - She-Oak Hill Dry Stone Wall Precinct

Melton Dry Stone Walls Survey Nos:	(See description)
Location:	Beatys Road, Ryans Road, and Diggers Rest – Coimadai Road, Diggers Rest
Critical Dates:	Construction and repair of dry stone walls: c.1850s-1920s
Existing Heritage Listings:	HO14, HO15, HO37, HO39, HO40, HO50
Recommended Level of Significance:	LOCAL

Statement of Significance:

The She-Oak Hill Dry Stone Wall Precinct is significant as a collection of characteristic and highly intact dry stone walls situated between two different types of volcanic eruption points; in an intact, rural setting in which the unbroken lengths of stone wall remain as a unifying feature of the landscape. The cultural landscape also features two substantial bluestone mid nineteenth century homesteads and associated farm complexes, and two other heritage dwellings dating to the 1880s and the 1920s. The walls are significant for their length and range of all-stone and composite types. It demonstrates nineteenth century rural settlement patterns and a now largely superseded type of fence construction, and has high potential to provide both research and educational information regarding mid-nineteenth and early twentieth century fencing practices within Victoria.

The She-Oak Hill Dry Stone Wall Precinct is historically significant at the LOCAL level (AHC A3, A4, B2, D2). It includes some of the major walls in the Shire, in terms of length and variety of wall types; the longest dry stone wall in the Shire (3.8 kilometres); high and long all-stone walls; one of the two best surviving examples of the most common style of wall in the Shire (composite stone and post-and-wire fences); composite walls (some with remnants of early post and rail tops); and walls with different stone types, ranging from the typical Melton heavy round lava basalt, to a rare red hued wall with angled vesicular fieldstone near the She-Oak Hill scoria cone. The precinct demonstrates, in the arrangement of walled enclosures and paddocks, early farming settlement patterns of Melbourne's western plains. The cultural landscape includes four dwellings of heritage significance, ranging from substantial nineteenth century bluestone homesteads (Pinewood and Glencoe, HO 37 and HO 14), rare in the Shire; to a Federation era timber cottage (Angus Downs, HO 15); and an interwar timber bungalow (Kororoit Park Stud, HO 39). The precinct is historically significant for its association with the pioneer settler John Beaty and his family, who built (or commissioned) the construction of all but but one of the walls.

The She-Oak Hill Dry Stone Wall Precinct is aesthetically significant at the LOCAL level(AHC E1). The dry stone walls which cross the landscape in regular enclosure patterns, make a fundamental statement about human interaction with the volcanic landscape of which they are a part. The precinct has views of two volcanic sources: the more vertical and conical shape of She Oak Hill to the south; and the broader shape of Aitkens Hill, a 'lava shield' volcano to the north. While the most publically accessible walls are not high or dramatic, their original rural context is intact, ensuring that the walls are a prominent feature of the cultural landscape. The precinct affords beautiful pastoral views of farms, walls and wooded hills in the distance in undulating terrain, which contrasts to all the other very flat precincts. Numerous individual walls, including Walls R309 and R297 have excellent sculptural qualities and are

expressive of the skilled craftsmanship of their builders.

The She-Oak Hill Dry Stone Wall Precinct is scientifically significant at the LOCAL level (A1, C2). The walls in the precinct demonstrate two different type of volcanic eruption points: She Oak Hill (a 'scoria hill' which emitted a more irregular vesicular stone); and Aitkens Hill (a 'lava shield' volcano which emitted a heavy round lava basalt). The walls also have potential to yield research information regarding nineteenth century rural settlement patterns and farm management, and ways of life on Melbourne's western plains. In particular they have high potential for research of mid nineteenth century wall construction techniques, and the early twentieth century modification of these for changing farming practices.

The She-Oak Hill Dry Stone Wall Precinct is socially significant at the LOCAL level (AHC G1). The precinct has the potential to educate the community in regard to wall construction techniques, and also nineteenth century farm management, settlement patterns, and ways of life.

Overall, the She-Oak Hill Dry Stone Wall Precinct is of LOCAL heritage significance.

The following extract from Council's GIS records all the walls in the She-Oak Hill Precinct (Blackhill Road):

WALL NO	NEAREST ROAD
R190	Diggers Rest Coimadai Road
R194	Blackhill Road
R195	Blackhill Road
R196	Ryans Lane
R245	Diggers Rest Coimadai Road
R246	Blackhill Road
R247	Blackhill Road
R248	Blackhill Road
R301	Blackhill Road
R302	Blackhill Road
R303	Blackhill Road
R304	Blackhill Road
R305	Blackhill Road
R307	Blackhill Road
R308	Blackhill Road
R37	Blackhill Road

Description:

The landscape features of the precinct, and the source of the fieldstone used in the construction of its walls, are She-Oak Hill (the top half of which is now removed for quarry stone) and Aitkens Hill, two of about 400 inactive eruption points that have been identified on Victoria's western volcanic plains. Most were active between 4.5 million and 20,000 years ago.

In the Werribee – Bacchus Marsh area lava streams flowed to the south from catchments rising gently to the north and west. The 'Port Phillip Sunklands' contain scoria cones and domes as well as lava volcanoes with many broad low eruption points producing numerous overlapping flows. The tongues of lava emanating from 'Lava Shield' and 'Lava Hill' volcanoes – Mount Cottrell, Mount Atkinson, Mount Kororoit, Aitkens Hill, Cabbage Tree Hill and several unnamed hills – were gently effusive and slowly cooling, producing a dense basalt. The less numerous 'Scoria Hills' (the best example of which was She Oak Hill) were formed by more explosive and quickly cooling eruption points, which produced 'pyroclastic material' (ejecta), which ranged in size from ash, through sand and gravel, to large boulders, but which is generally seen as a more vesicular scoria, or tuff. While the round-shaped heavy fieldstone that is the major material seen in the dry stone walls of the Shire is the product of the Lava Shield and Lava Hill volcanoes, the 'vesicularity' of stone from the same eruption points varies, and there is often a mixture of dense, smooth lava stone and more honeycombed textured lava stone in the same area.[1]

1 Rosengren, N, 'Eruption Points of the Newer Volcanics Province of Victoria: An Inventory and Evaluation of Scientific Significance', a report prepared for the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) and the Geological Society of Australia (Victorian Division), 1994, pp.7-31

Most of the steep-sided, dome shaped volcanic hills in Victoria are mounds of scoria, as distinct from volcanoes built up with lava flows, which are broader, with low angle slopes (such as Mount Cottrell). The near perfect sugarloaf shape dome of She Oak Hill, the only Scoria Cone in Melton Shire, is now completely removed.[2] The walls in the precinct demonstrate two different type of volcanic eruption points: the typical Melton heavy round lava basalt (the most common type), and the angled vesicular fieldstone in a unique (for Melton) red hue near the She-Oak Hill scoria cone.

Apart from its geological and landscape context, and the walls themselves, the precinct includes buildings of considerable heritage significance. There are four dwellings, ranging from substantial nineteenth century bluestone homesteads, to Federation era timber cottage, and an interwar timber bungalow:- *Pinewood* homestead and garde, *Glencoe* homestead and outbuildings, which include a dry stone wall pig pen, *Angus Downs* and *Kororoit Park Stud*. They are integrally linked to the walls in this precinct, virtually all of which are either located on these farms, or were boundaries to these properties.

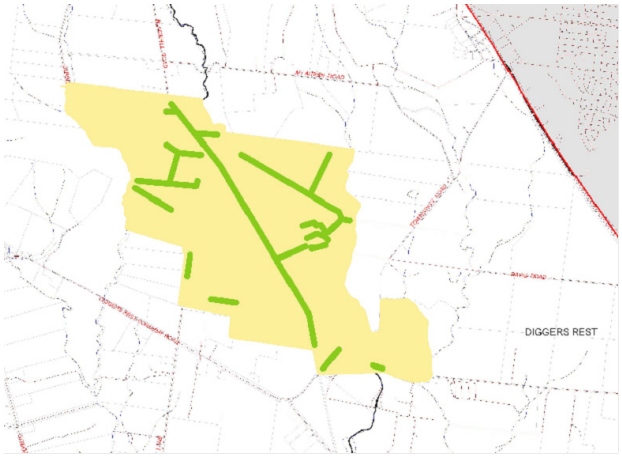
The landscape is arranged around Blackhill Road, which runs along a ridge between Yangardook and Kororoit Creek (West Branch). The landscape rises to the north, and is elevated above the plains to the south. In addition to She Oak Hill and Aitkens Hill, it provides views over these valleys and the timbered Black Hills behind *Greenhills* to the west. The precinct offers good visibility of most of the walls. The undulating landscapes within the properties themselves enable the dry stone walls to be appreciated as a cultural landscape; surrounding treed hills contribute to the beauty and integrity of the landscape.

The higher all-stone walls are within *Pinewood* and *Glencoe*. The mature hawthorn hedge (*Crataegus monogyna*) along the *Pinewood* homestead wall is indicative of the age of that wall. It is the only hawthorn hedge planted in association with a wall in the Shire.

The higher all-stone walls are the exceptions in the precinct, which generally consists of good representative examples of composite stone and post and wire walls. The precinct includes many very long walls, and includes the longest wall in the Shire (Wall R248). Some of these walls were originally post and rail, and there are significant segments of post and rail posts.

2 *ibid*, pp.349, 373

She-Oak Hill dry stone wall precinct



History:

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

Fencing in Nineteenth Century Rural Victoria

- **Fencing 1850s-1870s**

The majority of dry stone walls in Victoria appear to have been built in the 30 year period from the 1850s to the 1880s.

In 1826 rural affairs commentator James Atkinson reported that he knew of no example of dry stone walling having been erected in the colony of New South Wales.[1] Initially pastoralists employed shepherds to look after sheep. They guided the sheep to pasture during the day, and in the evening returned them to folds, constructed of wooden hurdles or brush fences, near their huts (or outstations). There are several dry stone walls on Melton's Kororoit Creek that are thought to have been associated with early pastoralists: an outstation associated with Yuille at Caroline Springs, and the remnants of a wall that are thought to have been associated with a shepherd's enclosure.[2] Other fencing

1 Kerr, JS, 'Fencing, a brief account of the development of fencing in Australia', *Australasian Society for Historical Archaeology Newsletter*, Vol. 14.No.1, March 1984, pp.9-16.
2 Melton Heritage Study Place Nos. 467 and 81.

was used on the squatters' homestations:- the 'home paddock' (likely for the squatters' precious horses) and the 'cultivation [or kitchen] garden'. Early fences were also required to separate stock for breeding purposes. These fences were usually of post & rail, vertical timber slabs or other primitive paling material.[3] (However at *Greenhills* in Toolern Vale there are some remains of a dry stone wall that would appear to be the remnants of an original homestation garden.[4])

Two major and related events in the early 1850s radically changed this situation. Firstly, the exodus to the gold-rushes made it difficult and expensive for squatters to retain labour for shepherding. And secondly, the extensive survey, subdivision and sale of Crown land in the early 1850s provided security of tenure to pastoralists, and incentive for them to invest in major improvements, including permanent fences, on their stations. Pastoralists were also encouraged to fence their land to ensure that neighbouring farmers didn't allow their stock to stray upon the open expanses of their stations.

Nevertheless, until the 1860s, extensive fencing of properties remained the exception rather than the rule. The first boundary fences in the Barrabool Hills of Victoria were only erected in 1854, and boundary and paddock fencing 'only gathered momentum after the mid 1850s.'[5] This was no doubt due to the extensive sale of Crown Land as freehold in the 1850s, as well as the increasing availability of capital due to the gold boom, and the increasing availability of labour including professional stone wallers as alluvial gold declined in the late 1850s.

Slowly, fences began to replace shepherds on the pastoral estates. Early maps of Melton Shire show that pastoralists built walls and fences relatively sparsely – only on property boundaries and to enclose huge paddocks (about 5-10 square kilometres in the south part of Clarke's Rockbank estate).[6] In dramatic contrast the same historical maps (and the mapping survey undertaken as part of this Study) show concentrated patterns of walled paddocks established on farms in the same areas at the same time. The creation of small paddocks enabled mixed farming, by securing crops and gardens from stock, and managing stock for breeding. This Study shows that, in the south of the Shire, virtually all of these fences were dry stone walls. Dry stone walls were also used to protect the homestead from stock, to construct stockyards, fowl houses and pigpens, and possibly, on a few of the larger farms, to provide aesthetic effect.[7]

Given the expense of establishing a farm from nothing in a wilderness, and the experience of many small farmers as agricultural labourers before coming to Australia, it is almost certain that the walls on all but the largest farms would have been constructed by farmers themselves rather than by professional wallers. For example, general hand William Ison and his wife arrived on a Werribee farm in the mid 1850s, and found there a small wooden cottage and a young German in charge, '*who had already done some clearing of the stones which covered the land … We set to, and cleared about 10 acres, and had it fenced in with stones by the next sowing time*.'[8] The quality of wall construction would have depended on the experience of the farmers and their seasonal hands at the craft. William Robinson who settled in the Tarneit area in 1872, was a stonemason who turned his skills to fieldstone, building a house (which does not survive) of the material and numerous fences (some of which do survive along Robinsons Road).

The tracks that wandered across the landscape gradually became straight roads, constrained within the boundary walls of freehold rural landholdings. Slowly but surely the wide open land became plotted and pieced with fences. However until the fencing of properties was completed, straying stock remained a problem. Reserves for impounding stray stock had been established early: 'by early 1851 a poundkeeper's hut or house and a couple of fenced paddocks near a water supply had been established at more than forty inland

3 Kerr, *loc cit*; Allan Willingham, 'The Dry Stone Walls in the Corangamite Region: A Brief History', in Corangamite Arts Council Inc, *If These Walls Could Talk, Report of the Corangamite Dry Stone Walls Conservation Project*, Terang, 1995, p.44

4 Melton Heritage Study, Place No.055

5 Kerr, *loc cit*

6 Shire Map Series (1892); Army Ordnance Map, 1916: 'Sunbury'.

7 Alan Marshall, asking an old waller why the walls on a particular property were so high, was told that ostensibly the reason was to keep steers in (they jumped fences), but the real reason was 'just so that he could say he had the best walls in the Western District, the biggest and the best, and bugger you.' (cited in Corangamite Arts Council, 1995, p.114). On Melbourne's western plains district however, such finely constructed walls were generally associated with formal gardens on only the largest properties, such as the Ha Ha walls on the Eynesbury (Melton Shire) and Werribee Park (Wyndham Shire) pastoral estates, or Greystones (Moorabool Shire).

8 Murray, E, *The Plains of Iramoo*, Henwood & Dancy, Geelong, 1974, p.111. (Murray notes that in 1974 these walls were still standing.)

sites.'[9] (By 1854 George Scarborough, on Mount Cottrell Road, had been installed as the Melton poundkeeper.[10])

The outbreak of the highly contagious sheep disease, 'scab', which reached epidemic proportions in the 1850s, hastened enclosure of the pastoral estates.[11] Western District squatter Neil Black quickly enclosed his Glenormiston run, and in 1854 George Russell ordered five miles of wire: '…the importance of fencing is becoming every year more apparent.'[12] Likewise, the appearance of pluero-pneumonia in Australian cattle in the early 1860s impressed cattle-men of the need to isolate their properties from travelling or straying stock.[13] That 'dreadful disease' also encouraged the erection of property fences by Melton dairy farmers (and was responsible for less use of local Commons by Melton's farmers).[14]

The construction of fencing that was encouraged by sheep scab and cattle pleuro pneumonia was also fostered by legislation. At the beginning of the pastoral period in Victoria, common law held that, generally, a landowner was under no obligation to construct or maintain boundary fences, or fences adjoining a public road. However, as a result of Australia's rapidly expanding pastoral industry, trespass of stock, and the need for security, the Victoria's *Fences Statute 1865* gave landowners the right to claim equal contribution towards the construction or repair of boundary fences from the owners of adjoining lands.[15]

By 1876 the presence of 'substantial stone walls' appears to have been hallmark of a good farm in the Melton district, the *Australasian*'s 'Travelling Reporter' making sure to note these on the farms of Ralph Parkinson, George Missen, John Moylan and Isaac Gidney.[16] However little is known of dry stone wallers who worked in the Shire at the time: Irish brothers John and George Funston worked in the Toolern Vale area from the 1850s; Patrick Connor worked on Mount Aitken in the 1860s; and Dick (the mason) Mitchell, and Arcoll (Arkell) worked in the Mount Cottrell area before 1872.[17]

- **Types of Fencing in the Nineteenth Century**

The great variety and combination of nineteenth century fencing arose 'as much from material shortages and the need to use what was procurable as from a desire to improve the utility and durability of fencing.'[18] As is the case with the rest of the Shire, most of the walls in the She-Oak Hill precinct are 'composite' stone and post & wire, rather than all-stone.

The *Fences Statute 1874* lists numerous types of fences, including 'walls' (stone walls) and 'combination' type fences. Walls that divided properties had to be a minimum of 4 feet high (1.22 metres), with a base of 'not less than 2 feet wide at the bottom', and '9 inches at the top'.[19] Although the specifications for road boundary fences were not given (the Crown being exempt from the legislation) it could be expected that the walls on these public boundaries would be at least as high as those that divided neighbouring properties.

Post and rail fences were the most common early fence type in Australia, no doubt due to the prevalence of forests and woodlands, in contrast to stony land, across Victoria. They appeared early and were prominent in the study area. In 1854 William Westgarth, on his way to the goldfields Royal Commission in Ballarat, recorded that he 'struck west through post and rail fences onto the Keilor Plains'.[20] By the 1860s timber fencing, probably from the Grey Box forest in the west and south-west of the Shire, was common in the vicinity of Melton. But as local farmer John Chandler recorded, such fencing was prone to loss in the bushfires that swept south from the ranges over the plains.[21] Even in the volcanic area near Aitkens Hill to the north of the Shire, nearly 80% of squatter John Aitken's fencing was either 'post & rail' (either 2 rail, the most common, or 3 rail), or 'post & 2

9 Priestley, Susan, *The Victorians: Making Their Mark* (Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, McMahons Point, 1984), pp. 68-9
10 Government Gazette 1854
11 Kerr, *loc cit*
12 Willingham, *op cit*, p.45
13 Kerr, *loc cit*
14 Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 1864, p.94 ; John Chandler, Michael Canon, *Forty Years in the Wilderness* (Loch Haven, Main Ridge, 1990), p.175
15 Lawlink: New South Wales Law Reform Commission website: 'Report 59 (1988) – Community Law Reform Program: Dividing Fences'; Parliament of Victoria website: Law Reform Committee, 'Review of the Fences Act 1968'
16 The *Australasian*, October 1876.
17 Bilszta, JA, 'Dry Stone Wall: Faulkners Road, Mt Cottrell, Shire of Melton', 9/9/1990, unpublished paper
18 Kerr, *loc cit*
19 The Fences Statute 1874 (Fences Amendment Act, November 1873), Clause 4 (i-xi). Other types of early fencing are described in Michael Cannon's *Life in the Country: Australia in the Victorian Age: 2*, Nelson, West Melbourne, 1978, pp.89-90; and Graham Condah's Of the Hut I Builded, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1988, p.89.
20 Lack, J, Ford, O, 'Melbourne's Western Region: An Introductory History' (Melbourne's Living Museum of the West Inc, Melbourne Western Region Commission, 1986), p.27
21 Chandler, J, Forty Years in the Wilderness, Loch Haven, 1990, p.174

rails with (2 or 3) wires', or 'post & rail with 5 foot palings'. The balance was 'stone walls'.[22] These figures might reflect squatters' early preference for timber fencing, and an early dearth of professional dry stone walling skills, not remedied until after the gold rushes. In 1868 on the same property Henry Beattie erected much more stone walling, but also built nearly twice as much '3-rail fence' in the same year.[23]

Post and wire fences were first introduced into Victoria in the 1850s, but the price of the metal posts (which could often not go down into the dry hard ground in Victoria) made them 'exceedingly expensive'.[24] The very thick and soft 'black bull wire' was soon superseded by galvanised steel wires which, with droppers to keep the wire stable, allowing greater distance between fence posts, reducing the costs.[25] With progressive improvements, including local production of wire, use of timber posts, and winding and straining devices, by at least the early 1870s wire was the cheapest type of fence.[26] The invention of barbed wire in the 1870s, and its widespread use in Victoria in the 1880s meant that it could secure cattle as well as sheep, and it became the standard fence type from this time.[27]

- **Dry Stone Walls**

In 1856 a government agricultural reporter travelling through the eastern part of Melton Shire (the Parish of Maribyrnong) commented that: 'A few good stone fences the only improvement worth noting.'[28]

A dry stone wall was the best solution:- 'Where stone was abundant, timber scarce, transport of fencing material expensive, skilled labour available, and where cheaper alternatives were unavailable.'[29] From about the mid-late 1850s, when freehold ownership exploded and the price of labour declined, and through the early 1860s when the price of labour remained cheap, the labour-intensive construction of stone walls remained very competitive.

Stone walls were built wherever stony ground made them possible, or necessary. While most farmers built their own walls to clear stony ground and manage stock and crops, pastoralists could afford professional wallers.[30] In the mid 1850s brothers John and George Funston, stone wallers and farm labourers from Ireland, are known to have been erecting walls on the Mount Aitken and Gisborne Park estates.[31] The Mount Aitken station accounts in 1868 showing the employment of a John Starkie for four weeks to help Henry gather and cart stones, and the engagement of 'Paterick [sic] Connor, Stone Wall Fencer' to erect 34 chains of stone walling at the very low rate of only 8 shillings per chain.

The popularity of stone walls with farmers is evident in the Lands Department files relating to the 1860s Selection Acts, which record the type, length and price of fencing 'improvements' made by each selector. A detailed examination of 21 selections in the Mount Cottrell, Rockbank, Mount Kororoit and Diggers Rest–Holden areas reveals that stone walling constituted by far the largest proportion (60%) of the 32.3 kilometres of fencing built on those properties by c.1875, despite the fact that it was the most expensive. Post & wire fences, one of the cheapest types of fencing then available, comprised only 6% of all fences erected. Post & rail fences, a little cheaper than the best stone walls, and a little dearer than the cheapest, constituted 9% of the fences. (Note that many other 'composite' varieties of fences were constructed from these three primary materials. There were also a small number of 'stub' or picket, and 'log' fences.[32])

Stone walling resolved two problems: the need to

22 Map, 'Index of Fences' on John Aitken's Mount Aitken property (after Crown Land sales). PROV 460/P0/39365. (The stone walls would appear not to survive.)
23 Beattie, Steward K, *The Odd Good Year: Early Scots to Port Phillip, Northern Australia, Gap, Gisborne and Beyond*, Southwood Press, Marrickville, 1999, p.63
24 Willingham, *op cit*, pp.45-6
25 Cannon, 1978, *op cit*, pp.89-91
26 Survey of 21 Selectors in the Holden – Mount Cottrell districts.
27 Willingham, *op cit*, p.46; Kerr, *loc cit;* Cannon, 1978, *loc cit*
28 Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 'Statistics of Victoria for 1856', Appendix No.1, p.46
29 Vines, G, 'Comparative Analysis of Dry Stone Walls in Victoria, Australia and Overseas', in Corangamite Arts Council, 1995, *op cit*, p.56
30 Ann Beggs-Sunter, 'Buninyong and District Community News', Issue 211, August 1996
31 Judith Bilszta, Melton Heritage Study Research, Place No.029 (3/8/2005)
32 Research of PROV VPRS 625 (Selection Act files) for the Keneally, Slattery, Reddan J, Reddan M, Tate, Rhodes C, Rhodes, McKenzie, O'Brien P, McLeod, O'Brien J, Moloney, White, Mangovin, Carrige, Moylan Mary, Moylan Margaret, Parry, Moylan, MP, Moylan T, and Watts selections. This sample is primarily of selectors on stony country, Hannah Watts, in the forest off Chapmans Road Toolern Vale being the only exception; interestingly, the cost of her post & rail fences were half the price of the others, no doubt reflecting the relative proximity of materials, with none of the other properties having ready access to local timber. Another possible bias of the sample is the over-representation of Moylan properties. But it remains a good sample of fences built in stony country in the period late 1860s to mid 1870s.

clear the land of rocks, and the need for fencing. Unquestionably, as was the case elsewhere, the key reason for the preference for dry stone walls on Melbourne's western plains by selectors was the need to clear stony land to enable cropping and grazing (dairying).[33]

Apart from the relatively small areas that were sold under the Selection Acts, there were many other areas of dry stone walling in Melton Shire. Apart from the She Oak Hill walls, property sale advertisements in the local paper suggest that the properties on the Keilor Plain east of Toolern Creek were almost entirely walled.[34] Advertisements for stone wallers in the Buttlejorrk, Diggers Rest and Rockbank Estate areas appeared regularly until 1890. Between Toolern Vale and Diggers Rest the Beaty family built many kilometres of medium sized stone walls along boundaries, and a few larger walls inside their properties for stock. Other walls, including one of substantial composition (on what was formerly the Campbells' Toolern Park property), are scattered lightly around Toolern Vale. The highest concentration of walls is situated in the southern plains of the Shire: the 1850s small farming communities of Mt Cottrell and Truganina, and the paddock and boundary fences of WJT Clarke's Rockbank station.

According to Vines the dry stone walls of the Keilor Werribee Plains 'form a reasonably distinct regional style quite different from either the interstate examples or the Western District walls'. This regional style is characterised by:-

> *'… walls constructed using the local rounded, smoothly weathered, basalt field-stone of variable size. They are generally fairly low walls, averaging 1.2 metres with a width at the base of an average of 0.83 metres and battered sides on a slope of about 5-10 degrees off the vertical. Coursing is uncommon although coping is almost always found on intact walls and through stones can usually be identified at regular intervals of about one metre. The coping stones are often quite large, rounded boulders of a maximum dimension of 400-500 millimetres. Because of their rounded shape the stones are rarely suited to the close-fitting construction seen on the Western district walls, either for the main part of the wall or the coping. As a result, the rabbit proofing techniques involving close plugging, overhanging coping, or other methods are never found in this region.'*[35]

These regular round stones lack interlocking, and often surface friction, and were never the ideal building material. The author of the 1848 'Rural Cyclopedia' considered round stones objectionable 'as they are ever rolling off'. The small wedge stones which held these round stones in position were easily dislodged.[36] Similarly, the 'round stone fence' surmounted by turf was described in Loudon's 1857 guide to British agriculture as a 'very indifferent fence', whose only apparent benefit was that it cleared the land of stone and could be built by labourers. It was found to be unstable when built to a standard wall height. Stock could easily dislodged its copings, and 'great trouble and expense are annually required to keep it in repair.'[37] Despite this, as can be seen in an apparently scarce example of this type in Corangamite (the Foxhow Road Wall), a sturdy wall of very respectable height could be built by careful selection and coursing of stones, and the use of copestones and extensive plugging.[38]

The Fences Statute's specification of walls to be a minimum 4 feet (1220 mm) high seems to have been the 'average paddock height' for which tenders were called in sheep country.[39] Walls in cattle country were built higher 'to discourage the cattle from leaning over to reach greener pastures and dislodging coping stones'. While numerous Western District dairying walls are higher, 'walls enclosing cattle were generally at least 1.4 metres (4 feet 7 inches) high'.[40] This standard also seems to have been applied in Melton, where the Moylan's high walls on Mount Kororoit Farm measure 1400 mm.

Although there is no conclusive evidence of it in Melton Shire, elsewhere boundary walls were built higher than internal walls. Vines states that: 'In almost all the dry stone wall regions in Victoria, the … most substantial walls are located along the boundaries of properties.

33 Selectors were in fact obliged under the Selection Acts to cultivate 10% of their land area.
34 Bilszta, 1990, *op cit*.
35 Corangamite Arts Council, *op cit*, p.58
36 Willingham, *op cit*, p.41
37 Loudon, JC, *Encyclopaedia of Agriculture*, 5th Edition (Longman Brown Green Longmans and Roberts, London, 1857), p.496
38 Corangamite Arts Council, *op cit*, p.28
39 Willingham, *op cit*, p.41. (The 1300 mm height was chosen as one of the categories for Study field survey. Almost all of the walls in the Shire had a base width of 700-800 mm.); Corangamite Arts Council, *op cit*, pp.49, 113
40 *ibid*, pp.17, 21, 130; Rod McLellan, 'The Dry Stone Walls of Victoria's Western District', *Historic Environment* Vol 7 No 2, 1989, pp.28-32

Subdivision of properties into fields was evidently a secondary consideration once the property had been fenced. Additional stone walls would be constructed to subdivide the property into paddocks if the field stone was so abundant as to allow these.'[41] Perkins (whose stone wall education was in Britain) states similarly that: 'Inner boundaries however were not built as high as the boundary fences, which are also known as March Dykes.'[42]

- **Composite Walls**

In the Melton Shire, and Melbourne's western plains area, most of the remnant early fences are a combination of low stone walls with spit timber post with wire above (or more rarely, timber rail). Many, perhaps the majority, of 'half walls' in Victoria were constructed because of limited availability of fieldstone.[43] Peel states what is likely to be the primary reason for their construction:-

> *'With increasing distance from a timber supply, less timber was used in fence construction and wire fences, or stone walls in the stony country, became more common. Again, where less stone was available, stone walls and wire fences were combined, with the stone wall portion consisting of anything from a single row of stones to a substantial wall three or more feet high with only one or two wires on top.'*[44]

> *For example, says Peel, timber for the Sunbury vicinity was sourced from the Mount Macedon area, but as Sunbury was also at the edge of stony country, split timber, stone and wire were all used, commonly in the same fence.*[45] *And, as Vines has shown, the 'combination' fencing is also common on the Keilor and Werribee plains.*[46] *The reason for part stone wall - part wire fences of the Melton Shire study area relates to the quantity of stone in the area. And so the most typical stone fence of the study area reflects the particular geography and history of the Melton Shire, and is important for this reason.*

Many other of Victoria's composite stone walls would appear to be the remnants of original all-stone walls that were later repaired by part-demolition and incorporation of post & wire fencing, or else just built up to a 'workable height' by the addition of post & wire fencing (perhaps to accommodate a transition from sheep to cattle).[47] Mitchell states that 'Stone walls … have since been electrified or had post and wire worked into their construction'.[48] Other examples of such walls have been recorded.[49]

Some 'composite' stone walls were definitely not built as such. Farmers sometimes gathered 'floaters' as they appeared, stacking them under fences, making a rubble stone fence, rather than a professionally built 'dry stone wall'. Melton farmer Mary Tolhurst had stone walls on her childhood property, but also tells how, prior to sowing a crop, the men would take the horse and dray and pick up stones and place them along and under the property's post & wire and post and rail fences.[50]

However the construction of half stone walls was not always simply an accidental by-product of the amount of fieldstone available, or deterioration of original walls, or need to increase wall height, or the need to progressively clear land. An 1861 treatise on fencing by a Scottish manufacturer includes a diagram showing wire fencing on top of stone walls.[51] And experiments with combining fencing materials to most economic effect were undertaken early in Australia. In 1851 John Learmonth in the Western District erected a boundary fence in which the lowest rail was replaced by a stone dyke (or wall).[52] It appeared to Learmonth: 'that in some part this would add little to the expense, and at the same time would add to the durability and safety from fires.' Contracts for the same fences were being deliberately let in 1927, when a 'two foot walls with cope stone on a 2'6" base, with barb wire' was built at *Turkeith* near Birregurra.[53]

In the Shire of Melton 'half-stone walls' – with the stone less than 18 inches high – were also built deliberately. The exact reasons are probably lost to time, but present farmers know that they had benefits in terms of preventing sheep crawling under the lower wire, and in

41 Corangamite Arts Council, *op cit*, p.60
42 *ibid*, p.130
43 Corangamite Arts Council, *op cit*, p.80
44 Peel, LJ, *Rural Industry in the Port Phillip Region 1835-1880*, MUP, 1974, p.108
45 Peel, *op cit*, p 108.
46 Vines, G, *Built To Last; An Historical and Archaeological Survey of Dry Stone Walls in Melbourne's Western Region* (Living Museum of the West Inc, 1990).
47 Vines, 1995, *op cit*, p.60
48 Mitchell, H, 'Building Dry Stone Walls', Grass Roots, No.48, April 1985
49 Richard Peterson, Daniel Catrice, 'Bacchus Marsh Heritage Study', 1994
50 Mary Tolhurst, February 2002.
51 Willingham, o*p cit*, p.46
52 Kerr, *op cit*. (Dyke was the Scottish word for stone wall.)
53 Mary Sheehan (author of Colac Otway Heritage Study), 11/8/2005

preventing draught horses from scratching itch mites in the hairs of their legs.[54]

Many of the Melton composite stone and wire walls have neat coping stones intact. These all appear to have been built in the traditional manner in relation to base width and double wall construction (perhaps to comply with the Fences Act definition of a 'sufficient' wall). Other composite walls are less neatly constructed. These generally have a higher percentage of round-shaped stones, and consequently a higher wall batter and a more pyramidal, less vertical, shape. While some of these have obviously had posts inserted into them, it is also possible that some might have always been composite walls. The relative instability of stone walls built with the 'round stone' that predominates in Melton Shire may also have encouraged the original wall constructions to have been kept low, and topped up with wire.[55]

Our natural association of 'the richest areas for dry stone walls'[56] with areas where fieldstone is most abundant is not the complete explanation for the different extent and quality of stone wall construction in different areas. While the availability of stone is the 'supply' side of the equation, there is also a 'demand' side: the need for fencing; and the economic feasibility of clearing land and building walls.

As mentioned previously, both historical and present maps of dry stone walls in Melton Shire show strikingly greater densities of walls in farming areas than on large pastoral properties. This is despite the fact that, as in the southern part of the Shire, both the pastoral and farming land-uses are situated in exactly the same volcanic landscape. So, while the greatest numbers of extant walls in the Shire were built as part the Clarkes' vast Rockbank pastoral estate, the greatest concentrations are situated on medium and small sized farms. Another contrast between pastoral and farming properties evident in the fieldwork undertaken for this Study is that in all but one case (Clarke's boundary wall No.F96 on Faulkners Road) the most substantial stone walls – the most 'all-stone' and the highest walls – are also to be found on farms and small grazing properties rather than on the large pastoral estates.

Farms had a greater need for fencing, in order to separate stock from crops, and for construction of dairy yards, small dams, pigsties and cowsheds, than did large sheep-runs, which only required fencing of boundaries and large paddocks. This more intensive use of the land would also have meant that it was worth investing more in the land, including clearing the property of fieldstone. Whereas land needed to be cleared for crops, and to maximise grass for cattle on small farms, less complete (if any) clearing of land was required to make huge flocks of sheep economical. For example, in the 1890s parts of the Chirnside Brothers great Werribee Park pastoral estate were let to tenant farmers: 'The Chirnsides retained the "rocky" country, which was not fit for cultivation, but which was quite good grazing country, growing a nice quality of wool.'[57] And there was comparatively little demand for fencing on the vast paddocks of the Clarkes' Rockbank estate. While the evidence of the nearby small farms indicates that there was sufficient stone to build at least some substantial all-stone walls, it was not economical (or perhaps necessary) to build such walls for sheep paddocks.

The situation was different for farmers. At least three of the 21 selectors examined in the district (the Holden area) had stone coverage that was too expensive to clear. The Land Department inspector reported on Ellen Slattery's selection, which appears to have been the worst: 'I consider the land to be unfit for cultivation; it would cost from £20 to £30 per acre to clear some part of it, as it is a mass of rock.'[58] While most of the volcanic plains would have cost much less than this to clear, even with a very conservative estimate of only £1 or £2 per acre, stone clearing would still have been a substantial cost likely to have been economical only for the more intensive land uses; that is, for farming rather than pastoralism.[59] Being unskilled work, farmers (and their sons and itinerant labourers) would also be in a position to do it themselves cheaply.

So, even if there was sufficient fieldstone to build substantial stone walls, it was not always economical to clear it. In Australia the comparatively large size of landholdings, the high cost of fencing from scratch, and the predominantly pastoral land use, is likely to have

54 Personal conversations, John Morton, and Charlie Finch.
55 Loudon, *loc cit*
56 Eg, Vines, 1995, *op cit*, p.58

57 Morris, G, 'Centennial History, Werribee', extract obtained from *Werribee Banner*, 5th April 1962.
58 PROV VPRS 625 Unit 304 (20712), Inspector Yeoman, 10/9/1875
59 Figures provided by selector Alexander McLeod, whose density of rocks appears to have been unremarkable and may have been light, suggest that he spent approximately £1-2 per acre on 'clearing stone and sundries' (PROV VPRS 625, Unit 273 (18276)).

had a significant influence on the form of stone wall built. Whereas in Europe there is a high proportion of high all-stone walls, in Australia paddocks with enough stone to build high all-stone walls may not have been economical to clear.[60] In the Melton Shire exceptions to this occurred in the larger and more successful mid-nineteenth century farms and small grazing properties (such as the Moylan, Beaty and Hopkins properties), on which some substantial stone walls (generally near the homestead) were constructed. The other major exceptions in Melton are the large and finely built Clarke dry stone wall dams. These, together with the magnificent boundary walls built by the Manifolds in the Western District to protect against rabbits, also support a conclusion that the use of stone was related not just to its quantity (the supply), but also to the special needs of the owners (the demand): for farming; or to countervail the peculiarly dry climate on Melton plains; or to combat the devastating rabbit plague on the Stony Rises. Cultural circumstances, for example, the local pool of skills in the Western District, and local traditions (such as belief in stone walls as a fire retardant), no doubt also played a part.[61]

Analysis of the 21 Selection Act files provides some grounds for arguing that composite walls such as 'post & wire and stone' may in fact have been particularly associated with the Melton district. The printed forms upon which selectors were asked to mark the improvements to their properties included 11 types of fences. However, these 11 options did not include categories for the most common type of fence in the district:- the composite 'post & wire & stone' (or 'post & rail & wire & stone') fences. Yet at least 5 of the 21 selectors in the district describe these types of fences on their selections, marking additions such as 'stone bottom' to the 'post and wire' category (Patrick O'Brien). It is likely that the lack of category meant that others again (in addition to these five) simply selected one of the given types to describe their composite walls; some probably called their 'half stone' fences either 'stone walling' or 'post & wire' or 'post & rail' fences. (As such, it is likely that much of the fencing described as 'stone' and other categories was actually composite post & wire and stone. The price of the different type of walls would support the possibility that some 30% of the fencing built by these selectors was in fact post & wire and stone.)

One conclusion that could be drawn from the Selection Act pro-formas is that composite 'post & wire and stone' and 'post & wire & rail and stone' walls/fences were variants that were particularly associated with Melbourne's western plains. Alternatively, they may have been variants that became more common throughout the whole of Victoria around the time of the Selection Acts.

Composite stone and post & wire walls appear to characterise Melton Shire in a way that they do not elsewhere. But they are not confined to Melton Shire or Melbourne's western and northern plains. Examples are to be found in virtually all of the stone wall districts of Victoria, although they would appear to be small minority in some districts. There are also known to be many in New Zealand's Otago area, at least some in North America, but virtually none in Europe. The questions that remain, and can only ultimately be answered by further studies in other regions, is whether they are in fact the most common type of fence in Victoria as some claim, and whether they are more concentrated and numerous in Melton Shire and the Melbourne fringe than elsewhere.

Another much rarer type of composite wall of which there is an example in the She Oak Hill precinct is that which is referred to in the *Fences Statute 1874* as the 'close hedge or live fence'. During the late 1860s and 1870s many colonial farmers believed that stone, post-and-rail, wire, or combination fences should gradually be replaced with hedges. These could shelter stock from the cold, and crops and pastures from the hot Australian winds. Hedges began to be planted along the fence lines, with the intention of overgrowing and eventually replacing the 'less permanent' types of fence. For example, Osage Orange and Briar Rose were advertised in local papers for sale in large lots. Other species that might be found include Boxthorn, Hawthorn, Briar Rose (also called Wild Rose, or Sweet Briar), the native Tree

60 Gary Vines, posting in Heritage Chat, 11/8/2005

61 While it has not been analysed, it would seem that many of the large stone walls in the Western District (eg, the Kolora, Derrinallum and Purrumbete areas) were built by farmers c.1900 (Corangamite Arts Council, 1995, pp.76-142 and *passim*). The primary reason for the farmers' high walls, no doubt, was the amount of stone on the properties. But the 'demand' side may also have contributed. This was a period when dairying was transforming from a cottage to an export industry: the quality of the soil, or the rainfall, might have made this investment in the land worthwhile at this time, whereas it did not in Melton Shire. This is clearly very speculative, but perhaps demonstrates a need for more general research on the relationship between economics of farming and fence construction.

Violet (which is indigenous to rocky volcanic areas), and the South African Honeysuckle or Red Trumpet Flower.[62] Along some fences these species have apparently been self-sown by birds. No pure hedge fences would appear to remain in the study area, although remnants of hedges in conjunction with stone, post-and-wire/rail fences do survive. Wall R309 at Pinewood is the only known example of a composite stone and hawthorn wall identified in the Shire of Melton.

Like most farms in Melton Shire situated east of Toolern Creek, the Beaty property was surrounded on several sides by the Clarke family's immense pastoral estate. While the She Oak Hill precinct is situated predominantly on the Beaty land, one wall (R245) on the Diggers Rest – Coimadai Road is a Clarke wall.[63]

History of the Place

Apart from Wall R245 on Diggers Rest – Coimadai Road, all of the walls in the She-Oak Hill precinct are situated on land historically owned by the Beaty family, r were built by or for the Beatys. John Beaty purchased a large allotment at one of the first sales of Crown Land in the district. There is a family belief that he settled on the property years before he purchased the land, perhaps as early as 1848, when he arrived in the colony from Northern Ireland.[64] Pollitt's earlier history of the Shire which states that 'Old' John Beaty settled on the Kororoit between Toolern and Sunbury in '1869' may be meant to read '1849'. Pollitt states that Beaty, as with many who prospered in the area, 'started a carrying business between Melbourne and Bendigo, using bullock teams, and prospered up to the time of the railway'.[65]

Jointly with a 'John Beattie', in August 1852 John Beaty purchased the 482 acre Crown Allotment 20 Parish of Holden at the very good price of £578. Five months later, in January 1853, John Beattie sold John Beaty his half share in this allotment for £1446.[66] (Beattie may have been a relation of John Beaty, as different branches of the family adopted different spellings. For example John Beaty met his brother Charles when he arrived in Melbourne from their native Co. Tyrone Ireland in 1856, but Charles used the spelling 'Beatty', and his descendents 'Beattie'.[67] Beattys Road in Rockbank is named after Charles' branch of the family who occupied the Rockbank Inn from the 1860s to 1970s. Official government records add to the confusion by often spelling John Beaty as 'Beatty', and sometimes 'Beattey'. Confusion is further increased by John Beaty's neighbour Henry Beattie, who managed and then leased for many years the adjacent Mt Aitken Station and other nearby property, but who hailed from Scotland and was presumably therefore no relation to John Beaty.[68] Henry and his sons, including William and John Aitken, became nationally famous breeders of Hereford cattle, Shropshire sheep, and Leicester and Merino crosses. Another son Walter also owned land in the district.[69])

Beaty had done well to establish in this area, with the very early pastoral station Green Hills on his west, the famous early squatter and sheep breeder John Aitken to his north and east, and the notorious land-shark WJT (Big) Clarke to his south. By 1854 Beaty had a well-established 'homestead' on his allotment, which was situated the east bank of the West Branch of Kororoit Creek.70 At Crown Land sales 1854-57, Beaty capitalised on his foothold and purchased the majority of his holding, a further 1547 acres. The majority of this land was situated on the west side of the West Branch of Kororoit Creek - formerly part of the Green Hills Station - where the Pinewood homestation would later be built (on Crown Allotment 9, Parish of Yangardook, purchased on 19th July 1855). Also on this side of the creek, along Blackhill Road, his son Andrew's Glencoe, Andrew's son George's Angus Downs, and eventually the house at 847 Black Hill Road (Kororoit Park Stud), would also be built. He purchased 15 separate but contiguous parcels of land, some of which cost, in this gold-rush period, over £4 per acre. In total Beaty acquired some 2030 acres (c.820 hectares) in the 1850s Crown sales.

