

No. 271: House

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|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Address | 398-428 Exford Road, Weir Views |
| Significance | Local |
| Construction Dates | Circa 1900 |
| Period | (Early) Federation |
| Date Inspected | 6 February 2018 |



Statement of Significance

What is Significant?

The Federation weatherboard house at 398-428 Exford Road, Weir Views.

The weatherboard house originally had a symmetrical façade. It was later extended at the northern end in a similar manner to the original section so that the entry is located off-centre (towards the southern end). Two red brick chimneys survive to the southern elevation and the roof is clad in corrugated sheet metal. The original double hung sash windows have vertical glazing bars (that is the sashes are two-paned).

How is it Significant?

The house at 398-428 Exford Road, Weir Views is of local historical and representative significance to the City of Melton.

Why is it Significant?

The house at 398-428 Exford Road, Weir Views is historically significant for being an early weatherboard house, likely to have been constructed during the first decade of the 20th century. It is one of a few such buildings in the City which are a testament to its rural history.

The Federation period house has associations with the Exford Estate, of which it formed part until the turn of the 21st century. It was probably built for a farm manager or the like. The house faces the northern group of outbuildings to Exford Homestead (located on the opposite side of the road), including the woolshed, coach house and former blacksmith's forge and residence. Though the residence is now separated from these buildings by Exford Road, the house maintains a visual relationship with the outbuildings and was likely erected before the road was created in 1911. The Exford Estate is significant for its associations with the earliest phase of European occupation of the Port Phillip District (later Victoria). Initially occupied by Dr John Watton, a member of the Port Phillip Association, it was taken over by Simon Staughton in 1842 and was retained by the Staughton family (Harry Werribee and Harold Werribee) until the late 1920s. (Criterion A)

The house is of representative significance for being a relatively intact example of turn of the century house. It has a distinct lack of detailing, not uncommon for timber houses in a rural location. In its appearance, it is similar to the other houses built about the turn of the 20th century associated with the Closer Settlement Scheme that was undertaken on Exford holdings. (Criterion D)

Description

The timber house is located at the southern edge of a large parcel (nearly 3 ha) of farm land on the high ground near the Toolern Creek. It is set back about 35 metres from the front boundary but is widely visible as there is limited planting to its front. It is set in a wire mesh fenced enclosure with a decorative steel gate and the ground may slope towards the house from the road.

The house has a hip roof, clad in corrugated sheet metal (individual sheets are evident) and has sheet metal flashing, both painted red. The guttering is not original and has a quad profile. To the rear is a skillion section, whose roof is unpainted, and to the south side, two red brick chimneys with banding and a corbelled cap. The chimneys have been painted/covered in white wash.

The walls are clad in painted weatherboards with a squared edge (plain lapped). There are no decorative features such as a cornice or brackets suggesting the house may date to the first decade of the 20th century, though the original symmetrical format is more suggestive of a late 19th century/Victorian period date. The building has been extended to the north – a line is evident in the weatherboards of the likely original northern edge of the building – so that originally it would have had a symmetrical façade.

The openings are timber-framed with an off-centre, four panelled door and three double hung sashes. The visible sashes are two paned (have a vertical glazing bar). A vent is located above the original southern two windows.

The verandah has a hipped roof and is supported by plain timber posts with chamfered edges. It has been partly enclosed at the north end with metal sheeting. The deck may be concrete and the posts have pads, possibly also concrete. The verandah has partly collapsed at the southern end.

