

No. 239: House & Outbuildings (Tara Stud)

Address	2-6 Sherwin Court, 2 Killarney Drive, 2a Sherwin Court, Melton
Significance	Local
Construction Dates	Circa 1930s
Period	Mid-20 th century
Date Inspected	6 February 2018



Statement of Significance

What is Significant?

The weatherboard house at 2-6 Sherwin Court, Melton and the three largely intact outbuildings (stables, large gabled shed and small office building) as well as the metal horse walker at 2 Killarney Drive and the row of 11 cypress trees on the adjacent public reserve (2A Sherwin Court).

The Old English Revival style house has a gable roof clad in terracotta tiles a squat clinker brick chimney and multi-paned timber windows. In addition to the house, both the stables and the office building have similar decorative treatments to the gable end including timber bargeboards terminating with a curved section and overlapping boards with rounded ends (excluding the office building).

How is it Significant?

The house at 2-6 Sherwin Court, Melton is of local historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Melton. The three largely intact outbuildings, the horse walker (2 Killarney Drive) and the associated row of cypress trees (2A Sherwin Court) are of historic significance and representative significance.

Why is it Significant?

Historically Tara Stud is representative of the facilities employed during the mid-20th century for the horse industry, which was an important industry for the Municipality from the late nineteenth century. The site has a long association with equine activity as it was part of the 'sports paddock' which was used for various events including hunt club gatherings during the 19th century. From 1959, Tara Stud was owned by Russell George O'Shea who was secretary of the Metropolitan and Country Trotting Association and owned successful trotters including 'Tara Dream'.

Historically the site is also associated with notable local identities including the Hornbuckle family and later was occupied by the Nixons who were related to the Hornbuckles. (Criterion A)

The single storey house at 2-6 Sherwin Court, Melton is of aesthetic significance for being a largely intact, weatherboard example of the Old English Revival style. The design is distinguished by the feature brickwork detailing to the entry porch and vertical battened boards to the gable ends. Possibly no other example of this style exist in the Municipality. (Criterion E)

The Tara Stud outbuildings (at 2 Killarney Drive) are of representative significance as largely intact examples of horse facilities constructed during the mid-20th century. The small office building and the large shed incorporate decorative timber detailing to the gable ends which relate to that of the house and reflect the high quality of the facilities. The horse walker contributes to understanding the former use of the site whilst the row of mature cypresses (2A Sherwin Court) contribute to the setting of the former stud. (Criterion D)

Description

The single storey, Interwar period weatherboard house is largely intact and indicative of the Old English Revival style, popular during the Interwar period. It consists of interlocking gable roof sections in an L-shaped format with a skillion roof addition to the west side. The house is well set back from the front boundary but is largely visible.

The house has a gable roof clad in variegated tiles. The (angled) soffits to the gable end are lined with timber boards and are finished with bargeboards terminating a curved section. The (horizontal) soffits are however lined with battened sheeting. The gable ends are clad with overlapping vertical boards with rounded ends (creating a scalloped lower edge). The roof of the skillion addition is however clad in corrugated sheet metal. There are two clinker brick components – a prominent chimney to the front gable section and an arched entry of the front porch. The latter has a depressed/segmental arch with its voussoirs in a contrasting brown brick.



View of house from Sherwin Court



View of house from Sherwin Court showing east side

The original windows are timber-framed and those to the front have mostly four-pane sashes. A fixed pane window on the east side has an upper horizontal glazing bar.

There is a row of eleven cypresses, immediately to the west of the property on the adjacent public reserve (2A Sherwin Court) which were presumably associated with the house. They are well-established and may have been planted during the mid-20th century.

Outbuildings

On the adjacent parcel of land to the north, 2 Killarney Drive, stand four earlier outbuildings which were part of the same development/complex – three substantial (one of whose roof has been demolished) and one small. A house has been recently constructed in the north-eastern part of the site. The buildings were inspected from the boundary however four photographs taken circa 2002 as part of the earlier study provide some further detail. The buildings all have gable roofs clad in corrugated sheet metal except for the building whose roof has been demolished.

The two buildings to the southern end are substantial and may date to about the time of the construction of the adjacent house as they have a similar gable end treatment that includes overlapping boards with rounded ends as well as bargeboards with curved ends. The western building, on which there had been a sign identifying it as the 'Tara Stud', has been partly demolished (nearly all of the roof, gable ends and some of the southern wall). The (remnant) walls are clad in weatherboard and there is a horizontally-orientated row of five mid-height hopper windows to the long elevations. This building has large timber sliding doors to each end. The roof had been clad in terracotta tiles (possibly glazed) and had a large window to each gable end. A current aerial suggests there are several stalls to this building indicating that it may have been used as a stable.

The nearby building to the east is externally intact and has walls clad in horizontally orientated, corrugated metal sheeting (painted green). The building has large opening to the south end.