John Beaty ('of Kororoit Creek') and his wife Elizabeth apportioned their estate between sons John junior,

62 Peel, *op. cit*, p.108
63 Shire Map Series (1892), Parishes of Holden and Yangardook.
64 Starr, J, *Melton: Plains of Promise* (Shire of Melton, nd, c.1985) p.29; John Beaty, personal conversation, 8th May 2002. Also Wesfarmers' real estate brochure for the property, 2002.
65 Pollitt, JH, *An Historical Record of Melton* (nd), p.44
66 PROV Torrens Application file: VPRS 460/P0 (39493).
67 Starr, *loc cit*. International 'Beatty' family websites also encompass all spellings of the surname (although male and female Christian names recur constantly in the nineteenth century).
68 Peck, HH, *Memoirs of a Stockman*, (Stock & Land Publishing, Melbourne, 1972), p. 99; also Beattie, SK, *The Odd Good Year: Early Scotes to Port Phillip, Northern Australia, Gap, Gisborne & Beyond*, (the Author, Wagga Wagga, 1999), *passim*.
69 Peck, *op cit*, pp. 50, 99, 179-181; also Shire of Melton Ratebooks, 1882-1888.
70 Lands Victoria, Put-Away Plan Y27 (1854)

Andrew and William. John junior was 'granted' (sold for £300, a small sum) the property on West Branch of Kororoit Creek as far west as Blackhill Road, in 1872.[71] On this land (about 716 acres by the late 1880s) the bluestone homestead *Pinewood* was built by John junior.[72] John was the youngest of the brothers, and didn't marry until in his 40s, so Pinewood was the last of the houses built. A notice appears in the Melton *Express* in March 1876 for tenders to construct 'five roomed bluestone with brick house for Mr John Beaty, Yangardook'.[73] This fits the family's belief that *Pinewood* was built c.1875, and that, as with the other brothers' homesteads (*Glencoe and Rockands*), it was built of stone quarried on *Glencoe*, other stone tried not being suitable.[74]

John senior retained some 600 acres of land in his own name.[75] This was probably the site of his original homestead, which was situated nearby, on a flat on the east side of the creek, a complex of house, outbuildings and fenced yards (probably containing a gardern or orchard, stockyard or paddock).[76] All that remains of this house are three *pinus radiata*, an exceptionally fine old pear tree, and hawthorn plantings around the dry stone wall paddock.[77] Archaeological evidence of the original house complex may remain. There are also paddocks fenced by good all-stone drystone walls nearby. John Beaty senior died on 18th November 1999.

John Beaty junior was described as 'farmer and grazier' in the early twentieth century. Two of sons, John III (Jack), and Robert, established 'Beaty Brothers' Dorset Horn Stud in the 1930s. The brothers' partnership was dissolved in 1965, after which Robert and his son John continued the Dorset Horn Stud, and called the property Kororoit Park.[78] In around 1926 a house (847 Black Hill Road) was built on that part of the property rated as 273 acres, being part of allotments 7, 8 and 9, Parish of Yangardook. It was owned then by the 'Misses Beaty' - Elizabeth A, Marjory C, and Catherine M - Robert and John III (Jack's) sisters. The womens' occupations were given as 'home duties', and their place of residence as *Pinewood*.[79] While their mother had been keen to live in the new house, the sisters were happy living at *Pinewood*. The first occupant of 847 Blackhill Road was Jack Beaty, and then Robert, after he married in 1933.[80]

By 1936 'Robert Alexander Beaty grazier' remained in possession of the land to the south of William Beaty's *Rocklands*.[81] His son John remains lives on this property today, carrying on the Dorset Horn Stud established by his father and uncle.

At the homestead (internal) gate of the rear (main) driveway to *Pinewood*, beside a dry stone wall around the garden, is an old tree which according to Beaty family lore is an offshoot of a Canary Island pine that was picked up in the Canary Islands *en route* to Australia. Inspection reveals that it is in fact an Aleppo pine (*Pinus halepensis*). The original tree, which the family relates was planted c.1870s and fell in 2001, remains as a stump on the opposite side of the gateway. The existing tree is said to have been planted c.1900 from a seed from the original. The property may have been named after these trees. The ancient and exceptionally fine specimen of a Pear tree near Kororoit Creek, again beside a dry stone wall, is thought to have been the remnant of an orchard situated near the original 1850s Beaty homestead (no longer extant).

In 1879 John senior transferred some 318 acres of land on the east side of the West Branch of Kororoit Creek (which had increased to some 739 acres in the late 1880s), to William who built the *Rocklands* homestead there.[82] The next day John senior transferred to Andrew the property (some 803 acres by the late 1880s) on which the *Glencoe* homestead was established.[83]

Glencoe is situated on the west side of Blackhill Road. On the south-western corner of the *Glencoe* allotment an early 'out station' was marked on an early map.[84] This allotment, purchased in 1855 by John Beaty, had undoubtedly been associated with the *Green Hills* 'headstation' about a kilometre to its south. John Hunter Patterson 'finding the country almost totally

71 PROV Torrens Application file: VPRS 460/P0 (39493), Conveyance John Beaty to John Beaty the Younger,12/2/1872.
72 Shire of Melton Ratebooks, 1887-1888.
73 The *Melton Express*, 5/3/1876
74 John Beaty, and Mrs D Watt. (There is also a quarry beside the Kororoit Creek on Rocklands.)
75 Shire of Melton Ratebooks, 1887-1888.
76 Shire Map Series, 1892, Parish of Yangarook (SLV 821.A)
77 John Beaty, personal conversation, 8/5/200
78 John Beaty, personal conversation, 25/10/2004, 8/5/2002
79 Shire of Melton Ratebooks, 1919-1927.
80 *ibid*
81 Torrens Application 48954, PROV VPRS 460 (Unit 817)
82 PROV Torrens Application file: VPRS 460/P0, Unit 817 (48954), Conveyance John Beaty to William Beaty,19/9/1879; also Shire of Melton Ratebooks, 1887-1888.
83 PROV Torrens Application file: VPRS 460/P0 (37508), Conveyance John Beaty to Andrew Beaty, 20/9/1879; also Shire of Melton Ratebooks, 1887-1888.
84 Lands Victoria, Put-Away Plan Y27 (1854)

unoccupied' had established the well-known Port Phillip *Green Hills* station in early December 1836.[85] The 1841 census reveals that it was at the time the largest of the squatting stations in the Shire of Melton - far larger than Simon Staughton's Brisbane Ranges-Exford run, or the nearby Mt Aitken run established earlier by John Aitken. In 1841 the census collector found *Green Hills,* on 'Pennyroyal Creek', being run by 'Simeon Cadden for John Patterson'. There were 22 adults, including 15 shepherds, living on the property. In 1841 Patterson was forced by the financial crisis to sell or lease all his extensive pastoral holdings.

Andrew and his brother William returned to Ireland where they both married before returning home.[86] It is possible that the construction of *Glencoe* was associated with Andrew's marriage. *Glencoe* might have been built as early as the late 1850s, but was probably built 1860s-70s. It was definitely built by 1888.[87] *Glencoe* was built of stone quarried behind the house, and the bluestone shed was then built from offcuts created when this stone was quarried.[88]

The other property established on the west side of Blackhills Road, south of and near to *Glencoe*, was the weatherboard cottage *Angus Downs*. In 1900 Andrew Beaty transferred various parcels of land south of *Glencoe* homestead, totalling some 240 acres, to George, who was his only son.[89] (He may also have transferred other land at another time, as it is not certain that these parcels included the *Angus Downs* house. The *Angus Downs* property was in excess of 330 acres by the early twentieth century.) The family tradition is that George was expected to inherit *Glencoe*, so *Angus Downs* was regarded as something of a temporary home until this occurred. However George died in c.1902,[90] some eight years before his father Andrew (on 27th November 1910). As a result of his son predeceasing him, the *Glencoe* property was eventually passed to Mrs Wilson, a daughter.

George Beaty's son John George Beaty was born at *Angus Downs* in 1896. John George's three sisters, the eldest of whom was about four years older than him, were also born at the house.[91] It would appear then that the house was occupied by George Beaty by c.1892. It is possible that it had been erected (or moved to the site) to accommodate George on the occasion of his marriage to wife Eliza.

John George Beaty raised a family of three daughters, Zelma, Verna and Jean on *Angus Downs*. In the 1930s a large new kitchen was built onto the rear of the old house. John George lived there until about a week before his death in 1968.[92] This was the end of an era for Angus Downs. In the 1970s the vacated property became the setting for a 'back to the land' experiment by a 'community' of university students and young teachers seeking to go 'back to basics'. The young city community set to learning how to breed (and kill) chickens, raise a few farm animals (as pets), and once the tractor was tamed, plant a kitchen garden.[93] It was a photograph of this group beside their first crop of corn that was chosen as the cover photograph of the inaugural edition of the magazine 'Grass Roots'. The *Angus Downs* community had become something of an emblem for a magazine that would become a part of the 1970s alternative movement.[94]

The house is still in the ownership of the Beaty family. In 2002 Andrew Robinson, the son of Jean Beaty of Angus Downs was undertaking repairs, restoration and extensions to his family home. Apart from structural works, the alterations were confined to the rear part of the house.

The Beaty family have played a prominent part in the history of European settlement of the Toolern Vale area and Shire of Melton. For some 40 years in the early twentieth century John Beaty III (Jack) of Pinewood was

85 A number of the squatters who established runs in the Mount Emu area near Caramut (Western District) - such as Cadden, Hyde, maybe Bell, and possibly Urquhart would also appear to have had early association with *Green Hills* at Toolern in some way. There was also a large pastoral run called *Green Hills No.1* at Carumut. [Sayers, C.E.(ed), Bride, T.F., *Letters From Victorian Pioneers*, facsimile edition (Lloyd O'Neill, Melbourne 1983), pp.281-282, 290-291, 289-299; Brown, PL (ed), *The Narrative of George Russell of Golf Hill*, (Oxford University Press, London: Humphrey Milford, 1935), p.172]

86 *ibid*

87 John Beaty, personal conversation, 25/10/2004; VPRS 460/P0 (37508); Shire of Melton, *Ratebooks*, 1887-88 Further family genealogical information on marriage dates etc might provide clues that would help to date the building.

88 John Beaty, personal conversation, 8/5/2002

89 VPRS 460/P0 (37508)

90 Personal conversation, Mrs Verna Hornbuckle, granddaughter of George Beaty, 12/10/04.

91 *Ibid.*

92 *ibid*

93 An article on the community was written for the 25th Jubilee edition of *Grass Roots* (No.127, June/July 1998).

94 *Grass Roots* (the Craft and Lifestyle Magazine, for Down to Earth People), No.1, April-June 1973. *Grass Roots* was dedicated to sharing information between those who would turn their backs on 'big business' by co-operativism and subsistence, growing vegetables, making candles, and moulding mud bricks.

a Melton Councillor, serving six terms as Shire President. 'Beaty's Bush Paddock' was for many years the site of annual 'Bird Day' excursions for scholars at the nearby Toolern Vale State School.[95]

The Dry Stone Walls

Most of the walls in this precinct were built on the Beaty properties, and one on the Clarke pastoral estate. The Melton Dry Stone Walls Heritage Study has shown that approximately 45% of the dry stone walls surviving in the Shire today were erected as part of the Clarkes' pastoral estate. Of the balance, it is estimated that three larger farmers – the Beatys on Blackhills Road (8.5%), Hopkins & Farragher on Hopkins Road (7.4%), and the Moylans on Mount Kororoit Road (5.6%), between them built another 21.5% of the remaining walls. The residual one third of the walls in the Shire was built mainly by smaller farmers and selectors.

- **Beaty Walls**

It is very likely that the high all-stone wall (with hawthorn plantings) on the *Pinewood* property beside Kororoit Creek was built very early, close to the time that John Beaty established the property. Most of the other walls, especially the boundary walls along Blackhills Road, could be presumed to have been built very early in the Beaty occupation, probably the 1850s.

However the extensive boundary and paddock dry stone walls (all-stone, rather than composite post-and-wire) on the *Pinewood* property (including R193, R309) are believed to have been repaired / rebuilt in the 1920s. The higher internal paddock walls are in especially good condition, and may have been associated with the use of these paddocks for cattle. Some of the internal walls are not shown on the 1916 Ordnance plan for the area, and may date to the 1920s.

The long walls on the *Glencoe* property were likely built a little later, by Andrew Beaty. These are some of the longest and highest walls in the precinct.

Early twentieth century surveyors of the properties were described many of the composite walls: -

- In 1901 surveyor Muntz described well-built composite post and wire and stone wall (Wall R246) on the north-west corner of Blackhills and Diggers Rest – Coimadai Road simply as a 'Stone Wall'.[96] It is now a 'post and wire double' wall; a post and wire fence may have been added in the twentieth century.

- In 1911 surveyor Arundt identified the walls on Blackhill Road (Wall Nos.R248, R194, and the northern part of R247) as 'fence and wall'. He also described the wall perpendicular to Blackhill Road on the east side (Wall R195) as 'fence and wall'. He described the wall perpendicular to Blackhill Road (the entrance to Pinewood) as 'wall and fence'.[97] Most of these walls survive today in this form.

- In 1933 surveyor Webb described Wall R37 as being 'Post Rail & wire and stone base'. This wall is still about 200 metres long, and is now described as a composite Post and Wire Double stone wall, in poor condition.[98]

Wall R245, built as part of the Clarke *Rockbank* estate, although visually unprepossessing, is significant in its own right. At 430 metres it is the second longest, and one of only six walls in the whole Shire in the height range 751-1000 mm that are recorded as being in 'excellent' condition. This is significant, as the height range of 751-1000 mm is the largest category of walls in the Shire (36% of all walls). Similarly, the other large group (the height range of 351-750 mm, which has 31% of all walls) also has a very low percentage of walls in excellent condition. This range of wall height (351-1000 mm) is the range in which walls are topped up by post and wire. The reason that most of these walls (comprising 66% of all Melton walls) are in only fair condition may be that most walls of these heights, in contrast to the higher walls, were built by farmers rather than professional wallers. In addition, the maintenance required for such walls was high, given that the typical round fieldstone of the locality made them particularly prone to tumbling-down. However, Wall No.R245 would appear to be an exception. The more intact section (at the eastern end) is better built than most and, given that it was a Clarke wall, is likely to have been professionally built.

95 Toolern Vale State School Centenary History 1869-1969 (Toolern Vale State School Centenary Celebrations Committee, 1969); Pollitt, *op cit*, p.44; Starr, *op cit*, p.269

96 Lands Victoria, Torrens Application No.32954, April 1901.
97 Lands Victoria, Torrens Application No.39493, June 1911.
98 Lands Victoria, Torrens Application No.49013, 15/9/1933

Thematic Context / Comparative Analysis:

Shire of Melton Historical Themes: 'Pastoral', 'Farming'.

Comparable Places in Shire of Melton:

The most comparable precincts in the Shire of Melton are those precincts centred on eruption points:- the Mount Cottrell Precinct, the Mount Atkinson Precinct, and the She-Oak Hill Precinct. It is also comparable, to a lesser extent, to the 'gateway' precincts, in particular the Greigs Road Precinct, the Western Highway Precinct, the Melton Highway Precinct, and the Robinsons Road Precinct.

The precinct is one of the most concentrated groups of dry stone walls in the Shire of Melton. It has a very high percentage of walls in 'excellent' or 'good' condition. It also has the most intact original rural context of all the dry stone wall precincts in the Shire. It also has the longest walls, including the longest wall in the Shire (R248, 3.8 kilometres) situated on Blackhill Road, and therefore entirely accessible to the public. These roadside walls are composite stone and post and wire (with a few remnant posts of former post-and-rail composite walls). The highest all-stone walls are on the Pinewood and Glencoe properties, not visible from the road.

The walls in this area were not surveyed in Vines' 1990 study of dry stone walls in the nine municipalities of Melbourne's western region.

Condition:

The walls in the precinct are generally in good condition.

Integrity:

The integrity of the walls in the precinct varies, high, to moderate, to low.

Recommendations:

Individual walls are recommended for inclusion in the Melton Planning Scheme Heritage Overlay.

Other Recommendations:

It is recommended that the dry stone walls condition, and threats, be identified as part of the development of a limited Conservation Management Plan to ensure their long-term maintenance. Archaeological survey of some of the walls has the potential to provide further information regarding early pastoral settlement, and in particular the original construction of the walls and any modifications to the style of the walls that have occurred in the early twentieth century.

Wall R297.
A substantial all-stone wall on Glencoe, west of Blackhill Road. Another long wall is visible in the distance.

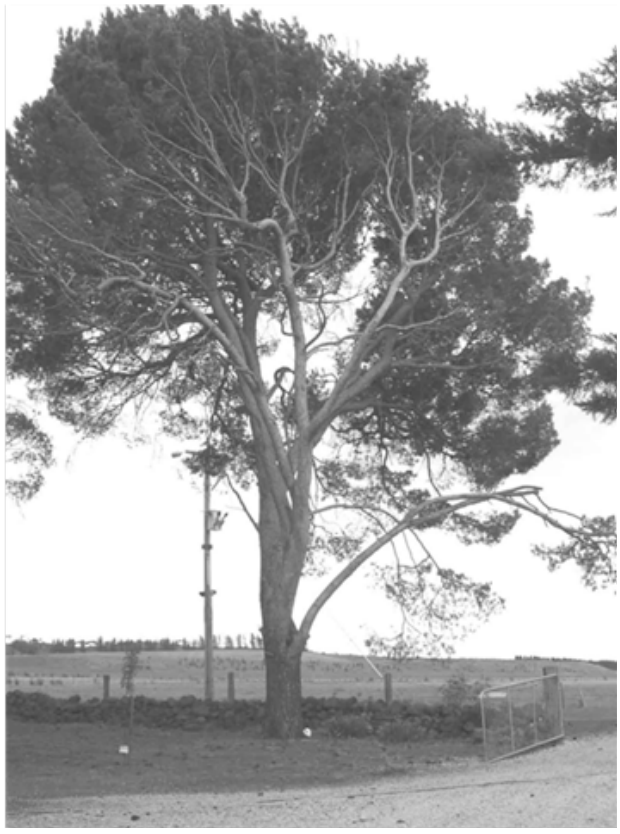
Wall R247 (west side of Blackhill Road).
Dry stone wall built around a venerable casuarina.

Walls R195 &R248.
Junction of two composite walls on Blackhill Road.

An ancient and exceptionally fine specimen of a Pear tree with dry stone walls, near the original John Beaty homestead site on Kororoit Creek.

Wall R309. (Also photograph on front of this report)
Home Paddock wall at Pinewood.
All-stone wall and mature hawthorn planting.

Stone wall at entrance to Pinewood, beside historical Aleppo pine.



Wall R190.
Composite wall east of Ryans Road.

Wall R247.
Blackhill Road. This fence has a loose stone base. The accumulation of stone over the lower mortise of the former post & rail fence is evident.

Wall R194.
Composite wall, on the north part of Blackhill Road near the 'Lava Shield' volcano Aitkens Hill, showing heavy round lava basalt from that volcanic type.

Wall R247.
Composite wall, on the south part of Blackhill Road near the 'Scoria Hill' volcano She Oak Hill, showx more angular (rather than round) vesicular fieldstone, reddish in colour, from that volcanic type.

Wall R245 (Diggers Rest – Coimadai Road).
This is one of the two most intact walls of this most common dry stone wall height range (751-1000) in Melton Shire.

Citation No. 4 - Mount Atkinson Dry Stone Wall Precinct

Melton Dry Stone Walls Survey Nos:	(See description)
Location:	Hopkins Road, Boundary Road, Middle Road, Truganina
Critical Dates:	Original construction of most c.late 1850s – 1870s; extensive reconstruction of most Rocklands walls c.1930s
Existing Heritage Listings:	HO 114
Recommended Level of Significance:	LOCAL

Statement of Significance:

The Mount Atkinson Dry Stone Wall Precinct is a group of characteristic and distinctive Shire of Melton walls built c.late 1850s to 1870s. It is significant at the LOCAL level as the densest concentration of dry stone walls in the Shire, for its demonstration of rural settlement patterns; for its demonstration of the early farming settlement of South Derrimut (Truganina / Tarneit), which was particularly dry, and partly isolated by the surrounding huge *Rockbank* pastoral estate; for its associations with gold-rush land speculators and the issue of closed roads on pastoral estates; for its demonstration of skilled craftsmanship; for the evocative names of two of its major properties – *Rocklands* and *Rockbank*; and for its potential to provide both research and educative information regarding nineteenth century farming and pastoral practices on Melbourne's western plains.

The Mount Atkinson Dry Stone Wall Precinct is historically significant at the LOCAL level (AHC A3, A4, B2, D2). The precinct demonstrates the early pastoral and farming settlement patterns of Melbourne's western plains. It is significant as the densest group of dry stone walls in the Shire of Melton. The walls express nineteenth century small farming practices, and the particular difficulties of water supply and transport that hindered farming in this region. The precinct is framed by two original *Rockbank* boundary walls, associated with WJT Clarke and his son Sir WJ Clarke. Some of the dry stone walls in the precinct are the best evidence of the widespread activity of land speculators along gold-rush routes in Melton Shire, and more widely across Melbourne's western plains, that is known to survive. The walls along Mt Atkinson Road and Hopkins Road are almost certainly associated with the controversial issue of 'closed roads' on pastoral estates.

The precinct includes some excellent high and long all-stone walls (eg Wall B118), and composite stone and post & wire, with characteristic broad-based and pyramidal (rather than vertical) section. They are expressive of the historical diversity of dry stone wall construction in Victoria and are representative of the dominant type of wall in Melton Shire, and Melbourne's west. The shape of the walls is largely a function of the high proportion of round and smooth stones, which are characteristic of Melbourne's western plains. The precinct also contains excellent examples of original composite low stone and post and wire walls, including what is probably the best preserved example of this significant type of wall in the Shire (Wall B46 on Middle Road). An immensely significant stone structure in the precinct is the small dam on *Rocklands* (Wall B44). The precinct is also significant for its ongoing association with the Hopkins family, three of whom were Braybrook Shire Councillors (and one a President) in the nineteenth century, and after whom Hopkins Road is named; the family still occupies the late 1850s *Rocklands* homestead and farms the property.

The Mount Atkinson Dry Stone Wall Precinct is aesthetically significant at the LOCAL level (AHC E1). Some of the individual walls have good sculptural qualities, and are expressive of the craftsmanship of their builders. Although the landscape is flat and the walls generally follow the grid pattern of roads and subdivisions, the relative concentration of walls enables some landscape views of multiple walls. The views to and from the homestead and gardens of *Rocklands*, to the open farmland to the north, west and east are highly evocative of its C19th pastoral origins. The garden setting of the homestead, with high walls to enclose stock, C19th garden plants and mature plantation trees, is rare for its intactness and visual cohesion as a C19th farm landscape, in an area undergoing rapid urbanization.

The Mount Atkinson Dry Stone Wall Precinct is scientifically significant at the LOCAL level (A1, C2). The precinct demonstrates the volcanic origin of the landscape, and is associated with the Mount Atkinson 'Lava Hill'. The walls have the potential to yield research information regarding wall construction techniques, nineteenth century rural settlement patterns and farm management, and ways of life on Melbourne's western plains.

The Mount Atkinson Dry Stone Wall Precinct is socially significant at the LOCAL level (AHC G1). The precinct has the potential to educate the community in regard to wall construction techniques, and also nineteenth century farm management, settlement patterns, and ways of life on Melbourne's western plains.

Overall, the Mount Atkinson Dry Stone Wall Precinct is of LOCAL significance.

The following extract from Council's GIS records all the walls in the Mount Atkinson Precinct (Hopkins Road District):

WALL NO	NEAREST ROAD
B115	Mt Atkinson Road
B116	Mt Atkinson Road
B117	Mt Atkinson Road
B118	Boundary Road
B119	Boundary Road
B120	Boundary Road
B121	Hopkins Road
B122	Hopkins Road
B123	Hopkins Road
B124	Hopkins Road
B125	Hopkins Road
B126	Hopkins Road
B127	Hopkins Road
B130	Hopkins Road
B169	Hopkins Road
B170	Hopkins Road
B38	Hopkins Road
B39	Hopkins Road
B40	Middle Road
B41	Middle Road
B42	Middle Road
B43	Middle Road
B45	Middle Road
B46	Middle Road
B47	Hopkins Road
G84	Mt Atkinson Road
G85	Boundary Road

Description:

The source of the fieldstone used in the construction of the walls in the precinct is Mount Atkinson, one of about 400 inactive eruption points that have been identified on Victoria's western volcanic plains, which stretch from the Darebin Creek to near the South Australian border. Mt Atkinson is described by geologists as a 'Lava Hill', a source of extended flows of lava whose crater is now 'absent or ambiguous'.[1]

Unlike many of the volcanoes on Victoria's western plains, Mt Atkinson, a low hill south of Rockbank, does not lend a dramatic and distinctive character to its flat landscape. Its normally fluid lava flow became more viscous towards the end of the vent's eruptive phase, and built up a ridge that extends two kilometres east of the vent. The lava from the volcano extended mainly to the north, east and south in broad, thin flows, influencing the present course of Kororoit Creek. The western extent of its lava flows is an unnamed gully which marks the boundary between the Mt Cottrell and the Mt Atkinson flows. (Mt Atkinson is the younger of the two volcanoes.)[2]

The longest of the Mt Atkinson lava flows extended to the south-east, that is, to the location of the present Mount Atkinson Dry Stone Walls Precinct. The tongues of lava it extruded were effusive, and slowly cooling, producing a denser basalt, in contrast to more explosive eruptions, or quickly cooling flows, which produced a more vesicular scoria or tuff. The basalt it produced has a slightly finer grain than the Mt Cottrell basalt.[3] Although, as in the Mt Cottrell Dry Stone Walls Precinct, the vesicularity of the stone varies, a higher percentage of the stone in the Mt Atkinson dry stone walls are smooth, round and dense, providing less friction for good wall building.

Surveyors divided the extensive plains into square mile allotments, and created roads on a massive grid. This grid dominates the form of the Mt Atkinson dry stone wall landscape today, with the majority of walls built along the roads or perpendicular to them, forming property boundaries or internal paddocks. The landscape is completely flat, diminishing the ability to view a pattern of walls, but the open character of most of the area does enable some views of multiple walls.

This is the most concentrated collection of walls in the Shire. Most were built by neighbouring early farming families: the Hopkins' (descendents of who still own, occupy and work *Rockbank*) and Faragher families. Like nearly all farms in the Shire, they were almost surrounded by the Clarke pastoral estate, and these Clarke boundary walls define the western and northern boundaries of the precinct. The Hopkins' (now Bitans') family's *Rocklands* homestead (HO 114) is a painted bluestone Victorian styled house, built around the late 1850s (and extended later) on a site settled a few years earlier. It is particularly distinguished by an exceptional complex of substantial and extensive all-stone dry stone wall cattle and sheep yards (c.1.5 metres high), with associated milking shed & farm outbuildings. Although of these walls were apparently rebuilt, with lesser skill, after the 1930s depression, they are solidly constructed on original foundations, and some have neat copings. There are some huge stones at the bases of some of the walls. One wall of a shed is a dry stone wall. There is a very old peppercorn tree beside a rear wall. Lower dry stone paddock walls beyond the homestead precinct also contribute to an understanding of the nineteenth century farming history of the place.

In front of the house is an apparently very early, well built and remarkably intact stock dam, c.3 metres deep and c.25 metres long. It has cobbled or pitched stone paving on an inclined ramp at the south end. Its embankment includes double tiers of dry stone walling, quite steeply set, on the west and east sides, with lower courses roughly 'squared'. The paved stock entrance ramp is at the south end of the horseshoe shaped structure.

The rather spare ornamental garden of *Rocklands* is typical of this particularly dry district, in which peppercorns, eucalypts and other native species (including the very old saltbush) are the most successful species; the stunted specimens of old pine trees sometimes encountered along the north side of Boundary Road (presumably planted by the former Braybrook Shire), also underline the dry and gaunt nature of the district.

1 Rosengren, N, 'Eruption Points of the Newer Volcanics Province of Victoria: An Inventory and Evaluation of Scientific Significance', a report prepared for the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) and the Geological Society of Australia (Victorian Division), 1994, pp.20, 349, 373

2 Stewart, G, 'The Newer Volcanics lava field between Deer Park and the Werribee River', *Geological Survey of Victoria, Unpublished Report* 1977/26, 1977, pp.4, 7

3 *ibid*

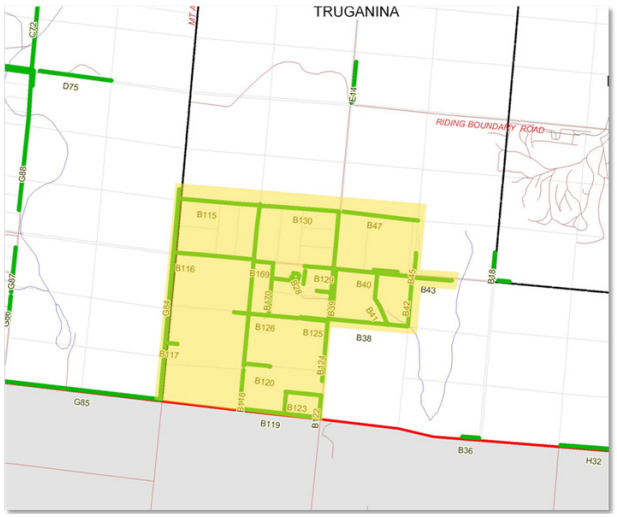
To the south of *Rocklands* is *Tibbermore*, which was established at the same time by the Faragher family, although the present weatherboard house dates substantially from 1903. (Its front verandah was burnt in the 1969 fire that devastated the area.) Adjacent to the house are old cow yards, constructed of dry stone walls, associated with a former milking shed. The numerous stone walls on the property are generally as they are shown in the 1916 map. They include a substantially intact all-stone driveway wall, and the substantial 'one mile' dry stone wall (most of this one mile north-south wall survives) situated to the west of house, sections of which are very intact (Wall B118).

On the neighbouring property some 500 metres to the west of *Tibbermore* is a bluestone ruin (originally the Killeen's house) burnt out in the 1969 fire. About 150 metres east of this ruin is an empty but quite intact small-medium sized old shallow-styled farm dam with walls built of fieldstone: c.15m long, c.2.5 m deep (including earth embankments).

The field-stone from which the walls in the precinct have been constructed are predominantly round, heavy, and medium to large in size. Accordingly, most walls lack coursing. The walls in this precinct are thus the typical style of wall in Melton Shire. Round stones are not the ideal material for construction of high (low batter) walls, and most of the walls are more pyramidal than vertical in cross-section. Some walls (eg Wall B42) retain clear evidence of original composite stone ('half-walls') and post-and-wire construction. These include very low stone walls with post-and-wire fences; this type of wall, clearly purpose-built although their purpose is unknown, is quite widespread throughout the Shire. Wall B46 on Middle Road is probably the best stone wall of this type, in terms of condition and length, in the whole of Melton Shire.

However many, perhaps most, walls in the precinct appear to have originally been all-stone constructions into which posts and steel droppers with between 1 and 4 wires have since been worked. These post-and-wire "top-ups" appear to have occurred in order to supplement the maintenance and height of the walls. In common with most old dry stone walls on Victoria's western volcanic plains, while often retaining sections in near original condition, most of the walls are generally in a state of declining condition. Inevitably, over the years many have lost copings, sagged and spread, and some have tumbled down in parts. It is noticeable that in general walls on the major thoroughfares are in considerably worse condition than internal paddock walls. Many have sizeable gaps, which have been created by theft of stones, presumably for suburban gardens.

Mt Atkinson (Hopkins Road) dry stone wall precinct



History:

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

Fencing in Nineteenth Century Rural Victoria

- **Fencing the Wilderness, 1850s-1870s**

The majority of dry stone walls in Victoria appear to have been built in the 30 year period from the 1850s to the 1880s.

In 1826 rural affairs commentator James Atkinson reported that he knew of no example of dry stone walling having been erected in the colony of New South Wales.[1] Initially pastoralists employed shepherds to look after sheep. They guided the sheep to pasture during the day, and in the evening returned them to folds, constructed of wooden hurdles or brush fences, near their huts (or outstations). There are several dry stone walls on Melton's Kororoit Creek that are thought to have been associated with early pastoralists: an

1 Kerr, JS, 'Fencing, a brief account of the development of fencing in Australia', *Australasian Society for Historical Archaeology Newsletter*, Vol. 14.No.1, March 1984, pp.9-16.

outstation associated with Yuille at Caroline Springs, and the remnants of a wall that are thought to have been associated with a shepherd's enclosure.[2] Other fencing was used on the squatters' homestations:- the 'home paddock' (likely for the squatters' precious horses) and the 'cultivation [or kitchen] garden'. Early fences were also required to separate stock for breeding purposes. These fences were usually of post & rail, vertical timber slabs or other primitive paling material.[3] (However at *Greenhills* in Toolern Vale there are some remains of a dry stone wall that would appear to be the remnants of an original homestation garden.[4])

Two major and related events in the early 1850s radically changed this situation. Firstly, the exodus to the gold-rushes made it difficult and expensive for squatters to retain labour for shepherding. And secondly, the extensive survey, subdivision and sale of Crown land in the early 1850s provided security of tenure to pastoralists, and incentive for them to invest in major improvements, including permanent fences, on their stations. Pastoralists were also encouraged to fence their land to ensure that neighbouring farmers didn't allow their stock to stray upon the open expanses of their stations.

Nevertheless, until the 1860s, extensive fencing of properties remained the exception rather than the rule. The first boundary fences in the Barrabool Hills of Victoria were only erected in 1854, and boundary and paddock fencing 'only gathered momentum after the mid 1850s.'[5] This was no doubt due to the extensive sale of Crown Land as freehold in the 1850s, as well as the increasing availability of capital due to the gold boom, and the increasing availability of labour including professional stone wallers as alluvial gold declined in the late 1850s.

Slowly, fences began to replace shepherds on the pastoral estates. Early maps of Melton Shire show that pastoralists built walls and fences relatively sparsely – only on property boundaries and to enclose huge paddocks (about 5-10 square kilometres in the south part of Clarke's Rockbank estate).[6] In dramatic contrast the same historical maps (and the mapping survey undertaken as part of this Study) show concentrated patterns of walled paddocks established on farms in the same areas at the same time. The creation of small paddocks enabled mixed farming, by securing crops and gardens from stock, and managing stock for breeding. This Study shows that, in the south of the Shire, virtually all of these fences were dry stone walls. Dry stone walls were also used to protect the homestead from stock, to construct stockyards, fowl houses and pigpens, and possibly, on a few of the larger farms, to provide aesthetic effect.[7]

Given the expense of establishing a farm from nothing in a wilderness, and the experience of many small farmers as agricultural labourers before coming to Australia, it is almost certain that the walls on all but the largest farms would have been constructed by farmers themselves rather than by professional wallers. For example, general hand William Ison and his wife arrived on a Werribee farm in the mid 1850s, and found there a small wooden cottage and a young German in charge, 'who had already done some clearing of the stones which covered the land … We set to, and cleared about 10 acres, and had it fenced in with stones by the next sowing time.'[8] The quality of wall construction would have depended on the experience of the farmers and their seasonal hands at the craft. William Robinson who settled in the Tarneit area in 1872, was a stonemason who turned his skills to fieldstone, building a house (which does not survive) of the material and numerous fences (some of which do survive along Robinsons Road).

The outbreak of the highly contagious sheep disease, 'scab', which reached epidemic proportions in the 1850s, hastened enclosure of the pastoral estates.[9] Western District squatter Neil Black quickly enclosed his Glenormiston run, and in 1854 George Russell

2 Melton Heritage Study Place Nos. 467 and 81.
3 Kerr, *loc cit*; Allan Willingham, 'The Dry Stone Walls in the Corangamite Region: A Brief History', in Corangamite Arts Council Inc, *If These Walls Could Talk, Report of the Corangamite Dry Stone Walls Conservation Project*, Terang, 1995, p.44
4 Melton Heritage Study, Place No.055
5 Kerr, *loc cit*
6 Shire Map Series (1892); Army Ordnance Map, 1916: 'Sunbury'.
7 Alan Marshall, asking an old waller why the walls on a particular property were so high, was told that ostensibly the reason was to keep steers in (they jumped fences), but the real reason was 'just so that he could say he had the best walls in the Western District, the biggest and the best, and bugger you.' (cited in Corangamite Arts Council, 1995, p.114). On Melbourne's western plains district however, such finely constructed walls were generally associated with formal gardens on only the largest properties, such as the Ha Ha walls on the Eynesbury (Melton Shire) and Werribee Park (Wyndham Shire) pastoral estates, or Greystones (Moorabool Shire).
8 Murray, E, *The Plains of Iramoo*, Henwood & Dancy, Geelong, 1974, p.111. (Murray notes that in 1974 these walls were still standing.)
9 Kerr, *loc cit*

ordered five miles of wire: '…the importance of fencing is becoming every year more apparent.'[10] Likewise, the appearance of pluero-pneumonia in Australian cattle in the early 1860s impressed cattle-men of the need to isolate their properties from travelling or straying stock.[11] That 'dreadful disease' also encouraged the erection of property fences by Melton dairy farmers (and was responsible for less use of local Commons by Melton farmers).[12]

By 1876 the presence of 'substantial stone walls' appears to have been hallmark of a good farm in the Melton district, the *Australasian*'s 'Travelling Reporter' making sure to note these on the farms of Ralph Parkinson, George Missen and Isaac Gidney.[13]

However little is known of dry stone wallers who worked in the Shire at the time: Irish brothers John and George Funston worked in the Toolern Vale area from the 1850s; Patrick Connor worked on Mount Aitken in the 1860s; and Dick (the mason) Mitchell, and Arcoll (Arkell) worked in the Mount Cottrell area before 1872.[14]

The construction of fencing that was encouraged by sheep scab and cattle pleuro pneumonia was also fostered by legislation. At the beginning of the pastoral period in Victoria, common law held that, generally, a landowner was under no obligation to construct or maintain boundary fences, or fences adjoining a public road. However, as a result of Australia's rapidly expanding pastoral industry, trespass of stock, and the need for security, Victoria's *Fences Statute 1865* gave landowners the right to claim equal contribution towards the construction or repair of boundary fences from the owners of adjoining lands.[15]

- **Types of fencing in the nineteenth century**

The great variety and combination of nineteenth century fencing arose 'as much from material shortages and the need to use what was procurable as from a desire to improve the utility and durability of fencing.'[16] As is the case with the rest of the Shire, most of the walls in the Mount Atkinson precinct are 'composite' stone and post & wire, rather than all-stone.

The *Fences Statute 1874* lists numerous types of fences, including 'walls' (stone walls) and 'combination' type fences. Walls that divided properties had to be a minimum of 4 feet high (1.22 metres), with a base of 'not less than 2 feet wide at the bottom', and '9 inches at the top'.[17] Although the specifications for road boundary fences were not given (the Crown being exempt from the legislation) it could be expected that the walls on these public boundaries would be at least as high as those that divided neighbouring properties.

Post and rail fences were the most common early fence type in Australia, no doubt due to the prevalence of forests and woodlands, in comparison with stony land, across Victoria. They appeared early and were prominent in the study area. In 1854 William Westgarth, on his way to the goldfields Royal Commission in Ballarat, recorded that he 'struck west through post and rail fences onto the Keilor Plains'.[18] By the 1860s timber fencing, probably from the Grey Box forest in the west and south-west of the Shire, was common in the vicinity of Melton. But as local farmer John Chandler recorded, such fencing was prone to loss in the bushfires that swept south from the ranges over the plains.[19] Even in the volcanic area near Aitkens Hill to the north of the Shire, nearly 80% of squatter John Aitken's fencing was either 'post & rail' (either 2 rail, the most common, or 3 rail), or 'post & 2 rails with (2 or 3) wires', or 'post & rail with 5 foot palings'. The balance was 'stone walls'.[20] These figures might reflect squatters' early preference for timber fencing, and an early dearth of professional dry stone walling skills, not remedied until after the gold rushes. In 1868 on the same property Henry Beattie erected much more stone walling, but also built nearly twice as much '3-rail

10 Willingham, *op cit*, p.45
11 Kerr, *loc cit*
12 Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 1864, p.94 ; John Chandler, Michael Canon, *Forty Years in the Wilderness* (Loch Haven, Main Ridge, 1990), p.175
13 The *Australasian*, October 1876.
14 Bilszta, JA, 'Dry Stone Wall: Faulkners Road, Mt Cottrell, Shire of Melton', 9/9/1990, unpublished paper
15 Lawlink: New South Wales Law Reform Commission website: 'Report 59 (1988) – Community Law Reform Program: Dividing Fences'; Parliament of Victoria website: Law Reform Committee, 'Review of the Fences Act 1968'
16 Kerr, *loc cit*
17 The Fences Statute 1874 (Fences Amendment Act, November 1873), Clause 4 (i-xi). Other types of early fencing are described in Michael Cannon's *Life in the Country: Australia in the Victorian Age: 2*, Nelson, West Melbourne, 1978, pp.89-90; and Graham Condah's *Of the Hut I Builded*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1988, p.89.
18 Lack, J, Ford, O, 'Melbourne's Western Region: An Introductory History' (Melbourne's Living Museum of the West Inc, Melbourne Western Region Commission, 1986), p.27
19 Chandler, J, Forty Years in the Wilderness, Loch Haven, 1990, p.174
20 Map, 'Index of Fences' on John Aitken's Mount Aitken property (after Crown Land sales). PROV 460/P0/39365. (The stone walls would appear not to survive.)

fence' in the same year.[21]

Post and wire fences were first introduced into Victoria in the 1850s, but the price of the metal posts (which could often not go down into the dry hard ground in Victoria) made them 'exceedingly expensive'.[22] The very thick and soft 'black bull wire' was soon superseded by galvanised steel wires which, with droppers to keep the wire stable, allowing greater distance between fence posts, reducing the costs.[23] With progressive improvements, including local production of wire, use of timber posts, and winding and straining devices, by at least the early 1870s wire was the cheapest type of fence.[24] The invention of barbed wire in the 1870s, and its widespread use in Victoria in the 1880s meant that it could secure cattle as well as sheep, and it became the standard fence type from this time.[25]

- **Dry Stone Walls**

In 1856 a government agricultural reporter travelling through the eastern part of Melton Shire (the Parish of Maribyrnong) commented that: 'A few good stone fences the only improvement worth noting.'[26]

A dry stone wall was the best solution:- 'Where stone was abundant, timber scarce, transport of fencing material expensive, skilled labour available, and where cheaper alternatives were unavailable.'[27] From about the mid-late 1850s, when freehold ownership exploded and the price of labour declined, and through the early 1860s when the price of labour remained cheap, the labour-intensive construction of stone walls remained very competitive.