There is a late 20th century garage/shed to the south side. Both the roof and walls are clad in metal sheeting. Opposite the subject house is a group of Exford Homestead outbuildings. These are also widely visible from the road and include the former coach house (1856), woolshed (mid-20th century) and remnants of a stone blacksmith's forge and residence (circa 1850s).¹

History

Simon Staughton (1797-1863) and wife Mary Susan (nee Dean, 1807-1893), together with their eldest four children, immigrated to Victoria from England on the *Himalaya*, arriving in Port Melbourne in February 1842.² The family came from St Neot's and Great Staughton, Huntingdon County.³

Simon purchased the Exford run (then known as 'Brisbane Ranges and Exford') consisting of 60,000 acres in June 1842 from Dr John Watton.⁴ He established the homestead, Exford in 1846, which remained in the Staughton family for about 80 years. The original house, to the west of the subject site overlooking the Werribee River, was constructed from pisé de terre. By the early 1860s, the Exford Estate had expanded to consist of about 70,000 acres of freehold land and Staughton become one of the most successful squatters in the state.⁵

¹ Shire of Melton Heritage Study, Citation no. 269, Exford Homestead

² 'Death of Mrs Armytage – Memories of Early Melbourne', *Argus*, 27 December 1924, p10

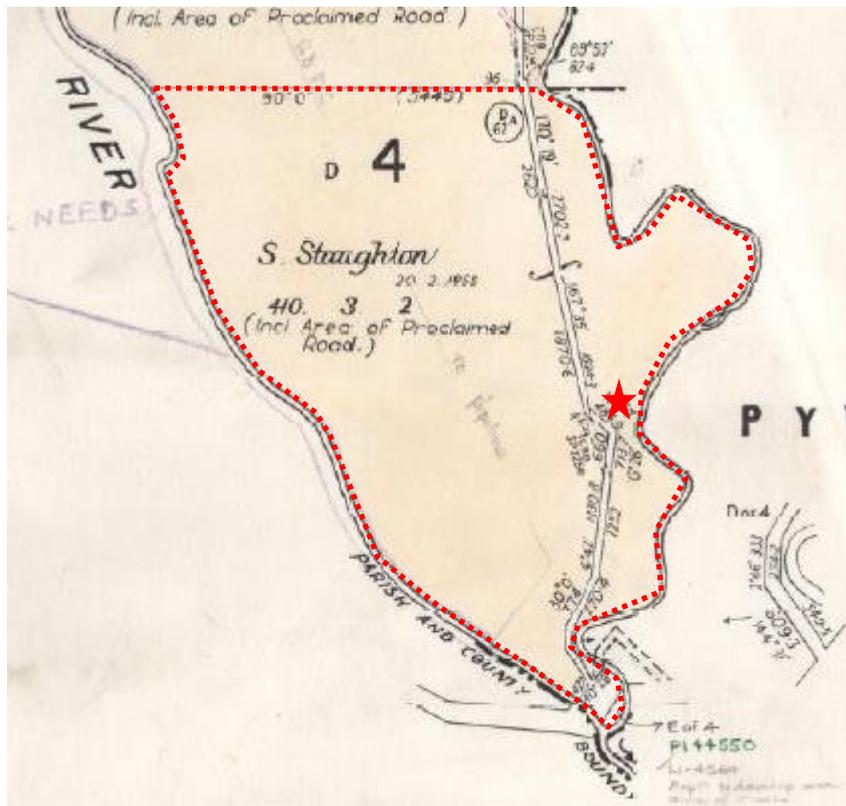
³ Sir Bernard Burke, *A genealogical and heraldic history of the colonial gentry*, 1891, p302 (from Ancestry.com website)

⁴ J F and H P W Staughton + M P Loader, *The Staughtons of Eynesbury*, p69

⁵ Joan Starr, *Melton - Plains of Promise*, Melton 1985, pp52-53

The subject site was part of Crown Portion D, Section 4, Parish of Djerriwarrah which was granted to Simon Staughton on 20 February 1855. The area of this allotment was 410 acres, 3 roods and 2 perches (about 166 hectares).⁶ Staughton also acquired other allotments in the vicinity, including in the adjoining Parish of Mooradoranook.