Southern group (west to left/foreground, east to right/background)



Northern group with mid-20th century stable in foreground

The two buildings to the northern end of the group are of varied size and type. The larger western stable building has a lower pitched gable roof, more typical of the mid to late 20th century. The outer walls are clad in corrugated sheet metal (possibly not original) whereas the other walls are clad in weatherboards. It has an L-shaped footprint, ridge ventilators and limited openings. A photograph from an earlier study shows some timber-lined stalls with a varnished finish and metal railing suggestive of a mid-20th century date.



Mid century stable, view from east



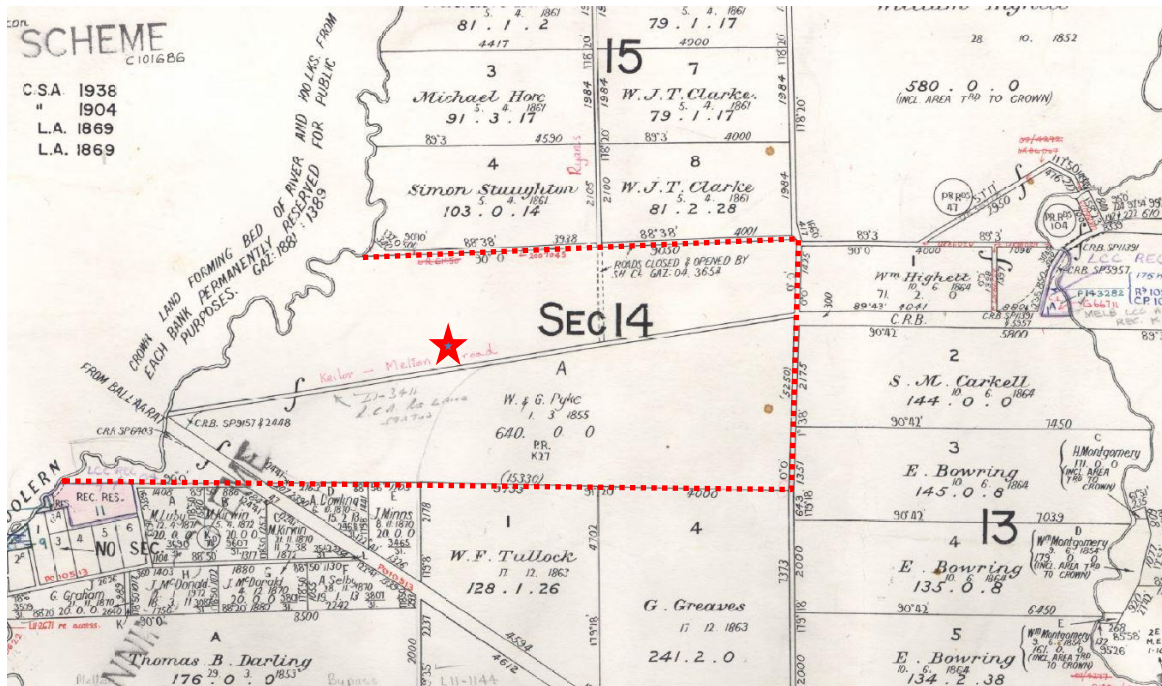
Office building

The smaller, possible office building, is clad in weatherboards and has curved ends to the bargeboards similar to the main house.

The metal horse walker to western edge of site probably dates to the 1930s and so is likely to be original.¹ A photograph from the earlier study shows a timber fence and gate between rear of house and outbuildings, though this appears to have been removed.

History

The subject site was part of Crown Portion A, Section 14, Parish of Koroit which was granted to W & G Pyke as Pre-emptive Right on 1 March 1855. The land holdings initially consisted of 640 acres (about 259 hectares),² William and George Pyke were possibly the first European settlers in the area.³



Parish Plan, K74(4). Allotment A indicated (dashed line, except for creek boundary) and approximated location of the subject site (star) (Source: PROV)

By 1899, the site had been registered to Sir Rupert Clarke of *Rupertswood* (Sunbury), who had extensive holdings in the locality.⁴ Prior to this, the land had been owned by his father Sir William John Clarke.⁵ The subject site was part of Clarke's large Rockbank Estate which was reported to have an area of about 54,000 and extended south-westerly from *Rupertswood* to within a few miles of Footscray and the Werribee district.⁶

In June 1907, part of the original Crown allotment was registered to Robert Hornbuckle of Melton, grazier.⁷ This holding consisted of nearly 228 acres (about 92 hectares) and included the subject site.⁸ At this time, the site was known as the 'sports paddock' and had been since for at least 10 years.⁹ Hornbuckle, a local Councillor resided at *Croxtan Park*, which consisted of over 330 acres of land to the north of the 'sports paddock' on which was erected an 11 roomed weatherboard house.¹⁰ Hornbuckle died on 26 July 1911 in a terrible driving accident when he was caught between the body of the vehicle and the front wheel.¹¹