Stone walls were built wherever stony ground made them possible, or necessary. While most farmers built their own walls to clear stony ground and manage stock and crops, pastoralists could afford professional wallers.[28] In the mid 1850s brothers John and George Funston, stone wallers and farm labourers from Ireland, are known to have been erecting walls on the Mount Aitken and Gisborne Park estates.[29] The Mount Aitken station accounts in 1868 showing the employment of a John Starkie for four weeks to help Henry gather and cart stones, and the engagement of 'Paterick [sic] Connor, Stone Wall Fencer' to erect 34 chains of stone walling at the very low rate of only 8 shillings per chain.

The popularity of stone walls with farmers is evident in the Lands Department files relating to the 1860s Selection Acts, which record the type, length and price of fencing 'improvements' made by each selector. A detailed examination of 21 selections in the Mount Cottrell, Rockbank, Mount Kororoit and Diggers Rest–Holden areas reveals that stone walling constituted by far the largest proportion (60%) of the 32.3 kilometres of fencing built on those properties by c.1875, despite the fact that it was the most expensive. Post & wire fences, one of the cheapest types of fencing then available, comprised only 6% of all fences erected. Post & rail fences, a little cheaper than the best stone walls, and a little dearer than the cheapest, constituted 9% of the fences. (Note that many other 'composite' varieties of fences were constructed from these three primary materials. There were also a small number of 'stub' or picket, and 'log' fences.[30])

Stone walling resolved two problems: the need to clear the land of rocks, and the need for fencing. Unquestionably, as was the case elsewhere, the key reason for the preference for dry stone walls on Melbourne's western plains by selectors was the need to clear stony land to enable cropping and grazing (dairying).[31]

21 Beattie, Steward K, *The Odd Good Year: Early Scots to Port Phillip, Northern Australia, Gap, Gisborne and Beyond*, Southwood Press, Marrickville, 1999, p.63
22 Willingham, *op cit*, pp.45-6
23 Cannon, 1978, *op cit*, pp.89-91
24 Survey of 21 Selectors in the Holden – Mount Cottrell districts.
25 Willingham, *op cit*, p.46; Kerr, *loc cit;* Cannon, 1978, *loc cit*
26 Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 'Statistics of Victoria for 1856', Appendix No.1, p.46
27 Vines, G, 'Comparative Analysis of Dry Stone Walls in Victoria, Australia and Overseas', in Corangamite Arts Council, 1995, *op cit*, p.56
28 Ann Beggs-Sunter, 'Buninyong and District Community News', Issue 211, August 1996
29 Judith Bilszta, Melton Heritage Study Research, Place No.029 (3/8/2005)
30 Research of PROV VPRS 625 (Selection Act files) for the Keneally, Slattery, Reddan J, Reddan M, Tate, Rhodes C, Rhodes, McKenzie, O'Brien P, McLeod, O'Brien J, Moloney, White, Mangovin, Carrige, Moylan Mary, Moylan Margaret, Parry, Moylan, MP, Moylan T, and Watts selections. This sample is primarily of selectors on stony country, Hannah Watts, in the forest off Chapmans Road Toolern Vale being the only exception; interestingly, the cost of her post & rail fences were half the price of the others, no doubt reflecting the relative proximity of materials, with none of the other properties having ready access to local timber. Another possible bias of the sample is the over-representation of Moylan properties. But it remains a good sample of fences built in stony country in the period late 1860s to mid 1870s.
31 Selectors were in fact obliged under the Selection Acts to cultivate 10% of their land area.

Apart from the relatively small areas of Melton Shire that were sold under the Selection Acts, there were many other areas of dry stone walling in the Shire. It is estimated that there were 23 miles of fencing on the Moylan brothers' Mt Kororoit property by 1876, and from the extensive walling that survives today it is evident that much of this was dry stone wall construction.[32] Property sale advertisements in the local paper suggest that the properties on the Keilor Plain east of Toolern Creek were almost entirely walled.[33] Advertisements for stone wallers in the Buttlejorrk, Diggers Rest and Rockbank Estate areas appeared regularly until 1890. Between Toolern Vale and Diggers Rest the Beaty family built many kilometres of medium sized stone walls along boundaries, and a few larger walls inside their properties for stock. Other walls, including one of substantial composition (on the former Campbells' Toolern Park property), are scattered lightly around Toolern Vale. The highest concentration of walls is situated in the southern plains of the Shire: the 1850s small farming communities of Mt Cottrell and Truganina (this Mount Atkinson Precinct), and the paddock and boundary fences of WJT Clarke's Rockbank station.

According to Vines the dry stone walls of the Keilor-Werribee Plains 'form a reasonably distinct regional style quite different from either the interstate examples or the Western District walls'. This regional style is characterised by:-

> *'… walls constructed using the local rounded, smoothly weathered, basalt field-stone of variable size. They are generally fairly low walls, averaging 1.2 metres with a width at the base of an average of 0.83 metres and battered sides on a slope of about 5-10 degrees off the vertical. Coursing is uncommon although coping is almost always found on intact walls and through stones can usually be identified at regular intervals of about one metre. The coping stones are often quite large, rounded boulders of a maximum dimension of 400-500 millimetres. Because of their rounded shape the stones are rarely suited to the close-fitting construction seen on the Western district walls, either for the main part of the wall or the coping. As a result, the rabbit proofing techniques involving close plugging, overhanging coping, or other methods are never found in this region.'*[34]

These regular round stones lack interlocking, and often surface friction, and were never the ideal building material. The author of the 1848 'Rural Cyclopedia' considered round stones objectionable 'as they are ever rolling off'. The small wedge stones which held these round stones in position were easily dislodged.[35] Similarly, the 'round stone fence' surmounted by turf was described in Loudon's 1857 guide to British agriculture as a 'very indifferent fence', whose only apparent benefit was that it cleared the land of stone and could be built by labourers. It was found to be unstable when built to a standard wall height. Stock could easily dislodged its copings, and 'great trouble and expense are annually required to keep it in repair.'[36] Despite this, as can be seen in an apparently scarce example of this type in Corangamite (the Foxhow Road Wall), a sturdy wall of very respectable height could be built by careful selection and coursing of stones, and the use of copestones and extensive plugging.[37]

The Fences Statute's specification of walls to be a minimum 4 feet (1220 mm) high seems to have been the 'average paddock height' for which tenders were called in sheep country.[38] Walls in cattle country were built higher 'to discourage the cattle from leaning over to reach greener pastures and dislodging coping stones'. While numerous Western District dairying walls are higher, 'walls enclosing cattle were generally at least 1.4 metres (4 feet 7 inches) high'.[39] This standard also seems to have been applied in Melton, where the Moylan's high walls on Mount Kororoit Farm measure 1400 mm.

Although there is no conclusive evidence of it in Melton Shire, elsewhere boundary walls were built higher than internal walls. Vines states that: 'In almost all the dry stone wall regions in Victoria, the … most substantial walls are located along the boundaries of properties. Subdivision of properties into fields was evidently a secondary consideration once the property had been fenced. Additional stone walls would be constructed to

32 The *Australasian*, 28th October 1876
33 Bilszta, 1990, *op cit*.
34 Corangamite Arts Council, *op cit*, p.58

35 Willingham, *op cit*, p.41
36 Loudon, JC, *Encyclopaedia of Agriculture*, 5th Edition (Longman Brown Green Longmans and Roberts, London, 1857), p.496
37 Corangamite Arts Council, *op cit*, p.28
38 Willingham, *op cit*, p.41. (The 1300 mm height was chosen as one of the categories for Study field survey. Almost all of the walls in the Shire had a base width of 700-800 mm.); Corangamite Arts Council, *op cit*, pp.49, 113
39 *ibid*, pp.17, 21, 130; Rod McLellan, 'The Dry Stone Walls of Victoria's Western District', *Historic Environment* Vol 7 No 2, 1989, pp.28-32

subdivide the property into paddocks if the field stone was so abundant as to allow these.'[40] Perkins (whose stone wall education was in Britain) states similarly that: 'Inner boundaries however were not built as high as the boundary fences, which are also known as March Dykes.'[41]

- **Composite Walls**

In the study area, and Melbourne's western plains area, most of the remnant early fences are a combination of low stone walls with spit timber post with wire above (or, more rarely, timber rail). Many, perhaps the majority, of 'half walls' in Victoria were constructed because of limited availability of fieldstone.[42] Peel states what is likely to be the primary reason for their construction:-

> *'With increasing distance from a timber supply, less timber was used in fence construction and wire fences, or stone walls in the stony country, became more common. Again, where less stone was available, stone walls and wire fences were combined, with the stone wall portion consisting of anything from a single row of stones to a substantial wall three or more feet high with only one or two wires on top.'*[43]

For example, says Peel, timber for the Sunbury vicinity was sourced from the Mount Macedon area, but as Sunbury was also at the edge of stony country, split timber, stone and wire were all used, commonly in the same fence.[44] And, as Vines has shown, the 'combination' fencing is also common on the Keilor and Werribee plains.[45] The reason for part stone wall - part wire fences of the Melton Shire study area relates to the quantity of stone in the area. And so the most typical stone fence of the study area reflects the particular geography and history of the Melton Shire, and is important for this reason.

Many other of Victoria's composite stone walls would appear to be the remnants of original all-stone walls that were later repaired by part-demolition and incorporation of post & wire fencing, or else just built up to a 'workable height' by the addition of post & wire fencing (perhaps to accommodate a transition from sheep to cattle).[46] Mitchell states that 'Stone walls … have since been electrified or had post and wire worked into their construction'.[47] Other examples of such walls have been recorded.[48]

Some 'composite' stone walls were definitely not built as such. Farmers sometimes gathered 'floaters' as they appeared, stacking them under fences, making a rubble stone fence, rather than a professionally built 'dry stone wall'. Melton farmer Mary Tolhurst had stone walls on her childhood property, but also tells how, prior to sowing a crop, the men would take the horse and dray and pick up stones and place them along and under the property's post & wire and post and rail fences.[49]

However the construction of half stone walls was not always simply an accidental by-product of the amount of fieldstone available, or deterioration of original walls, or need to increase wall height, or the need to progressively clear land. An 1861 treatise on fencing by a Scottish manufacturer includes a diagram showing wire fencing on top of stone walls.[50] And experiments with combining fencing materials to most economic effect were undertaken early in Australia. In 1851 John Learmonth in the Western District erected a boundary fence in which the lowest rail was replaced by a stone dyke (or wall).[51] It appeared to Learmonth: 'that in some part this would add little to the expense, and at the same time would add to the durability and safety from fires.' Contracts for the same fences were being deliberately let in 1927, when a 'two foot walls with cope stone on a 2'6" base, with barb wire' was built at Turkeith near Birregurra.[52]

In the Shire of Melton 'half-stone walls' – with the stone less than 18 inches high – were also built deliberately. The exact reasons are probably lost to time, but present farmers know that they had benefits in terms of preventing sheep crawling under the lower wire, and in preventing draught horses from scratching itch mites in the hairs of their legs.[53]

40 Corangamite Arts Council, *op cit*, p.60
41 *ibid*, p.130
42 Corangamite Arts Council, *op cit*, p.80
43 Peel, LJ, *Rural Industry in the Port Phillip Region 1835-1880*, MUP, 1974, p.108
44 Peel, *op cit*, p 108.
45 Vines, G, *Built To Last; An Historical and Archaeological Survey of Dry Stone Walls in Melbourne's Western Region* (Living Museum of the West Inc, 1990).
46 Vines, 1995, *op cit*, p.60
47 Mitchell, H, 'Building Dry Stone Walls', *Grass Roots*, No.48, April 1985
48 Richard Peterson, Daniel Catrice, 'Bacchus Marsh Heritage Study', 1994
49 Mary Tolhurst, February 2002.
50 Willingham, o*p cit*, p.46
51 Kerr, *op cit*. (Dyke was the Scottish word for stone wall.)
52 Mary Sheehan (author of Colac Otway Heritage Study), 11/8/2005
53 Personal conversations, John Morton, and Charlie Finch.

Many of the Melton composite stone and wire walls have neat coping stones intact. These all appear to have been built in the traditional manner in relation to base width and double wall construction (perhaps to comply with the Fences Act definition of a 'sufficient' wall). Other composite walls are less neatly constructed. These generally have a higher percentage of round-shaped stones, and consequently a higher wall batter and a more pyramidal, less vertical, shape. While some of these have obviously had posts inserted into them, it is also possible that some might have always been composite walls. The relative instability of stone walls built with the 'round stone' that predominates in Melton Shire may also have encouraged the original wall constructions to have been kept low, and topped up with wire.[1]

Our natural association of 'the richest areas for dry stone walls'[2] with areas where fieldstone is most abundant is not the complete explanation for the different extent and quality of stone wall construction in different areas. While the availability of stone is the 'supply' side of the equation, there is also a 'demand' side: the need for fencing; and the economic feasibility of clearing land and building walls.

As mentioned previously, both historical and present maps of dry stone walls in Melton Shire show strikingly greater densities of walls in farming areas than on large pastoral properties. This is despite the fact that in this Mount Atkinson Precinct (in the Parish of Derrimut) and also in the adjacent Parish of Pywheitjorrk, both the pastoral and farming land-uses are situated in exactly the same volcanic landscape. So, while the greatest numbers of extant walls in the Shire were built as part the Clarkes' vast Rockbank pastoral estate, the greatest concentrations are situated on medium and small sized farms. Another contrast between pastoral and farming properties evident in the fieldwork undertaken for this Study is that in all but one case (Clarke's boundary wall No.F96 on Faulkners Road) the most substantial stone walls – the most 'all-stone' and the highest walls – are also to be found on farms and small grazing properties rather than on the large pastoral estates.

Farms had a greater need for fencing, in order to separate stock from crops, and for construction of dairy yards, small dams, pigsties and cowsheds, than did large sheep-runs, which only required fencing of boundaries and large paddocks. This more intensive use of the land would also have meant that it was worth investing more in the land, including clearing the property of fieldstone. Whereas land needed to be cleared for crops, and to maximise grass for cattle on small farms, less complete (if any) clearing of land was required to make huge flocks of sheep economical. For example, in the 1890s parts of the Chirnside Brothers great Werribee Park pastoral estate were let to tenant farmers: 'The Chirnsides retained the "rocky" country, which was not fit for cultivation, but which was quite good grazing country, growing a nice quality of wool.'[3] And there was comparatively little demand for fencing on the vast paddocks in the southern part of the Clarkes' Rockbank estate. While the evidence of the nearby small farms indicates that there was sufficient stone to build at least some substantial all-stone walls, it was not economical (or perhaps necessary) to build such walls for sheep paddocks.

The situation was different for farmers. At least three of the 21 selectors examined in the district (the Holden area) had stone coverage that was too expensive to clear. The Land Department inspector reported on Ellen Slattery's selection, which appears to have been the worst: 'I consider the land to be unfit for cultivation; it would cost from £20 to £30 per acre to clear some part of it, as it is a mass of rock.'[4] While most of the volcanic plains would have cost much less than this to clear, even with a very conservative estimate of only £1 or £2 per acre, stone clearing would still have been a substantial cost likely to have been economical only for the more intensive land uses; that is, for farming rather than pastoralism.[5] Being unskilled work, farmers (and their sons and itinerant labourers) would also be in a position to do it themselves cheaply.

So, even if there was sufficient fieldstone to build substantial stone walls, it was not always economical to clear it. In Australia the comparatively large size of landholdings, the high cost of fencing from scratch, and the predominantly pastoral land use, is likely to have had a significant influence on the form of stone wall

1 Loudon, *loc cit*
2 Eg, Vines, 1995, *op cit*, p.58

3 Morris, G, 'Centennial History, Werribee', extract obtained from *Werribee Banner*, 5th April 1962.
4 PROV VPRS 625 Unit 304 (20712), Inspector Yeoman, 10/9/1875
5 Figures provided by selector Alexander McLeod, whose density of rocks appears to have been unremarkable and may have been light, suggest that he spent approximately £1-2 per acre on 'clearing stone and sundries' (PROV VPRS 625, Unit 273 (18276)).

built. Whereas in Europe there is a high proportion of high all-stone walls, in Australia paddocks with enough stone to build high all-stone walls may not have been economical to clear.[6] In the Melton Shire exceptions to this occurred in the larger and more successful mid-nineteenth century farms and small grazing properties (such as the Moylan, Beaty and Hopkins properties), on which some substantial stone walls (generally near the homestead) were constructed. The other major exceptions in Melton are the large and finely built Clarke dry stone wall dams. These, together with the magnificent boundary walls built by the Manifolds in the Western District to protect against rabbits, also support a conclusion that the use of stone was related not just to its quantity (the supply), but also to the special needs of the owners (the demand): for farming; or to countervail the peculiarly dry climate on Melton plains; or to combat the devastating rabbit plague on the Stony Rises. Cultural circumstances, for example, the local pool of skills in the Western District, and local traditions (such as belief in stone walls as a fire retardant), no doubt also played a part.[7]

Analysis of the 21 Selection Act files provides some grounds for arguing that the composite walls, such as 'post & wire and stone', may in fact have been particularly associated with the Melton district. The printed forms upon which selectors were asked to mark the improvements to their properties included 11 types of fences. However, these 11 options did not include categories for the most common type of fence in the district:- the composite 'post & wire & stone' (or 'post & rail & wire & stone') fence. Yet at least 5 of the 21 selectors in the district describe these types of fences on their selections, marking additions such as 'stone bottom' to the 'post and wire' category (Patrick O'Brien). It is likely that the lack of category meant that others again (in addition to these five) simply selected one of the given types to describe their composite walls; some probably called their 'half stone' fences either 'stone walling' or 'post & wire' or 'post & rail' fences. (As such, it is likely that much of the fencing described as 'stone' and other categories was actually composite post & wire and stone. The price of the different type of walls would support the possibility that some 30% of the fencing built by these selectors was in fact post & wire and stone.)

One conclusion that could be drawn from the Selection Act pro-formas is that composite 'post & wire and stone' and 'post & wire & rail and stone' walls/fences were variants that were particularly associated with Melbourne's western plains. Alternatively, they may have been variants that became more common throughout the whole of Victoria around the time of the Selection Acts.

Composite stone and post & wire walls appear to characterise Melton Shire in a way that they do not elsewhere. But they are not confined to Melton Shire or Melbourne's western and northern plains. Examples are to be found in virtually all of the stone wall districts of Victoria, although they would appear to be small minority in some districts. There are also known to be many in New Zealand's Otago area, at least some in North America, but virtually none in Europe. The questions that remain, and can only ultimately be answered by further studies in other regions, is whether they are in fact the most common type of fence in Victoria as some claim, and whether they are more concentrated and numerous in Melton Shire and the Melbourne fringe than elsewhere.

History of the Place

All of the land in the precinct is situated in the Parish of Derrimut. It was subdivided by the Crown into allotments of c.100 acres, and sold in either May or November 1854. There were nine different purchasers of the ten Crown Allotments in the Mount Atkinson Precinct.

All of the land to the north of the Precinct – most of the Parish of Derrimut – had been purchased by WJT ('Big') Clarke at the same Crown Land sales.[8] South of the precinct, in the Parish of Tarneit (in the Shire of Wyndham), c.160 acre allotments along Boundary

6 Gary Vines, posting in Heritage Chat, 11/8/2005

7 While it has not been analysed, it would seem that many of the large stone walls in the Western District (eg, the Kolora, Derrinallum and Purrumbete areas) were built by farmers c.1900 (Corangamite Arts Council, 1995, pp.76-142 and *passim*). The primary reason for the farmers' high walls, no doubt, was the amount of stone on the properties. But the 'demand' side may also have contributed. This was a period when dairying was transforming from a cottage to an export industry: the quality of the soil, or the rainfall, might have made this investment in the land worthwhile at this time, whereas it did not in Melton Shire. This is clearly very speculative, but perhaps demonstrates a need for more general research on the relationship between economics of farming and fence construction.

8 Parish Plan, Parish of Derrimut

Road were purchased by individuals, a few (eg William Doherty) of whom were *bona fide* farmers, while others (eg James Watson and William Craig) purchased multiple allotments, numerous of which appear to have been subject to speculative subdivision. South of these precincts the northern pattern was repeated, with WJT Clarke purchasing many allotments (although not as many as he did to the north); their price was probably lower than those on Boundary Road where speculators were operating.

- **The Establishment of a Farming Community**

The 1854 sales of Crown Lands in relatively small 100 acre parcels enabled the establishment of small farms. On allotments along Boundary Road, between Middle Road (originally in the Shire of Braybrook but in Melton Shire since the early twentieth century) and Doherty's Road (in the Shire of Wyndham), and significantly isolated by large pastoral estates, communities of *bona fide* farmers established small hamlets such as Mount Cottrell and South Derrimut (later known as Tarneit, and Truganina).

Melton Shire is a very dry place. The 'Melton Mallee' woodland near the Djerriwarrh Creek is the only place where mallee vegetation is found south of the Dividing Range.[9] The area from about Bacchus Marsh - Diggers Rest to the Bay and towards Geelong has the lowest average rainfall in the Port Phillip district, about 22 inches (56 cm). The area between Melton and Werribee – which includes the Mount Atkinson Precinct – has the lowest rainfall of all, less than 18 inches (46 cm).[10] Places associated with the provision of domestic and stock water supply are therefore of particular significance.

In the early 1930s, octogenarian Robert D Hopkins, born in 1854, related the two fundamental problems of early farmers. 'Two of the original difficulties' he said 'were in connection with water supply and transport.' For a time the necessary water was carried from Werribee River 'but only until such time as wells could be sunk, and dams used for water conservation'. As with the rest of the Shire however, it is likely that recourse would have had to have been made to the river in times of water shortage. 'Of course years passed before there were any metal roads', continued Hopkins, 'and horses ranged in price from £120 to £140 per head. Consequently the bullock occupied pride of place for purposes of traction on the road or in the field.'[11]

In nearby Truganina (a little to the west) a bluestone Methodist church was built on the left bank of Skeleton Creek, on the south side of Boundary Road, in the 1850s. Then Sam Evans gave a quarter of an acre of land on the north-east corner of the intersection of Doherty's and Skeleton Creek Roads, for a corrugated iron Baptist church, built 1862. Members of the Baptist community included the locally prominent Cropley brothers. John Cropley often travelled across the country from Rockbank to take services as a lay preacher. Once a month Rev William Wade drove from Footscray on Saturday, preached at the church on Sunday, and returned to Footscray on Monday. An 1871 Sunday School roll names 37 children from 13 families.[12]

In the 1860s the Education Department inspector described the Mt Cottrell farmers as 'well-to-do', and the Rockbank familes as being 'in fair circumstances'. The 'farmers and dairy keepers' of Mt Atkinson however were described as being 'in very moderate circumstances'.[13] With the wretched seasons, droughts and pests of the early 1860s, many farmers left the area. By 1871 a 'group of twelve farmers and one labourer were the only landholders in south Derrimut'. The departure of the Cropley brothers and others from the district meant dwindling support for Baptist church, which was purchased in 1907 by the Werribee Presbyterian church, and used by a number of other Protestant churches.[14]

The farmers of the area 'were separated by their neighbours to the north by thousands of acres of the Clarke *Rockbank* Estate, but linked to their western neighbours by Boundary Road.'[15] During the 1860s many of the surveyed roads on the square-mile grid on the southern plains had been closed, incorporated into the immense *Rockbank* estate. In 1871 the only open roads in the district are said to have been Boundary Road, Greigs Road, Mt Cottrell Road, and Mt Atkinson

9 National Trust of Australia (Victoria) Landscape Classification Report. Also *Ballarat Courier*, 11/6/1983

10 Peel, L, *Rural Industry in the Port Phillip Region, 1835-1880* (MUP, Melbourne, 1974), p.9

11 George F Green, 'A History of Truganina', unpublished typescript, 1935, pp.2-3

12 Starr, J, *Melton: Plains of Promise*, Shire of Melton, nd, pp.171-172

13 Ford, Olwen, 'Voices From Below: Family, School and Community in the Braybrook Plains 1854-1892' (M.Ed Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1993), pp.215, 235

14 Green, *op cit*, p.4. Pages 177-200 of the 'Rural Heritage Study: Western Region of Melbourne' (Melbourne Western Region Inc) by Chris Johnston / Context provides an overview of heritage places of this district.

15 Ford, *op cit*, p.234

Road (perhaps included at the urging of speculator TH Jones, who had subdivided a village half-way along this road).[16] Notably, Hopkins Road is not included in this list; named after the Hopkins family several generations of whom were represented on the Braybrook Shire Council, it may have been opened after the 1878 Royal Commission into Closed Roads, which recommended the cessation of the practice of closing roads. The opening of Hopkins Road would have made Mt Atkinson Road, on which no small farm had been established, superfluous, and in c.1887 Patrick Killeen blocked it off with a stone wall across Boundary Road, effectively incorporating the road reservation into his own farm.[17]

In contrast to the Clarke estate which formed a barrier to the north, the east-west links were open for the farmers. In his evidence to the 1878 Royal Commission, Wyndham Shire Secretary and Engineer Patrick Nolan identified the 'three or four leading thoroughfares in the Shire of Wyndham' as Doherty's Road (parallel to and south of Boundary Road), Sayers Road (near Werribee), and Boundary Road, which he described as 'pretty well made'.[18]

- **The Gold Era Subdivisions**

An interesting historical sub-theme of the precinct was the small-allotment re-subdivision of land along prospective routes to the Ballarat gold-fields by gold-rush era speculators. Although the main route between Melbourne and Ballarat was the present Melton Highway through Keilor, the Western Highway and Greigs Road were lesser routes and Boundary Road, Middle Road and Doherty's Road apparently also carried some traffic.

When prices of land soared during the early 1850s, speculators snapped up Crown Lands on the flat, treeless, dry, isolated and shallow-soiled Melton-Werribee plains. They were particularly busy in the parishes of Pywheitjorrk and Derrimut. Travelling on the badly marked road from Geelong to Melbourne in 1854, William Westgarth encountered only 7 people (most near Melbourne), but was glad to see the plains in the process of survey. While hoping that men of modest financial means would be able to acquire it, he remained sceptical:- 'Already the speculators are pouncing upon it – buying it all up as fast as it is sold, and letting it lie in hope of an augmented price.'[19]

But many of the speculators were not content to let their blocks lie, instead conjuring up audacious schemes to expedite and inflate their returns. The present day Boundary and Greigs Roads, and the Western Highway, as minor alternative routes between Melbourne and Ballarat, inspired the boosters to subdivide villages along them, creating so-called townships such as 'Middleton', 'Staughtonville', and 'North Uxbridge'. One township of about 120 suburban-sized allotments was even created half-way along Mount Atkinson Road.[20] Scores of allotments, of size ranging from less than half an acre to five acres (2 hectares), were created in these subdivisions.

If, as some proposed, the intention of the subdivisions was to facilitate the establishment of small yeoman farmers, they proved utter failures. No evidence of actual development, and only the barest fragments of their histories, remain today. It is highly likely in fact that many purchasers of the small rural and township blocks so created were themselves aspiring speculators. Most probably bought their properties on the strength of the representation of the 'developer', without having bothered to actually visit the properties. The boom appears to have amplified each whisper from every plausible source into an urgent din that many urban professionals and small businessmen found difficult to resist.

Crown Allotment 2 of Section One (the Hopkins homestead allotment) and CA 6 of Section One, and CAs 3 and 4 of Section Two, Parish of Derrimut, appear to have been subdivided by 1850s speculators. A later surveyors plan showed a patchwork of allotments, some with roads, on these allotments that are clearly the remnant of an earlier subdivision.[21] There is also evidence that CA 3 of Section 2 (at least) was associated with the serial speculator/subdivider Joseph Charles Clinchy, of 'Melbourne Gentleman'. This allotment was one of at least three c.100 acre allotments which had

16 Ford, *op cit*, p.236, 239
17 PROV VPRS 460/P36721, statutory declaration by Samuel Smith, March 1907; and Lands Victoria, Torrens Application 36721, 'Plan of Crown Portions 1 & 3, Parish of Derrimut, 28/9/1905'.
18 Royal Commission into Closed Roads, Progress Report (containing minutes of evidence etc), Victorian Parliamentary Papers 1878 (No.72), p.13
19 Cited in John Lack & Olwen Ford, 'Melbourne's Western Region: An Introductory History' (Melbourne's Living Museum of the West, Melbourne Western Region Commission, 1986), p.30
20 Lands Victoria, Torrens Application 15850 (Crown Allotment 6, Section 15, Parish of Pywheitjorrk).
21 Lands Victoria, Torrens Application 31642, Claude Purchas 28/5/1898; a version of this plan is also attached to the title created by the application.

been purchased from the Crown by William Byrne, 'Melbourne Civil Engineer' and sold to Clinchy. While two of these Byrne allotments were on or near Boundary Road, a larger subdivision, 'better known as the Village of Surrey', was 'on the road to Buninyong', on the south side of the Western Highway, opposite Clarkes Road. As was typical, it was soon subsumed into the Rockbank estate.[22]

At least 17 small allotments and two roads are known to have been created by Clinchy in the Mt Atkinsion Precinct, on land newly purchased from the Crown by W Byrne and J Fox. As these allotments were approximately 4 acres each, and the original allotments some 200 acres, it is likely that many more were created. Having already purchased numerous of these small allotments, in 1898 Robert Faragher claimed much of the balance of CA3 and CA4 of Section 2 by adverse possession; some 12 names were identified as having a potential interest in the land.[23]

Another major partnership in gold-rush speculation in Melton Shire comprised Algernon Lindsay, 'victualler', and James Moxham, 'auctioneer', both of Williamstown. They had jointly subdivided part of Section 24 Parish of Derrimut (the land immediately to the east of the present Hopkins Road overpass, on the south side of the Western Highway) into at least 58 allotments of 5 acres, selling them for up to £26 each.[24] Most purchasers (fellow Williamstown-ites) purchased multiple blocks, probably site unseen, and virtually all had on-sold to WJT Clarke within 3 or 4 years, usually at about half the price they had paid, although some received even less. The Lindsay/Moxham team also subdivided an allotment in the Mt Atkinson Precinct:- CA3, Section 1, Parish of Derrimut, on the east side of Mt Atkinson Road. The allotment had been purchased from the Crown by J Moxham in 1854, and in 1864 Algernon Lindsay conveyed some 46 allotments, on 'Lindsay', 'Mason' and 'Southgate' streets, to Patrick Killeen. These were likely the unwanted allotments from the goldrush subdivision. In 1904 Patrick Killeen's son Thomas, seeking creation of a title for his farm, claimed other parts of this property by adverse possession. His solicitors had identified 11 persons who might have had an interest in parts of the land.[25]

22 PROV VPRS 460/P/35850 (Torrens Application 35850), conveyance, 17/8/1863.
23 PROV VPRS 460/P/31642 (Torrens Application 31642), various conveyances.
24 VPRS 460/P/35850 (Torrens Application 35850), various indentures.
25 PROV VPRS 460/P/36721 (Torrens Application 36721), various indentures.

There is also evidence that CA1 Section 1, the 100 acre allotment immediately north purchased from the Crown by WS Durie (who had also purchased the Rocklands homestead allotment for which there is also evidence of speculative subdivision), had also been subdivided into small allotments. In the period 1860s – 1880s Patrick Killeen had purchased portions of this Allotment from different owners.

Such speculative subdivisions in the Mt Atkinson Precinct would have been abandoned by the late 1850s, as soon as the major gold-rushes ended. Many of the unwanted small blocks appear to have been incorporated into the adjacent dairy farms, at a low price, or for no price where owners had simply walked away from their purchases. Some small farmers (such as the Killeens) may even have been initially attracted to the district because of the possibility of establishing very small farms on subdivided portions of the original 100 acre Crown Allotments. During the nineteenth century most of land in the Mt Atkinson Precinct was in the ownership of the Hopkins and Faragher families. In addition, another 270 acres were owned by the Killeens, and a 100 acre block was owned by the Clarkes.[26] The Woods family lived on a small property in the precinct on land rented from Clarke and Hopkins.

- **The Hopkins Property, Rocklands**

William Hopkins married Catherine Currie in Kilmarnock, Scotland on 2nd June 1851, after which the couple sailed for Australia, arriving at Gawler (South Australia) later in the year.[27] The extended family then moved around different parts of Victoria and Tasmania. One cousin settled in Sale, a second (after whom the Hopkins River is thought to have been named) went to Warrnambool, while cousin Robert moved to Boundary Road. In 1856 William and Catherine brought their young family to the property on which the homestead is built (part of of Crown Allotment 2, Section 1, Parish of Derrimut, which had been purchased from the Crown in May 1854 by WS Durie.[28]) William conducted a dairy farm.[29] The Hopkins' were the only Presbyterian family in the locality then known as 'Derrimut' – later Truganina – in which Weslyans, Episcopaleans, and Baptists predominated.

26 Shire Map Series (1892): Parish of Derrimut
27 Unless otherwise stated, Hopkins family history is derived from pesonal conversations with Mrs Wendy Bitans, 13/2/2002, 14/3/2002.
28 Parish Plan, Parish of Derrimut
29 Sutherland, A. *Victoria and Its Metropolis*, (McKarron Bird, Melbourne, 1888), p.427

It was a pocket of smaller holdings isolated from Rockbank in the north by WJT Clarke's vast *Rockbank* estate, further to the north-east lay Morton and Leech's *Mount Derrimut* station. It was connected to the west and east by Boundary Road.[30]

School records show that in 1866 the Hopkins' had five children enrolled in the local school: William, aged 13 (born in Adelaide); Robert, aged 11 (born in South Melbourne's 'Canvass Town'); Margaret, aged 8, Elizabeth, aged 6, and Catherine, aged 3. As with many local communities in the early days, the Derrimut community was in dispute about the best location for the local school, with the different camps lodging hand-drawn maps of the location of dwellings of children who attended the school. The school committee was split, with four members representing the southern interests, and five representing families in the Parish of Derrimut. William Hopkins was in the camp of the latter. The dispute escalated dramatically when the Hopkins camp moved the school to their preferred site (rather than the site selected in Truganina by the southern interests) in the middle of the night. The southern camp was furious, describing the the settled Weslyan and Episcopalean families of Derrimut as ruffians. A correspondent complained particularly of the behaviour of William Hopkins at a meeting. He had 'interrupted the proceedings in a most violent manner, using towards your correspondent the most vile and filthy language as could not be repeated'. Receiving no support from the chairman, the complainant left the meeting. By 1871 the vocal Hopkins was a Councillor of the Shire of Braybrook.[31]

The 1860s marked a turning point for farming in the Melton district, with many small farmers failing and leaving from this time. The boom prices of the gold-rush had collapsed, the good early yields had quickly exhausted the poor soils, and the crops were infested with rust and caterpillars, and decimated by drought. The advent of pleuro-pneumonia in cattle was devastating for those who relied on dairy produce. And wheat was now imported into Melbourne, both from overseas and from the new lands being opened in northern Victoria. The peak acreage under crop in the district from Bacchus Marsh to Craigieburn (including Melton), occurred in 1859. This figure was halved by 1864, and a further slight decline occurred during the next two decades.[32]

The report of the West Bourke agricultural inspector in 1862-63 noted the continued drought, and the advent of 'that dreadful disease, pluero-pneumonia.' This had ruined some industrious families, and was causing many dairymen to turn their attention to sheep dealing.[33] Memories of Melton Shire farmers John Chandler and Anders Hjorth both record the loss of heifers on local farmers commons (usually just unalienated crown land) to pleuro-pneumonia.[34] While in 1863-64 pleuro-pneumonia was no so virulent according to the inspector, he noted that he had recently 'met a gentleman from Derrimut who informed me that he had lost 27 of his best milkers' to the disease.[35] The disease was a major incentive to farmers to build good walls. Grain cropping farmers were devastated by 'rust and the caterpillar' in the 1863-64 season.[36]

The exceptional drought continued through the 1865-66 season: '… most disastrously felt over the whole line of the plain country, extending from Essendon to the Djerriwarrh Creek.' There was still the occasional loss of cattle in the district to pleuro-pneumonia. The hoped-for advantages of the 'commonages' to dairy farmers had been disappointed, as they were always overstocked during the growing months, and in drought the 'wretched cattle' must die of starvation, said the agricultural inspector.[37] In the Truganina - Derrimut area, which has the lowest average annual rainfall in the Port Phillip district (18 inches), only 11 inches of rain fell in each of the years 1867 and 1868.[38]

The drought of the 1860s caused the failure of many small settlers, and the merging of their quarter square mile properties into larger holdings.[39] Olwen Ford's detailed study of the South Derrimut district shows that

30 Ford, Olwen, 'Voices From Below: Family, School and Community in the Braybrook Plains 1854-1892' (M.Ed Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1993), pp.222, 234
31 Ford, *op cit*, pp.222, 230
32 Peel, L, *Rural Industry in the Port Phillip Region, 1835-1880,* (MUP, 1974), p.90.
33 Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 1864, p.94
34 Chandler, J (M Cannon), *Forty Years in the Wilderness* (Loch Haven, Arthurs Seat, 1990), p.175; 'Recollections of Melton 1861-67', by Anders Hjorth, reproduced in the MDHS News Sheet, April 2001
35 Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 1864-65, Vol.3, p.93.
36 *ibid* The dry lands that were soon to be opened for selection on the lower Goulburn and the Wimmera were not affected by rust, and consequently wheat growing soon moved north from the 1850s farming areas such as Port Phillip and Kyneton.
37 Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 1867, Vol.3, 1st Session, pp.83-84.
38 Green, *op cit*, pp.3-4, 7
39 *ibid*

in 1866 there had been 40 families with schoolchildren in the district. Six families were lost to the district in 1868-69, and by 1871 there were only twelve farming families, and one labourer, with children in the school.[40]

William Hopkins continued to add acreage to his farm. By the early 1870s he had increased his holding to 387 acres of land, described as being situated in a 'peculiar manner, that is to say, in various blocks and not those adjoining each other.' Three of the blocks were situated amongst WJT Clarke's holdings.[41] By the 1880s, under the management of William Hopkins junior and his brother Robert, dairying had been replaced by hay growing and grazing.[42] The combination of hay and sheep was one of the movements in local farming in the late nineteenth century.[43] Although dairying would also make a general revival at a later stage, the pleuro-pneumonia outbreak of the late 1860s could be expected to have contributed to the shift at the Hopkins' farm. Indian horse-dealers were also good buyers of the district's hay at that time.[44] In the early twentieth 'general farming and grazing' were being conducted on the property.[45]

The family was immersed in the 'South Derrimut' - 'Truganina' community. William junior married a Missen (the large pioneering Rockbank family who had also come over from South Australia), as did several of his sisters. His brother Robert Duncan Hopkins married a Miller (of Millers Road Altona); it was Robert who inherited the homestead property. In the early 1880s elder brother William, a justice of the peace, followed his father's footsteps in being elected a member of the Braybrook Shire Council in 1882, and President in 1887.[46] Robert Duncan Hopkins, who obtained possession of the Rocklands property, also followed his father in being both a member of the school Board of Advice, and a Councillor of the Shire of Braybrook; he was President of the Shire at the time of Federation.[47]

The family is well represented in historical photographs of Truganina annual picnics. Local records show Robert Hopkins as runner-up in both the 'Slow Bicycle Race', and Obstacle Race held at the Truganina Debating Society's 1904 picnic. R Hopkins, with JP Robinson, was elected first President of the Truganina Progress Association in 1924. In 1926 he was appointed a Trustee of the new Truganina recreation ground. In 1933, at a ball held to mark the Silver Anniversary of the opening of the Truganina Hall (Mechanics Hall), Robert Hopkins was presented with an illuminated address as a token of appreciation of his 25 years as Secretary to the Hall committee. With Henry Robinson, Robert Hopkins also initiated the Truganina tradition of the 'Ladies Night', in which men provided entertainment and catering as a gesture of thanks for the work of the local women at all public functions in the area.[48] Robert had the first tractor in the district.

In January 1969, on the same day the (separate) Lara fire killed five people, a fire started on Boundary Road and quickly burnt east and south. Many of the local fire brigade out fighting the Lara fire returned to find their own houses burnt. Forty five houses were destroyed by the 'Truganina' fire that day, as well as the Truganina school and hall.[49] While the stone house of their neighbour to the west was lost to the fire, and Tibbermore, the nearby house on their south side, was charred, Rocklands survived.[50]

The exact date of the present bluestone house is unknown to the family, but is thought to be early. Family history is that the first house was of wattle and daub. William brought a stonemason from Scotland to build the house (his second job was a house on nearby Doherty's Road). In 1881 the house was described as a bluestone house of four rooms with wooden stables.[51] In the 1930s Robert D Hopkins, who was born in 1854, remembered a hotel (or shanty) that had been built opposite the Hopkins' farm to cater for goldfields traffic along Middle Road.[52] Hopkins family lore is that

40 Ford, *op cit*, pp.223, 225, 234
41 Ford, *op cit*, p.222, citing William Hopkins' 1881 probate papers. He had also acquired 114 acres in the Parish of Truganina.
42 Sutherland, *loc cit*
43 Sutherland, *op cit*, p.419-439
44 Green, GF, 'A History of Truganina' (1935), p.4
45 Albert Evans, 'From the Early Settlers to the 1969 Fires' (unpublished manuscript), p.5
46 Sutherland, *op cit,* p.427
47 Evans, *loc cit;* Bitans, *op cit*, 13/2/2002; Green, *op cit*, p.7
48 Green, *op cit*, pp.10-14
49 Bitans, *op cit*
50 Evans, *op cit*, p.5 ; The overgrown ruins of the stone house to the west survive. It was owned by Patrick and Mary Anne Killen and family from at least c.1870 to 1890s, and then Bob Patterson; there are memories of the Hopkins' family visiting the Pattersons to play cards (Shire Map Series, 1892, Parish of Derrimut; Ford, *op cit*, p.233
51 Ford, *op cit*, p.222, citing probate papers.
52 Green, *op cit*, p.2. It is possible that Middle Road was one of the many informal routes taken in the early goldrush days before official roads (tracks) were properly formed. It would have provided a route from the west of Melbourne (including the Footscray and Williamstown areas) away from the swampy Western Highway route which was not in common use until several decades later. Wendy Bitans recounts local lore that there are two graves dating to the goldrush days beside the

stone for the Rocklands house was taken from this shanty. If this is so, better quality quarried stone was probably also obtained from elsewhere for dressing by the stonemason. The archaeological remains of the hotel (several depressions, with evidence of stone foundations and stairs, in which crockery and other artefacts have been found, and cobble paving) are situated in a paddock on the opposite side of Hopkins Road, on a property which is thought to have been owned by the Hopkins family since the early 1850s.