After Simon Staughton's death in 1863, his vast holdings were divided between his four sons, with youngest son Harry Werribee Staughton procuring Exford. The other parts became Eynesbury, Brooklyn and Staughton Vale.⁷



Djerriwarrah Parish Plan, D62(4). Allotment D indicated (dashed line) and approximated location of the subject site (star)
(Source: PROV)

The land remained part of the core of the Exford Estate after 1907 when extensive subdivision of the outer parts was undertaken after being purchased by the Closer Settlement Board. The board acquired 8020 acres, which it subdivided into some 48 allotments, mostly between 100 to 200 acres, though there were some larger and smaller town allotments.⁸ By this time, the estate's population had risen to about 150 as tenanted/share farming had been taken up.⁹ It is likely that the timber house was built about this time.

In July 1908, when the first Torrens title for the Exford Estate was created, the subject site remained part of the 1142 acres holdings of the estate, then owned by Harold Werribee Staughton (son of Harry).¹⁰ A few years later, in 1911, the Exford Road was created.¹¹

⁶ Parish Plan, Djerriwarrah D62(4)

⁷ J Starr, *Melton - Plains of Promise*, pp53, 56. The other three properties were inherited by the older sons— Simon Fredrick (Staughton Vale), Samuel Thomas (Eynesbury) and Stephen George (Brooklyn). Simon's daughters inherited some of his city properties.

⁸ 'Exford Estate', *Weekly Times*, 23 March 1907, pp8-9

⁹ *Melbourne Leader*, 9 September 1905, p38

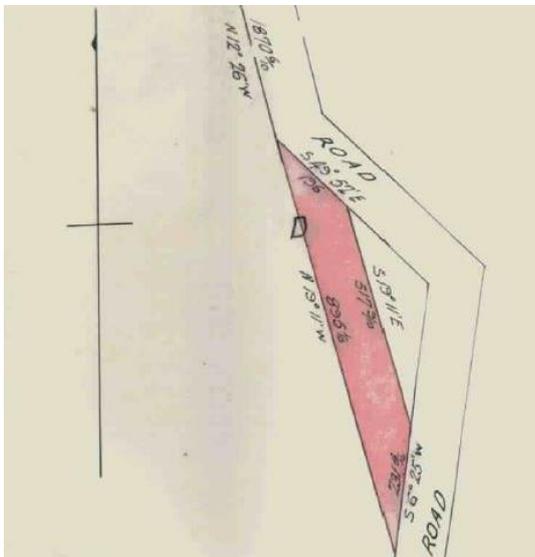
¹⁰ *Certificate of Title*, vol. 3271/folio 073. Part along the Werribee River in 1915 to State Rivers and Water Supply Commission.

¹¹ *Victoria Government Gazette*, 30 August 1911, p4427; Put-away (Parish) Plan, D62A_5, 1911

The road is approximately located between the former blacksmith forge and residence, part of the northern group of Exford's outbuildings (east of the coach house and woolshed/barn) suggesting that the subject house probably had been erected by that time. Initially there was a more pronounced bend in the road at this location such that the road would have passed closer to the front of the house. A 1916 plan depicts a building in about the current location, though slightly south, with no other building nearby on the east side of Exford Road.¹²

In a sale notice for the Exford Estate in August 1927, the extensive group of outbuildings included two cottages, each of 5 rooms, one of which may relate to the subject building.¹³ The long association with the Staughton family ended in July 1928 when Exford was sold by Harold Werribee, who died shortly afterwards aged 81 in February 1930.¹⁴ At this time, the Estate consisted of 1076 acres and was sold to John and Helen Sutherland, formerly of Elcho near Lara. The Sutherlands subdivided their holdings in January 1934, transferring the north-eastern part to their son James McWilliam Sutherland.¹⁵ The subject house remained part of the central holdings of about 628 acres.

In late 1929, the location of the roadway in front of the house was slightly altered so that the original bend in the road was removed and the area in front of the house was increased.¹⁶ On a 1938 plan, the house appears in the existing location.¹⁷



Drawing showing changes to road in front of the subject house undertaken in 1929
(Source: *Certificate of Title*, vol. 5612/folio 326)

It is not certain when the house was extended to the north end but possibly during the mid-20th century. The house is evident in a 1948 aerial photograph, possibly at its current length.¹⁸

¹² Commonwealth Section, Imperial General Staff, 'Victoria, Sunbury' [cartographic material], 1916

¹³ 'Exford Estate', *Sydney Mail*, 31 August 1927, p36

¹⁴ *Werribee Shire Banner*, 13 February 1930, p6

¹⁵ Certificate of Title, vol. 5428/folio 489. The north-eastern part of the Estate, mainly east of the Toolern Creek, consisting of nearly 456 acres.