The Derrimut-Truganina plain is the driest place in the Port Phillip region. Until such time as underground tanks and dams could be sunk, the residents of the Truganina area had to carry water from the Werribee River.[53] It could reasonably be assumed that it was very early in his occupation that Hopkins built the small dam near the homestead, located to take advantage of a shallow drainage line which crosses in front of the property (Wall B44). It is an extremely good expression of the necessity for farmers to harvest water in the plains area. It is also an excellent example of the shallow dams built in the plains areas, where the shallow soil (high bedrock) generally prevented deep excavation for paddock tanks, and so fieldstone was used to build up walls on shallow drainage lines. It is c.3 metres deep, which would appear to be deeper than the typical early small dry-stone wall dams in the district. Its quality of construction, and depth, may have played a part in the success of the Hopkins farm at times when many neighbours were failing.

This dam appears very similar to the description and plan of a 'pond' provided in an 1857 edition of a British encyclopaedia, a variant of the conventional English paved stock pond:-

> *'It consists in employing the horse-shoe form as the ground plan of the excavation, and cutting all the sides steep, or at an angle of 45 or 50 degrees, except the part answering to the heel of the shoe, which is well gravelled or paved, as the only entrance for the cattle. The excavated earth serves to raise the high side of the pond, which is generally guarded by a fence, or a few trees.'* [54]

road, one near Hopkins Road, the other (a 12 year old girl) some 1.5 kilometres east. Their exact locations were known to the previous generation of locals. Ruts were once visible in the road.

53 Green, *op cit*, p3.

54 Loudon, JC, *Encyclopaedia of Agriculture* (London, Brown Green Longman's & Roberts, 1857), p.735.

The Hopkins dam varies only in the addition of dry stone walling for the steep sides of the construction.

The farm is also notable for its complex of dry stone walls, as stockyards and paddock walls. The present owner is Wendys Bitans, a direct descendant of the original owner, William Hopkins. She advises that the walls were substantially altered in the 1930s Depression, when her father allowed many to be taken apart by rabbiters facing starvation. They were afterwards rebuilt, but not with the professional skills of the originals.

- **The Faragher Property**

To the south of and adjoining the Hopkins' property were the homes of the two Faragher families. Daniel and Robert H Faragher had purchased the site of the present Tibbermore homestead from J Begg in 1855, just one year after Begg had purchased it from the Crown. In 1859 they purchased C Smith's 100 acre Crown purchase on Middle Road. Additional allotments were purchased over the following decades.[55]

In the 1860s Robert and Elizabeth Faragher had four children of school age, as did Daniel and his wife Christina. Daniel Faragher, the eldest brother, was a member of the Braybrook Road District Board. The Faraghers were Weslyans; Robert was Chapel Steward of the Weslyan chapel at Skeleton Creek and the donor of half an acre of land proposed for a new school site.[56]

The brothers ran the farm as a partnership. Daniel died in 1868, and his wife Christina died in 1869, leaving five children (one had died in 1866). Daniel Faragher had been 'one of the of the more comfortably off families in the district', yet the list of his assets in his probate papers include what we would regard today as very small items, such as 30 milch dishes, two cream crocks, two buckets, a can and scales and weights.

It appears that after Daniel's death Robert took over the running of the whole farm, and possibly the guardianship of the children. The Daniel Faragher children attended Mount Cottrell school to the west, possibly with a 'certificate of destitution.'

By 1871 Rober Faragher was one of the larger landholders of the Braybrook Shire, his farm was being over 500 acres in extent (half held in trust for his brother's children). He was involved in Mount Cottrell school, and

55 PROV VPRS 460/P/31642.

56 Ford, *op cit*, p.222

was one of the organisers of an annual picnic held for the people of Mt Cottrell and the plains. His son William was a school prize winner in 1874. The Faragher family were buried at Truganina Cemetery.[57]

In 1900 Robert Faragher (farmer 'of Tower Hill, Koroit') held title to 584 acres 3 roods and 1 perch of land in Sections 1 and 2 of the Parish of Derrimut. In 1902 this land was transferred to Moonee Ponds 'gentleman' Finlay McPhail, who sold it in 1906 to 'Derrimut Grazier' John Walter Leigh.[58] The information of the current owner is that Faragher 'went back' to Kororoit around 1900. Like all local farmers, he made money at the time by growing oats for Boer War horses. The Leighs built the 'extension' to the house. This was probably the current weatherboard house (with pressed metal ceilings), behind which is a bluestone addition which is believed to have been constructed with stone from the original Faragher house (the large underground tank being the only part of the original house which now survives).[59]

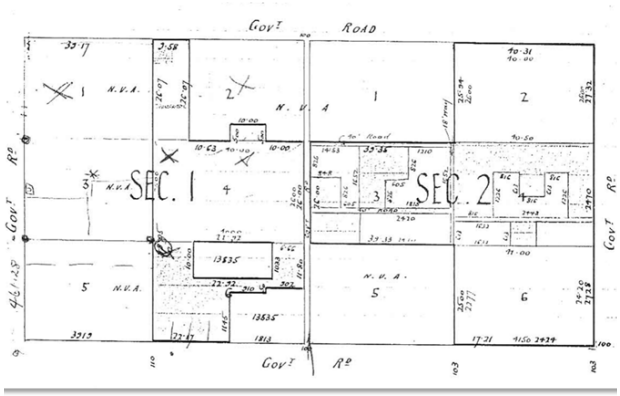
By 1934 that part of the property to the east of Hopkins Road (202 acres, 2 roods, 31 perches) was on a separate title, in the ownership of Harold Knowles. In 1941 William Athol Boyd was the owner. In 1950 and 1951 the property changed hands several times, but in 1952 was purchased by Alexander Graham McNaughton, whose descendents still own this and adjacent properties.[60] The McNaughtons have thus owned the property and maintained its dry stone walls longer than any other owner.

Old local resident Albert Evans' late twentieth century notes on the district have it that the Faragher family 'all died at an early age', that Bill Hannan and then Bill Boyd farmed the property for a number of years before it was sold to McNaughton.[61]

In about 1960 a major theft occurred of stone from one of the walls of the Tibbermore property. The house had a close escape from the devastating 1969 fire, its bullnoze verandah being lost.

It is evident from the sketch plan attached to the original title that the property had originally been subdivided into small allotments by early speculators. It was no doubt one of these sites that is today known as the 'shanty site'.[62]

A surveyors plan of Robert Faragher's land in 1900 shows a roughly 'H' shaped property with Hopkins Road crossing vertically through the centre. It is evident that Crown Allotments 2, 4 and 6 of Section One, and CAs 3 and 4 of Section Two have been previously subdivided into many smaller parcels, some of which have been amalgamated. Section Two shows two of the roads created in the early subdivision, but apparently never actually used. (Courtesy of Mrs Bonnie McNaughton.)



- **The Killeen Property**

To the west of McNaughtons' Tibbermore, to the east of Mt Atkinson Road, is a low ruin of a stone cottage that was built by the Killeens, and nearby an associated dam and windmill. The house was destroyed in the 1969 fire.[63]

In 1864 Patrick Killeen, of Kildare, Ireland, purchased 46 of the unwanted small lots created by speculators A Lindsay and J Moxham in the mid 1850s. Patrick and Mary Ann Killeens' daughter Catherine was born on the property in 1868. They progressively added to their landholding, purchasing additional allotments over ensuing decades.[64]

57 Ford, *op cit*, pp.230-232
58 Certificate of Title, Vol.2770 Fol.553853. (Thanks to Bonnie McNaughton for copy of this title).
59 Bonnie McNaughton, personal conversation, 26/2/2002
60 Certificate of Title, Vol.5896 Fol.1179073
61 Albert Evans, notes ('From the Early Settlers to the 1969 Fires'), Site 45.
62 Personal conversation, Bonnie and Robert McNaughton, 26/2/2002
63 Evans, *op cit*, Site No.44.
64 PROV VPRS 460/P/36721, conveyances and statutory declarations.

In 1870 the Killeens' farm was 170 acres. They were still a young couple when their three week old daughter Mary Jane died in 1870. Mary Anne told the coroner she took her down to their 'next neighbour' Mrs Woods 'who is of more experience about children than I am'.[65] (Two of the Woods children were later to die of the diphtheria that scourged the district in the in 1870s. The Woods also lived within the precinct.[66]) Four Killeen children died under the age of 6 years.[67]

In 1872 Patrick Killeen and neighbouring farmers John Scott, his nephew William, and William Palmer, were driving drays home from a bone mill at Melton with 1.5 tons of bone dust. They stopped for a drink at the Rose and Crown Hotel in Rockbank, after which Scott stumbled and fell under the wheel of his dray, which killed him. While denying that Scott was drunk, Killeen conceded to the coroner that 'I believe the deceased was in the custom of taking a good deal of liquor. We used to have a drop together sometimes.'[68]

Mary Anne Killeen died in 1884 and her daughter Rachel died in 1889. Patrick died from an accident in 1898, and in the early years of the next century his son Thomas succeeded to the family farm. The property was leased to the Patterson family, who milked cows up until 1939; after the war Colin Morton's brother purchased it.[69]

- **The Rockbank Estate**

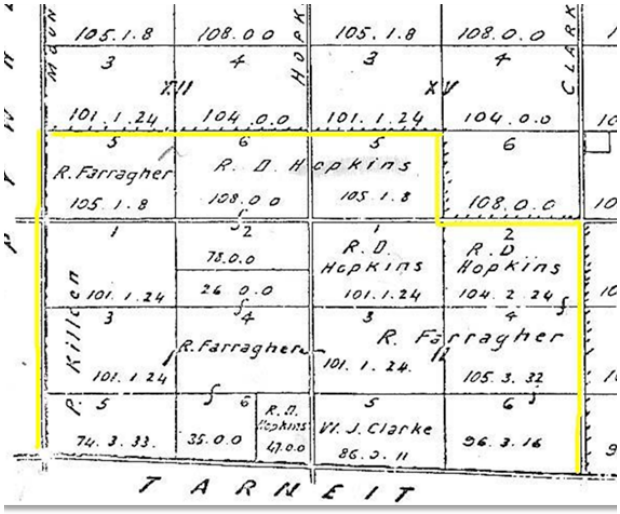
Like most farming precincts in Melton Shire situated east of Toolern Creek, the Hopkins, Faragher and Killeen farms were almost surrounded by the Clarke family's immense Rockbank pastoral estate. Clarke owned the abutting land to the west, north, and east of the Mt Atkinson Precinct.[70] The western and northern perimeter walls of the precinct are Rockbank boundary walls.

WJT 'Big' Clarke, whose early 1850s Sunbury Special Survey coup saw him gain control of most of the stations of earlier squatters in the whole region from Diggers Rest to Konagaderra, set about adding to this estate at the 1850s Crown land sales in the Shires of Melton and Wyndham. He was later described as the largest landholder in Australia. Clarke apportioned this vast estate into different stations including *Bollinda Vale, Red Rock* (both north of Sunbury, and including Rupertswood) and *Rockbank* (which extended south of Sunbury to near Werribee, mostly from Diggers Rest to Tarneit). The *Rockbank* station had originally been established in the early 1840s; the headstation of its previous owner, WC Yuille, had been at the Beatty's Road crossing of Kororoit Creek, the location of the former Rockbank Inn.

Over the next 30-40 years Clarke and his son WJ Clarke (later to become Australia's first baronet) added greatly to their estate by buying adjacent properties, many of which had been abandoned by impoverished farmers during times of droughts or agricultural disease. Upon Big Clarke's death in 1874 WJ Clarke inherited his Victorian estate, including 136,310 acres in the Melbourne vicinity, stretching in an arc from about Sunshine, Tarneit, Balliang, Rockbank, Diggers Rest, Sunbury, Bolinda Vale and across to the Hume Highway.[71] By 1892 Sir WJ Clarke owned the vast majority of the Parish of Pywheitjorrk, which together with his similarly extensive Parish of Derrimut landholdings, comprised most of the southern part of his immense *Rockbank* estate.[72]

65 Ford, *op cit*, pp.233-234
66 Ford, *op cit*, p.241
67 PROV VPRS 460/P/36721, conveyances and statutory declarations.
68 Ford, op cit, pp.224-225
69 Evans, *loc cit*
70 Shire Map Series (1892), Parishes of Derrimut and Pywheitjorrk.
71 Peel, *op.cit*., pp.130-1; Michael Clarke, *'Big' Clarke* (Queensberry Hill Press, Melbourne, 1980) Clarke (1980), opposite p.247
72 SLV Map 821.1A (1892), Parish of Pywheitjorrk; also PROV VPRS 460/P0 (35850).

Part of Parish of Derrimut, 1892, showing the boundary of the Clarke Rockbank estate (hatched in original and highlighted here in yellow) surrounding the farming district on three sides. The western and most of the northern parts of this boundary wall survive. The farming area of Truganina/Tarneit continues on into the Parish of Tarneit (in the Shire of Wyndham). The centre of the image is junction of Hopkins Road (north south) and Middle Road (east west), the west part of which is closed.



However, by the end of the nineteenth century historical changes were afoot. In addition to new taxes and the inherent difficulties of the pastoral industry, a new generation of farmers was restlessly surveying the vast pastoral estates about them. In the 1860s local Melton farmer Anders Hjorth had observed that 'the village was surrounded by large pastoral estates on three sides.'[73] There had long been a belief in Melton that these estates were thwarting the development of the town. As early as 1883 the situation enraged radical liberal politician John Quick:

> *'What a monstrous and barbaric law that must be, under which the splendid land between Melbourne and Sunbury, and between Melbourne and Geelong, capable of giving homes and existence to a teeming population, is locked up in pastoral solitudes …'*[74]

As the the 1890s depression deepened popular discontent intensified, with calls for the repurchase of good pastoral lands for subdivision into small farms. The language was as it had always been: 'the plough' versus 'the sheepwalks'. The 'yeoman ideal', and the associated wrestle for the land between the rich and the poor had been a long-running and major theme in Australian history, evident in the diggers' movements to 'unlock the land' in the 1850s and 60s, the 'Closer Settlement' Acts at the turn of the century, and the early-mid twentieth century 'Soldier Settlement' Acts.

This early twentieth century 'break-up' of the large estates was a milestone in Australia's history. It coincided with major developments in farming in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, as new science, technologies, fertilisers, transport and markets enabled huge productivity increases. With inventions such as the Babcok separator, the development of local co-operative creameries and butter factories, and advances in refrigeration creating new export markets, dairying in particular boomed. In 1901 there were 42,000 rural properties in Victoria. By 1914 this number had jumped to 70,500, and by 1923 to a peak of 80,500.[75]

And so the beginning of the twentieth century marked a watershed in the history of Melton Shire. In 1898 surveyors on behalf of Sir RTH Clarke began their calculations of the bearings and lengths and fences of the estate, in preparation for its sale.[76]

The Dry Stone Walls

- **Dry Stone Walls on the Hopkins & former Faragher Properties**

Most of the walls in the precinct appear to have been built by the Hopkins family, whose Rocklands homestead is the centrepiece of the precinct, and the adjacent Faragher family. As a consequence of the goldrush subdivisions, some of the Hopkins and Faragher lands were in small parcels, and there was some swapping of these between the two neighbours, adding to the uncertainty about who built some of the walls.[77]

73 Hjorth, *op cit*. Also, MDHS (1905 Melton Express), *op cit*, which refers to these three stations, plus Taylor's *Overnewton* Estate.
74 Cited in Lack, Ford, *op cit*, p.32
75 Dingle, *op cit*, p 193.
76 Clarke (1980), *passim*; Lands Victoria Torrens Application 32123. Sir RTH Clarke Bart. sold the vast section of the Rockbank Estate that lay south of the Western Highway in November 1906; it appears that he sold the northern portion about a year earlier. (PROV VPRS 560/P0, 35850); also CT Vol.3211 Fol.642206, pertaining to an 8000 acre portion south part of this estate; and also Shire of Melton Ratebooks from 1905-06 which record local farmers as owners of parts of the *Rockbank* estate.)
77 Wendy Bitans, personal conversations, 13/2/2002, 14/3/2002;

In the early 1930s Robert D Hopkins recalled a 'hotel or "sly grog shop" opposite his residence', the ruined cellar of which could still be seen. The stone foundations and remains of this shanty or hotel cellar are still visible, set amongst dry stone walls.[78]

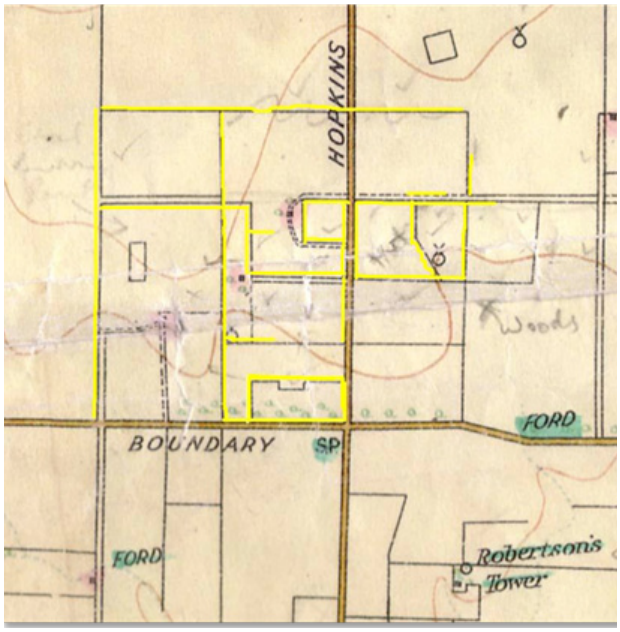
The map below shows the walls that were situated in the precinct in 1916, with walls extant in 2006 marked in yellow. The walls would have been built by the original Hopkins and Faragher families, and are likely to date from the late 1850s to the 1870s.

also PROV VPRS 460/P/31642, Deed of Agreement 'to exchange lands Robert D Hopkins to Applicant' (1898).

78 Green, *op cit*, p.2; Bitans, *op cit*.

Part of 1916 Ordnance Map, showing the location of walls, which mark:- road boundaries; the internal boundaries of the c.100 acre allotments into which the land was surveyed and sold by the government; and also numerous smaller parcels some of which were the product of the even smaller allotments that were created by speculators in the mid -1850s gold-inspired property boom.

The Mt Atkinson Dry Stone Walls Precinct situated in the Shire of Melton, north of Boundary Road. The walls to the south of Boundary Road, in the former small farming district of Truganina/Tarneit in the adjacent Shire of Wyndham, are an integral part of the precinct. This small farming district was wedged between huge pastoral estates. The walls to the west and north of the precinct are the boundary walls of the Clarkes' Rockbank estate. The Mt Atkinson Precinct walls identified in this Study (the extant walls) are highlighted in yellow; it can be seen that these comprise the majority of the original walls (the walls south of Boundary Road were not included in this study).



Of the many walls in the precinct which are likely to have been associated with Hopkins and Faragher (the present Rocklands and Tibbermore properties), evidence from c.1900 surveyors plans associated with Torrens Applications by the parties suggests that:-

- Hopkins Road boundary Walls B127 and B139 and and Middle Road boundary Wall B140 were almost certainly built by Hopkins; although Hopkins Road may not have been opened until the 1870s or later, it is likely that the southern portion, which provided access to Hopkins and other farms, was opened early, and that these walls also date from the period late 1850s – 1860s.
- The complex of stockyards and walls on the Rocklands homestead site was obviously built by Hopkins; while some probably date to an early era, it is known that they were added to and rebuilt over time.
- The fine long north-south Wall B118 formed a property boundary between Faragher and Killeen and also Faragher and Hopkins, so is likely to have been built by Faragher, likely by the 1860s. This wall, known as the 'mile wall', was originally an all-stone wall which has been topped up with a few strands of wire; it is one of the most vertical and intact walls in the precinct.
- Walls B125/126 to the west of Hopkins Road, and Walls B38 and B42 on the east side of Hopkins Road were also Hopkins – Faragher boundary walls, the cost of which was likely shared, and which could have been built by either party. They were probably built in the late 1850s – early 1860s.
- Road boundary walls on the Faragher property – Walls B124 (Hopkins Road) and B119 (Boundary Road) – would have been erected by Faragher; they are likely to have been amongst the first walls they erected.
- One wall on Tibbermore that does not appear on surveyors Jenkins' 1898 plan is Wall B120. It was either built later or, being an internal wall, was simply not recorded in 1898.

No early surveyors' plans or descriptions of Wall B46 on Middle Road have been found. However it was the boundary to an allotment owned by RD Hopkins in the late nineteenth century, and may have been built by him.[1] It is of a style that is important in the Shire of Melton:- the composite 'half-walls' (apparently originally built in that form), some of which comprise a low stone wall, with just a few well-laid courses of stone and post & wire above. Wall B46 on Middle Road is probably the best stone wall of this type (in terms of condition and length) in Melton Shire.

As previously noted, Wall B44 (the dam in front of Rocklands) is a classic example of nineteenth century small farm dams adapted to the Melbourne's western plains. It is likely to have been one of the very early structures built by William Hopkins.

Many of the Hopkins walls were rebuilt in the 1930s as a consequence of the activities of rabbiters in the Depression.

The continuous occupation of Rocklands by the Hopkins family may have contributed to the preservation of the walls; similarly the Faragher property has been owned by the McNaughton family for a lengthy period.

- **Dry Stone Walls on the former Clarke Rockbank Estate**

The estates of the pastoralists – particularly the Clarkes, Staughtons, and Taylor – dominated Melton Shire in the nineteenth century. Of the 165 kilometres of dry stone walls identified in the Shire in this study, 73.7 kilometres, some 45%, appear to have been erected by the Clarkes' (WJT Clarke, Sir WJ Clarke, and Sir RTH Clarke) on the Rockbank estate. There are almost no drystone walls remaining that were associated with the Staughtons or William Taylor.

Little is known of when most of the Clarke walls were constructed.[2] Most of the information presently available constitutes the documents associated with RTH Clarke's applications for Torrens titles in preparation for selling the land in the early years of the twentieth century. In particular, statutory declarations attached to these applications (held at the PROV) sometimes describe the age and position of existing fences, and field notes for survey plans (held at Lands Victoria) often mark the walls and fences. Also, from the first edition of the Bacchus Marsh Express newspaper in 1866 until

1 Shire Map Series (1892): Parish of Derrimut

2 Any Clarke family papers relating to the period might include such information in the form of account records, correspondence between managers and owners, maps, photographs etc. Such papers have not been located at this stage.

about 1890, there were periodic advertisements seeking stone wallers for specified lengths (miles) of walling. For example, in 1880 Clarke advertised for 'Stonewallers on Rockbank Station'; applicants were advised to apply at either the Raglan or Monmouthshire Hotels.[3] These advertisements – 'apply Monmouthshire Hotel Diggers Rest' or 'Rockbank Inn', or 'Rockbank Estate' – appear at regular intervals, together with warnings that trespassers pulling down walls would receive summary justice.[4] Although some walls are known to have been built later, it is likely that most stone walls on the Rockbank estate were built between the late 1850s and the early 1880s, after which period post and wire fencing would have been the major type of fencing built throughout area, as it was throughout the State.

Unlike farming properties, the vast majority of Rockbank pastoral estate walls erected were boundary walls. There were relatively few internal paddock walls. It could be conjectured that Rockbank estate boundary walls were more substantial due to their purpose in providing security. However a more detailed study would be required to confirm this; the style and quality of dry stone walls on the Clarke estate varies considerably. This would relate at least in part to the range of wallers used over the long period of their construction, and to the availability and quality of stone on different parts of the estate.

The precinct contains a number of Rockbank boundary walls. Clarke probably arranged their construction.

Walls B115, B130 and B47 are portions of the same original east-west wall, c.2.3 kilometres in length, which comprised a southern boundary of the Clarke Rockbank estate. Wall B45 is a portion of a north-south wall near these walls.[5]

Wall G84 marks an eastern boundary of the Clarke Rockbank estate. Situated along the western side of the Mt Atkinson Road reservation, and stretching for 2.2 kilometres, it is the remnant of an original c.6.5 kilometre stone wall that stretched from Boundary Road to Greigs Road.[6] The fact that Mt Atkinson Road is thought to have been one of only two (with Mt Cottrell Road) north-south roads in this southern portion of the Shire by 1871[7] suggests that Wall G84 is likely to have been one of the first walls constructed by Clarke. It would certainly pre-date 1871 and is likely to date to the late 1850s or early 1860s.

- **Dry Stone Walls on the former Killeen Property**

The fieldnotes and final plan of surveyor John S Jenkins made as part of Thomas Killeen's Torrens Title application show the fences on Crown Allotments 1, 3 and 5 of Section 1 Parish of Derrimut as they were in 1905.[8] They show these allotments, and the Mt Atkinson Road reserve to the west, entirely enclosed by 'stone walls'. On the west Mt Atkinson Road was walled along the whole length of its west side (Wall G84, a Rockbank boundary wall), and along the southern part of its east side (not extant). The northern wall (Wall B116) survives; it bordered a property owned by Faragher, and the cost was likely shared between the two parties. The long (c.1.9 kilometre) eastern wall, the boundary of the Hopkins and Faragher properties (Wall B118), also survives, substantial portions of it in excellent condition. The only external boundary wall that does not survive is the southern boundary, along Boundary Road.

Three east-west walls ran part-way into the allotments. These may have been built to accommodate small parcels created in the 1850s Lindsay/Moxham speculative subdivision. One is known to have been removed by Thomas Killeen in 1905.[9] A stone wall dam (Wall B117) survives in the locality of one of these walls. Another short north-south wall within the allotment has also been demolished.

It is certain then that these walls are over one hundred years old. It is likely that they were built sometime between the late 1850s and the 1870s, and that they are 130-150 years old.

It is interesting that, by 1905, Mt Atkinson Road, which had earlier been open, was now closed by stone walls (without gates) across it at both Boundary and Middle Roads.

3 The Bacchus Marsh *Express*, 6/3/1880
4 Bilszta, 1990, *op cit*.
5 Lands Victoria, Torrens Application 35850 (p.18) 'Plan of Resurvey of Part of Parish of Derrimut', Claude Purchas, 23/2/1905
6 Lands Victoria, Torrens Application 35850 (p.3) 'Fieldnotes o fsurvey of Part of Parish of Pywheitjorrk', Claude Purchas, Dec 1904
7 Ford, *op cit*, p.236, 239
8 Lands Victoria, Torrens Application 36721
9 PROV VPRS 460/P/36721, statutory declaration by Samuel Smith, March 1907.

- **Dry Stone Walls Associated with the Gold Rush Subdivisions**

Some of the walls which survive (B121, B123, B170) would appear to correlate with the property boundaries established by the goldrush property speculators. The small size, and isolated location (even today), of these allotments provides telling evidence of the fantastic impact of 'gold fever' on society in the early to mid 1850s. Although they were almost certainly not built by the original purchasers of these allotments, but by later owners such as the Hopkins and Faragher families, they are now the only material evidence of the subdivision pattern established by speculators during the goldrush boom. They are the most graphic known evidence of the work of the speculators along gold-rush routes.

Thematic Context / Comparative Analysis:

Shire of Melton Historical Themes: 'Pastoral', 'Farming', 'Transport', 'Water'.

Comparable Places in Shire of Melton:

The comparable precincts of walls in the Shire of Melton are those situated around eruption points:- the Mount Cottrell Precinct; the Mount Kororoit Precinct; and the She-Oak Hill Precinct. It is also comparable, to a lesser extent, to the 'gateway' precincts, in particular the Greigs Road Precinct, the Western Highway Precinct, the Melton Highway Precinct, and the Robinsons Road Precinct.

Condition:

Overall, the walls in the precinct are in good condition.

Integrity:

The integrity of the walls in the precinct varies, from low, moderate to high. Some of the walls in the worst condition are located along the roads, where they are prey to to thieves who help themselves to stones for private gardens.

While the extent to which many dry stone walls have been altered over their long life may never be known, it is known that many of the walls on Hopkins' Rocklands were reconstructed, in an inferior way to the originals, in the 1930s.

Recommendations:

Individual walls not already included in HO 114, are recommended for inclusion in the Melton Planning Scheme Heritage Overlay.

Other Recommendations:

- The walls in the precinct, especially the most significant examples, should be listed by the Shire of Melton as a high priority for future conservation works.
- An education campaign regarding the significance of the walls, and penalties for theft of stone, should be initiated by the Shire of Melton. This might include interpretation and other signage within the Precinct.

The integrity of the walls is likely to be affected by any future change in land-use (including rural residential development). If this is envisaged, guidelines for appropriate development of the walls (new gates etc) should be prepared; compliance with these would need to be mandatory.

Wall B28.
Hopkins' Rocklands homestead garden wall.

Rocklands homestead landscape of stock-yard walls. (The shed at rear also has a stone wall.)

Wall 44.
Hopkins' stone-lined dam on Rocklands, showing paved stock access. Another wall in background. This dam is a textbook nineteenth century small farming dam.

Another small dam (dry), on former Killeen's property, south-west of Rocklands. Less elaborately constructed, without a cobbled ramp, this is a typical small farm dam in Melton Shire, on a small gully, dug about a metre or two to near the high bedrock, and walls constructed of fieldstone.

Walls B75.
At Rocklands homestead. A high and well constructed wall, with coping, is constructed using characteristic local round stones and the occasional boulder.

Walls B46.
Middle Road. This composite low stone post and wire fence with netting is the best preserved stone wall in the key 301 – 750 mm height range in the whole of Melton Shire. It is an excellent example of the major type of fence in the Shire that was constructed with a stone base. Although only a few stones high, its base is traditional double wall construction.

Walls B170. (Interior Rocklands paddock wall).
This style – with a broad-base and pyramidal rather than vertical shape –is the characteristic Melton wall. Steel droppers and barbed wire added later.

Wall B18.
The same style of wall, here more intact and vertical.

Walls B40.
(Both of the photos below). Middle Road. This is an excellent portion of a wall most of which is tumbling down (or having its stones stolen). Although doubtless repaired over its life, it demonstrates the original state of many local walls. The preservation of such remnants is important.

Walls B41.
Off Middle Road. Showing reasonably intact portion of original wall which has been topped up by single strand of barbed wire strung between later steel droppers.

Walls B42. (Off Middle Road).
Would appear to be an original composite 'half-wall, with early two-wire posts (with what may be remnants of thick 'black wire', now bypassed with barbed wire attached to post side).

Walls B48.
A similar wall/fence, with old four wire fence. Internal farm paddock wall, typically in better condition than roadside walls.

Walls B39.
Wall on Hopkins Road, the major thoroughfare in the precinct.

Walls B47. (Off Hopkins Road.
Clarke Rockbank Estate boundary wall.

Walls B122. Hopkins Road.
A portion of a major roadside wall that has not yet had stones pilfered.

Walls B118.
A more intact portion of the 'Mile Wall', an internal paddock wall behind Tibbermore. The wall runs north from Boundary to Middle Road.

Walls B43.
Looking west along Middle Road: a landscape of walls in the Mt Atkinson Precinct.

Citation No. 5 - Greigs Road Dry Stone Wall Precinct

Melton Dry Stone Walls Survey Nos:	(See description)
Location:	Greigs Road, Rockbank
Critical Dates:	Original construction of most c.late 1850s – 1870s; considerable reconstruction
Existing Heritage Listings:	HO 108, HO 112, HO 1113
Recommended Level of Significance:	LOCAL

Statement of Significance:

The Greigs Road Dry Stone Wall Precinct is a group of characteristic Shire of Melton walls, built c.late 1850s to 1870s. It is significant at the LOCAL level as a dense concentration of dry stone walls in Melton Shire. The visual accessibility of the walls is a feature of the precinct, with walls highly visible to vehicles travelling along one of the Shire's major historic roads. It is significant for its demonstration of early small farming settlement patterns on the dry Melton Plains; for its strong historical association with gold-rush land speculators; for its demonstration of skilled craftsmanship; and for its potential to provide both research and educative information regarding nineteenth century farming and pastoral practices on Melbourne's western plains. It is also associated with Victoria's seminal pastoral industry which dominated Melton during the nineteenth century; and whose wall patterns contrast to those of smaller farmers.

The Greigs Road Dry Stone Wall Precinct is historically significant at the LOCAL level (AHC A3, A4, B2, D2). Greigs Road is significant for its association with Victoria's gold-rush years; it was one of the major early routes to the Ballarat and Blackwood rushes. As such it became the focus for land speculation, and the centre of goldrush land subdivision in the Shire. A few small fragments of the pattern of these speculative subdivisions preserved by dry stone walls are witness to the extent of gold-fever in Victoria in the 1850s, and the intense activity along Greigs Road during this period. The precinct demonstrates the early pastoral and farming settlement patterns of Melbourne's western plains. It is significant as the one of the most concentrated groups of dry stone walls in the Shire of Melton. The precinct includes early Rockbank estate boundary walls, which express the Shire's seminal and dominating nineteenth century pastoral industry, and in particular the activity of WJT Clarke and his son Sir WJ Clarke.

While including some all-stone walls, most walls are composite stone and post & wire, with characteristic broad-based and pyramidal (rather than vertical) cross-section. The shape of the walls is largely a function of the high proportion of round and smooth stones in the district, which makes coursing difficult. They express the historical diversity of dry stone wall construction in Victoria, and are representative of the typical style of wall in Melton Shire and Melbourne's west.

The Greigs Road Dry Stone Wall Precinct is aesthetically significant at the LOCAL level (AHC E1). The dry stone walls which cross the landscape in regular enclosure patterns, make a fundamental statement about human interaction with the volcanic landscape of which they are a part. The precinct has views of two volcanic sources: Mount Cottrell to the south and Mount Atkinson to the east. The most publically accessible walls have good sculptural qualities, their original rural context is intact and most major roads in the precinct have walls along

them, ensuring that the walls are a prominent feature of the cultural landscape.

The Greigs Road Dry Stone Wall Precinct is scientifically significant at the LOCAL level (A1, C2). The precinct demonstrates the volcanic origin of the landscape, and is also associated with the geologically significant Mount Cottrell 'lava shield' volcano. The walls have the potential to yield research information regarding wall construction techniques, nineteenth century rural settlement patterns and farm management, and ways of life on Melbourne's western plains.

The Greigs Road Dry Stone Wall Precinct is socially significant at the LOCAL level (AHC G1). The precinct has the potential to educate the community in regard to wall construction techniques, and also nineteenth century farm management, settlement patterns, and ways of life on Melbourne's western plains.

Overall, the Greigs Road Dry Stone Wall Precinct is of LOCAL significance.

The following extract from Council's GIS records all the walls in the Greigs Road precinct:

WALL NO	NEAREST ROAD
C69	Greigs Road
C70	Greigs Road
C71	Troups Road
D1	Greigs Road
D80	Troups Road
D81	Greigs Road
D82	Greigs Road
D83	Greigs Road
J132	Leakes Road
J133	Leakes Road
J134	Leakes Road
J135	Leakes Road
J136	Greigs Road
J137	Greigs Road
J138	Troups Road
J143	Paynes Road
J144	Paynes Road
J145	Greigs Road
J146	Greigs Road
J147	Greigs Road
J148	Greigs Road
J149	Greigs Road
J150	Leakes Road
J151	Leakes Road
J152	Paynes Road
J153	Greigs Road
J18	Greigs Road

(Note that this table does not include some walls (C50, C55, C57-C61, C185 and C311) that would have been included were they not already in the adjacent Mt Cottrell Dry Stone Walls Precinct.)

Description:

The sources of the fieldstone used in the construction of the walls in the precinct are Mounts Cottrell and Atkinson, two of about 400 inactive eruption points that have been identified on Victoria's western volcanic plains, which stretch from the Darebin Creek to near the South Australian border. The boundary between the Mount Cottrell and the younger Mount Atikinson lava flows is a gully situated between them.[1] This gully, unnamed today but historically called 'Dry Creek', is a tributary of Skeleton Creek to its east, whose catchment is near Hopkins Road.[2]

Mount Cottrell, south of Greigs Road between Faulkners and Mt Cottrell Roads, is of State geological significance, having been identified as the 'best example in Victoria of lava shield with lava cone forming summit.' Its notable features are the unusual structures at its bluff and crater, and the extent of its radial flows, which have produced

1 Stewart, G, 'The Newer Volcanics lava field between Deer Park and the Werribee River', *Geological Survey of Victoria, Unpublished Report* 1977/26, 1977, pp.4, 7.
2 Shire Map Series (1892): Parishes of Phyweitjorrk, Tarneit & Derrimut.

a very broad lava shield. It is the 'most massive of the Werribee Plains volcanoes, and one of the largest shield volcanoes in Victoria'.[3]

Mount Cottrell was built up by a succession of lava flows over its life. Its broad thin tongues of lava were effusive, and slowly cooling, producing a denser basalt, rather than explosive eruptions, or quickly cooling flows, which produced a more vesicular scoria or tuff. While the vesicularity of the basalt extruded from Mount Cottrell varies, the dominant surface stone is a grey basalt,[4] which is evident in the round dense stones that feature in the dry stone walls of the precinct.

Unlike many of the volcanoes on Victoria's western plains, Mount Atkinson, a low hill south of Rockbank, does not lend a dramatic and distinctive character to its flat landscape. It is described by geologists as a 'Lava Hill', a source of extended flows of lava whose crater is now 'absent or ambiguous'.[5] Its normally fluid lava flow became more viscous towards the end of the vent's eruptive phase, and built up a ridge that extends two kilometres east of the vent.[6] As with Mt Cottrell, its lava tongues were effusive and its basalt more dense.

The precinct features a reasonably dense pattern of dry stone walls situated on the property boundaries along both sides of the road, and also includes some internal property walls perpendicular to the road. (Some of the walls at the south western end of the road are included in the Mount Cottrell precinct.) Although the precinct is flat the walls are visually accessible to vehicles travelling along Greigs Road, one of the Shire's major through roads. This visual accessibility is a feature of this precinct.

The field-stone from which the walls in the precinct have been constructed are predominantly round, heavy, and medium to large in size. Accordingly, most walls lack coursing. Round stones are not the ideal material for construction of high (low batter) walls, and many of the walls are more pyramidal than vertical in cross-section. The walls in this precinct are thus the typical style of wall in Melton Shire.

In common with most old dry stone walls on Victoria's volcanic plains, many walls are deteriorating. Many walls have clearly been substantially rebuilt, and it is presumed that most have been repaired, usually, as is typical, without the same skill as was used in their original construction.

Several early cottages, and relics of cottages, contribute to the precinct. Paines Cottage HO 113, a small bluestone building on the north-east corner of Greigs and Paynes Roads, diagonally opposite, on the south-west corner of Greigs and Faulkners Road, is a small weatherboard farmhouse with a modest modern extension, and the stone foundations of a former building on its western side. This property features a complex of stone walls, which in part reflect a speculative subdivision related to the 1850s gold-rush.

Greigs Road dry stone wall precinct

3 Rosengren, N, 'Eruption Points of the Newer Volcanics Province of Victoria: An Inventory and Evaluation of Scientific Significance', a report prepared for the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) and the Geological Society of Australia (Victorian Division), 1994, pp.162, 301, 349.

4 *ibid*

5 Rosengren, N, 'Eruption Points of the Newer Volcanics Province of Victoria: An Inventory and Evaluation of Scientific Significance', a report prepared for the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) and the Geological Society of Australia (Victorian Division), 1994, pp.20, 349, 373

6 Stewart, G, 'The Newer Volcanics lava field between Deer Park and the Werribee River', *Geological Survey of Victoria, Unpublished Report* 1977/26, 1977, pp.4, 7

History:

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

Fencing in Nineteenth Century Rural Victoria

- **Fencing the Wilderness, 1850s-1870s**

The majority of dry stone walls in Victoria appear to have been built in the 30 year period from the 1850s to the 1880s.

In 1826 rural affairs commentator James Atkinson reported that he knew of no example of dry stone walling having been erected in the colony of New South Wales.[1] Initially pastoralists employed shepherds to look after sheep. They guided the sheep to pasture during the day, and in the evening returned them to folds, constructed of wooden hurdles or brush fences, near their huts (or outstations). There are several dry stone walls on Melton's Kororoit Creek that are thought to have been associated with early pastoralists: an outstation associated with Yuille at Caroline Springs, and the remnants of a wall that are thought to have been associated with a shepherd's enclosure.[2] Other fencing was used on the squatters' homestations:- the 'home paddock' (likely for the squatters' precious horses) and the 'cultivation [or kitchen] garden'. Early fences were also required to separate stock for breeding purposes. These fences were usually of post & rail, vertical timber slabs or other primitive paling material.[3] (However at *Greenhills* in Toolern Vale there are some remains of a dry stone wall that would appear to be the remnants of an original homestation garden.[4])

Two major and related events in the early 1850s radically changed this situation. Firstly, the exodus to the gold-rushes made it difficult and expensive for squatters to retain labour for shepherding. And secondly, the extensive survey, subdivision and sale of Crown land in the early 1850s provided security of tenure to pastoralists, and incentive for them to invest in major improvements, including permanent fences, on their stations. Pastoralists were also encouraged to fence their land to ensure that neighbouring farmers didn't allow their stock to stray upon the open expanses of their stations.

Nevertheless, until the 1860s, extensive fencing of properties remained the exception rather than the rule. The first boundary fences in the Barrabool Hills of Victoria were only erected in 1854, and boundary and paddock fencing 'only gathered momentum after the mid 1850s.'[5] This was no doubt due to the extensive sale of Crown Land as freehold in the 1850s, as well as the increasing availability of capital due to the gold boom, and the increasing availability of labour including professional stone wallers as alluvial gold declined in the late 1850s.

Slowly, fences began to replace shepherds on the pastoral estates. Early maps of Melton Shire show that pastoralists built walls and fences relatively sparsely – only on property boundaries and to enclose huge paddocks (about 5-10 square kilometres in the south part of Clarke's Rockbank estate).[6] In dramatic contrast the same historical maps (and the mapping survey undertaken as part of this Study) show concentrated patterns of walled paddocks established on farms in the same areas at the same time. The creation of small paddocks enabled mixed farming, by securing crops and gardens from stock, and managing stock for breeding. This Study shows that, in the south of the Shire, virtually all of these fences were dry stone walls. Dry stone walls were also used to protect the homestead from stock, to construct stockyards, fowl houses and pigpens, and possibly, on a few of the larger farms, to provide aesthetic effect.[7]

Given the expense of establishing a farm from nothing in a wilderness, and the experience of many small farmers as agricultural labourers before coming to Australia, it is almost certain that the walls on all but the

1 Kerr, JS, 'Fencing, a brief account of the development of fencing in Australia', *Australasian Society for Historical Archaeology Newsletter*, Vol. 14.No.1, March 1984, pp.9-16.
2 Melton Heritage Study Place Nos. 467 and 81.
3 Kerr, *loc cit*; Allan Willingham, 'The Dry Stone Walls in the Corangamite Region: A Brief History', in Corangamite Arts Council Inc, *If These Walls Could Talk, Report of the Corangamite Dry Stone Walls Conservation Project*, Terang, 1995, p.44
4 Melton Heritage Study, Place No.055
5 Kerr, *loc cit*
6 Shire Map Series (1892); Army Ordnance Map, 1916: 'Sunbury'.
7 Alan Marshall, asking an old waller why the walls on a particular property were so high, was told that ostensibly the reason was to keep steers in (they jumped fences), but the real reason was 'just so that he could say he had the best walls in the Western District, the biggest and the best, and bugger you.' (cited in Corangamite Arts Council, 1995, p.114). On Melbourne's western plains district however, such finely constructed walls were generally associated with formal gardens on only the largest properties, such as the Ha Ha walls on the Eynesbury (Melton Shire) and Werribee Park (Wyndham Shire) pastoral estates, or Greystones (Moorabool Shire).

largest farms would have been constructed by farmers themselves rather than by professional wallers. For example, general hand William Ison and his wife arrived on a Werribee farm in the mid 1850s, and found there a small wooden cottage and a young German in charge, 'who had already done some clearing of the stones which covered the land … We set to, and cleared about 10 acres, and had it fenced in with stones by the next sowing time.'[8] The quality of wall construction would have depended on the experience of the farmers and their seasonal hands at the craft. William Robinson who settled in the Tarneit area in 1872, was a stonemason who turned his skills to fieldstone, building a house (which does not survive) of the material and numerous fences (some of which do survive along Robinsons Road).

The outbreak of the highly contagious sheep disease, 'scab', which reached epidemic proportions in the 1850s, hastened enclosure of the pastoral estates.[9] Western District squatter Neil Black quickly enclosed his Glenormiston run, and in 1854 George Russell ordered five miles of wire: '…the importance of fencing is becoming every year more apparent.'[10] Likewise, the appearance of pluero-pneumonia in Australian cattle in the early 1860s impressed cattle-men of the need to isolate their properties from travelling or straying stock.[11] That 'dreadful disease' also encouraged the erection of property fences by Melton dairy farmers (and was responsible for less use of local Commons by Melton farmers).[12]

By 1876 the presence of 'substantial stone walls' appears to have been hallmark of a good farm in the Melton district, the *Australasian*'s 'Travelling Reporter' making sure to note these on the farms of Ralph Parkinson, George Missen and Isaac Gidney.[13]

However little is known of dry stone wallers who worked in the Shire at the time: Irish brothers John and George Funston worked in the Toolern Vale area from the 1850s; Patrick Connor worked on Mount Aitken in the 1860s; and Dick (the mason) Mitchell, and Arcoll (Arkell) worked in the Mount Cottrell area before 1872.[14]

The construction of fencing that was encouraged by sheep scab and cattle pleuro pneumonia was also fostered by legislation. At the beginning of the pastoral period in Victoria, common law held that, generally, a landowner was under no obligation to construct or maintain boundary fences, or fences adjoining a public road. However, as a result of Australia's rapidly expanding pastoral industry, trespass of stock, and the need for security, Victoria's *Fences Statute 1865* gave landowners the right to claim equal contribution towards the construction or repair of boundary fences from the owners of adjoining lands.[15]

- **Types of Fencing in the Nineteenth Century**

The great variety and combination of nineteenth century fencing arose 'as much from material shortages and the need to use what was procurable as from a desire to improve the utility and durability of fencing.'[16] As is the case with the rest of the Shire, most of the walls in the Greigs Road precinct are 'composite' stone and post & wire, rather than all-stone.

The *Fences Statute 1874* lists numerous types of fences, including 'walls' (stone walls) and 'combination' type fences. Walls that divided properties had to be a minimum of 4 feet high (1.22 metres), with a base of 'not less than 2 feet wide at the bottom', and '9 inches at the top'.[17] Although the specifications for road boundary fences were not given (the Crown being exempt from the legislation) it could be expected that the walls on these public boundaries would be at least as high as those that divided neighbouring properties.

Post and rail fences were the most common early fence type in Australia, no doubt due to the prevalence of forests and woodlands, in comparison with stony land, across Victoria. They appeared early and were prominent in the study area. In 1854 William Westgarth, on his way

8 Murray, E, *The Plains of Iramoo*, Henwood & Dancy, Geelong, 1974, p.111. (Murray notes that in 1974 these walls were still standing.)
9 Kerr, *loc cit*
10 Willingham, *op cit*, p.45
11 Kerr, *loc cit*
12 Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 1864, p.94 ; John Chandler, Michael Canon, *Forty Years in the Wilderness* (Loch Haven, Main Ridge, 1990), p.175
13 The *Australasian*, October 1876.
14 Bilszta, JA, 'Dry Stone Wall: Faulkners Road, Mt Cottrell, Shire of Melton', 9/9/1990, unpublished paper
15 Lawlink: New South Wales Law Reform Commission website: 'Report 59 (1988) – Community Law Reform Program: Dividing Fences'; Parliament of Victoria website: Law Reform Committee, 'Review of the Fences Act 1968'
16 Kerr, *loc cit*
17 The Fences Statute 1874 (Fences Amendment Act, November 1873), Clause 4 (i-xi). Other types of early fencing are described in Michael Cannon's *Life in the Country: Australia in the Victorian Age: 2*, Nelson, West Melbourne, 1978, pp.89-90; and Graham Condah's *Of the Hut I Builded*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1988, p.89.

to the goldfields Royal Commission in Ballarat, recorded that he 'struck west through post and rail fences onto the Keilor Plains'.[18] By the 1860s timber fencing, probably from the Grey Box forest in the west and south-west of the Shire, was common in the vicinity of Melton. But as local farmer John Chandler recorded, such fencing was prone to loss in the bushfires that swept south from the ranges over the plains.[19] Even in the volcanic area near Aitkens Hill to the north of the Shire, nearly 80% of squatter John Aitken's fencing was either 'post & rail' (either 2 rail, the most common, or 3 rail), or 'post & 2 rails with (2 or 3) wires', or 'post & rail with 5 foot palings'. The balance was 'stone walls'.[20] These figures might reflect squatters' early preference for timber fencing, and an early dearth of professional dry stone walling skills, not remedied until after the gold rushes. In 1868 on the same property Henry Beattie erected much more stone walling, but also built nearly twice as much '3-rail fence' in the same year.[21]

Post and wire fences were first introduced into Victoria in the 1850s, but the price of the metal posts (which could often not go down into the dry hard ground in Victoria) made them 'exceedingly expensive'.[22] The very thick and soft 'black bull wire' was soon superseded by galvanised steel wires which, with droppers to keep the wire stable, allowing greater distance between fence posts, reducing the costs.[23] With progressive improvements, including local production of wire, use of timber posts, and winding and straining devices, by at least the early 1870s wire was the cheapest type of fence.[24] The invention of barbed wire in the 1870s, and its widespread use in Victoria in the 1880s meant that it could secure cattle as well as sheep, and it became the standard fence type from this time.[25]

- **Dry Stone Walls**

In 1856 a government agricultural reporter travelling through the eastern part of Melton Shire (the Parish of Maribyrnong) commented that: 'A few good stone fences the only improvement worth noting.'[26]

A dry stone wall was the best solution:- 'Where stone was abundant, timber scarce, transport of fencing material expensive, skilled labour available, and where cheaper alternatives were unavailable.'[27] From about the mid-late 1850s, when freehold ownership exploded and the price of labour declined, and through the early 1860s when the price of labour remained cheap, the labour-intensive construction of stone walls remained very competitive.

Stone walls were built wherever stony ground made them possible, or necessary. While most farmers built their own walls to clear stony ground and manage stock and crops, pastoralists could afford professional wallers.[28] In the mid 1850s brothers John and George Funston, stone wallers and farm labourers from Ireland, are known to have been erecting walls on the Mount Aitken and Gisborne Park estates.[29] The Mount Aitken station accounts in 1868 showing the employment of a John Starkie for four weeks to help Henry gather and cart stones, and the engagement of 'Paterick [sic] Connor, Stone Wall Fencer' to erect 34 chains of stone walling at the very low rate of only 8 shillings per chain.

The popularity of stone walls with farmers is evident in the Lands Department files relating to the 1860s Selection Acts, which record the type, length and price of fencing 'improvements' made by each selector. A detailed examination of 21 selections in the Mount Cottrell, Rockbank, Mount Kororoit and Diggers Rest–Holden areas reveals that stone walling constituted by far the largest proportion (60%) of the 32.3 kilometres of fencing built on those properties by c.1875, despite the fact that it was the most expensive. Post & wire fences, one of the cheapest types of fencing then available, comprised only 6% of all fences erected. Post & rail fences, a little cheaper than the best stone walls, and a little dearer than the cheapest, constituted 9% of the fences. (Note that many other 'composite' varieties of fences were constructed from these three primary

18 Lack, J, Ford, O, 'Melbourne's Western Region: An Introductory History' (Melbourne's Living Museum of the West Inc, Melbourne Western Region Commission, 1986), p.27
19 Chandler, *op cit*, p.174
20 Map, 'Index of Fences' on John Aitken's Mount Aitken property (after Crown Land sales). PROV 460/P0/39365. (The stone walls would appear not to survive.)
21 Beattie, Steward K, *The Odd Good Year: Early Scots to Port Phillip, Northern Australia, Gap, Gisborne and Beyond*, Southwood Press, Marrickville, 1999, p.63
22 Willingham, *op cit*, pp.45-6
23 Cannon, 1978, *op cit*, pp.89-91
24 Survey of 21 Selectors in the Holden – Mount Cottrell districts.
25 Willingham, *op cit*, p.46; Kerr, *loc cit;* Cannon, 1978, *loc cit*
26 Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 'Statistics of Victoria for 1856', Appendix No.1, p.46
27 Vines, G, 'Comparative Analysis of Dry Stone Walls in Victoria, Australia and Overseas', in Corangamite Arts Council, 1995, *op cit*, p.56
28 Ann Beggs-Sunter, 'Buninyong and District Community News', Issue 211, August 1996
29 Judith Bilszta, Melton Heritage Study Research, Place No.029 (3/8/2005)

materials. There were also a small number of 'stub' or picket, and 'log' fences.30)

Stone walling resolved two problems: the need to clear the land of rocks, and the need for fencing. Unquestionably, as was the case elsewhere, the key reason for the preference for dry stone walls on Melbourne's western plains by selectors was the need to clear stony land to enable cropping and grazing (dairying).[31]

Apart from the relatively small areas of Melton Shire that were sold under the Selection Acts, there were many other areas of dry stone walling in the Shire. It is estimated that there were 23 miles of fencing on the Moylan brothers' Mt Kororoit property by 1876, and from the extensive walling that survives today it is evident that much of this was dry stone wall construction.[32] Property sale advertisements in the local paper suggest that the properties on the Keilor Plain east of Toolern Creek were almost entirely walled.[33] Advertisements for stone wallers in the Buttlejorrk, Diggers Rest and Rockbank Estate areas appeared regularly until 1890. Between Toolern Vale and Diggers Rest the Beaty family built many kilometres of medium sized stone walls along boundaries, and a few larger walls inside their properties for stock. Other walls, including one of substantial composition (on the former Campbells' Toolern Park property), are scattered lightly around Toolern Vale. The highest concentration of walls is situated in the southern plains of the Shire: the 1850s small farming communities of Mt Cottrell and Truganina, and the paddock and boundary fences of WJT Clarke's Rockbank station.

According to Vines the dry stone walls of the Keilor-Werribee Plains 'form a reasonably distinct regional style quite different from either the interstate examples or the Western District walls'. This regional style is characterised by:-

> *'… walls constructed using the local rounded, smoothly weathered, basalt field-stone of variable size. They are generally fairly low walls, averaging 1.2 metres with a width at the base of an average of 0.83 metres and battered sides on a slope of about 5-10 degrees off the vertical. Coursing is uncommon although coping is almost always found on intact walls and through stones can usually be identified at regular intervals of about one metre. The coping stones are often quite large, rounded boulders of a maximum dimension of 400-500 millimetres. Because of their rounded shape the stones are rarely suited to the close-fitting construction seen on the Western district walls, either for the main part of the wall or the coping. As a result, the rabbit proofing techniques involving close plugging, overhanging coping, or other methods are never found in this region.'*[34]

These regular round stones lack interlocking, and often surface friction, and were never the ideal building material. The author of the 1848 'Rural Cyclopedia' considered round stones objectionable 'as they are ever rolling off'. The small wedge stones which held these round stones in position were easily dislodged.[35] Similarly, the 'round stone fence' surmounted by turf was described in Loudon's 1857 guide to British agriculture as a 'very indifferent fence', whose only apparent benefit was that it cleared the land of stone and could be built by labourers. It was found to be unstable when built to a standard wall height. Stock could easily dislodged its copings, and 'great trouble and expense are annually required to keep it in repair.'[36] Despite this, as can be seen in an apparently scarce example of this type in Corangamite (the Foxhow Road Wall), a sturdy wall of very respectable height could be built by careful selection and coursing of stones, and the use of copestones and extensive plugging.[37]

The Fences Statute's specification of walls to be a minimum 4 feet (1220 mm) high seems to have been the 'average paddock height' for which tenders were called in sheep country.[38] Walls in cattle country were

30 Research of PROV VPRS 625 (Selection Act files) for the Keneally, Slattery, Reddan J, Reddan M, Tate, Rhodes C, Rhodes, McKenzie, O'Brien P, McLeod, O'Brien J, Moloney, White, Mangovin, Carrige, Moylan Mary, Moylan Margaret, Parry, Moylan, MP, Moylan T, and Watts selections. This sample is primarily of selectors on stony country, Hannah Watts, in the forest off Chapmans Road Toolern Vale being the only exception; interestingly, the cost of her post & rail fences were half the price of the others, no doubt reflecting the relative proximity of materials, with none of the other properties having ready access to local timber. Another possible bias of the sample is the over-representation of Moylan properties. But it remains a good sample of fences built in stony country in the period late 1860s to mid 1870s.

31 Selectors were in fact obliged under the Selection Acts to cultivate 10% of their land area.

32 The *Australasian*, 28th October 1876

33 Bilszta, 1990, *op cit*.

34 Corangamite Arts Council, *op cit*, p.58

35 Willingham, *op cit*, p.41

36 Loudon, JC, *Encyclopaedia of Agriculture*, 5th Edition (Longman Brown Green Longmans and Roberts, London, 1857), p.496

37 Corangamite Arts Council, *op cit*, p.28

38 Willingham, *op cit*, p.41. (The 1300 mm height was chosen as one of the categories for Study field survey. Almost all

built higher 'to discourage the cattle from leaning over to reach greener pastures and dislodging coping stones'. While numerous Western District dairying walls are higher, 'walls enclosing cattle were generally at least 1.4 metres (4 feet 7 inches) high'.[39] This standard also seems to have been applied in Melton, where the Moylan's high walls on Mount Kororoit Farm measure 1400 mm.

Although there is no conclusive evidence of it in Melton Shire, elsewhere boundary walls were built higher than internal walls. Vines states that: 'In almost all the dry stone wall regions in Victoria, the … most substantial walls are located along the boundaries of properties. Subdivision of properties into fields was evidently a secondary consideration once the property had been fenced. Additional stone walls would be constructed to subdivide the property into paddocks if the field stone was so abundant as to allow these.'[40] Perkins (whose stone wall education was in Britain) states similarly that: 'Inner boundaries however were not built as high as the boundary fences, which are also known as March Dykes.'[41]

- **Composite Walls**

In the study area, and Melbourne's western plains area, most of the remnant early fences are a combination of low stone walls with spit timber post with wire above (or, more rarely, timber rail). Many, perhaps the majority, of 'half walls' in Victoria were constructed because of limited availability of fieldstone.[42] Peel states what is likely to be the primary reason for their construction:-

> *'With increasing distance from a timber supply, less timber was used in fence construction and wire fences, or stone walls in the stony country, became more common. Again, where less stone was available, stone walls and wire fences were combined, with the stone wall portion consisting of anything from a single row of stones to a substantial wall three or more feet high with only one or two wires on top.'*[43]

> *For example, says Peel, timber for the Sunbury vicinity was sourced from the Mount Macedon area, but as Sunbury was also at the edge of stony country, split timber, stone and wire were all used, commonly in the same fence.*[44] *And, as Vines has shown, the 'combination' fencing is also common on the Keilor and Werribee plains.*[45] *The reason for part stone wall - part wire fences of the Melton Shire study area relates to the quantity of stone in the area. And so the most typical stone fence of the study area reflects the particular geography and history of the Melton Shire, and is important for this reason.*

Many other of Victoria's composite stone walls would appear to be the remnants of original all-stone walls that were later repaired by part-demolition and incorporation of post & wire fencing, or else just built up to a 'workable height' by the addition of post & wire fencing (perhaps to accommodate a transition from sheep to cattle).[46] Mitchell states that 'Stone walls … have since been electrified or had post and wire worked into their construction'.[47] Other examples of such walls have been recorded.[48]

Some 'composite' stone walls were definitely not built as such. Farmers sometimes gathered 'floaters' as they appeared, stacking them under fences, making a rubble stone fence, rather than a professionally built 'dry stone wall'. Melton farmer Mary Tolhurst had stone walls on her childhood property, but also tells how, prior to sowing a crop, the men would take the horse and dray and pick up stones and place them along and under the property's post & wire and post and rail fences.[49]

However the construction of half stone walls was not always simply an accidental by-product of the amount of fieldstone available, or deterioration of original walls, or need to increase wall height, or the need to progressively clear land. An 1861 treatise on fencing by a Scottish manufacturer includes a diagram showing wire fencing on top of stone walls.[50] And experiments with combining fencing materials to most economic

of the walls in the Shire had a base width of 700-800 mm.); Corangamite Arts Council, *op cit*, pp.49, 113

39 *ibid*, pp.17, 21, 130; Rod McLellan, 'The Dry Stone Walls of Victoria's Western District', *Historic Environment* Vol 7 No 2, 1989, pp.28-32

40 Corangamite Arts Council, *op cit*, p.60

41 *ibid*, p.130

42 Corangamite Arts Council, *op cit*, p.80

43 Peel, LJ, *Rural Industry in the Port Phillip Region 1835-1880*, MUP, 1974, p.108

44 Peel, *op cit*, p 108.

45 Vines, G, *Built To Last; An Historical and Archaeological Survey of Dry Stone Walls in Melbourne's Western Region* (Living Museum of the West Inc, 1990).

46 Vines, 1995, *op cit*, p.60

47 Mitchell, H, 'Building Dry Stone Walls', *Grass Roots*, No.48, April 1985

48 Richard Peterson, Daniel Catrice, 'Bacchus Marsh Heritage Study', 1994

49 Mary Tolhurst, February 2002.

50 Willingham, o*p cit*, p.46

effect were undertaken early in Australia. In 1851 John Learmonth in the Western District erected a boundary fence in which the lowest rail was replaced by a stone dyke (or wall).[51] It appeared to Learmonth: 'that in some part this would add little to the expense, and at the same time would add to the durability and safety from fires.' Contracts for the same fences were being deliberately let in 1927:, where a 'two foot walls with cope stone on a 2'6" base, with barb wire' was built at *Turkeith* near Birregurra.[52]

In the Shire of Melton 'half-stone walls' – with the stone less than 18 inches high – were also built deliberately. The exact reasons are probably lost to time, but present farmers know that they had benefits in terms of preventing sheep crawling under the lower wire, and in preventing draught horses from scratching itch mites in the hairs of their legs.[53]

Many of the Melton composite stone and wire walls have neat coping stones intact. These all appear to have been built in the traditional manner in relation to base width and double wall construction (perhaps to comply with the Fences Act definition of a 'sufficient' wall). Other composite walls are less neatly constructed. These generally have a higher percentage of round-shaped stones, and consequently a higher wall batter and a more pyramidal, less vertical, shape. While some of these have obviously had posts inserted into them, it is also possible that some might have always been composite walls. The relative instability of stone walls built with the 'round stone' that predominates in Melton Shire may also have encouraged the original wall constructions to have been kept low, and topped up with wire.[54]

Our natural association of 'the richest areas for dry stone walls'[55] with areas where fieldstone is most abundant is not the complete explanation for the different extent and quality of stone wall construction in different areas. While the availability of stone is the 'supply' side of the equation, there is also a 'demand' side: the need for fencing; and the economic feasibility of clearing land and building walls.

As mentioned previously, both historical and present maps of dry stone walls in Melton Shire show strikingly greater densities of walls in farming areas than on large pastoral properties. This is despite the fact that both the pastoral and farming land-uses are situated in exactly the same volcanic landscape (the Parishes of Pywheitjorrk and Derrimut). So, while the greatest numbers of extant walls in the Shire were built as part the Clarkes' vast Rockbank pastoral estate, the greatest concentrations are situated on medium and small sized farms. Another contrast between pastoral and farming properties evident in the fieldwork undertaken for this Study is that in all but one case (Clarke's boundary wall No.F96 on Faulkners Road) the most substantial stone walls – the most 'all-stone' and the highest walls – are also to be found on farms and small grazing properties rather than on the large pastoral estates.

Farms had a greater need for fencing, in order to separate stock from crops, and for construction of dairy yards, small dams, pigsties and cowsheds, than did large sheep-runs, which only required fencing of boundaries and large paddocks. This more intensive use of the land would also have meant that it was worth investing more in the land, including clearing the property of fieldstone. Whereas land needed to be cleared for crops, and to maximise grass for cattle on small farms, less complete (if any) clearing of land was required to make huge flocks of sheep economical. For example, in the 1890s parts of the Chirnside Brothers great Werribee Park pastoral estate were let to tenant farmers: 'The Chirnsides retained the "rocky" country, which was not fit for cultivation, but which was quite good grazing country, growing a nice quality of wool.'[56] And there was comparatively little demand for fencing on the vast paddocks in the southern part of the Clarkes' Rockbank estate. While the evidence of the nearby small farms indicates that there was sufficient stone to build at least some substantial all-stone walls, it was not economical (or perhaps necessary) to build such walls for sheep paddocks.

The situation was different for farmers. At least three of the 21 selectors examined in the district (the Holden area) had stone coverage that was too expensive to clear. The Land Department inspector reported on Ellen Slattery's selection, which appears to have been the worst: 'I consider the land to be unfit for cultivation; it would cost from £20 to £30 per acre to clear some part

51 Kerr, *op cit*. (Dyke was the Scottish word for stone wall.)
52 Mary Sheehan (author of Colac Otway Heritage Study), 11/8/2005
53 Personal conversations, John Morton, and Charlie Finch.
54 Loudon, *loc cit*
55 Eg, Vines, 1995, *op cit*, p.58
56 Morris, G, 'Centennial History, Werribee', extract obtained from *Werribee Banner*, 5th April 1962.

of it, as it is a mass of rock.'[57] While most of the volcanic plains would have cost much less than this to clear, even with a very conservative estimate of only £1 or £2 per acre, stone clearing would still have been a substantial cost likely to have been economical only for the more intensive land uses; that is, for farming rather than pastoralism.[58] Being unskilled work, farmers (and their sons and itinerant labourers) would also be in a position to do it themselves cheaply.

So, even if there was sufficient fieldstone to build substantial stone walls, it was not always economical to clear it. In Australia the comparatively large size of landholdings, the high cost of fencing from scratch, and the predominantly pastoral land use, is likely to have had a significant influence on the form of stone wall built. Whereas in Europe there is a high proportion of high all-stone walls, in Australia paddocks with enough stone to build high all-stone walls may not have been economical to clear.[59] In the Melton Shire exceptions to this occurred in the larger and more successful mid-nineteenth century farms and small grazing properties (such as the Moylan, Beaty and Hopkins properties), on which some substantial stone walls (generally near the homestead) were constructed. The other major exceptions in Melton are the large and finely built Clarke dry stone wall dams. These, together with the magnificent boundary walls built by the Manifolds in the Western District to protect against rabbits, also support a conclusion that the use of stone was related not just to its quantity (the supply), but also to the special needs of the owners (the demand): for farming; or to countervail the peculiarly dry climate on Melton plains; or to combat the devastating rabbit plague on the Stony Rises. Cultural circumstances, for example, the local pool of skills in the Western District, and local traditions (such as belief in stone walls as a fire retardant), no doubt also played a part.[60]

Analysis of the 21 Selection Act files provides some grounds for arguing that the composite walls, such as 'post & wire and stone', may in fact have been particularly associated with the Melton district. The printed forms upon which selectors were asked to mark the improvements to their properties included 11 types of fences. However, these 11 options did not include categories for the most common type of fence in the district:- the composite 'post & wire & stone' (or 'post & rail & wire & stone') fence. Yet at least 5 of the 21 selectors in the district describe these types of fences on their selections, marking additions such as 'stone bottom' to the 'post and wire' category (Patrick O'Brien). It is likely that the lack of category meant that others again (in addition to these five) simply selected one of the given types to describe their composite walls; some probably called their 'half stone' fences either 'stone walling' or 'post & wire' or 'post & rail' fences. (As such, it is likely that much of the fencing described as 'stone' and other categories was actually composite post & wire and stone. The price of the different type of walls would support the possibility that some 30% of the fencing built by these selectors was in fact post & wire and stone.)

One conclusion that could be drawn from the Selection Act pro-formas is that composite 'post & wire and stone' and 'post & wire & rail and stone' walls/fences were variants that were particularly associated with Melbourne's western plains. Alternatively, they may have been variants that became more common throughout the whole of Victoria around the time of the Selection Acts.

Composite stone and post & wire walls appear to characterise Melton Shire in a way that they do not elsewhere. But they are not confined to Melton Shire or Melbourne's western and northern plains. Examples are to be found in virtually all of the stone wall districts of Victoria, although they would appear to be small minority in some districts. There are also known to be many in New Zealand's Otago area, at least some in North America, but virtually none in Europe. The questions that remain, and can only ultimately be answered by further studies in other regions, is whether they are in

57 PROV VPRS 625 Unit 304 (20712), Inspector Yeoman, 10/9/1875

58 Figures provided by selector Alexander McLeod, whose density of rocks appears to have been unremarkable and may have been light, suggest that he spent approximately £1-2 per acre on 'clearing stone and sundries' (PROV VPRS 625, Unit 273 (18276)).

59 Gary Vines, posting in Heritage Chat, 11/8/2005

60 While it has not been analysed, it would seem that many of the large stone walls in the Western District (eg, the Kolora, Derrinallum and Purrumbete areas) were built by farmers c.1900 (Corangamite Arts Council, 1995, pp.76-142 and *passim*). The primary reason for the farmers' high walls, no doubt, was the amount of stone on the properties. But the 'demand' side may also have contributed. This was a period when dairying was transforming from a cottage to an export industry: the quality of the soil, or the rainfall, might have made this investment in the land worthwhile at this time, whereas it did not in Melton Shire. This is clearly very speculative, but perhaps demonstrates a need for more general research on the relationship between economics of farming and fence construction.

fact the most common type of fence in Victoria as some claim, and whether they are more concentrated and numerous in Melton Shire and the Melbourne fringe than elsewhere.

History of the Place

- **Greigs Road**

The first main road to the Ballarat diggings was the pre-existing Portland Road, from Keilor through the nascent towns of Melton and Bacchus Marsh. While this was the main route for diggers setting out, at first all of the supplies, gold escorts and mail between Melbourne and Ballarat went via Geelong. In 1853, according to William Kelly, this was 'the only line for traffic, for the Bacchus Marsh approach was not ventured on even by horsemen, except in the summer season.'[61]

Especially in the first few years however there were a number of routes across the plains to the diggings. Greigs Road was one of the main early routes to the Ballarat and the later Blackwood (Ballan) diggings. An early 1860s Geological Survey of Victoria map of the junction of todays Greigs Road and Western Highway shows Greigs Road (and that part of the Western Highway to the east of the Greigs Road junction) as the 'Road from Ballarat & Ballan to Melbourne'.[62] The line of the present Western Highway west of Greigs Road passed through swampy ground and was little used, to the extent that it was still unnamed at this time. Another early (undated) map of the 'old and new' routes to the goldfields also shows the proposed route leaving the Western Highway at Rockbank and taking the present line of Greigs Road to the Exford crossing of the Werribee River. The route continued along Exford Road, and south of the Werribee River, to join the main road (from Ballarat to Keilor) at Ballan.[63] The Greigs Road route also appears as one of the two main routes between Melbourne to Ballarat on another early map, the other being via Keilor.[64]

The reason for the popularity of the southerly Greigs Road route was almost certainly the same as the much longer early route via Geelong:- the difficulty of the Bacchus Marsh route, especially in winter. This is evident in the scene of devastation portrayed in Thomas Ham's 'Crossing the Creek at Bacchus Marsh.'[65] Similarly, the protracted steep rise west of Bacchus Marsh was a deterrent: 'the upper portion of the Bacchus Marsh route [was] wholly impracticable for teams' reported Kelly.[66]

In addition to the fact that it avoided some of the more difficult stream and range crossings, the Greigs Road line appears to have been a natural early route across the plains, with a number of early parties finding themselves at Staughton's Exford property by mistake. Instead of turning south along Mt Cottrell Road as at present, the early Greigs Road continued west across the Strathtulloh property to Toolern Creek. At this crossing there survive today the remains of a bluestone wall that may have been an abutment of an early bridge.[67] On the opposite bank of Toolern Creek the track headed south and then west to about the location of the present bridge across the Werribee River. This was probably the location at which Simon Staughton would build a bridge that he then charged diggers to use. The bridge is said to have been 'used heavily' by Ballarat diggers, and Staughton willed its proceeds to his eldest daughter Mary. It was washed away in the 1880s floods, after which the government built a toll-free bridge.[68] (Note that from the early twentieth century maps have marked 'Staughton's bridge' across the river at Doherty's Road, near Eynesbury, but this would appear to have been a later bridge.[69])

While the most direct route to the goldfields - the 'Footscray' road (the present Western Highway) – had been surveyed by the 1850s, swamps in the Rockbank area were an obstacle to its use and development during the goldrush period. It was gradually improved, thanks largely to the Clarkes, until by about 1870 this route, by then called 'Ballarat Road', superseded both

61 Kelly, William, *Life in Victoria, or Victoria in 1853 and Victoria in 1858*, Lowden Publishing, Kilmore, 1977 (reprint), Vol. 1, p.158
62 Lands Victoria, Historic Map: MD 8C
63 CPO, Map NR 714 (nd). 'Plan of the Road from Melbourne to Ballarat shewing the Old and New Lines between the Salt Water River and Ballan.'
64 Kelly, *op cit*, Vol.1
65 Thomas Ham, 'The Gold Diggers Portfolio', Stringer Mason & Co, Melbourne, 1854. (The steep crossing of Djerriwarrh Creek was also another well-known danger point.)
66 Kelly, *op cit*, p.151
67 Bill Green, personal conversation, 26/2/2002
68 'The Staughtons of Eynesbury' (Simon Staughton VI: The Great Entrepreneur, p.4).
69 1:25000 Topographical Map 'Eynesbury'; 1:63,360 Army Ordnance Maps (1916, 1933). However, in 1878 Wyndham Shire was negotiating with Staughton to build this bridge, which would connect Doherty's Road, then the best constructed road in Wyndham Shire, with properties across the river (Royal Commission into Closed Roads, Progress Report, containing minutes of evidence etc, Victorian Parliamentary Papers 1878, No.72, p.13)

the Keilor Bridge (Melton Highway) and the Rockbank Inn (Beaty's Road) routes as the main non-coach road to Ballarat.

Whereas the closed roads on the Clarke's Rockbank estate constituted a major impediment to north-south travel on the Melton – Werribee plains until the 1870s,[70] the push to the goldfields had established major east-west roads in the same area. In addition to Greigs Road, Boundary and Doherty's Roads to the south were described as 'pretty well made' – in contrast to most other roads in the district – in 1878.[71]

With improvements to the Western Highway and Melton Highway, the opening of a direct Melbourne to Ballarat rail link, and the advent of the motor car, Greigs Road became essentially a regional access road. In 1916 it was known as Exford Road;[72] it was later named Greigs Road after a local resident and Melton Shire Councillor.

- **The Gold Era Subdivisions**

Most allotments on Greigs Road sold 24th February 1854, the same date as most of the rest of the Parish of Pywheitjorrk. A few were sold later, in May and July of the same year.[73]

When prices of land soared during the early 1850s, speculators snapped up Crown Lands on the flat, treeless, dry, isolated and shallow-soiled Melton-Werribee plains. They were particularly busy in the parishes of Pywheitjorrk and Derrimut. Travelling on the badly marked road from Geelong to Melbourne in 1854, William Westgarth encountered only 7 people (most near Melbourne), but was glad to see the plains in the process of survey. While hoping that men of modest financial means would be able to acquire it, he remained sceptical:- 'Already the speculators are pouncing upon it – buying it all up as fast as it is sold, and letting it lie in hope of an augmented price.[74]

The speculators bought up big along Greigs Road in particular, and Boundary Road, which were both Ballarat goldrush routes.[75] The Greigs Road allotments were much smaller (typically 60-80 acres) than had been usual in Crown sales of the time, presumably because of the higher value of land along a main (goldfields) road, and to facilitate its settlement by small farmers. But any farmers interested in Greigs Road were pushed aside by speculators. With the exception of one allotment sold to WJT Clarke, and another to 'J Clarke' (unknown) every allotment along the entire length of the north side of Greigs Road, from Mt Cottrell Road to Hopkins Road, was purchased by someone who had also subdivided land elsewhere in the Shire (mainly near Boundary Road): James Watson, W Craig, WS Durie, and John O'Grady. Less, about half, of the length of the south side of Greigs Road was purchased by known speculators – Craig and O'Grady, and TH Jones and J Fox – however others, such as T Kennedy, Stephen Donovan and S Bottomley may also have been speculators. Other notorious local speculators A Lindsay and J Moxham were also active east of Greigs Road.

A few Crown Allotments on Greigs Road were purchased by pastoral giant WJT ('Big') Clarke.[76] Clarke had allowed the speculators to buy most of the allotments along Greigs Road (and Boundary Road), despite the fact that Greigs Road was strategically situated near the middle of his Rockbank station, and that he was at the time purchasing the great majority of the adjacent property in the Parishes of Pywheitjorrk and Derrimut. A famously shrewd man, Clarke clearly shunned the inflated prices that the speculators were paying for these allotments. After the gold-rush land boom and the failure of the speculative townships he acquired many of these same properties, very cheaply.

Many of the speculators were not content to let their blocks lie, as observed by Westgarth, instead conjuring up audacious schemes to expedite and inflate their returns. Along and near Greigs and Boundary Roads the boosters subdivided small acreage allotments, and many even smaller township-sized blocks in the so-called villages of 'North Uxbridge', 'Middleton', 'Staughtonville', and 'Surrey'. One township of about 120 suburban-sized allotments was even created on Mount Atkinson Road, half-way between Greigs and

70 Ford, *op cit*, p.234
71 Royal Commission into Closed Roads, Progress Report (containing minutes of evidence etc), Victorian Parliamentary Papers 1878 (No.72), p.13
72 Army Ordnance Map, 1916: Sunbury.
73 Parish Plan, Parish of Pywheitjorrk.
74 Cited in John Lack & Olwen Ford, 'Melbourne's Western Region: An Introductory History' (Melbourne's Living Museum of the West, Melbourne Western Region Commission, 1986), p.30
75 It is interesting to note however that this speculation did not occur on the main Ballarat goldfields road in the Shire of Melton (the road from Keilor to Bacchus Marsh). Perhaps this was because the government surveyed an official township (Melton) on this route.
76 Names such as TH Jones, A Lindsay and J Moxham John O'Grady and W Craig, and W Durie and J Fox, were also associated with other speculative subdivisions within the Shire.

Boundary Roads, which is even today a notably forsaken part of the Melton plains.[77]

Only a minority of the speculators' newly created small allotments actually sold, and it is not known how profitable they were for their promotors. Their subdivisions definitely failed however in terms of development of both townships and a yeomanary. No evidence of actual development, and only the barest fragments of their histories, remains today. It is highly likely in fact that many purchasers of the small rural and township blocks so created were themselves aspiring speculators. Most probably bought their properties on the strength of the representation of the 'developer', without having bothered to actually visit the properties. The boom appears to have amplified each whisper from every plausible source into an urgent din that many urban professionals and small businessmen found difficult to resist.

The Greigs Road speculative subdivisions were abandoned by the late 1850s as the the main gold-rushes and associated land-boom collapsed. Many of the unwanted small blocks appear to have been incorporated into the Clarke Rockbank estate, or adjacent dairy farms, at a low price. Sometimes purchasers of the subdivided small allotments simply walked away from their purchases, and their land was claimed by neighbours under the law of adverse possession. It is possible that some small farmers might have been initially attracted to the district because of the possibility of establishing very small farms on subdivided portions of these original 100 acre Crown Allotments.

- **The 'Township of North Uxbridge': Greigs Road**

This was situated on the south side of Greigs Road, some 500 metres east of Faulkners Road (Portion 5 of Section 18, Parish of Pywheitjorrk). Thomas Henry Jones, 'of Melbourne, Gentleman', a prominent local speculator, had purchased the c.100 acre allotment from the Crown in February 1854. He then created 13 streets, many of which were named after leading members of the British government, and local government officials.[78] (Hotham Street, undoubtedly named after the new Victorian Governor Charles Hotham, was also used by TH Jones in his isolated Mt Atkinson Road subdivision.[79]). Many small allotments, some less than the average suburban block, were created on the streets of North Uxbridge.[80] The land eventually ended as part of the Clarke empire, and no fabric is known to survive of any development associated with this early subdivision. Perimeter walls were built at some stage.

"The Township of North Uxbridge". Most allotments are consolidated, either having been unsold, or sold in groups; some original size allotments can be seen. Greigs Road is the 'Govt Road' at the top of the plan. (Lands Victoria, Survey Plan, TA 36681)

- Subdivision on the north-east corner of Greigs Road and Paynes Road.

Crown Allotment 1, Section 18, Parish of Pywheitjorrk, of 62 acres 2 roods and 27 perches, was purchased on 7th July 1854 by J Mackintosh and WS Durie.[81] It was subdivided into small-lot subdivision as shown below.[82] The names of its nine streets exhibit the common grandeur of these subdivisions, in this case a European regal theme is adopted. This subdivision is on the opposite side of Greigs Road to the 'Township of North Uxbridge' (above).

WS Durie was an active land speculator in the district. At the same time he had also purchased several 100 acre allotments near Boundary Road in the Parish of

77 Lands Victoria, Torrens Application 15850 (Crown Allotment 6, Section 15, Parish of Pywheitjorrk).
78 PROV VPRS 460/P/36721 (Torrens Application 36721)
79 Lands Victoria, Survey Plan TA 36571
80 Lands Victoria, Survey Plan, TA 52279 & TA 36681
81 Parish Plan, Parish of Pywheitjorrk
82 Lands Victoria, Survey Plan, TA 52279

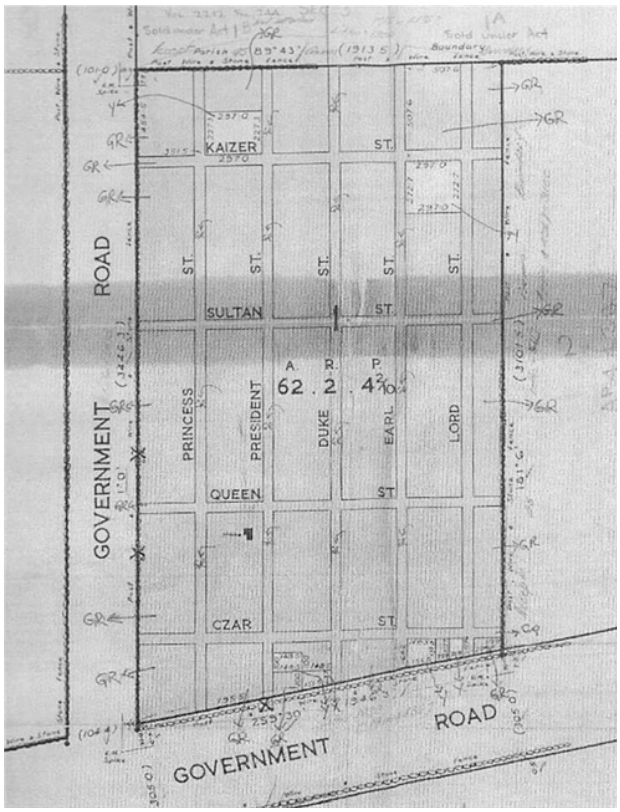
Derrimut, which had also been subdivided into small allotments.[83]

It is likely that only the few small allotments shown on the plan, mainly on Greigs Road, were sold, probably as shop or hotel (or shanty) sites. (If they were developed for these purposes for a few years it is possible that archaeological evidence of them may survive.) Local identity Mark Paine, who had purchased allotments on the opposite side of Greigs Road (probably only a few blocks in other speculative subdivisions) in 1863, by 1871 owned 62 acres, which would almost certainly have been Crown Allotment 1, Section 18, upon which he built the bluestone cottage which remains on the site today.[84]

83 PROV VPRS 460/P/31642 (Torrens Application 31642); Lands Victoria, Survey Plan, TA 31642; Parish Plan, Parish of Derrimut.