¹⁶ Certificate of Title, vol. 5612/folio 326 (28.11.1929) and vol. 5628/folio 464 (30.12.1929)

¹⁷ Australian Section, Imperial General Staff, 'Victoria, Sunbury' [cartographic material], 1938.

¹⁸ Sunbury (838C3), land.vic.gov.au



House indicated
Sunbury 838C3, 1948
(Source: Landata)

John and Helen Sutherland sold the Exford Estate in October 1949,¹⁹ and six months later during April 1950, it was formally transferred to Basil and Bernard Lavery.²⁰ In June 1967, Bernard Lavery and Thelma Crowley Lavery became the proprietors.²¹

The land on the east side of the Exford Road was subdivided from the main homestead in 2000.²² The house was marked as 'formerly part of Exford' on a drawing in 2002.²³

Thematic Context/Comparative Analysis

City of Melton Historical Themes:

Community – towns and people

Pastoralism

Known comparable places in the City of Melton

Historically, this is one of a few late 19th/early 20th century houses remaining in the municipality. Similar places include:

- HO55 – House, 974-1048 Melton Highway, Plumpton: Circa 1906-07, weatherboard house associated with the Closer Settlement Scheme of the Overnewton subdivision.
- HO73 - House, 54-56 Exford Road (Place no. 195): A circa 1910 weatherboard house, predominantly intact, asymmetric form.
- HO101 - House, 865 Exford Road (Place no. 276): A circa 1907, relocated 1910 weatherboard house, mostly intact, asymmetric form. It is associated with the Closer Settlement Scheme subdivision of the Exford estate.
- HO102 - House 'Glengallan', 77-207 Greigs Road East, Mt Cottrell (Place no. 282); A circa 1917 weatherboard house, predominantly intact, symmetric façade, more elaborate with a return verandah.
- HO 122 – House, 2341-2421 Western Highway, Rockbank (Place no. 462): Constructed 1898, it has a symmetrical façade with hipped roof and timber verandah.

Condition

Poor to fair (though inspected from boundary only).

Integrity

Largely intact, though has been extended to the north.

¹⁹ Certificate of Title, vol. 5877/folio 278; 'Exford Estate, Melton, Sold', *The Argus*, 12 October 1949, p9

²⁰ Certificate of Title, vol. 7570/folio 002. Area of 627 acres

²¹ Certificate of Title, vol. 8687/folio 589

²² Plan of Subdivision, PS422772, 3 July 2000. The house being on lot 3 but the property also includes lots 1 + 2 to the north.

²³ Bryce Raworth, 'Exford Homestead - Conservation Management Plan', [draft] 2002, p18 (map)

Previous Assessment

The site was first identified as being of potential heritage significance in Stage One of the *Shire of Melton Heritage Study, 2002*.²⁴ In the final report for Stage Two, the site was included in Schedule 3A as a 'conservation desirable place'. It was one of 57 such places.

Heritage Overlay Schedule Controls

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| External Paint Controls | Yes |
| Internal Alteration Controls | No |
| Tree Controls | No |
| Outbuildings and/or Fences | No |

Extent of Heritage Overlay

The proposed extent of the heritage overlay would include the house with and curtilage of 10 metres and would extend to the front boundary so as to maintain the visual relationship with the northern group of outbuildings to the Exford Homestead site.



Recommended extent of Heritage Overlay
(Source: Nearmap 21 April 2018)

²⁴

D Moloney, *Shire of Melton Heritage Study Stage One 2002: Places of Potential Heritage Significance*, p73