84 Olwen Ford, 'Voices From Below: Family, School and Community on the Braybrook Plains 1854-1892', M.Ed. Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1993, p.248

The north-west corner of Greigs Road and Paynes Road in the mid 1850s. The L-shape building situated south of Queen Street and west of President Street is the Paine Cottage (Melton Heritage Study Place No.373). Dry stone walls shown enclosing most of the allotment; parts of these survive today as Wall Nos: J 143-146. (Lands Victoria, Survey Plan TA 52279)



- **Subdivision of the north side of Greigs Road between Leakes Road and Troups Road North.**

Crown Allotments 1 of Section 17 was purchased from the Crown by J O'Grady in July 1854.[1] Although 107 acres in size, it is an awkward shape, long but narrow, being only c.200-250 metres deep. An east-west road created off Leakes Road in the west extended some 400 metres eastward. The far east part of the allotment was described by the surveyor as 'impractical to chain', and was probably one of the swamps which were common in the Rockbank area.[2]

In addition there are a number of known substantial speculative subdivisions along the Greigs Road –

1 Parish Plan, Parish of Pywheitjorrk

2 Lands Victoria, Survey Plan, TA 52279

Western Highway goldrush route which are situated near to but outside the Greigs Road precinct:-

- **Subdivision on the south western corner of Greigs Road and Mt Atkinson Road.**

In May 1854 J Fox purchased 136 acre allotment on the south side of Greigs Road about 400 metres west of the railway line crossing. Fox had also purchased a Crown Allotment on Boundary Road.[3] Until at least 1860 the Trustees of the 'The Colonial Freehold Land Society' (John Hodson, Charles Vaughan and John Browning, all 'Gentlemen' of Melbourne) were selling the subdivided allotments at about £43 each. The only known purchasers on-sold to WJ Clarke in the 1870s and 1880s, of course at great losses.[4]

- **Subdivision on Greigs Road, Western Highway, Rockbank Middle Road (west of Hopkins and Sinclair Roads).**

The land had been purchased from the Crown in May 1854 by 'J O'Grady & W Craig'.[5] W.Craig, apparently a professional of some sort (having offices at Russell Street Melbourne), commissioned the plan of the subdivision.[6]

Although we have no name for it, this was one of the largest estates floated. Probably in the 1850s, and certainly prior to the building of the Ballarat Railway in 1884, the whole 301 acres, 3 roods and 10 perches of Crown Allotments 5 and 6, Portion 25, Parish of Derrimut, was cut up into 88 one and two acre blocks, with four larger (5-8 acre) blocks reserved on strategic corners, probably for civic or commercial purposes. The land was strategically placed, straddling the road 'to Ballarat' (the Western Highway), north of the road 'to Buninyong' (Greigs Road), which was a major road to Ballarat, and south of the Government Road 'to Keilor' (Rockbank Middle Road).[7]

Five new roads were created in the subdivision, none of which survive today, so it is unlikely that many allotments were sold.

3 Parish Plans, Parish of Pywheitjorrk and Derrimut.
4 PROV VPRS 460/P/35850; Lands Victoria, Survey Plan TA 36571. (The allotments here seem to have been larger than most, some 5-10 acres each).
5 Parish Plan, Parish of Derrimut.
6 State Library of Victoria, Vale Collection, Vol.4, p.78 (nd)
7 State Library of Victoria, Vale Collection, Vol.4, p.78 (nd)

- **Subdivision on the Western Highway (eastern end of Greigs Road, east side of Hopkins Road).**

Algernon Lindsay, 'victualler', and James Moxham, 'auctioneer', both of Williamstown, subdivided Parts 2 and 3 of Section 24 Parish of Derrimut (the land immediately to the east of the present Hopkins Road overpass, on the south side of the Western Highway) into at least 58 allotments of 5 acres each. They acquired the land from the Crown in May 1854, and by May 1855 had commenced selling 5 acre blocks for up to £26 each.[8] Most purchasers purchased multiple blocks. Most of them were fellow Williamstownites, such as Andrew Wauchope 'pilot', John Wright 'butcher', Charles Herman, 'waterpoliceman', Henry Jones 'jeweller', and William Baldwin 'labourer'. Virtually all the purchasers resold to WJT Clarke within 3 or 4 years, usually at about half the price they had paid, although some received even less than this. A few others limited their losses by selling to other similarly unsuspecting small businessmen/ professionals; in July 1859 one such victim – Melbourne chemist James Blair – on-sold his 8 allotments to WJT Clarke for £40 just 3 months after having paid £80 for them.[9] Presumably he visited the allotments after he had purchased them.

At the same time the Lindsay/Moxham team had also subdivided CA3, Section 1, Parish of Derrimut, near Boundary Road (in the Mt Atkinson Precinct) into township allotments. As with most subdivisions, most allotments appear never to have been sold, or sold very cheaply to neigbours later on; some allotments appear to have been acquired by adverse possession.[10]

- **'The Village of Surrey': Western Highway, east of Greigs Road.**

Prominent local speculator Joseph Charles Clinchy, 'Melbourne Gentleman', subdivided at least three c.100 acre allotments in the Parish of Derrimut which had been purchased from the Crown by William Byrne, 'Melbourne Civil Engineer'. Two of these subdivisions were on or near Boundary Road in the south of the Shire. A large subdivision, 'better known as the Village of Surrey', was situated 'on the road to Buninyong', or the present Western Highway east of Greigs Road. The 'village' was established on part of Portion 2, Section 23,

8 VPRS 460/P/35850 (Torrens Application 35850). Various indentures.
9 *ibid*, conveyances, 14/4/1859, 11/7/1859
10 PROV VPRS 460/P/36721 (Torrens Application 36721), various indentures.

Parish of Derrimut – on the south side of the Western Highway, opposite Clarkes Road.

It is not known if the adjacent Portion 3, also purchased from the Crown by Byrne, was also subdivided in this way. Of only two records found of the sale of allotments in the Village of Surrey; one was only ¾ of an acre in size so it is likely that scores of allotments were created in this subdivision. As was typical, it was soon subsumed into the Rockbank estate.[11]

- **After the Goldrush**

The speculators may have contributed to the creation of the ribbon of small farms, and their dry stone walls, which subsequently developed along Greigs Road. While only a few of the dry stone walls, built after the collapse of the early 1850s land boom, map property boundaries created by the early speculators, most simply mark the original Crown Sections. But even these walls might not have been built if the land had not originally been purchased by the speculators. If not for the inflated prices they paid at auction, this land is likely to have become, like the vast majority of the rest of the land in the Parishes of Pywheitjorrk and Derrimut, part of WJT Clarke's immense Rockbank pastoral estate.

After the goldrush most of the allotments that had been subdivided were taken over either by WJT Clarke, or by neighbouring farmers. It was these new owners who built the dry stone walls along Greigs Road.

The number of legitimate farmers in the area was swelled greatly in the early 1860s by the opening up of the extensive, often swampy areas of land in the adjacent Parish of Kororoit (immediately north of the allotments on the north side of Greigs Road) under the Selection Acts. A few allotments to the south of Greigs Road were also taken up under these Acts by the Cropley brothers, a prominent family in the Melton-Werribee plains district.[12] Such farmers did actually stay and work the land, and built the Rockbank community, which included a school, post office, and the Rose and Crown Hotel (built by the Missens' on the Western Highway).

An 1892 map shows that allotments on the north side of Greigs Road allotments had been purchased by successful selectors in these areas, such as George Missen and Isaac Gidney, and also Mark Daniel, from a prominent family in the district. Virtually all the land to the south of Greigs Road had by that time been incorporated into the Clarkes' Rockbank Estate.[13]

The exception was Mark Paine, a prominent local farmer and identity, who had acquired small farming allotments on both the north and south sides of Greigs Road. It is possible that Paine had been attracted to settle in the area by the smaller allotments created by speculators, which were sold especially cheaply in the late 1850s as the gold inspired land-boom collapsed.[14] By 1892 he is shown as being in possession (either owning or leasing) three of the four allotments on the corners of Greigs, Paynes and Faulkners Road, all of which had been heavily subdivided in the 1850s.[15]

- **The Paine Family**

Mark Paine had arrived from Buckinghamshire England with his wife in 1859.[16] In 1863 he purchased allotments of land on the south side of Greig's Road on both sides of Faulkners Road, near Mt Cotterell. By 1871 he claimed to own 62 acres (which would have been Allotment 1 of Section 18, on the north-east corner of Greigs and 'Paynes' Roads, where his bluestone cottage is built), to have selected 237 acres, and leased 223 acres. In addition to purchasing blocks of land from speculators, he is likely to have acquired other allotments by adverse possession.

Paine ran sheep, had a team of bullocks and carried goods across the Plains when not undertaking contracting work for the Melton Roads Board. He was responsible for the original construction of much of High Street under the supervision of Richard Lethbridge, Shire Secretary and Engineer. He also moved buildings around the Shire, and obtained a slaughtering licence.[17]

> *Payne represented the Rockbank Riding on the Braybrook Council and was opposed only once during his long tenure, winning the election by a large majority. He was known by locals as something of a character. A long time afterwards Anders Hjorth recalled of him:*

11 PROV VPRS 460/P/35850
12 Parish Plans, Parishes of Kororoit and Pywheitjorrk.
13 Shire Map Series (1892): Parish of Pywheitjorrk
14 It is possible that other prominent families might also have been attracted to the Shire by the small allotments at bargain prices. Candidates for further research into this question would include the Kerr, Hopkins, Killeen, or Farragher families on Boundary Road.
15 Shire Map Series (1892): Parish of Pywheitjorrk
16 Olwen Ford, 'Voices From Below: Family, School and Community on the Braybrook Plains 1854-1892', M.Ed. Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1993, p.248
17 Alex Cameron, 'Melton Memoirs' (M&DHS), p.22, and introduction; Ford, *loc.cit*.

'Mark Paine had a small piece of land near Mt Cotterill; he had a couple of teams of bullocks with which he often came to Melton for wood. He was very keen on arguing, and although he might not himself believe in the cause he tried to defend, he would argue for arguments sake. He had a terrible set on the working capabilities of the native-born, although his eldest son, Willie, was an uncommon hard-working and industrious lad'.[18]

He and his wife raised a family of two sons and four daughters in their small stone cottage on Paynes Road. In 1873 four of his six children were of school age: Emma (13), Mary (12), Elizabeth (9), and Phoebe (6); the eldest William had left school, and the youngest, Mark, was 3 years old.[19] *He was very active in the 'New Cambridge' (Rockbank) school where he was a member, later Chairman, of the Board of Advice. He apparently also owned or leased land adjacent to the school, as correspondence exists regarding his complaint to the Education Department that, whereas the land on which the school was situated had been 'a gift for State School purposes', the Department was preventing them from fencing it, making it difficult to herd his own cattle, 'and keep other pepals cattle of' (sic).*[20]

In 1896 the *Express* carried a report on the magisterial inquiry conducted by Mr Hornbuckle JP 'touching upon the death of a very old resident of the district, Mr Mark Paine.' On Saturday evening he had got a ride part of the way home from Deer Park with Mr W Missen; he had been tendering his vote for an election. After leaving Mr Missen he had to walk between 3-4 miles, and got to within ½ a mile of his own home 'when he appeared to have lain down and fallen asleep'. He was not found until Monday, by his son. Dr Vance certified that death was due to heart failure and exposure. The deceased had been a Braybrook Shire Councillor, and was 'well liked by all who knew him and was commonly called the "King of Mount Cotterell"'.[21]

Two daughters married local identities - William Kilpatrick, hotel owner, and Thomas H Collins, bricklayer.

18 Anders Hjorth, 'Recollections of Melton 1861-67', reproduced in M&DHS Newsletter, Feb.2001. (Presumably he was collecting the Melton greybox timber to cart to Melbourne for firewood, which was an important Melton industry in the nineteenth century.)
19 Ford, *op.cit*., p.252
20 Ford, *op cit*, p.251
21 *Melton Express*, 1/9/1896

The *Express* also carries reports of his 31 year old daughter Phoebe's death at her brother's Toolern Vale home in 1898,[22] and his 85 year old wife Mrs E Paine's death, and burial at Melton Cemetery, in 1911. She had lived at Rockbank for 'over half a century'.[23] Son Mark, the last member of the family to live in the bluestone cottage at Mt Cottrell died in 1916 aged 46. He had been of a 'very retiring disposition taking no part in public matters, but was respected by all.' He had been 'suffering of pleurisy when pneumonia supervened with a fatal result.'[24] The Paines' Rockbank property eventually passed to a grandson, William Collins.

The Paines' bluestone cottage had few amenities. The building remained vacant for many years. Vandals removed windows and doors and wrecked the building which was burnt in the 1965 fire. Fire destroyed the timber detached kitchen.

- **The *Rockbank* Estate**

WJT 'Big' Clarke, whose early 1850s Sunbury Special Survey coup saw him gain control of most of the stations of earlier squatters in the whole region from Diggers Rest to Konagaderra, set about adding to this estate at the 1850s Crown land sales in the Shires of Melton and Wyndham. He was later described as the largest landholder in Australia. Clarke apportioned this vast estate into different stations including Bollinda Vale, Red Rock (both north of Sunbury, and including Rupertswood) and Rockbank (which extended south of Sunbury to near Werribee, mostly from Diggers Rest to Tarneit). The Rockbank station had originally been established in the early 1840s; the headstation of its previous owner, WC Yuille, had been at the Beatty's Road crossing of Kororoit Creek, the location of the former Rockbank Inn.

Over the next 30-40 years Clarke and his son WJ Clarke (later to become Australia's first baronet) added greatly to their estate by buying adjacent properties, many of which had been abandoned by impoverished farmers during times of droughts or agricultural disease. Upon Big Clarke's death in 1874 WJ Clarke inherited his Victorian estate, including 136,310 acres in the Melbourne vicinity, stretching in an arc from about Sunshine, Tarneit, Balliang, Rockbank, Diggers Rest,

22 *Melton Express*, 9/7/1898
23 *Melton Express*, 11/3/1911.
24 *Melton Express*, 13/5/1916.

Sunbury, Bolinda Vale and across to the Hume Highway.[25] By 1892 Sir WJ Clarke owned the vast majority of the Parish of Pywheitjorrk, which together with his similarly extensive Parish of Derrimut landholdings, comprised most of the southern part of his immense Rockbank estate.[26]

By 1892 all but two parcels of land on the southern boundary of Greigs Road were owned by Sir WJ Clarke.[27] (The other two blocks, marked Paine, might also have been owned by Clarke but leased to Paine.) Only a few of these parcels had been purchased at the original Crown sales.

By the end of the nineteenth century historical changes were afoot. In addition to new taxes and the inherent difficulties of the pastoral industry, a new generation of farmers was restlessly surveying the vast pastoral estates about them. In the 1860s local Melton farmer Anders Hjorth had observed that 'the village was surrounded by large pastoral estates on three sides.'[28] There had long been a belief in Melton that these estates were thwarting the development of the town. As early as 1883 the situation enraged radical liberal politician John Quick:

> *'What a monstrous and barbaric law that must be, under which the splendid land between Melbourne and Sunbury, and between Melbourne and Geelong, capable of giving homes and existence to a teeming population, is locked up in pastoral solitudes …'*[29]

As the the 1890s depression deepened popular discontent intensified, with calls for the repurchase of good pastoral lands for subdivision into small farms. The language was as it had always been: 'the plough' versus 'the sheepwalks'. The 'yeoman ideal', and the associated wrestle for the land between the rich and the poor had been a long-running and major theme in Australian history, evident in the diggers' movements to 'unlock the land' in the 1850s and 60s, the 'Closer Settlement' Acts at the turn of the century, and the early-mid twentieth century 'Soldier Settlement' Acts.

This early twentieth century 'break-up' of the large estates was a milestone in Australia's history. It coincided with major developments in farming in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, as new science, technologies, fertilisers, transport and markets enabled huge productivity increases. With inventions such as the Babcok separator, the development of local co-operative creameries and butter factories, and advances in refrigeration creating new export markets, dairying in particular boomed. In 1901 there were 42,000 rural properties in Victoria. By 1914 this number had jumped to 70,500, and by 1923 to a peak of 80,500.[30]

The Clarkes' Rockbank estate at the time of survey in 1905 included the great majority of the Parish of Pywheitjorrk. The portion shown extends from Greigs Road in the north to Boundary Road in the south, and Mt Cottrell Road in the west to Mt Atkinson Road in the east. Only a few allotments on the south side of Greigs Road are not part of the Rockbank Estate.

(Lands Victoria, Survey Plan TA 35850)

25 Peel, *op.cit*., pp.130-1; Michael Clarke, *'Big' Clarke* (Queensberry Hill Press, Melbourne, 1980) Clarke (1980), opposite p.247
26 SLV Map 821.1A (1892), Parish of Pywheitjorrk; also PROV VPRS 460/P0 (35850).
27 Shire Map Series (1892), Parish of Pywheitjorrk.
28 Hjorth, *op cit*. Also, MDHS (1905 Melton Express), *op cit*, which refers to these three stations, plus Taylor's *Overnewton* Estate.
29 Cited in Lack, Ford, *op cit*, p.32
30 Dingle, *op cit*, p 193.

- **The Twentieth Century**

And so the beginning of the twentieth century marked a watershed in the history of Melton Shire. In 1898 surveyors on behalf of Sir RTH Clarke began their calculations of the bearings and lengths and fences of the estate, in preparation for its sale.[31] In c.1900 Clarke began subdividing and disposing of the vast Rockbank estate (and most of Rupertswood-Red Rock and Bolinda Vale estates) that had been so carefully acquired and tended by his grandfather and father.[32] Most of the new farms carved out of the central and northern parts of the pastoral estates were small, and many double fronted weatherboard homes typical of the period were built over the as a result.

In the dry south however, allotments were sold in much larger parcels, and the rural properties that established were typically sheep grazing properties. On Saturday 17th November 1906 the southern part of the Rockbank estate, comprising 21,306 acres (over 33 square miles, or c.85 square kilometres) was put up for auction by agent WS Keast & Co on the property at Deer Park.[33] Large purchasers were grazier and investor EV Goller, who purchased two square miles (1280 acres) on the west side of Faulkners Road, and William, George and James Troup, who purchased seven parcels of the cheaper land on the east side of Faulkners Road, a total of nearly 5000 acres. Amongst these properties were Sections 17 and 18, on Greigs Road. Other Greigs Road allotments were purchased by Alfred Monaghan and Thomas Henry Clarke.[34]

The properties to the north of Greigs Road were owned by farmers. By 1916 there was a closely patterned network of dry stone walls to the north of Greigs Road, particularly on the Missen and Payne properties.[35]

31 Clarke (1980), *passim*; Lands Victoria Torrens Application 32123. Sir RTH Clarke Bart. sold the vast section of the Rockbank Estate that lay south of the Western Highway in November 1906; it appears that he sold the northern portion about a year earlier. (PROV VPRS 460/P0, 35850); also CT Vol.3211 Fol.642206, pertaining to an 8000 acre portion south part of this estate; and also Shire of Melton Ratebooks from 1905-06 which record local farmers as owners of parts of the *Rockbank* estate.)

32 Clarke (1980), *passim*; PROV VPRS 560/P0, 35850; Certificat of Title Vol.3211 Fol.642206, pertaining to an 8000 acre portion south part of this estate; Shire of Melton Ratebooks from 1905-06 record local farmers as owners of parts of the *Rockbank* estate.

33 PROV VPRS 460/P0 (35850)

34 PROV VPRS 460/P0 (35850), Statutory Declaration by William HOwat, 13/5/1907.

35 Army Ordnance Map, 1916: Sunbury; Shire Map Series (1892), Parishes of Pywheitjorrk and Kororoit.

Except for the land around Faulkners Road, most of the land to the south of Greigs Road had been part of the Clarkes' Rockbank estate during the nineteenth century, and was virtually bare of dry stone walls.[36]

Between 1916 and 1938 most of the internal farm paddock walls to the north of Greigs Road had been removed, probably to accommodate new farming machinery and practices.[37]

The Dry Stone Walls

The walls were built by farmers and by the Clarkes. Some may date from the alienation of the land by the Crown in the mid 1850s, but it is more likely that most date from the 1860s, and the 1870s. The alignments of a few walls trace remnants of 1850s speculative subdivisions.

A few walls may have been built in the twentieth century. Some have been subject to major repairs in recent years, a few (usually along relatively short the Greigs Road property frontages) to the extent of being virtually total reconstructions, with idiosyncratic styles and heights. While the specific histories of walls cannot be known, there is some documentary evidence available for some of the walls.

By 1904 the entire length of the north sides of Greigs Road in the Parish of Pwywheitjorrk was described as both 'stone walls' and 'fence and wall'. The entire length of the south side (except for a few hundred metres outside the precinct) was described as 'stone wall' in 1904.[38] By 1955 most of these walls survived, but by this time they were described as 'post and wire and stone fence'.[39] While it is possible that some of these walls had been topped-up with post and wire in the intervening period, it is likely (given that this same wall was also desribed 'fence and wall' in 1904) that the differences in descriptions relate more to different surveyors and different periods rather than different walls. That is, while some of the walls would originally have been all-stone, a good proportion were originally composite stone and post & wire.

36 Army Ordnance Map 1916: Sunbury.

37 Army Ordnance Map, 1938: Sunbury.

38 Lands Victoria, Survey Plan TA 35850

39 Lands Victoria, Survey Plan, TA 52279

- **Dry Stone Walls on the former Clarke *Rockbank* Estate**

The estates of the pastoralists – particularly the Clarkes, Staughtons, and Taylor – dominated Melton Shire in the nineteenth century. Of the 165 kilometres of dry stone walls identified in the Shire in this study, 73.7 kilometres, some 45%, appear to have been erected by the Clarkes' (WJT Clarke, Sir WJ Clarke, and Sir RTH Clarke) on the Rockbank estate. There are almost no drystone walls remaining that were associated with the Staughtons or William Taylor.

Little is known of when most of the Clarke walls were constructed.[40] Most of the information presently available constitutes the documents associated with RTH Clarke's applications for Torrens titles in preparation for selling the land in the early years of the twentieth century. In particular, statutory declarations attached to these applications (held at the PROV) sometimes describe the age and position of existing fences, and field notes for survey plans (held at Lands Victoria) often mark the walls and fences. Also, from the first edition of the Bacchus Marsh Express newspaper in 1866 until about 1890, there were periodic advertisements seeking stone wallers for specified lengths (miles) of walling. For example, in 1880 Clarke advertised for 'Stonewallers on Rockbank Station'; applicants were advised to apply at either the Raglan or Monmouthshire Hotels.[41] These advertisements – 'apply Monmouthshire Hotel Diggers Rest' or 'Rockbank Inn', or 'Rockbank Estate' – appear at regular intervals, together with warnings that trespassers pulling down walls would receive summary justice.[42] Although some walls are known to have been built later, it is likely that most stone walls on the Rockbank estate were built between the late 1850s and the early 1880s, after which period post and wire fencing would have been the major type of fencing built throughout area, as it was throughout the State.

Unlike farming properties, the vast majority of Rockbank pastoral estate walls erected were boundary walls. There were relatively few internal paddock walls. It could be conjectured that Rockbank estate boundary walls such as Wall F96 were more substantial due to their purpose in providing security. However a more detailed study would be required to confirm this. Indeed most of the boundary walls are of much less quality than Wall F96. In fact the style and quality of dry stone walls on the Clarke estate varies considerably. This would related at least in part to the range of wallers used over the long period of their construction, and to the availability and quality of stone on different parts of the estate.

The precinct contains a number of Rockbank boundary walls.

- **Dry Stone Walls to the North of Greigs Road**

Mt Cottrell Road to Paynes Road

By 1905 the length of the properties along the north of Greigs Road between Mt Cottrell and Paynes Roads was entirely 'stone wall'. Similarly the western boundary of Paynes Road and, parallel to it, the boundary between Allotments 3 and 4 of Section 19, were described as 'stone wall.[43] By 1955 most of the walls appear to have had wire added, being described at that time as 'post and wire and stone fence'.[44]

Today the short Wall J152 on Paynes Road is the only remnant of these walls. It is likely to have been built by Isaac Gidney, who had been breeding horses for the Indian market in the Rockbank area by the 1860s, and who owned these properties by 1892.[45]

Paynes Road to Leakes Road

In 1955 the entire Greigs Road boundary was described as 'post and wire and stone fence'. The same description was given to the Paynes Road boundary (for the depth of the Parish of Pywheitjorrk) and the property boundary parallel to it and perpendicular to the wall, for half the depth of the Parish of Pywheitjorrk. The west side of Leakes Road was also described in the same way.[46]

Today Walls J143 to J145, and J147 to J149, constitute substantial remnants of these original walls. Wall J146, perpendicular to Greigs Road, comprises the whole of the only internal wall (the boundary between CAs 1 and 2 of Section 18) in this block.

40 Any Clarke family papers relating to the period might include such information in the form of account records, correspondence between managers and owners, maps, photographs etc. Such papers have not been located at this stage.
41 The Bacchus Marsh *Express*, 6/3/1880
42 Bilszta, 1990, *op cit*.
43 Lands Victoria, Survey Plan, TA 35817
44 Lands Victoria, Survey Plan, TA 52279
45 Shire Map Series (1892): Parish of Pywheitjorrk
46 Lands Victoria, Survey Plans TA 52279 and TA 44367

It is likely that Wall Nos 143-146 were built by Mark Paine, who had acquired it in the early 1860s. Wall Nos 147-149 were built by the Clarkes, who had purchased this land from the Crown in the 1850s and still owned it in 1892.[47]

Leakes Road to Troups Road North

In 1904 and again in 1955 the entire length of Greigs Road in this block, and also its Leakes and Troups Road North boundaries in the Parish of Pywheitjorrk, and the generally parallel east-west rear boundary, were described as 'post and wire and stone fence'.[48] Three internal walls, perpendicular to Greigs Road near Troups Road North, were described in the same way.[49]

Today the majority of these walls remain: J134-138 and J18.

The land had originally been purchased by speculator John O'Grady. By 1892 it was owned by 'M Daniel & others'.[50] This was likely Mark Daniel, whose family had been pioneers in the Bulla district. Family members became locally prominent in various fields throughout the area in the nineteenth century; Mark's photography is an important early record of the district. It is likely that the land was leased out to local farmers, and the walls built by them or Daniel (or other property owner).

East of Troups Road North

In 1904 and again in 1955 the Greigs Road frontage, and the eastern side of Troups Road North, were described as 'post and wire and stone fence'.[51]

Today the majority of the Greigs Road walls remain: J134-138 and J18.

The land had been purchased from the Crown by speculators J O'Grady and W Craig; by 1892 it was owned by George Missen, and prominent Rockbank selector / pioneer who had selected land in the district in the 1860s, and had built the Rose & Crown Hotel. The walls were likely built by the Missen family.[52]

47 Shire Map Series (1892): Parish of Pywheitjorrk
48 Lands Victoria, Survey Plans TA 52279 and TA 35850
49 Lands Victoria, Survey Plan, TA 52279
50 Parish Plan: Parish of Pywheitjorrk; Shire Map Series (1892): Parish of Pywheitjorrk
51 Lands Victoria, Survey Plans TA 52279 and TA 35850
52 Parish Plan: Parish of Pywheitjorrk; Shire Map Series (1892): Parish of Pywheitjorrk

- **Dry Stone Walls to the South of Greigs Road.**

Downing Street to Troups Road

In 1904 the whole of the southern side of Greigs Road was marked as 'stone wall'.[53] In 1955 this was between Dowling Street and Troups Road was described as a 'post & wire & stone fence'.[54] It may have been topped up with post and wire in the intervening period, but could also have been the same wall described in different ways. It survives substantially today as Wall Nos C69 and C70.

Similarly, in 1904 the western boundary of Troups Road was described as 'stone wall'. A relic of this survives today as Wall C71.

The four allotments in this section were purchased from the Crown by Stephen Donovan in 1854 and 1855, but in August 1856 (the height of the boom) Donovan sold them to Clarke.[55] All of these walls would then have been Clarke Rockbank estate boundary walls.

Troups Road to Mt Atkinson Road

In 1904 the southern boundary of Greigs Road east of Troups Road was marked as 'stone wall'.[56] Part of this wall survives today as Wall D1.

Prior to its incorporation into the Clarkes' Rockbank estate this land had been selected by the Cropley brothers, and the walls likely date to their occupation in the 1860s.

Thematic Context / Comparative Analysis:

Shire of Melton Historical Themes: 'Pastoral', 'Farming', 'Transport', 'Water'.

The most comparable precincts of walls in the Shire of Melton are the nearby Mount Cottrell and Mount Atkinsons Precincts. These, together with the Mount Kororoit Precinct and the She-Oak Hill Precinct, are concentrations of dry stone walls related to the eruption points from which the stone derived. The Greigs Road Precinct however is one of the precincts identified

53 Lands Victoria, Survey Plan, TA 35850
54 Lands Victoria, Survey Plan, TA 52279
55 Parish Plan, Parish of Pyhweitjorrk; PROV, VPRS 460/P/35850
56 Lands Victoria, Survey Plan, TA 35850

as being significant for its prominence from a road. It is the most intact of these precincts. Other road-based, 'gateway', precincts are situated on the Western Highway, the Melton Highway, and Robinsons Road.

Condition:

Overall, the precinct is in Good – Fair condition.

Integrity:

The integrity of the walls in the precinct varies, from low, moderate to high. Many of the walls have clearly been altered; it is presumed that most have been repaired, probably using original materials.

Recommendations:

Individual walls recommended for inclusion in the Melton Planning Scheme Heritage Overlay.

Other Recommendations:

- Visibility of the walls is diminished where grass has been allowed to grow in front of the walls along the Greigs Road property boundaries. It is highly recommended that grass on the wide verge be kept mown.
- The walls in the precinct are recommended as a priority for future conservation works.
- A campaign of education regarding the significance of the walls, and penalties for theft of stone, should be initiated by the Shire of Melton. This might include interpretation and other signage within the Precinct.
- The integrity of the walls is likely to be affected by any future change in land-use (including rural residential development). If this is envisaged, guidelines for appropriate development of the walls (new gates etc) should be prepared; compliance with these would need to be mandatory.

Walls C69.
A Clarke (Rockbank Estate) boundary wall, A high wall in Excellent condition,with coping, including angled stones. The plugging has likely been replaced/repaired. A young plantation is behind.

Walls C69.
Vertical view of the same wall, showing near-vertical and smooth wall facing, clearly professionally built.

Walls C70.
A lower composite wall, in Fair condition. The long grass almost completely obscures the view of the wall from Greigs Road.

Walls D81.
The cleared verge enables a clear view of this wall from Greigs Road. This higher wall is more coarsely built. It has the less vertical, more pyramidal, shape that is characteristic of the round-stone walls on Melbourne's western plains. It was likely built by nineteenth century Selectors.

Walls D82.
Wall with stones of varying sizes, probably built by the Missens, a family of successful Rockbank Selectors. Originally more coarsely built, it has been extensively repaired, with varying degrees of skill.

Walls D82.
The same wall includes a lunky hole, of unknown purpose, that does not penetrate the whole width of the wall. It may have been added in more recent repairs.

Walls C69.
An improvised drop-post situated off the centre of the wall makes clear that wire was added later to a wall that was originally of all-stone construction.

Citation No. 6 - Plumpton Road Wall

Melton Dry Stone Walls Survey:	Wall No 200
Location:	625-833 Holden Road, Plumpton; Lots 1, 2 & 3, LP 135872
Critical Dates:	Original construction sometime between 1854 –1885; considerable repair and reconstruction
Existing Heritage Listings:	Associated with HO 53
Recommended Level of Significance:	LOCAL

Statement of Significance:

The Plumpton Road Wall, built sometime between 1854 and 1885, is a remnant of a group of dry stone walls built in the northern part of the Clarke *Rockbank* station. It is significant at the LOCAL level as one of the largest and more intact remnants of a Clarke boundary wall in the Shire of Melton, and as one of a diminishing number of all-stone, dry stone walls remaining in the north of the Shire. Its significance as a demonstration of nineteenth century pastoralism in the Shire of Melton is enhanced by its link to the nearby Holden Dam, and its location in the prime sheep fattening country of the *Rockbank* estate.

The Plumpton Road Wall is historically significant at the LOCAL level. (AHC A4, B2, D2) The wall is expressive of early pastoral practices on Melbourne's western plains. It is an early *Rockbank* station boundary wall which express the Shire's seminal and dominating nineteenth century pastoral industry, and in particular the activity of nationally significant pastoralist WJT Clarke and his son Sir WJ Clarke. The wall is a boundary wall, the most common type of fence associated with a pastoral estate, and contrasting to the walls of small farmers. It is one of few dry stone walls that were built on the prime northern part of the *Rockbank* station, used for fattening sheep prior to sale at Newmarket; its significance is enhanced by its proximity and likely former functional relationship with the nearby Holden Dam. The wall is situated on 'Plumpton Road', named after Australia's first Plumpton, and was possibly a part of WJT Clarke's pioneering coursing events in the area.

The Plumpton Road Wall is aesthetically significant at the LOCAL level. (AHC E1) The Plumpton Road wall makes a fundamental statement about human interaction with the volcanic landscape of which it is a part. Looking to the west, across grazing paddocks are views of the Mount Kororoit volcanic cone. In its original rural context the wall is a prominent feature as one drives along Plumpton Road. The wall has been repaired with a higher degree of care and skill than is evident with most of the walls in the Shire. It is now a comparatively scarce example of an all-stone wall, rather than the more typical composite wall, and in parts has excellent sculptural qualities. It expresses the historical diversity of dry stone wall construction in Victoria, and is representative of the typical style of wall in the Shire of Melton and Melbourne's west. The cypress planation along most of the wall, while diminishing its original historical context, and constituting a potential threat to the structure, echoes and highlights the length of the wall and enhances its aesthetic quality. It is situated on one of the few north-south roads of the Shire, with good visual access to travellers.

The Plumpton Road Wall is scientifically significant at the LOCAL level. (A3, C2) It demonstrates the volcanic origin of the landscape. It is one of a group of dry stone walls and dams on Plumpton and Holden Roads that

are situated south of two unnamed former volcanic eruption points that are the likely source of the stone of the walls. The wall has the potential to yield research information regarding wall construction techniques, nineteenth century rural settlement patterns, pastoral management, and ways of life on Melbourne's western plains.

The Plumpton Road Wall is socially significant at the LOCAL level (AHC G1). It has the potential to educate the community in regard to wall construction techniques, and also nineteenth century farm management, settlement patterns, and ways of life on Melbourne's western plains.

Overall, the Plumpton Road Wall is of LOCAL significance.

Description:

The wall is situated about half way between Mount Kororoit to the west, and an unnamed Lava Shield volcano which is situated to its north (the east side of Plumpton Road).[1] These former volcanoes are the likely source of the fieldstone used in the construction of the wall. They are two of about 400 inactive eruption points that have been identified on Victoria's western volcanic plains, which stretch from the Darebin Creek to near the South Australian border. Most were active between 4.5 million and 20,000 years ago.

Mount Kororoit, a dominant feature of the Shire of Melton, is geologically of State significance. It is the archetypal example of the small complex eruption points that occur on the plains between Melbourne and Woodend. It is an unusual scoria cone in that late-stage lava flows erupted from and filled the throat and crater of the volcano, covering earlier scoria deposits. The evidence of the lava flows is seen in the rocky outcrop of lava and lava agglomerate that cap the volcano.[2]

The tongues of lava emanating from lava volcanoes such as these eruption points were gently effusive and slowly cooling, producing dense basalt. This basalt produces a round-shaped heavy fieldstone that is the major material seen in the majority of dry stone walls of the Shire. In contrast the less numerous 'Scoria Hills' (the best example of which was She Oak Hill, now half quarried) were formed by more explosive and quickly cooling eruption points, which produced a more vesicular scoria, or tuff. While the vesicularity of stone from the same eruption points does vary, and there is often a mixture of dense, smooth lava stone and more honeycombed textured lava stone in the same area, this wall is strongly characterised by round smooth stones.

These smooth, round and dense stones, having less surface friction, are difficult material with which to build a dry stone wall. The sides of walls built with these stones typically have a high batter, and are more pyramidal than vertical in cross-section. As they have widened and lowered over time, most all-stone walls in the Shire have had been topped up with post and wire. This wall is an exception, a long wall that remains all-stone rather than a modified stone and post & wire composite fence. Parts of the wall have had a detached post-and-wire fence added behind, rather than having been inserted into the original wall. Unlike most such walls in the Shire, this wall is thus relatively undamaged.

The general context of the wall is flat volcanic grassland, near the centre of the former Clarke *Rockbank* estate. It is one of a group of dry stone walls, situated along Plumpton and Holden Roads (Wall Nos: P200-211), which are situated near former volcanic source MB5. This lava shield volcano, and possibly a less significant volcanic eruption point a little to its north,[3] is the likely source of the stone of these walls. The property on which the wall is situated also has a number of dry stone walls and other structures.

The immediate context of the wall is a later cypress plantation along most of its length. This has been planted far enough behind the wall to leave it undamaged. The wall is situated on one of the major north-south roads in this part of the Shire, giving it good visual accessibility. Along a smaller section of the wall north of the cypress plantation, it is significantly obscured by unmown grass on the road verge.

'MB5', the unnamed former Lava Shield volcano to the north of the wall is of local geological significance.[4] It is closer to the wall, and is perhaps more likely to be the source of its stone.

1 Rosengren, N, 'Eruption Points of the Newer Volcanics Province of Victoria: An Inventory and Evaluation of Scientific Significance', a report prepared for the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) and the Geological Society of Australia (Victorian Division), 1994, pp.373-4.

2 *ibid*, pp.21, 201

3 *ibid*, p.374. This eruption point (No.31) also situated on the east side of Plumpton Road, is not identified as being of significance by Rosengren.

4 Rosengren, *op cit*, p.321

In common with most old dry stone walls on Victoria's volcanic plains, the wall is in variable condition, ranging from excellent to poor condition. The wall has been considerably maintained and substantially rebuilt by its current owners, the Ford family. Although not by professional wallers, this repair has occurred with a higher degree of care and skill than is evident with most walls in the Shire.

Running perpendicular to Wall P200 on the west side of Plumpton Road are Walls P201 and P202, low composite walls ('half-walls') that almost certainly post-date Wall P200 on Plumpton Road, and could date to after the break-up of the Rockbank estate in the early twentieth century. Wall P200 is a very long wall, although somewhat short of the c.1600 metres (mile) than the original Plumpton Road boundary of Section 25.

History:

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY: DRY STONE WALLS IN NINETEENTH CENTURY VICTORIA

- **Fencing the Wilderness, 1850s-1870s**

The majority of dry stone walls in Victoria appear to have been built in the 30 year period from the 1850s to the 1880s.

In 1826 rural affairs commentator James Atkinson reported that he knew of no example of dry stone walling having been erected in the colony of New South Wales.[5] Initially pastoralists employed shepherds to look after sheep. They guided the sheep to pasture during the day, and in the evening returned them to folds, constructed of wooden hurdles or brush fences, near their huts (or outstations). There are several dry stone walls on Melton's Kororoit Creek that are thought to have been associated with early pastoralists: an outstation associated with Yuille at Caroline Springs, and the remnants of a wall that are thought to have been associated with a shepherd's enclosure.[6] Other fencing was used on the squatters' homestations:- the 'home paddock' (likely for the squatters' precious horses) and the 'cultivation [or kitchen] garden'. Early fences were also required to separate stock for breeding purposes. These fences were usually of post & rail, vertical timber slabs or other primitive paling material.[7] (However at *Greenhills* in Toolern Vale there are some remains of a dry stone wall that would appear to be the remnants of an original homestation garden.[8])

Two major and related events in the early 1850s radically changed this situation. Firstly, the exodus to the gold-rushes made it difficult and expensive for squatters to retain labour for shepherding. And secondly, the extensive survey, subdivision and sale of Crown land in the early 1850s provided security of tenure to pastoralists, and incentive for them to invest in major improvements, including permanent fences, on their stations. Pastoralists were also encouraged to fence their land to ensure that neighbouring farmers didn't allow their stock to stray upon the open expanses of their stations.

Nevertheless, until the 1860s, extensive fencing of properties remained the exception rather than the rule. The first boundary fences in the Barrabool Hills of Victoria were only erected in 1854, and boundary and paddock fencing 'only gathered momentum after the mid 1850s.'[9] This was no doubt due to the extensive sale of Crown Land as freehold in the 1850s, as well as the increasing availability of capital due to the gold boom, and the increasing availability of labour including professional stone wallers as alluvial gold declined in the late 1850s.

Slowly, fences began to replace shepherds on the pastoral estates. Early maps of Melton Shire show that pastoralists built walls and fences relatively sparsely – only on property boundaries and to enclose huge paddocks (about 5-10 square kilometres in the south part of Clarke's Rockbank estate).[10] In dramatic contrast the same historical maps (and the mapping survey undertaken as part of this Study) show concentrated patterns of walled paddocks established on farms in the same areas at the same time. The creation of small paddocks enabled mixed farming, by securing crops and gardens from stock, and managing stock for breeding. This Study shows that, in the south of the Shire, virtually all of these fences were dry stone walls. Dry stone walls were also used to protect the homestead from stock,

5 Kerr, JS, 'Fencing, a brief account of the development of fencing in Australia', *Australasian Society for Historical Archaeology Newsletter*, Vol. 14.No.1, March 1984, pp.9-16.
6 Melton Heritage Study Place Nos. 467 and 81.
7 Kerr, *loc cit*; Allan Willingham, 'The Dry Stone Walls in the Corangamite Region: A Brief History', in Corangamite Arts Council Inc, *If These Walls Could Talk, Report of the Corangamite Dry Stone Walls Conservation Project*, Terang, 1995, p.44
8 Melton Heritage Study, Place No.055
9 Kerr, *loc cit*
10 Shire Map Series (1892); Army Ordnance Map, 1916: 'Sunbury'.

to construct stockyards, fowl houses and pigpens, and possibly, on a few of the larger farms, to provide aesthetic effect.[11]

Given the expense of establishing a farm from nothing in a wilderness, and the experience of many small farmers as agricultural labourers before coming to Australia, it is almost certain that the walls on all but the largest farms would have been constructed by farmers themselves rather than by professional wallers. For example, general hand William Ison and his wife arrived on a Werribee farm in the mid 1850s, and found there a small wooden cottage and a young German in charge, 'who had already done some clearing of the stones which covered the land … We set to, and cleared about 10 acres, and had it fenced in with stones by the next sowing time.'[12] The quality of wall construction would have depended on the experience of the farmers and their seasonal hands at the craft. William Robinson who settled in the Tarneit area in 1872, was a stonemason who turned his skills to fieldstone, building a house (which does not survive) of the material and numerous fences (some of which do survive along Robinsons Road).

The outbreak of the highly contagious sheep disease, 'scab', which reached epidemic proportions in the 1850s, hastened enclosure of the pastoral estates.[13] Western District squatter Neil Black quickly enclosed his Glenormiston run, and in 1854 George Russell ordered five miles of wire: '…the importance of fencing is becoming every year more apparent.'[14] .

Likewise, the appearance of pluero-pneumonia in Australian cattle in the early 1860s impressed cattle-men of the need to isolate their properties from travelling or straying stock.[15] That 'dreadful disease' also encouraged the erection of property fences by Melton dairy farmers (and was responsible for less use of local Commons by Melton farmers).[16]

By 1876 the presence of 'substantial stone walls' appears to have been hallmark of a good farm in the Melton district, the *Australasian*'s 'Travelling Reporter' making sure to note these on the farms of Ralph Parkinson, George Missen and Isaac Gidney.[17]

However little is known of dry stone wallers who worked in the Shire at the time: Irish brothers John and George Funston worked in the Toolern Vale area from the 1850s; Patrick Connor worked on Mount Aitken in the 1860s; and Dick (the mason) Mitchell, and Arcoll (Arkell) worked in the Mount Cottrell area before 1872.[18]

The construction of fencing that was encouraged by sheep scab and cattle pleuro pneumonia was also fostered by legislation. At the beginning of the pastoral period in Victoria, common law held that, generally, a landowner was under no obligation to construct or maintain boundary fences, or fences adjoining a public road. However, as a result of Australia's rapidly expanding pastoral industry, trespass of stock, and the need for security, Victoria's *Fences Statute 1865* gave landowners the right to claim equal contribution towards the construction or repair of boundary fences from the owners of adjoining lands.[19]

- **Types of Fencing in the Nineteenth Century**

The great variety and combination of nineteenth century fencing arose 'as much from material shortages and the need to use what was procurable as from a desire to improve the utility and durability of fencing.'[20] As is the case with the rest of the Shire, most of the walls in the Greigs Road precinct are 'composite' stone and post & wire, rather than all-stone.

- **Dry Stone Walls**

In 1856 a government agricultural reporter travelling

11 Alan Marshall, asking an old waller why the walls on a particular property were so high, was told that ostensibly the reason was to keep steers in (they jumped fences), but the real reason was 'just so that he could say he had the best walls in the Western District, the biggest and the best, and bugger you.' (cited in Corangamite Arts Council, 1995, p.114). On Melbourne's western plains district however, such finely constructed walls were generally associated with formal gardens on only the largest properties, such as the Ha Ha walls on the Eynesbury (Melton Shire) and Werribee Park (Wyndham Shire) pastoral estates, or Greystones (Moorabool Shire).

12 Murray, E, *The Plains of Iramoo*, Henwood & Dancy, Geelong, 1974, p.111. (Murray notes that in 1974 these walls were still standing.)

13 Kerr, *loc cit*

14 Willingham, *op cit*, p.45

15 Kerr, *loc cit*

16 Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 1864, p.94 ; John Chandler, Michael Canon, *Forty Years in the Wilderness* (Loch Haven, Main Ridge, 1990), p.175

17 The *Australasian*, October 1876.

18 Bilszta, JA, 'Dry Stone Wall: Faulkners Road, Mt Cottrell, Shire of Melton', 9/9/1990, unpublished paper

19 Lawlink: New South Wales Law Reform Commission website: 'Report 59 (1988) – Community Law Reform Program: Dividing Fences'; Parliament of Victoria website: Law Reform Committee, 'Review of the Fences Act 1968'

20 Kerr, *loc cit*

through the eastern part of Melton Shire (the Parish of Maribyrnong) commented that: 'A few good stone fences the only improvement worth noting.'[21]

A dry stone wall was the best solution:- 'Where stone was abundant, timber scarce, transport of fencing material expensive, skilled labour available, and where cheaper alternatives were unavailable.'[22] From about the mid-late 1850s, when freehold ownership exploded and the price of labour declined, and through the early 1860s when the price of labour remained cheap, the labour-intensive construction of stone walls remained very competitive.

Stone walls were built wherever stony ground made them possible, or necessary. While most farmers built their own walls to clear stony ground and manage stock and crops, pastoralists could afford professional wallers.[23] In the mid 1850s brothers John and George Funston, stone wallers and farm labourers from Ireland, are known to have been erecting walls on the Mount Aitken and Gisborne Park estates.[24] The Mount Aitken station accounts in 1868 showing the employment of a John Starkie for four weeks to help Henry gather and cart stones, and the engagement of 'Paterick [sic] Connor, Stone Wall Fencer' to erect 34 chains of stone walling at the very low rate of only 8 shillings per chain.

The Fences Statute 1874 lists numerous types of fences, including 'walls' (stone walls) and 'combination' type fences. Walls that divided properties had to be a minimum of 4 feet high (1.22 metres), with a base of 'not less than 2 feet wide at the bottom', and '9 inches at the top'.[25] Although the specifications for road boundary fences were not given (the Crown being exempt from the legislation) it could be expected that the walls on these public boundaries would be at least as high as those that divided neighbouring properties.

Post and rail fences were the most common early fence type in Australia, no doubt due to the prevalence of forests and woodlands, in comparison with stony land, across Victoria. They appeared early and were prominent in the study area. In 1854 William Westgarth, on his way to the goldfields Royal Commission in Ballarat, recorded that he 'struck west through post and rail fences onto the Keilor Plains'.[26] By the 1860s timber fencing, probably from the Grey Box forest in the west and south-west of the Shire, was common in the vicinity of Melton. But as local farmer John Chandler recorded, such fencing was prone to loss in the bushfires that swept south from the ranges over the plains.[27] Even in the volcanic area near Aitkens Hill to the north of the Shire, nearly 80% of squatter John Aitken's fencing was either 'post & rail' (either 2 rail, the most common, or 3 rail), or 'post & 2 rails with (2 or 3) wires', or 'post & rail with 5 foot palings'. The balance was 'stone walls'.[28] These figures might reflect squatters' early preference for timber fencing, and an early dearth of professional dry stone walling skills, not remedied until after the gold rushes. In 1868 on the same property Henry Beattie erected much more stone walling, but also built nearly twice as much '3-rail fence' in the same year.[29]

Post and wire fences were first introduced into Victoria in the 1850s, but the price of the metal posts (which could often not go down into the dry hard ground in Victoria) made them 'exceedingly expensive'.[30] The very thick and soft 'black bull wire' was soon superseded by galvanised steel wires which, with droppers to keep the wire stable, allowing greater distance between fence posts, reducing the costs.[31] With progressive improvements, including local production of wire, use of timber posts, and winding and straining devices, by at least the early 1870s wire was the cheapest type of fence.[32] The invention of barbed wire in the 1870s, and its widespread use in Victoria in the 1880s meant that it could secure cattle as well as sheep, and it became the

21 Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 'Statistics of Victoria for 1856', Appendix No.1, p.46
22 Vines, G, 'Comparative Analysis of Dry Stone Walls in Victoria, Australia and Overseas', in Corangamite Arts Council, 1995, *op cit*, p.56
23 Ann Beggs-Sunter, 'Buninyong and District Community News', Issue 211, August 1996
24 Judith Bilszta, Melton Heritage Study Research, Place No.029 (3/8/2005)
25 The Fences Statute 1874 (Fences Amendment Act, November 1873), Clause 4 (i-xi). Other types of early fencing are described in Michael Cannon's *Life in the Country: Australia in the Victorian Age: 2*, Nelson, West Melbourne, 1978, pp.89-90; and Graham Condah's *Of the Hut I Builded*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1988, p.89.
26 Lack, J, Ford, O, 'Melbourne's Western Region: An Introductory History' (Melbourne's Living Museum of the West Inc, Melbourne Western Region Commission, 1986), p.27
27 Chandler, *op cit*, p.174
28 Map, 'Index of Fences' on John Aitken's Mount Aitken property (after Crown Land sales). PROV 460/P0/39365. (The stone walls would appear not to survive.)
29 Beattie, Steward K, *The Odd Good Year: Early Scots to Port Phillip, Northern Australia, Gap, Gisborne and Beyond*, Southwood Press, Marrickville, 1999, p.63
30 Willingham, *op cit*, pp.45-6
31 Cannon, 1978, *op cit*, pp.89-91
32 Survey of 21 Selectors in the Holden – Mount Cottrell districts.

standard fence type from this time.[33]

The popularity of stone walls with farmers is evident in the Lands Department files relating to the 1860s Selection Acts, which record the type, length and price of fencing 'improvements' made by each selector. A detailed examination of 21 selections in the Mount Cottrell, Rockbank, Mount Kororoit and Diggers Rest–Holden areas reveals that stone walling constituted by far the largest proportion (60%) of the 32.3 kilometres of fencing built on those properties by c.1875, despite the fact that it was the most expensive. Post & wire fences, one of the cheapest types of fencing then available, comprised only 6% of all fences erected. Post & rail fences, a little cheaper than the best stone walls, and a little dearer than the cheapest, constituted 9% of the fences. (Note that many other 'composite' varieties of fences were constructed from these three primary materials. There were also a small number of 'stub' or picket, and 'log' fences.[34])

Stone walling resolved two problems: the need to clear the land of rocks, and the need for fencing. Unquestionably, as was the case elsewhere, the key reason for the preference for dry stone walls on Melbourne's western plains by selectors was the need to clear stony land to enable cropping and grazing (dairying).[35]

Apart from the relatively small areas of Melton Shire that were sold under the Selection Acts, there were many other areas of dry stone walling in the Shire. It is estimated that there were 23 miles of fencing on the Moylan brothers' Mt Kororoit property by 1876, and from the extensive walling that survives today it is evident that much of this was dry stone wall construction.[36] Property sale advertisements in the local paper suggest that the properties on the Keilor Plain east of Toolern Creek were almost entirely walled.[37] Advertisements for stone wallers in the Buttlejorrk, Diggers Rest and Rockbank Estate areas appeared regularly until 1890. Between Toolern Vale and Diggers Rest the Beaty family built many kilometres of medium sized stone walls along boundaries, and a few larger walls inside their properties for stock. Other walls, including one of substantial composition (on the former Campbells' Toolern Park property), are scattered lightly around Toolern Vale. The highest concentration of walls is situated in the southern plains of the Shire: the 1850s small farming communities of Mt Cottrell and Truganina, and the paddock and boundary fences of WJT Clarke's Rockbank station.

According to Vines the dry stone walls of the Keilor-Werribee Plains 'form a reasonably distinct regional style quite different from either the interstate examples or the Western District walls'. This regional style is characterised by: -

> *'… walls constructed using the local rounded, smoothly weathered, basalt field-stone of variable size. They are generally fairly low walls, averaging 1.2 metres with a width at the base of an average of 0.83 metres and battered sides on a slope of about 5-10 degrees off the vertical. Coursing is uncommon although coping is almost always found on intact walls and through stones can usually be identified at regular intervals of about one metre. The coping stones are often quite large, rounded boulders of a maximum dimension of 400-500 millimetres. Because of their rounded shape the stones are rarely suited to the close-fitting construction seen on the Western district walls, either for the main part of the wall or the coping. As a result, the rabbit proofing techniques involving close plugging, overhanging coping, or other methods are never found in this region.'*[38]

These regular round stones lack interlocking, and often surface friction, and were never the ideal building material. The author of the 1848 'Rural Cyclopedia' considered round stones objectionable 'as they are ever rolling off'. The small wedge stones which held these round stones in position were easily dislodged.[39] Similarly, the 'round stone fence' surmounted by turf was described in Loudon's 1857 guide to British agriculture

33 Willingham, *op cit*, p.46; Kerr, *loc cit;* Cannon, 1978, *loc cit*

34 Research of PROV VPRS 625 (Selection Act files) for the Keneally, Slattery, Reddan J, Reddan M, Tate, Rhodes C, Rhodes, McKenzie, O'Brien P, McLeod, O'Brien J, Moloney, White, Mangovin, Carrige, Moylan Mary, Moylan Margaret, Parry, Moylan, MP, Moylan T, and Watts selections. This sample is primarily of selectors on stony country, Hannah Watts, in the forest off Chapmans Road Toolern Vale being the only exception; interestingly, the cost of her post & rail fences were half the price of the others, no doubt reflecting the relative proximity of materials, with none of the other properties having ready access to local timber. Another possible bias of the sample is the over-representation of Moylan properties. But it remains a good sample of fences built in stony country in the period late 1860s to mid 1870s.

35 Selectors were in fact obliged under the Selection Acts to cultivate 10% of their land area.

36 The *Australasian*, 28th October 1876

37 Bilszta, 1990, *op cit*.

38 Corangamite Arts Council, *op cit*, p.58

39 Willingham, *op cit*, p.41

as a 'very indifferent fence', whose only apparent benefit was that it cleared the land of stone and could be built by labourers. It was found to be unstable when built to a standard wall height. Stock could easily dislodged its copings, and 'great trouble and expense are annually required to keep it in repair.'[40] Despite this, as can be seen in an apparently scarce example of this type in Corangamite (the Foxhow Road Wall), a sturdy wall of very respectable height could be built by careful selection and coursing of stones, and the use of copestones and extensive plugging.[41]

The Fences Statute's specification of walls to be a minimum 4 feet (1220 mm) high seems to have been the 'average paddock height' for which tenders were called in sheep country.[42] Walls in cattle country were built higher 'to discourage the cattle from leaning over to reach greener pastures and dislodging coping stones'. While numerous Western District dairying walls are higher, 'walls enclosing cattle were generally at least 1.4 metres (4 feet 7 inches) high'.[43] This standard also seems to have been applied in Melton, where the Moylan's high walls on Mount Kororoit Farm measure 1400 mm.

Although there is no conclusive evidence of it in Melton Shire, elsewhere boundary walls were built higher than internal walls. Vines states that: 'In almost all the dry stone wall regions in Victoria, the … most substantial walls are located along the boundaries of properties. Subdivision of properties into fields was evidently a secondary consideration once the property had been fenced. Additional stone walls would be constructed to subdivide the property into paddocks if the field stone was so abundant as to allow these.'[44] Perkins (whose stone wall education was in Britain) states similarly that: 'Inner boundaries however were not built as high as the boundary fences, which are also known as March Dykes.'[45]

While most of the walls in the Shire of Melton and on Melbourne's western plains were 'composite walls', either built with a stone bottom and post-and-wire top, or had a post-and-wire top added as the original all-stone wall collapsed over time, Wall No.P200 on Plumpton Road is now unusual as a remaining all-stone wall in the Shire of Melton.

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY: THE CLARKE *ROCKBANK* ESTATE

On 24 August 1850 WJT ('Big') Clarke threw the administration of Port Phillip into turmoil by applying to purchase 20,000 acres of Sunbury land under a previously unused provision of an 1842 Imperial Land Act. Despite the strongest protests by existing squatters (including *Rockbank* pastoralist WC Yuille) he succeeded in purchasing 31,317 acres of this prime land. Clarke's consequent entitlement to lease three times that area of lands that adjoined this freehold (his 'grass-right') 'spelt disaster' for the existing pastoralists.[46]

Clarke's grass-right entitlement didn't last long as during the 1850s most of the leased land was put up for auction by the Crown. However most former pastoralists could not afford to purchase sizeable holdings, and their reduced holdings (often just a 640 acre pre-emptive right) were too small to graze profitably. Former Melton squatters such as Yuille, Pinkerton and Pyke were squeezed out, some ruined. Those pastoralists who had accumulated capital - Clarke, the Chirnsides, and Staughton - soon dominated the whole Port Phillip district.[47] In Melton other substantial pastoral properties were the *Green Hills* station at Toolern Vale, and William Taylor's 10,000 acre Keilor estate *Overnewton* (which included much of the area between Mt Kororoit and Sydenham).

During the 1850s Big Clarke bought thousands of acres of cheap Crown land to extend his Sunbury Special Survey south-westwards towards Melton, Derrimut, and the Werribee River.[48] He purchased vast tracts of plains land (around Mt Cotterell, Rockbank, and Truganina), and also much smaller and more strategically located pockets along Kororoit Creek.

40 Loudon, JC, *Encyclopaedia of Agriculture*, 5th Edition (Longman Brown Green Longmans and Roberts, London, 1857), p.496
41 Corangamite Arts Council, *op cit*, p.28
42 Willingham, *op cit*, p.41. (The 1300 mm height was chosen as one of the categories for Study field survey. Almost all of the walls in the Shire had a base width of 700-800 mm.); Corangamite Arts Council, *op cit*, pp.49, 113
43 *ibid*, pp.17, 21, 130; Rod McLellan, 'The Dry Stone Walls of Victoria's Western District', *Historic Environment* Vol 7 No 2, 1989, pp.28-32
44 Corangamite Arts Council, *op cit*, p.60
45 *ibid*, p.130
46 Clarke, Michael,*'Big' Clarke* (Queensberry Hill, Carlton, 1980), pp.103-5; Batey, Isaac, RHSV manuscript (1910), p.4.
47 Peel, Lynette, *Rural Industry in the Port Phillip Region 1835 – 1880* (MUP, Melbourne, 1974), pp.56, 129-131,133.
48 Clarke, Michael, *Clarke of Rupertswood, 1831-1897: The Life and Times of William John Turner Clarke, First Baronet of Rupertswood* (Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne, 1995), p.31

One of these sites, Section 25, Parish of Kororoit, on which the Wall is situated, of 624 acres, was purchased by Clarke on 9th June 1853.[49] This was in the heart of Clarke's *Rockbank* estate: he had also purchased square-mile sections at the 1850s Crown sales immediately to the north, south, east and west of Section 25.

Over the next 20 years Clarke vigorously bought up small farms whose owners had fallen on hard times.[50] Melton local Alexander Cameron explained that there was 'a very dry season with no feed or water and small farmers were forced to sell out, their properties being added to the *Rockbank* estate.'[51] For example, while Clarke had easily obtained many thousand acres of stony dry land at Crown sales, he initially had been much less successful in buying the rich land adjoining the Kororoit Creek. Yet by 1892 he owned almost all of it. The few exceptions were mostly in the hands of other pastoral estates (Overnewton and Mt Aitken), or owned by small pastoralists, the Moylan and Beaty families.[52]

Clarke divided his vast estate into different stations including *Bollinda Vale, Red Rock* (both north of Sunbury, and including *Rupertswood*) and *Rockbank* (which extended south of Sunbury to near Werribee, mostly from Diggers Rest to Tarneit). The *Rockbank* station had originally been established in the early 1840s; the headstation of its previous owner, WC Yuille, had been at the Beatty's Road crossing of Kororoit Creek, the location of the former Rockbank Inn.

Upon Big Clarke's death in 1874 his son WJ Clarke (later to become Australia's first baronet) inherited his Victorian estate, including 136,310 acres in the Melbourne vicinity, stretching in an arc from about Sunshine, Tarneit, Balliang, Rockbank, Diggers Rest, Sunbury, Bolinda Vale and across to the Hume Highway.[53]

- **The Development of *Rockbank* Station**

Once freehold tenure to their runs had been obtained, pastoralists' major investment was in land and improvements, rather than livestock as originally. Building fences and securing water points were the two first priorities, together with sheds, sheep-washing facilities and, more slowly, when finances allowed, building comfortable homesteads.[54]

With the appointment of William Francis Watson as manager, by the early 1860s work had begun on fencing, and drainage channels on the swampy ground around the *Rockbank* headstation. In 1864 disaster struck *Rockbank* when a fire destroyed many of the improvements. WJ Clarke, who was managing the estate for his father at this stage, was forced to build a new managers residence, new workmen's cottages, and a new 22-stand shearing shed.[55] The bluestone shearing shed, built 1864, with additions in 1884, by architects Reed and Barnes, is today one of the oldest woolsheds in Victoria, and included in the Victorian Heritage Register as *Deanside*.

Apart from managers and workers cottages, there was no homestead built on *Rockbank* at this time. WJ Clarke lived at Sunbury, but although Big Clarke lived in the city, he spent a lot of time at *Rockbank*. Once a fortnight he drove the few miles out there with his stock agent's two leading salesmen, William Hudson and John Murray Peck. 'At Rockbank, Clarke was accustomed to make a personal selection of the fat sheep that were to be walked to Newmarket.'[56]

JM Peck's young son Harry, later to become a legendary Newmarket stock agent, used to ride out with the men. His memoirs carry high praise for the Clarke stock, bred under the 'genius' of the Clarke's overall manager Robert Clarke (no relation). They also suggest the significance of the *Rockbank* station: -

> *'For many years the wethers and cast-for-age-ewes of English Leicester-Merino crosses from the Clarke stations travelled in on the hoof in mobs of 500-1000, week after week, right through the winters, and topped Newmarket for quality and price. Never since have we seen the like in such numbers for evenness of type and quality combined. Subdivision of the Clarke properties resulting in the dispersal of these flocks was a distinct loss to the pastoral community.'*[57]

As was evident by Big Clarke's personal control of Rockbank, the station was a core part of the Clarke operations, providing fattening for the stock, which

49 Parish Plan, Parish of Kororoit.
50 Peel, *op cit*
51 Cameron, Alexander, 'Melton Memoirs' (MDHS), p.16. (This would have been in the dry seasons of 1861-65, which concluded with a destructive flood in 1865.)
52 SLV Houghton, Plan I 29 (15/5/1854); Parish Plan: Kororoit; 'Shire Map Series' plans, SLV, 821.1A (1892)
53 Peel, *op.cit*., pp.130-1; Clarke (1980), *op cit*, opposite p.247
54 Peel, *op cit,* p.62
55 Clarke, 1995, *op cit*, p.36
56 Clarke, 1980, *op cit*, p.241
57 Peck, HH *Memoirs of a Stockman*, fourth edition (Stock & Land Publishing Co, Melbourne, 1972), p.97

could then be sent to Newmarket in good condition. Melton's Alexander Cameron also elaborated on Rockbank's two-fold advantages of in his memoirs. Firstly, 'the grass on the Keilor plains was sweet, and the property specialised in fattening wethers and barren ewes for the Newmarket sales.' Secondly, Rockbank, 'being so close to Melbourne market' allowed the drovers to 'start with the sheep in the evening and be at the market in the morning.'[58]

In the mid-1870s, when WJ Clarke (later Sir WJ Clarke) was the President of Melton Shire, he was pulling down huts and rebuilding bluestone cottages for the shepherds on *Rockbank* station.[59]

Big Clarke died in 1874 and WJ Clarke inherited his Victorian pastoral estates. Whereas Big Clarke was notorious for his parsimony, WJ Clarke was progressive and prepared to invest. It would be consistent with WJ Clarke's general approach to property if a substantial stone walling program commenced in his era.

Before leaving on his 1874-75 Grand Tour of Europe, Clarke took great pains to organise the running of his huge estates during his absence. 'Each manager and agent was given a program to follow and told to submit monthly reports to him by mail.' He sent them specific instructions regarding sheep, cattle, improved grasses and the preservation of the hares.[60]

A report on the property by the *Australasian's* 'Travelling Reporter' in 1876 advised that *Rockbank* sheep station was 40,000 acres in extent, and carried some 33,000 to 36,000 sheep (depending on the season), and some 800 head of cattle. The land was 'all open plains, with scarcely any shelter for the stock'.[61]

In 1879 the local paper advertised that 'Stonewallers wanted on Rockbank Station. Apply the Manager.' Again in 1880 the paper carried an advertisement:- '*Wanted. Stonewallers on Rockbank Station. Apply The Raglan Hotel or Monmouthshire Hotel.*'[62] These advertisements add to the evidence of a period of considerable walling on the property, although such a program may also have included the large dry stone wall dams that Clarke constructed, including the two on the gully west of Plumpton Road: the Holden Road Dam, on the property, and the Plumpton Dam to the north.

- **Greyhound Coursing**

The wall, situated on 'Plumpton Road' and close to Australia's first coursing Plumpton, may have featured in WJT Clarke's pioneering greyhound coursing events at Diggers Rest.

Together with fox hunting and shooting, coursing was one of the traditional recreations of a country gentleman. Originally there were no tracks or enclosures and each race consisted of two greyhounds pursuing a hare across country. The first officially recognised public coursing meeting held in Australia, in which hares were the game coursed, was held in 1873 on WJ Clarke's Rupertswood station at Sunbury. On the 14th of August 1874, this property hosted the inaugural 'Waterloo Cup', which became the premier greyhound trophy in Australia.

On 14th May 1874 the inaugural 'St Leger Stakes', another celebrated greyhound trophy, was organised by Clarke on his Rockbank station in Melton Shire, at Wallace's Paddock Diggers Rest. Diggers Rest had the advantages over Clarke's Sunbury paddocks of finer grass and more level terrain, so that the courses were easier to follow:

> *'…The ground was dry and firm, good going for the 400 spectators, who were quiet and orderly. The courses were easier to predict because the hares tended to run north, striving to escape into the rough ground bordering Jacksons Creek.'*[63]

Another advantage of Diggers Rest was the nearby railway station, which made public access to the paddocks easy: 'The special train was waiting nearby and reached Melbourne before six o'clock.'

58 Cameron, *op cit*, p.16; p.241
59 Clarke 1980, *op cit*, p.56; The *Melton Express*, 21/10/1876; The *Melton Express*, 14/11/1876
60 Clarke, 1995, *op cit*, p.85
61 *Australasian* Travelling Reporter, 28/10/1876
62 The *Melton Express*, 10/5/1879; 6/3/1880.
63 Clarke (1995), *op cit*, pp. 74-75

'Opening Meeting of the Victoria Coursing Club, at Diggers Rest'.

A good dry stone wall in the open landscape is prominent in these sketches. They are entitled: 'Departure from Railway Station'; 'The Meet at Diggers Rest'; 'The Stonewall'; 'The Deciding Course'.

(The Australasian Sketcher, 14th May 1875)

Such free-range coursing was soon made obsolete by another innovation when Diggers Rest became the premier venue of the Victorian Coursing Club (of which Clarke was President). For the first time, on 1st August 1881 the VCC held the Waterloo Cup in a Plumpton enclosure:[64]

> *'The Waterloo Cup meeting of 1st August 1882 introduced an entirely new element into field coursing. The VCC decided to construct a Plumpton enclosure. The word Plumpton came from a village in Sussex, and WJ Clarke sent details back to Australia after his visit there. The enclosed new oval was hurriedly constructed a mile west of Diggers Rest and was first used for the final two days of the Waterloo Cup. It drew a very large crowd to view the most successful meeting yet held. The innovation met with almost universal approval … there was much less fatigue than that caused by tramping over hundreds of boulder-strewn acres to follow 20 courses in a day … The meeting ended with hearty cheers for the absent Hon. WJ Clarke…'*[65]

For the 1883 season Clarke erected stands, a ladies' enclosure and other improvements.'[66] It was said that: 'none of the most renowned coursing grounds in England equalled the new set-up at Diggers Rest.'[67] The construction of an enclosed course would have meant that walls such as the wall no longer figured in the VCC's famous coursing events at Diggers Rest. By the early 1890s the introduction of greyhound racing in turn caused the demise of the Plumpton. In 1894 the VCC closed 'the Oval'. The special fencing and other improvements were sold and Clarke's 20 year reign as the coursing king of Victoria came to an end. However greyhound racing, always greatly popular in Melton Shire, continued. In May 1876 the Melton Coursing Club was formed at a Raglan Hotel meeting. Over the decades it held its coursing events on Staughton's *Exford*, Browne's *Green Hills*, Moylan's *Mt Kororoit*, Farrell's *Melton Park* and other local properties.[68]

- **The Twentieth Century Break-up of *Rockbank* Station.**

By the end of the nineteenth century historical changes were afoot. In Melton there had long been a belief that the Clarke and other large sheep-runs in the area were holding back the development of the town. In the 1860s local Melton farmer Anders Hjorth had observed that 'the village was surrounded by large pastoral estates on three sides.'[69] As early as 1883 the situation enraged Victoria's radical liberal politician John Quick:

> *'What a monstrous and barbaric law that must be, under which the splendid land between Melbourne and Sunbury, and between Melbourne and Geelong, capable of giving homes and existence to a teeming population, is locked up in pastoral solitudes.'*[70]

64 *ibid*, p.157

65 *ibid*, p.110
66 *ibid*, p.110. (Superior to the Chirnsides' *Werribee Park* copy)
67 *ibid*, p.292
68 Pollitt, *op cit*, p.54; Cameron, *op cit*, p.20; Macdonald, *op cit*, p.10; Starr, *op cit*, pp.199-202; Collins, *op cit*; Peck, Harry H, *Memoirs of a Stockman* (Stock and Land Publishing Co, Melbourne, 1972), pp.50-51; D & W Beaty, pers. conv.; Charles Watson, personal conversation, 9/12/2005; G Minns, pers. conv.
69 Hjorth, *op cit*. Also, MDHS (1905 Melton Express), *op cit*, which refers to these three stations, plus Taylor's *Overnewton* Estate.
70 Cited in Lack, Ford, *op cit*, p.32

Popular discontent intensified as the the 1890s depression deepened, with calls for the repurchase of good pastoral lands for subdivision into small farms. The language was as it had always been: 'the plough' versus 'the sheepwalks'. The 'yeoman ideal', and the associated wrestle for the land between the rich and the poor had been a long-running and major theme in Australian history, evident in the diggers' movements to 'unlock the land' in the 1850s and 60s, the 'Closer Settlement' Acts at the turn of the century, and the early-mid twentieth century 'Soldier Settlement' Acts.

Towards the turn of the century political pressure increased on the owners of Melton's pastoralists to 'break-up' their huge estates. Some of the Melton pastoralists – Sir RTH Clarke of *Rupertswood* and Samuel Staughton of *Eynesbury* – were also local parliamentary representatives in this period, and happy to maintain their family reputations as benevolent local squires. In 1897 Sir Rupert Turner Havelock Clarke Bart, the new inheritor of the Clarke empire, had mused in Parliament about cutting up 40,000 acres of his estate to lease to dairy farmers. He was under some local pressure to make land available for farming, and declared himself keen not to 'disappoint public expectations.'[71] The Victorian Municipal Directory 1898 entry for Melton Shire made the first of a series of unprecedented reports on movements by big local landholders such as Rupert Clarke, Harry Werribee Staughton, and Harvey Patterson to sell and lease (often under the 'share system') large portions of their estates to small farmers and graziers.[72]

And so the beginning of the twentieth century marked a major new era in the history of Melton. It saw the subdivision and sale of thousands of acres of the Clarke, Taylor, and Staughton pastoral empires, and after the First World War, of smaller pastoral estates such as *Melton Park* and *Green Hills*. In 1905 the Closer Settlement Board purchased *Overnewton* and subdivided it into smaller farming allotments.

This early twentieth century 'break-up' of the large estates was a milestone in Australia's history. It coincided with major developments in farming in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, as new science, technologies, fertilisers, transport and markets enabled huge productivity increases. With inventions such as the Babcok separator, the development of local co-operative creameries and butter factories, and advances in refrigeration creating new export markets, dairying in particular boomed. In 1901 there were 42,000 rural properties in Victoria. By 1914 this number had jumped to 70,500, and by 1923 to a peak of 80,500.[73]

In 1898 surveyors on behalf of Sir RTH Clarke began recording the bearings and lengths and fences of the estate in preparation for its sale.[74] The first land sales of the *Rockbank* property, near Werribee, were held in 1901. On Saturday 17th November 1906 the southern part of the *Rockbank* estate, comprising 21,306 acres (over 33 square miles, or c.85 square kilometres) was put up for auction by agent WS Keast & Co on the property at Deer Park.[75] In this driest part of *Rockbank* the 'farming' allotments were sold in much larger parcels, and the rural properties that consequently established there were typically sheep grazing properties, much larger than those elsewhere. In 1909 it was reported that Clarke had sold all that part of the vast *Rockbank* Estate around Digger's Rest.[76] In the same period Clarke also subdivided and sold most of the *Rupertswood*, *Red Rock* and *Bolinda Vale* estates that had been so carefully acquired and tended by his grandfather and father.[77]

- **Dry Stone Walling on the *Rockbank* Estate**

Research undertaken in this project indicates that the Clarkes (WJT Clarke, Sir WJ Clarke, and Sir RTH Clarke) built nearly half of the drystone walls that remain in the Shire. Of a total of over 165 kilometres of drystone walls in Melton Shire (identified in the Shire of Melton Dry Stone Walls study), some 74 km, or 45%, appear to have been built as part of the Clarkes' vast *Rockbank* Estate. Most of the surviving Clarke walls, and the most

71 *Sunbury News*: 31/7/1897, 7/8/1897, 4/9/1897.
72 *Victorian Municipal Directory*, 1898, and following years.

73 Dingle, *op cit*, p 193.
74 Clarke (1980), *passim*; Lands Victoria Torrens Application 32123. Sir RTH Clarke Bart. sold the vast section of the Rockbank Estate that lay south of the Western Highway in November 1906; it appears that he sold the northern portion about a year earlier. (PROV VPRS 460/P0, 35850); also CT Vol.3211 Fol.642206, pertaining to an 8000 acre portion south part of this estate; and also Shire of Melton Ratebooks from 1905-06 which record local farmers as owners of parts of the *Rockbank* estate.)
75 PROV VPRS 460/P0 (35850)
76 *The Sunbury News*, 24 July 1909, p.2.
77 Michael Clarke, *'Big' Clarke* (Queensberry Hill Press, Melbourne, 1980), *passim*; Sir RTH Clarke Bart. sold the vast section of the Rockbank Estate that lay south of the Western Highway in November 1906; it would appear that he sold the northern portion about a year earlier. (PROV VPRS 560/P0 (35850); also CT Vol.3211 Fol.642206, pertaining to an 8000 acre portion south part of this estate; and also Shire of Melton Ratebooks from 1905-06 which record local farmers as owners of parts of the *Rockbank* estate.

prominent of these, are situated in the southern part of the estate, south of Greigs Road.

Unlike farming properties, the vast majority of *Rockbank* pastoral estate walls erected were boundary walls. There were relatively few internal paddock walls. It could be conjectured that *Rockbank* estate boundary walls were more substantial due to their purpose in providing security. However a more detailed study would be required to confirm this. Indeed most of the boundary walls are of much less quality than this wall, although this was probably not always the case. The style and quality of dry stone walls on the Clarke estate varies considerably. This would relate at least in part to the range of wallers used over the long period of their construction, and to the availability and quality of stone on different parts of the estate.

History of the Place

The wall is situated on the west side of Plumpton Road south of Holden Road. It constitutes a boundary to the east side of Section 25, Parish of Kororoit. This allotment is a square, with boundaries of 7900 links (1.59 kilometres), virtually one mile. It is still near this length.

Section 25 was alienated by the Crown to WJ Clarke in June 1854. It was part of the district 'Subdivided by Assistant Surveyor Gibbins April 1854 and sold at Melbourne on the 8th day of June 1854'.[78] The square mile sections to the east, west, north and south of Section 25, and many others beyond, were also purchased from the Crown by Clarke in the 1850s. The country was described by the early surveyors as 'good grazing country, no timber very stony in places'.[79]

In 1854 a track from Keilor to *Green Hills* Station crossed Plumpton Road about 400 metres south of Holden Road, above the headwaters of two shallow gullies, in the exact location of the later wall.[80] It is clear that the country was unfenced at this time, and the wall was not in existence in 1854.

However Clarke soon began to enclose his land. Another early (1857) map of the area immediately adjacent to (but not including) that part of Plumpton Road upon which the wall is built, shows a north-south 'Stone Fence' one mile east of Plumpton Road, in between two Clarke square mile sections.[81] The existence of a 'fence' and 'stone fence' so close suggests that it is possible that the wall was also built around this time.[82] However, that part of Plumpton Road north of wall is shown on this map, and there are no stone walls marked on it. This is mysterious, as it would seem more logical for Clarke to have constructed a wall one mile further west, along the line of a public road which would have necessitated security, than along the internal boundary of two properties both of which were in his ownership. It may simply have been that the government surveyor was focussing on the eastern part of the mapped area, near the Mt Alexander Road and the railway line that were then under construction, and so did not mark all the fences and walls further to the west. Or perhaps Clarke was taking advantage of the fence that would have been built as part of the new railway to the north-east to form an enclosed paddock of appropriate proportions. It is also possible that in the 1850s Plumpton Road was one of the many 'Closed Roads' – surveyed road reservations across which fences or walls were being built by large landowners to prevent through access by the public – that were situated on the *Rockbank* estate (these roads appear to have remained enclosed until at least the late 1870s.)[83]

The wall is situated on the Keilor Plains, which appears to have been the heart of *Rockbank*. Here was the 'sweet' grass upon which the fine Leicester-Merino crosses were fattened before 'Big' Clarke selected those to go to Newmarket. It was in this immediate vicinity that the Clarkes later constructed two large dry stone wall dams on the gully west of Plumpton Road.

Big Clarke died in 1874 and WJ Clarke inherited his Victorian pastoral estates. Whereas Big Clarke was notorious for his parsimony, WJ Clarke was progressive and prepared to invest. In the mid-1870s he was pulling down huts and rebuilding bluestone shepherds cottages on *Rockbank* homestation on the Kororoit Creek.[84] In 1879 the local paper advertised that '*Stonewallers wanted on Rockbank Station. Apply the Manager.*' Again in 1880 the paper carried an advertisement:- '*Wanted.*

78 P/A K74(B2), 1852.
79 Lands Victoria, P/A H98 (B2), 1868.
80 Lands Victoria, 'Kororoit: County of Bourke: Roads Existing in 1839'

81 Lands Victoria, P/A Map H99 (5th May 1857)
82
83 See citations for the Mt Cottrell Dry Stone Wall Precinct and the Mt Atkinson Dry Stone Wall Precinct.
84 Clarke (1980), *op cit*, p.56; The *Melton Express*, 21/10/1876; The *Melton Express*, 14/11/1876

Stonewallers on Rockbank Station. Apply The Raglan Hotel or Monmouthshire Hotel.'[85] These advertisements add to the evidence of a period of considerable walling on *Rockbank* in the late 1870s, although such a program may also have included the large dry stone wall dams that Clarke constructed.

It is more likely than not that the wall dates from around the time that Plumpton Road was actually opened to the public. This may have been anytime from the mid 1850s until after the 1878 Royal Commission into Closed Roads recommended that pastoralists re-open the public roads on their properties. Plumpton Road was obviously named after the VCC Plumpton that was located north-west of wall, on the north side of Holden Road, c.0.5 kilometre west of intersection with Plumpton Road.[86] While it came to fame as the road along which punters accessed the Plumpton from Diggers Rest station, it may well have been a little used, but open, road well before 1882 when the Plumpton was opened.

In 1899 Sir RTH Clarke commissioned Claude Purchas to survey the northern part of the Rockbank Station, in the parishes of Kororoit, Yangardook, Holden and Maribyrnong, a total of 14,202 acres (c.5750 hectares).[87] The area included Section 25 Parish of Kororoit. There were far fewer dry stone walls in this part of Rockbank than the part south of the Western Highway. Purchas' survey plans show that in this area 'fences' and 'post and rail fences' greatly outnumbered the number of boundaries marked with 'stone walls' or 'wall and fence'.

The present wall was in the heart of the major precinct of stone walls in this northern part of the *Rockbank* Station. It was the middle part of the 'stone walls' that extended along a three mile section on the west side of Plumpton Road. (It is less clear whether there were dry stone walls on the east side of Plumpton Road in this period.) There were more limited lengths of other stone walls nearby, notably on north side of Holden Road (west of Plumpton Road), south along the Keilor Melton Road (Melton Highway), and to a lesser extent, on the east side of Holden Road.

The wall defines the eastern boundary of the paddock on which was situated the Holden Dam, some 1400 metres to its west.

In 1900 *Rockbank* Station overseer Henry Randall made a statutory declaration that the fences and walls shown on the plans had all been erected and continuously maintained 'during the last 15 years and upwards'. Elsewhere he states that walls and fences had been erected for '15 consecutive years last past at the least'.[88] This suggests that Randall had commenced work on the property in the year 1885, and that the walls and fences now shown were in existence at that time. The wall was thus built sometime between 1854 and 1885. This was the major period of construction for dry stone walls in Victoria.

Clarke subdivided and sold the estate at the turn of the century.[89] It is likely that Section No.25 was purchased by a farmer who (together with his/her successors) maintained the existing wall, whereas at some stage the stone walls on either side of it (on Plumpton Road) were removed by different owners. As such the remaining portion of stone wall has been reduced to approximately the original mile length of Section 25.

A 1916 Army Ordnance map shows that there was no dwelling situated on Section 25 in that year; the next map in this series (1938) does show a dwelling,[90] so it is possible that initially the property was part of a much larger farm, and the wall was isolated when Section 25 became a discrete property. The 1938 map shows a driveway extending into the north part of the property off Plumpton Road, in the vicinity of the two lower stone walls (P202, P204), which were probably built in the early part of the twentieth century.

By the mid-late twentieth century the dam on the property was known locally as 'Fowls Dam'.[91] The property may have been owned by people of that name. The property has been held by the Ford family for some years, and is now known as *Colglenn*. The wall has been known by them as the 'mile wall'. [92]

85 The *Bacchus Marsh Express*, 10/5/1879; 6/3/1880.
86 Historic Plan: M/Def 94 (1908)
87 PROV VPRS 460/P/32123, Torrens Application lodged by Clarke on 16th October 1899. This area extended from Beattys Road in the south across the Melton Highway, Holden Road, Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road, and to Davis Road in the north, encompassing much of the land eastwards from the Kororoit Creek towards Jacksons Creek.
88 *ibid*, Statutory Declaration, Henry Randall 'of Rockbank … Station Overseer', 14th July 1900.
89 'Rural Heritage Study, Western Region of Melbourne' (Chris Johnston, Context, 1994, pp.171,173) suggests that Section 25 was probably taken up by a First World War Soldier Settler. However it is unlikely that this part of the former Clarke *Rockbank* estate was resumed by the Crown for subdivision under either the Closer or Soldier Settlement schemes, as this is not indicated on the the Parish Plan, as would be the case.
90 Army Ordnance Maps: 'Sunbury' (1916) (1938)
91 John Beaty, personal conversation, 8/5/2002
92 Glenn W Ford, personal conversation, 14/3/2002

Thematic Context / Comparative Analysis:

Shire of Melton Historical Themes: 'Pastoral', 'Farming', 'Transport', 'Water'.

Comparable Places in Shire of Melton:

The most comparable walls in the Shire of Melton are boundary walls of the former Clarke Rockbank station. Most of these are in poor condition, and were originally or have since been converted to composite wall and post-and-wire fence walls. The most comparable wall is the Faulkers Road wall (F100), which is shorter, but higher and would appear to be in more original condition.

Condition:

Overall the wall is in good condition.

Integrity:

The wall has been extensively repaired, and its overall integrity is fair.

Recommendations:

Recommended for inclusion in the Melton Planning Scheme Heritage Overlay.

Other Recommendations:

- The impact on the structure of the cypress plantation that has been planted close behind the wall needs to be monitored.
- Visibility of the walls is diminished where grass has been allowed to grow in front of the wall along Plumpton Road. It is recommended that grass be kept mown.
- A campaign of education regarding the significance of the walls, and penalties for theft of stone, should be initiated by the Shire of Melton. This might include interpretation and other signage.

The integrity of the wall is likely to be affected by any future change in land-use (including rural residential development) or road widening proposals. If this is envisaged, guidelines for appropriate development of the walls (new gates etc) should be prepared; compliance with these should be mandatory.

Walls P200.
A section of the wall in excellent condition; well repaired.

Walls P200.
The average condition of the wall. Note the round, relatively smooth and large field-stone with which the wall is constructed.

Walls P200.
A poor section of the wall.

Walls P200.
Section of the wall north of the cypress plantation. The use of split fieldstone is more prominent in this portion of the wall. The construction of a separate fence to augment the wall has preserved its integrity. In contrast to the main portion of the wall further south, the long grass on the road verge obstructs the view of this portion of the wall.

Citation No. 7 - Selection Wall, Western Highway

Melton Dry Stone Walls Survey Nos:	Wall No N224. (The Gidney Wall)
Location:	2344-2412 Western Highway Rockbank; 1031-1085 Beattys Road Rockbank; 986-1008, 1010-1024, 1026-1040, 1042-1060 Leakes Road, Rockbank. Crown Allotments 2, 3, 5, Section 7, Parish of Kororoit
Critical Dates:	Original construction 1867-68; progressive (non skilled) repair and reconstruction
Existing Heritage Listings:	None
Recommended Level of Significance:	LOCAL

Statement of Significance:

The dry stone wall between the Western Highway and Beattys Road, Rockbank, is significant at the LOCAL level. Built c.1867-68, it is now an early and rare vestige of the opening up of the Rockbank commons for Selection in 1867. It is one of the longest walls in the Shire. It is the only example of the significant heritage of dry stone walls of the Shire of Melton that is visible to city-bound traffic on one of Victoria's major highways.

The dry stone wall, also known as the Selection Wall between the Western Highway and Beattys Road, Rockbank, is historically significant at the LOCAL level. (AHC A4, B2, D2) The wall is expressive of early farming practices on Melbourne's western plains. The wall is an early, rare, and one of the most substantial surviving structures of any sort associated with the Rockbank selections in the the 1860s and 70s; the only building known to survive from this selection period is the (much altered) former Rose & Crown Hotel,(HO 121) built 1875; other extant dry stone walls from the Rockbank selection era are very much remnants of the originals. The wall comprises the most substantial surviving evidence of Isaac Gidney's Spring Farm, and his trade of horses and chaff for the India army, an enterprise engaged in by some large farmers in the Melton – Werribee districts. The wall is also associated with Digby Tarleton, a local farmer and Newmarket stock dealer, whose family still lives in Melton, and who married the daughter of celebrated Melton midwife Hannah Watts.

The dry stone wall between the Western Highway and Beattys Road, Rockbank is aesthetically significant at the LOCAL level. (AHC E1). It is one of the longest walls in the Shire, and one of only 13% of all walls that were recorded as being over 1300 millimetres in height. Its construction is representative of a typical style of wall in Melton Shire and Melbourne's west. It is one of the most prominent walls in the Shire by virtue of its location on the Western Highway. It is perpendicular to the highway, and is the only dry stone wall in the Shire of Melton that is in any way conspicuous to city-bound travellers on the Western Highway. Its visibility is greatly enhanced by its rural context of flat farmland and the virtual absence of buildings in its immediate vicinity.

The dry stone wall between the Western Highway and Beattys Road, Rockbank is scientifically significant at the LOCAL level. (A1, C2) It demonstrates the volcanic origin of the landscape. Its stone is generally smooth, round and dense with little surface friction, typical of Melton's dry stone walls. The wall has the potential to yield research information regarding wall construction techniques, nineteenth century rural settlement patterns, the impact of the Selection Acts, and ways of life on Melbourne's western plains.

The dry stone wall between the Western Highway and Beattys Road, Rockbank is socially significant at the LOCAL level (AHC G1). It has the potential to educate the community in regard to wall construction techniques, and also nineteenth century farm management, settlement patterns, and ways of life on Melbourne's western plains. As the only dry stone wall in the Shire of Melton that is effectively visible to city-bound traffic it has considerable potential for restoration and public education / interpretation regarding the important dry stone wall heritage of the Shire of Melton.

Overall, the dry stone wall between the Western Highway and Beattys Road, Rockbank is of LOCAL significance.

Description:

The wall is situated about half way between Mount Cottrell to its south, and Mount Kororoit to its north. They are two of about 400 inactive eruption points that have been identified on Victoria's western volcanic plains, which stretch from the Darebin Creek to near the South Australian border. Most were active between 4.5 million and 20,000 years ago.

The wall is situated south of the Kororoit Creek, so Mount Cottrell is the most likely source of the fieldstone used in its construction. Mount Cottrell was built up by a succession of lava flows over its life. These broad, thin tongue flows of lava radiated from Mt Cottrell in all directions, the longest being to the south. The lava flows changed the drainage lines and caused the present courses of the Werribee River to its west, and the Kororoit Creek to its north.[1]

Although a very broad 'shield' volcano, like many of the volcanoes on these plains, which stretch from the Darebin Creek to near the South Australian border, Mount Cottrell lends a dramatic and distinctive character to an otherwise flat landscape. Geologically Mount Cottrell is of State significance, having been identified as the 'best example in Victoria of lava shield with lava cone forming summit.' Its notable features are the unusual structures at its bluff and crater, and the extent of its radial flows. It is the 'most massive of the Werribee Plains volcanoes, and one of the largest shield volcanoes in Victoria'.[2]

The broad thin tongues of lava from Mt Cottrell were effusive and slowly cooling, producing a more dense basalt, in contrast to explosive eruptions, or quickly cooling flows, which produced a more vesicular scoria or tuff. While the vesicularity of the basalt extruded from Mount Cottrell varies, the dominant surface stone is a grey basalt,[3] which is evident in the round dense stones of the district.

This round-shaped heavy fieldstone is the dominant material used in the wall. Even the fieldstone with a vesicular surface (providing better friction for construction) is heavy and dense. These smooth, round and dense stones, having less surface friction, are difficult material with which to build a dry stone wall. The sides of walls built with these stones typically have a high batter, and are more pyramidal than vertical in cross-section.

After widening and lowering over time, this wall, like most original all-stone walls in the Shire, has been topped up with post and wire. Parts of the wall have had a detached post-and-wire fence added to the side of the original, rather than having been inserted into the wall. Therefore, unlike most such walls in the Shire, this wall is relatively undamaged. In addition the southern part of the wall (near the Western Highway) is an exception; it remains an all-stone rather than a modified stone and post & wire composite fence.

In common with most old dry stone walls on Victoria's volcanic plains, the wall has been non-professionally and crudely repaired over the decades. Its history of single ownership for most of its life is probably responsible for its reasonably consistent condition over the entire length. Although not one of the more intact walls in the Shire, its length and height are notable, and it retains a quite substantial presence.

The presence is greatly enhanced by its context of flat grassland, swampy depressions and farmland and the virtual absence of buildings in its immediate vicinity. It is perpendicular to the Western Highway, and its southern portion is clearly visible to city-bound traffic. It is in fact

1 Stewart, G, 'The Newer Volcanics lava field between Deer Park and the Werribee River', *Geological Survey of Victoria, Unpublished Report* 1977/26, 1977, pp.4, 7.

2 Rosengren, N, 'Eruption Points of the Newer Volcanics Province of Victoria: An Inventory and Evaluation of Scientific Significance', a report prepared for the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) and the Geological Society of Australia (Victorian Division), 1994, pp.162, 301, 349.

3 *ibid*

the only dry stone wall in the Shire of Melton that is in any way conspicuous to city-bound travellers on the Western Highway. It is effectively the only example of the significant Shire of Melton dry stone wall heritage that is visible to traffic proceeding eastwards along one of the most significant highways in the State.

At 1440 metres in length, it is one of the longest walls in the Shire. It is the 19th longest of the 303 walls for which length has been recorded, putting it well within the top ten percentile. It is almost three times the average length of the dry stone walls in the Shire.

It is also one of only 13% of all walls recorded in the Shire of Melton Dry Stone Walls Study that are over 1300 millimetres in height, the highest category of walls recorded in the Study.

History:

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY: DRY STONE WALLS IN NINETEENTH CENTURY VICTORIA

- **Fencing the Wilderness, 1850s-1870s**

The majority of dry stone walls in Victoria appear to have been built in the 30 year period from the 1850s to the 1880s.

In 1826 rural affairs commentator James Atkinson reported that he knew of no example of dry stone walling having been erected in the colony of New South Wales.[4] Initially pastoralists employed shepherds to look after sheep. They guided the sheep to pasture during the day, and in the evening returned them to folds, constructed of wooden hurdles or brush fences, near their huts (or outstations). There are several dry stone walls on Melton's Kororoit Creek that are thought to have been associated with early pastoralists: an outstation associated with Yuille at Caroline Springs, and the remnants of a wall that are thought to have been associated with a shepherd's enclosure.[5] Other fencing was used on the squatters' homestations:- the 'home paddock' (likely for the squatters' precious horses) and the 'cultivation [or kitchen] garden'. Early fences were also required to separate stock for breeding purposes. These fences were usually of post & rail, vertical timber slabs or other primitive paling material.[6] (However at *Greenhills* in Toolern Vale there are some remains of a dry stone wall that would appear to be the remnants of an original homestation garden.[7])

Two major and related events in the early 1850s radically changed this situation. Firstly, the exodus to the gold-rushes made it difficult and expensive for squatters to retain labour for shepherding. And secondly, the extensive survey, subdivision and sale of Crown land in the early 1850s provided security of tenure to pastoralists, and incentive for them to invest in major improvements, including permanent fences, on their stations. Pastoralists were also encouraged to fence their land to ensure that neighbouring farmers didn't allow their stock to stray upon the open expanses of their stations.

Nevertheless, until the 1860s, extensive fencing of properties remained the exception rather than the rule. The first boundary fences in the Barrabool Hills of Victoria were only erected in 1854, and boundary and paddock fencing 'only gathered momentum after the mid 1850s.'[8] This was no doubt due to the extensive sale of Crown Land as freehold in the 1850s, as well as the increasing availability of capital due to the gold boom, and the increasing availability of labour including professional stone wallers as alluvial gold declined in the late 1850s.

Slowly, fences began to replace shepherds on the pastoral estates. Early maps of Melton Shire show that pastoralists built walls and fences relatively sparsely – only on property boundaries and to enclose huge paddocks (about 5-10 square kilometres in the south part of Clarke's Rockbank estate).[9] In dramatic contrast the same historical maps (and the mapping survey undertaken as part of this Study) show concentrated patterns of walled paddocks established on farms in the same areas at the same time. The creation of small paddocks enabled mixed farming, by securing crops and gardens from stock, and managing stock for breeding. This Study shows that, in the south of the Shire, virtually all of these fences were dry stone walls. Dry stone walls were also used to protect the homestead from stock,

4 Kerr, JS, 'Fencing, a brief account of the development of fencing in Australia', *Australasian Society for Historical Archaeology Newsletter*, Vol. 14.No.1, March 1984, pp.9-16.
5 Melton Heritage Study Place Nos. 467 and 81.
6 Kerr, *loc cit*; Allan Willingham, 'The Dry Stone Walls in the Corangamite Region: A Brief History', in Corangamite Arts Council Inc, *If These Walls Could Talk, Report of the Corangamite Dry Stone Walls Conservation Project*, Terang, 1995, p.44
7 Melton Heritage Study, Place No.055
8 Kerr, *loc cit*
9 Shire Map Series (1892); Army Ordnance Map, 1916: 'Sunbury'.

to construct stockyards, fowl houses and pigpens, and possibly, on a few of the larger farms, to provide aesthetic effect.[10]

Given the expense of establishing a farm from nothing in a wilderness, and the experience of many small farmers as agricultural labourers before coming to Australia, it is almost certain that the walls on all but the largest farms would have been constructed by farmers themselves rather than by professional wallers. For example, general hand William Ison and his wife arrived on a Werribee farm in the mid 1850s, and found there a small wooden cottage and a young German in charge, 'who had already done some clearing of the stones which covered the land … We set to, and cleared about 10 acres, and had it fenced in with stones by the next sowing time.'[11] The quality of wall construction would have depended on the experience of the farmers and their seasonal hands at the craft. William Robinson who settled in the Tarneit area in 1872, was a stonemason who turned his skills to fieldstone, building a house (which does not survive) of the material and numerous fences (some of which do survive along Robinsons Road).

The outbreak of the highly contagious sheep disease, 'scab', which reached epidemic proportions in the 1850s, hastened enclosure of the pastoral estates.[12] Western District squatter Neil Black quickly enclosed his Glenormiston run, and in 1854 George Russell ordered five miles of wire: '…the importance of fencing is becoming every year more apparent.'[13]

Likewise, the appearance of pluero-pneumonia in Australian cattle in the early 1860s impressed cattle-men of the need to isolate their properties from travelling or straying stock.[14] That 'dreadful disease' also encouraged the erection of property fences by Melton dairy farmers (and was responsible for less use of local Commons by Melton farmers).[15]

By 1876 the presence of 'substantial stone walls' appears to have been hallmark of a good farm in the Melton district, the *Australasian*'s 'Travelling Reporter' making sure to note these on the farms of Ralph Parkinson, George Missen and Isaac Gidney.[16]

However little is known of dry stone wallers who worked in the Shire at the time: Irish brothers John and George Funston worked in the Toolern Vale area from the 1850s; Patrick Connor worked on Mount Aitken in the 1860s; and Dick (the mason) Mitchell, and Arcoll (Arkell) worked in the Mount Cottrell area before 1872.[17]

The construction of fencing that was encouraged by sheep scab and cattle pleuro pneumonia was also fostered by legislation. At the beginning of the pastoral period in Victoria, common law held that, generally, a landowner was under no obligation to construct or maintain boundary fences, or fences adjoining a public road. However, as a result of Australia's rapidly expanding pastoral industry, trespass of stock, and the need for security, Victoria's *Fences Statute 1865* gave landowners the right to claim equal contribution towards the construction or repair of boundary fences from the owners of adjoining lands.[18]

- **Types of Fencing in the Nineteenth Century**

The great variety and combination of nineteenth century fencing arose 'as much from material shortages and the need to use what was procurable as from a desire to improve the utility and durability of fencing.'[19] As is the case with the rest of the Shire, most of the walls in the Greigs Road precinct are 'composite' stone and post & wire, rather than all-stone.

The *Fences Statute 1874* lists numerous types of fences, including 'walls' (stone walls) and 'combination' type fences. Walls that divided properties had to be a

10 Alan Marshall, asking an old waller why the walls on a particular property were so high, was told that ostensibly the reason was to keep steers in (they jumped fences), but the real reason was 'just so that he could say he had the best walls in the Western District, the biggest and the best, and bugger you.' (cited in Corangamite Arts Council, 1995, p.114). On Melbourne's western plains district however, such finely constructed walls were generally associated with formal gardens on only the largest properties, such as the Ha Ha walls on the Eynesbury (Melton Shire) and Werribee Park (Wyndham Shire) pastoral estates, or Greystones (Moorabool Shire).

11 Murray, E, *The Plains of Iramoo*, Henwood & Dancy, Geelong, 1974, p.111. (Murray notes that in 1974 these walls were still standing.)

12 Kerr, *loc cit*

13 Willingham, *op cit*, p.45

14 Kerr, *loc cit*

15 Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 1864, p.94 ; John Chandler, Michael Canon, *Forty Years in the Wilderness* (Loch Haven, Main Ridge, 1990), p.175

16 The *Australasian*, October 1876.

17 Bilszta, JA, 'Dry Stone Wall: Faulkners Road, Mt Cottrell, Shire of Melton', 9/9/1990, unpublished paper

18 Lawlink: New South Wales Law Reform Commission website: 'Report 59 (1988) – Community Law Reform Program: Dividing Fences'; Parliament of Victoria website: Law Reform Committee, 'Review of the Fences Act 1968'

19 Kerr, *loc cit*

minimum of 4 feet high (1.22 metres), with a base of 'not less than 2 feet wide at the bottom', and '9 inches at the top'.[20] Although the specifications for road boundary fences were not given (the Crown being exempt from the legislation) it could be expected that the walls on these public boundaries would be at least as high as those that divided neighbouring properties.

Post and rail fences were the most common early fence type in Australia, no doubt due to the prevalence of forests and woodlands, in comparison with stony land, across Victoria. They appeared early and were prominent in the study area. In 1854 William Westgarth, on his way to the goldfields Royal Commission in Ballarat, recorded that he 'struck west through post and rail fences onto the Keilor Plains'.[21] By the 1860s timber fencing, probably from the Grey Box forest in the west and south-west of the Shire, was common in the vicinity of Melton. But as local farmer John Chandler recorded, such fencing was prone to loss in the bushfires that swept south from the ranges over the plains.[22] Even in the volcanic area near Aitkens Hill to the north of the Shire, nearly 80% of squatter John Aitken's fencing was either 'post & rail' (either 2 rail, the most common, or 3 rail), or 'post & 2 rails with (2 or 3) wires', or 'post & rail with 5 foot palings'. The balance was 'stone walls'.[23] These figures might reflect squatters' early preference for timber fencing, and an early dearth of professional dry stone walling skills, not remedied until after the gold rushes. In 1868 on the same property Henry Beattie erected much more stone walling, but also built nearly twice as much '3-rail fence' in the same year.[24]

- **Dry Stone Walls**

In 1856 a government agricultural reporter travelling through the eastern part of Melton Shire (the Parish of Maribyrnong) commented that: 'A few good stone fences the only improvement worth noting.'[25]

A dry stone wall was the best solution:- 'Where stone was abundant, timber scarce, transport of fencing material expensive, skilled labour available, and where cheaper alternatives were unavailable.'[26] From about the mid-late 1850s, when freehold ownership exploded and the price of labour declined, and through the early 1860s when the price of labour remained cheap, the labour-intensive construction of stone walls remained very competitive.

Post and wire fences were first introduced into Victoria in the 1850s, but the price of the metal posts (which could often not go down into the dry hard ground in Victoria) made them 'exceedingly expensive'.[27] The very thick and soft 'black bull wire' was soon superseded by galvanised steel wires which, with droppers to keep the wire stable, allowing greater distance between fence posts, reducing the costs.[28] With progressive improvements, including local production of wire, use of timber posts, and winding and straining devices, by at least the early 1870s wire was the cheapest type of fence.[29] The invention of barbed wire in the 1870s, and its widespread use in Victoria in the 1880s meant that it could secure cattle as well as sheep, and it became the standard fence type from this time.[30]

Stone walls were built wherever stony ground made them possible, or necessary. While most farmers built their own walls to clear stony ground and manage stock and crops, pastoralists could afford professional wallers.[31] In the mid 1850s brothers John and George Funston, stone wallers and farm labourers from Ireland, are known to have been erecting walls on the Mount Aitken and Gisborne Park estates.[32] The Mount Aitken station accounts in 1868 showing the employment of a John Starkie for four weeks to help Henry gather and cart stones, and the engagement of 'Paterick [sic] Connor, Stone Wall Fencer' to erect 34 chains of stone

20 The Fences Statute 1874 (Fences Amendment Act, November 1873), Clause 4 (i-xi). Other types of early fencing are described in Michael Cannon's *Life in the Country: Australia in the Victorian Age: 2*, Nelson, West Melbourne, 1978, pp.89-90; and Graham Condah's *Of the Hut I Builded*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1988, p.89.

21 Lack, J, Ford, O, 'Melbourne's Western Region: An Introductory History' (Melbourne's Living Museum of the West Inc, Melbourne Western Region Commission, 1986), p.27

22 Chandler, *op cit*, p.174

23 Map, 'Index of Fences' on John Aitken's Mount Aitken property (after Crown Land sales). PROV 460/P0/39365. (The stone walls would appear not to survive.)

24 Beattie, Steward K, *The Odd Good Year: Early Scots to Port Phillip, Northern Australia, Gap, Gisborne and Beyond*, Southwood Press, Marrickville, 1999, p.63

25 Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 'Statistics of Victoria for 1856', Appendix No.1, p.46

26 Vines, G, 'Comparative Analysis of Dry Stone Walls in Victoria, Australia and Overseas', in Corangamite Arts Council, 1995, *op cit*, p.56

27 Willingham, *op cit*, pp.45-6

28 Cannon, 1978, *op cit*, pp.89-91

29 Survey of 21 Selectors in the Holden – Mount Cottrell districts.

30 Willingham, *op cit*, p.46; Kerr, *loc cit;* Cannon, 1978, *loc cit*

31 Ann Beggs-Sunter, 'Buninyong and District Community News', Issue 211, August 1996

32 Judith Bilszta, Melton Heritage Study Research, Place No.029 (3/8/2005)

walling at the very low rate of only 8 shillings per chain.

The popularity of stone walls with farmers is evident in the Lands Department files relating to the 1860s Selection Acts, which record the type, length and price of fencing 'improvements' made by each selector. A detailed examination of 21 selections in the Mount Cottrell, Rockbank, Mount Kororoit and Diggers Rest–Holden areas reveals that stone walling constituted by far the largest proportion (60%) of the 32.3 kilometres of fencing built on those properties by c.1875, despite the fact that it was the most expensive. Post & wire fences, one of the cheapest types of fencing then available, comprised only 6% of all fences erected. Post & rail fences, a little cheaper than the best stone walls, and a little dearer than the cheapest, constituted 9% of the fences. (Note that many other 'composite' varieties of fences were constructed from these three primary materials. There were also a small number of 'stub' or picket, and 'log' fences.[33])

Stone walling resolved two problems: the need to clear the land of rocks, and the need for fencing. Unquestionably, as was the case elsewhere, the key reason for the preference for dry stone walls on Melbourne's western plains by selectors was the need to clear stony land to enable cropping and grazing (dairying).[34]

Apart from the relatively small areas of Melton Shire that were sold under the Selection Acts, there were many other areas of dry stone walling in the Shire. It is estimated that there were 23 miles of fencing on the Moylan brothers' Mt Kororoit property by 1876, and from the extensive walling that survives today it is evident that much of this was dry stone wall construction.[35] Property sale advertisements in the local paper suggest that the properties on the Keilor Plain east of Toolern Creek were almost entirely walled.[36] Advertisements for stone wallers in the Buttlejorrk, Diggers Rest and Rockbank Estate areas appeared regularly until 1890. Between Toolern Vale and Diggers Rest the Beaty family built many kilometres of medium sized stone walls along boundaries, and a few larger walls inside their properties for stock. Other walls, including one of substantial composition (on the former Campbells' Toolern Park property), are scattered lightly around Toolern Vale. The highest concentration of walls is situated in the southern plains of the Shire: the 1850s small farming communities of Mt Cottrell and Truganina, and the paddock and boundary fences of WJT Clarke's Rockbank station.

According to Vines the dry stone walls of the Keilor-Werribee Plains 'form a reasonably distinct regional style quite different from either the interstate examples or the Western District walls'. This regional style is characterised by:-

> *'… walls constructed using the local rounded, smoothly weathered, basalt field-stone of variable size. They are generally fairly low walls, averaging 1.2 metres with a width at the base of an average of 0.83 metres and battered sides on a slope of about 5-10 degrees off the vertical. Coursing is uncommon although coping is almost always found on intact walls and through stones can usually be identified at regular intervals of about one metre. The coping stones are often quite large, rounded boulders of a maximum dimension of 400-500 millimetres. Because of their rounded shape the stones are rarely suited to the close-fitting construction seen on the Western district walls, either for the main part of the wall or the coping. As a result, the rabbit proofing techniques involving close plugging, overhanging coping, or other methods are never found in this region.'*[37]

These regular round stones lack interlocking, and often surface friction, and were never the ideal building material. The author of the 1848 'Rural Cyclopedia' considered round stones objectionable 'as they are ever rolling off'. The small wedge stones which held these round stones in position were easily dislodged.[38] Similarly, the 'round stone fence' surmounted by turf was described in Loudon's 1857 guide to British agriculture as a 'very indifferent fence', whose only apparent benefit

33 Research of PROV VPRS 625 (Selection Act files) for the Keneally, Slattery, Reddan J, Reddan M, Tate, Rhodes C, Rhodes, McKenzie, O'Brien P, McLeod, O'Brien J, Moloney, White, Mangovin, Carrige, Moylan Mary, Moylan Margaret, Parry, Moylan, MP, Moylan T, and Watts selections. This sample is primarily of selectors on stony country, Hannah Watts, in the forest off Chapmans Road Toolern Vale being the only exception; interestingly, the cost of her post & rail fences were half the price of the others, no doubt reflecting the relative proximity of materials, with none of the other properties having ready access to local timber. Another possible bias of the sample is the over-representation of Moylan properties. But it remains a good sample of fences built in stony country in the period late 1860s to mid 1870s.

34 Selectors were in fact obliged under the Selection Acts to cultivate 10% of their land area.

35 The *Australasian*, 28th October 1876

36 Bilszta, 1990, *op cit*.

37 Corangamite Arts Council, *op cit*, p.58

38 Willingham, *op cit*, p.41

was that it cleared the land of stone and could be built by labourers. It was found to be unstable when built to a standard wall height. Stock could easily dislodged its copings, and 'great trouble and expense are annually required to keep it in repair.'[39] Despite this, as can be seen in an apparently scarce example of this type in Corangamite (the Foxhow Road Wall), a sturdy wall of very respectable height could be built by careful selection and coursing of stones, and the use of copestones and extensive plugging.[40]

The Fences Statute's specification of walls to be a minimum 4 feet (1220 mm) high seems to have been the 'average paddock height' for which tenders were called in sheep country.[41] Walls in cattle country were built higher 'to discourage the cattle from leaning over to reach greener pastures and dislodging coping stones'. While numerous Western District dairying walls are higher, 'walls enclosing cattle were generally at least 1.4 metres (4 feet 7 inches) high'.[42] This standard also seems to have been applied in Melton, where the Moylan's high walls on Mount Kororoit Farm measure 1400 mm.

Although there is no conclusive evidence of it in Melton Shire, elsewhere boundary walls were built higher than internal walls. Vines states that: 'In almost all the dry stone wall regions in Victoria, the … most substantial walls are located along the boundaries of properties. Subdivision of properties into fields was evidently a secondary consideration once the property had been fenced. Additional stone walls would be constructed to subdivide the property into paddocks if the field stone was so abundant as to allow these.'[43] Perkins (whose stone wall education was in Britain) states similarly that: 'Inner boundaries however were not built as high as the boundary fences, which are also known as March Dykes.'[44]

While most of the walls in the Shire of Melton and on Melbourne's western plains were 'composite walls', either built with a stone bottom and post-and-wire top, or had a post-and-wire top added as the original all-stone wall collapsed over time, Wall No.P200 on Plumpton Road is now unusual as a remaining all-stone wall in the Shire of Melton.

History of the Place

The wall is situated in Section 7 Parish of Kororoit, and marks the boundary between three Crown Allotments (Nos. 2 on the west side, and 3 & 5 on the east side) that were sold under the Selection provisions of the Land Acts. On the east side of the wall the northernmost allotment (Crown Allotment 2, extending to Leakes Road) was selected by Digby Tarleton, and the southern one (Crown Allotment 5, also extending to Leakes Road), was selected by Isaac Gidney. The allotment on the west side of the wall (Crown Allotment 2) was selected by AT Frost.[45]

The land had previously been near the centre of the Rockbank 'farmers common',[46] the neighbouring farmers being permitted to graze stock there in proportion to the number of acres they cultivated. The appearance of the 'dread disease' pleuro pneumonia' on these commons there in 1864 had been a major cause of concern.[47] The land was opened for selection in 1867.

Early Melton settler Anders Hjorth recalled that a day or two before the Lands Board met to determine who would obtain the land there was a great influx of would-be selectors from different parts of Victoria, and even South Australia. 'They came in all sorts of conveyances, a good many in covered wagons'; the 'excitement was intense'.[48] The Lands Board, meeting in Bacchus Marsh, allocated the sites by ballot.

While the selection files held at the Public Records Office are usually a rich source of information regarding the description, extent and value of improvements (including fences and walls), unfortunately this is not so in relation to the selections on Section 7 Parish of Kororoit. All of the Gidney selections files are missing.[49]

39 Loudon, JC, *Encyclopaedia of Agriculture*, 5th Edition (Longman Brown Green Longmans and Roberts, London, 1857), p.496
40 Corangamite Arts Council, *op cit*, p.28
41 Willingham, *op cit*, p.41. (The 1300 mm height was chosen as one of the categories for Study field survey. Almost all of the walls in the Shire had a base width of 700-800 mm.); Corangamite Arts Council, *op cit*, pp.49, 113
42 *ibid*, pp.17, 21, 130; Rod McLellan, 'The Dry Stone Walls of Victoria's Western District', *Historic Environment* Vol 7 No 2, 1989, pp.28-32
43 Corangamite Arts Council, *op cit*, p.60
44 *ibid*, p.130
45 Parish Plan, Parish of Kororoit. (Note that the land was originally taken up under an earlier Land Act, but not alienated until after the passing of the 1869 Act.)
46 Bob Macdonald, 'History of Melton', typescript, October 1969, p.6
47 Anders Hjorth, 'Recollections of Melton 1861-67', in Melton & District Historical Society Newsletter, April 2001, pp.2-3
48 *loc cit*
49 PROV, VPRS 629/P/33 (File No.5949 in particular).

And the information provided for the Tarleton and Frost selections is unusually basic.[50]

Arthur Thomas Frost, who took up Crown Allotments 1 & 2 to the west of the wall in April 1867 is described in the file only as being from Riddells Creek. He appears to have taken over the selection from a Robert Johnson Sugden, who also had an interest in the allotments in April 1867.[51] AT Frost may have been a relation of Charles Frost, the Melton bootmaker who is reported to have also had a 'dairy at East Melton and when not at his trade had a horse and dray carrying goods to and from Melbourne'.[52] In September 1870 Frost successfully applied for his Selection lease to be replaced with a Crown grant. To have been entitled to make such an application Frost must have fenced the property boundary. Given the popularity of dry stone walls with selectors, and what is known about the survival of other selectors' dry stone walls, it is virtually certain that the existing wall (the eastern boundary of CA2), would have been constructed between April 1867 and September 1870.

The ratebooks of Braybrook Shire, within which the property was situated at the time, tell a little more about the ownership history of the allotments in this period. Gidney, Tarleton and Frost do not appear in the 1866 ratebooks, whereas in 1867 RJ Sugden (but not Frost) appears in association with Crown Allotments 1 and 2. (A George Gidney, perhaps a relation of Isaac, appears as a farmer/slaughterman, in the Parish of Cut Paw Paw, closer to Melbourne.) The 1868 ratebook shows that Frost has taken over Sugden's selection. Digby Tarleton also appears in 1868, apparently having taken over the selection of a Garnet Coghlan. Isaac Gidney suddenly appears as the owner or leesee of 6 selection allotments totalling some 550 acres in the Parish of Kororoit and 140 acres in the Parish of Cut Paw Paw. Each of his Kororoit selections is taken up in partnership. In the case of the allotment adjacent to the wall (Crown Allotments 5) his partner is a Slater Mawson. This allotment has no dwelling marked, and there is no other evidence that a house was ever built on Gidney's allotments east of and adjacent to the wall. On the other hand a 'house' is recorded on his allotment on the opposite (eastern) side of Leakes Road, on the north-eastern corner of Western Highway, and a 'hut' on the allotments to the north of this.

50 PROV, VPRS 629/P/37 (File No.7580); VPRS 629/P/4 (File No.677).
51 PROV, VPRS 629/P/4 (File 677)
52 Alexander Cameron, 'Melton Memoirs' (M&DHS), p.9

It is of note that the valuation of the Sugden/Frost property increased between the years 1867 and 1868, but not between 1868 and the year 1870, at which time the wall must definitely have been built. It is very likely then that the 1867-68 increase in valuation was due to the construction of fencing/walls, as there was no house recorded on the property, and fences/walls were usually the first or one of the first major improvement made on new farms.[53]

In May 1873 Gidney received the Crown grant for the southern property on the east side of the wall, and in October 1873 Tarleton received the Crown grant for the northern property on the east side of the wall.[54]

In the selection file, the occupation of Digby Tarleton of Melton in 1867 is given as 'dairyman'.[55] A seaman before taking up land in Rockbank, Digby married Mary Burns, daughter of famous Melton midwife Hanna 'Grannie' Watts, after whom Melton's main park on Toolern Creek is named. There are numerous photographs of Digby and his descendents in Starr's history of Melton.[56] He became a cattle dealer with another Melton pioneer Harry Minns.[57] His business was substantial enough to be noted in Harry H Peck's celebrated memoirs of the Newmarket Stockyards as they were in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. With John Kirk, Harry Minns and John Dickins, he is described as one of the 'distinct personalities who were regular suppliers to Newmarket from their farms close to town'. Peck notes that Digby was by his accent 'Yorkshire or Lancashire':

> *'Short and spare with little curly locks, active and quick-tempered, Digby with his light-weight had the sense to keep out of bodily encounters; he was hard to beat in a verbal one.'*[58]

Digby 'went bust' in the drought of 1882.[59] *This may have been the reason he left his Selection. He was killed in 1895. The family continued on in different farms in the Rockbank and Toolern Vale areas. In*

53 PROV, VPRS 1695/P/1, Shire of Braybrook Ratebooks, 1866-1870. Note that ratebook records can be some 12 months behind actual events.
54 Parish Plan, Parish of Kororoit.
55 PROV, VPRS 629/P/37 (File No.7580)
56 Starr, J, *Melton: Plains of Promise* (Shire of Melton, nd, c.1985), pp.100-109. The book's statement that Digby arrived in Australia in 1871 is clearly wrong.
57 Leo Tarleton, personal conversation, 27th December 2001.
58 Peck, Harry H, *Memoirs of a Stockman* (Stock and Land Co, Melbourne, 1972), p.123
59 Leo Tarleton, personal conversation, 27th December 2001.

1906 his son George took up a Closer Settlement allotment on what is now Tarletons Road, less than two kilometres from his father's original selection. In 1952 they purchased the property Bonnie Doon also on Tarleton's Road.[60] *The association with Newmarket continued: son George bred the 'first Friesian cow to reach £100 at market'; George's son Leo, grandson of Digby, is photographed holding the cow at the Newmarket saleyards, with a group that includes Jim Minns, grandson of Digby's partner Harry Minns.*[61] *Although Mary Tolhurst (Digby's granddaughter) and other members of the Tarleton family remain in the Melton area, in the early 1990's Leo Tarleton moved the farm to Boort. Subdivision activities and projected rezonings in the Melton area had impacted on the long term viability of farming.*[62]

Ratebooks indicate that by 1889 neither Frost nor Tarleton remained on their selections. By the 1880s good prices were being offered for Rockbank land, and Melbourne speculators, fired by the land boom, looked to buy land near new railway lines such as that which reached Rockbank in the early 1880s. However it was Gidney who purchased their lands. By 1889 ten properties totalling over 2,700 acres (c.1100 hectares) were in the occupation of Isaac, Charles, Henry and John Gidney, who describe themselves as 'dealers'. Most of these properties appear to have been actually owned by the Gidneys, with the exception of two which are leased from the executors of deceased estates, including that of William Tulloh (of *Strathtulloh*). All of the Gidney properties are marked as being entirely 'fenced', and some have a number of houses.[63] An 1892 map shows 'I Gidney' as the owner occupier of the entire extent of land north of the Western Highway and south of Beattys Road, between Paines Road in the west and to the Beattys Road crossing of Kororoit Creek in the east (over 1400 acres, or 580 ha). He had acquired the land of all the other selectors in this area: Frost, Tarleton, Frazer, Quaile, Mathews and Howard. At this time Gidney also possessed another c.500 (200 ha) acres nearby, to the south of the Western Highway.[64] At the same time he had disposed of one of his smaller relatively selections on the north side of Kororoit Creek (the site of the house *Bonnie Doon* on Tarletons Road) to WJT Clarke. While this was the only one of his properties with stream frontage, there were two Water Reserves very close to his main property.

Isaac Gidney cropped, made hay, grazed stock and bred remount horses for the India service on this Rockbank property, which he called '*Spring Farm*'.[65] A native of Norwich England, he had made money supplying goods to goldfields and in the 1860s set up as a successful dealer. He was then living in Abbotsford Street North Melbourne. He invested heavily in land particularly in Shire of Braybrook, and also had land in the Parish of Maribyrnong under family management, and in the Parish of Pywheitjorrk under lease. In 1886 he sent for his brother who arrived to manage *Spring Farm*.

Whilst Isaac Gidney himself continued to reside in North Melbourne (moving from Abbotsford Street to 'Hotham Villa' in Dryburgh Street), his sons and nephews travelled extensively in pursuit of their business shipping horses between Melbourne and India. Nephew William, son of John, who worked on *Spring Farm*, died of Colonial fever in Madras in 1884 whilst managing a shipment of horses.

Charles Gidney and his descendents inherited *Spring Farm*. By the mid twentieth century it had begun to be sold out of the family. In early 1942 Sections 2 and 3 (202 acres) were developed as the United States Army receiving station for the Pacific War. Towards the end of the year, after major victories, the United States forces moved north and the station was developed as the Australian Army Signals (Receiving) Station. By 1952 the Army was looking to greatly expand its operations as part of the UK Army Wireless Chain and the AMF Command Communications System. The owners of the additional 884 acres that the Army sought to acquire were Mrs EM Hughes, 'daughter of Mrs Gidney' (604 acres), and Mr G Harrison (279 acres).[66] There were three dwellings on the property, one of which was 'owned by Mrs Hughes and is approximately 100 years old … in poor condition'. It was at the time being rented by a Mr Jazar for 13 shillings 6 pence per week. This Hughes house was situated on Crown Allotment 1B, on the north-eastern corner of the Western Highway

60 Melton *Express* 26/4/1952
61 Starr, *op cit*, p.109
62 Mary Tolhurst, personal conversation, August 2005
63 PROV, VPRS 1696/P/1, Shire of Braybrook Ratebook, 1889. The ratebooks of 1880 and 1888 similarly note that the Gidney properties were all fenced.
64 Shire Map Series, 1892: Parishes of Kororoit and Pywheitjorrk.
65 The following biographical information on Isaac Gidney is Judith Bilsztas's research of genealogical (BDM etc) sources; *Victoria and its Metropolis*; the *Australasian* newspaper; the Bacchus Marsh *Express* and the 'Vertical Files' in the RHSV collection.
66 The Bacchus Marsh *Express*, 29th March 1952.

and Leakes Road (where the Signals personnel estate was built in the 1960s).[67] This was almost certainly the Gidney house that was noted in on these allotments (Crown Allotments 1 and 8) in the 1868 ratebook.

The other two houses noted in 1952 were built in the early twentieth century, and were occupied by Mr A Missen and Mr Harrison.[68] Others Rockbank families associated with the former *Spring Farm* in more recent years included Peacock and and Summers. In Pywheitjorrk, the Misses Smith purchased the Gidney land to add to their *Strathtulloh* holding. *Spring Farm* had had a large stable complex of bluestone and split palings a short distance off Ballarat Road. Remnants of the stables could be seen in the paddock adjacent to the Western Highway east of Leakes Road until the mid 1980's. A 1916 map shows an intense pattern of walls near the stable location. This land was eventually purchased by Harold Missen.

There appears never to have been a house constructed on the allotments originally selected by Gidney on the western side of Leakes Road (Sections 5 and 6A), adjacent to the wall. However by 1916 a house does appear on the allotment on the western side of the wall (the Sugden/Frost selection); this was perhaps an early building, or else not very substantial, as it was gone by 1938.[69]

The pattern of dry stone walls shown in the 1916 map matches almost exactly the boundaries of the original properties that were offered to selectors. This indicates that the majority of walls were built in the original selection phase. Within a decade or two so much land was in the hands of a single owner. This wall (N224) and a short and more deteriorated remnant of a wall along Leakes Road (N241) are the only remnants of Selection in this region.

The wall also comprises the most substantial evidence of Isaac Gidney's *Spring Farm*, and the business of trade of horses and chaff for the India Army, which was a significant business in the districts of Melton, Braybrooks and Werribee.

67 Army Ordnance Map, 1916: 'Sunbury'; also NAA MT1131/1, CE Drawing No.7142 341.12.

68 National Archives of Australia, Series MT1131/1, Unit A259/18/297, AMF Minute Paper, 12/2/1953.

69 Army Ordnance Maps, 1916, 1938. Another house appears on the original Tarleton selection on the west side of Leakes Road. It is however situated on an early 5 acre excision from the Tarleton selection (Crown Allotment 4B), which does not abut the wall.

Thematic Context / Comparative Analysis:

Shire of Melton Historical Themes: 'Farming', 'Transport'.

Comparable Places in Shire of Melton:

- This is one of very few, and by far the most prominent, of the dry stone walls on the north side of the Western Highway. The other walls - Nos.N232, N241 and N212 – are nowhere near as substantial, or as intact, and are effectively undetectable to traffic. Effectively, Wall N224 is the only dry stone wall in the Shire of Melton that is visible to city-bound traffic (travelling in an easterly direction). As such it is of very high importance to the public image of the Shire of Melton's as a place with an important heritage of dry stone walls.
- Wall N224, built c.1867-68, is one of the most substantial surviving structures, of any sort, associated with the historical 'Selection Act' foundation of Rockbank in the the 1860s and 70s.

It is the most substantial and prominent of the few dry stone walls of the Rockbank selection district that now survive. The only comparable walls in terms of length are those on Leakes Road south of the Western Highway (Walls J150-152), associated with the original George Missen selection. Other extant walls associated with 'Selection Acts' at Rockbank are now very much remnants, usually short and highly deteriorated vestiges of the originals.

These walls are among the most substantial surviving structures of any sort associated with the Rockbank selections. No houses in the district date from the 1860s/70s 'Selection Act' period. The only early houses in the district were built after this period:- 1957-1963 Western Highway (built c.1895 for George Missen); 2341 Western Highway (built 1898 for George Pitson); and 107-121 Water Reserve Road (built c.1900/1913). The only place in any way comparable in terms of date is the former Rose & Crown Hotel, built 1875 but now much altered (the office for the Sundowner Caravan Park).

Condition:

Overall the wall is in Good-Fair condition.

Integrity:

Fair

Recommendations:

Recommended for inclusion in the Melton Planning Scheme Heritage Overlay.

Other Recommendations:

- Planning controls should ensure that the visibility of the road from the Western Highway on its western (approach) side is retained. This would ensure that the view of the wall is not impeded by new buildings.
- The location of the wall gives it considerable strategic significance in promoting the heritage and image of the Shire of Melton as a place significant for dry stone walls. The restoration of at least the southern part of the wall should be given priority in the Shire of Melton. Interpretation of the wall should be part of such conservation works. It is recommended that grass be kept mown, at least on its south- western (approach) side, as part of such conservation and interpretation.

Wall N224.
A section of the southern part of the wall in typically variable condition. Its height is evident behind the tall grass impeding its view.

Wall N224.
Something of a sense of the length of the wall (in the middle distance) is evident from the the Western Highway at its southern end. The bushes (probably self-sown) help trace its form.

Wall N224.
The northern (Beattys Road) end of the wall has been topped up with a post and wire fence inserted into one side, and the wall itself has evidently been inexpertly topped up in the past. The dense rocks with which the wall was built can also be seen here;(these round stones are more evident in the photograph on the title page of this report).