- 1 Duncan Shaw, Property Valuer from Colliers International, 22 February 2018
- 2 Parish Plan, K74 (4), Parish Plan Schedule 2972, p2
- 3 Joan Starr, *Melton Plains of Promise*, p31
- 4 Certificate of Title, Vol 2731 Folio 115
- 5 Certificate of Title, Vol 2731 Folio 108
- 6 *Weekly Times* (Melbourne), 21 August 1897, p2
- 7 Certificate of Title, Vol 2919 Folio 745. Two other portions were sold privately and another portion was acquired by the Melton Council.
- 8 Certificate of Title, Vol 2996/Folio 083
- 9 *The Bacchus Marsh Express*, 25 September 1897
- 10 Probate of Robert Hornbuckle, PROV, VPRS 28, P3, unit 226, item 121/125
- 11 'Terrible driving accident', *Hamilton Spectator*, 28 July 1911, p26

Following Robert Hornbuckle's death, the site was registered in the name of his wife Mary. A few years after, in 1914, a six-roomed weatherboard house was erected on the old sports paddock (where the golf course is now located) for Mary's daughter Sarah Nixon.¹² A 1938 map shows a building on the 'sports paddock' site, though it is not clear if this related to the house constructed for Sarah Nixon or the subject dwelling. The sports paddock allotment had previously been used for Melbourne Hunt Club meetings as well as for other athletic sports, cycling and pony races.¹³ Since the late nineteenth century Melton has been celebrated for its horse studs and training facilities and during the late twentieth century the Shire labelled itself 'Thoroughbred Country'.¹⁴

Mary Hornbuckle died four years after her husband on 17 July 1915 and the property was transferred to one of her sons Thomas Hornbuckle of 45 Fairview Avenue, Newtown (Geelong), retired farmer, and one of her daughters Mary Charlotte Knox, married woman, Melton.¹⁵ Thomas Hornbuckle had also been a local Councillor and was held in high regard by local residents for his contribution to community affairs. Thomas raised Lincoln sheep at *Croxton Park* after the death of his mother.¹⁶ In 1928, Thomas' lease of *Croxton Park* was reported to have expired and he put up for sale his 'splendid herd of Shorthorn Cattle, Pedigree [sic] horses, Plant etc.'¹⁷ The sale was reported as being successful.¹⁸

Following the death of Thomas Hornbuckle, his sister Mary Knox became the sole proprietor of the subject site in 1959. Mary Knox (née Hornbuckle) married Thomas Knox in 1920. The couple resided at *Croxton Park* where Thomas bred sheep during the 1930s and 1940s.¹⁹ When Mary Knox became the registered proprietor of the subject site in 1959, she immediately transferred the site to Sarah Nixon's children: Mary Collins, of *Rosemont* Rockbank, George Nixon, Deer Park, and Robert Nixon, Fairfield. A few months later in November 1959, it was transferred to Russell George O'Shea, timber merchant of Clayton.²⁰

From at least the early 1940s, it appears that Sarah's son George Nixon was farming on the former 'sports paddock' when he is listed in the rate books as either an occupier or an owner.²¹ In both 1945 and 1946 George placed advertisements for the sale of various farming implements, including a Massey Harris plough.²² It is unclear if the subject house and contemporary outbuildings had been constructed by this time, though it is likely that they were erected for the Nixon family.

George O'Shea (presumably Russell George O'Shea) who owned the site in 1959, owned trotters and was also the secretary of the Metropolitan and Country Trotting Association.²³ In 1969, he was reported to have sold his brilliant trotting mare 'Tara Dream' to American interests, when she had won nine of her last 12 starts.²⁴

By 1972, a training track had been made on the corner of the Keilor-Melton Road and Ryans Lane. The cypress trees to the west of the had grown to a substantial size by this time.²⁵

In 1985, the holdings were reduced by the compulsory acquisition of some land for a roadway (4.5 hectares) by the Road Construction Authority and 17 hectares to the west near the Toolern Creek (now part of the Melton Valley Golf Club). In 1999, the remaining part (about three quarters) was transferred to Graywood Park P/L, Hawthorn East,²⁶ and was subdivided into large residential allotments.²⁷

¹² *Bacchus Marsh Express*, 12 December 1914, p2

¹³ Shire of Melton Heritage Study, Stage Two, Environmental History, 2006 p139

¹⁴ p27

¹⁵ Mary Charlotte Hornbuckle married Thomas Knox in 1920.

¹⁶ *The Bacchus Marsh Express*, 24 July 1915, p2. *Stock and Land* (Melbourne), 29 January 1915, p2

¹⁷ *Werribee Shire Banner*, 16 February 1928, p4

¹⁸ *Werribee Shire Banner*, 1 March 1928, p5

¹⁹ *The Argus*, 28 March 1934, p11 and 24 November 1943, p10

²⁰ Certificate of Title, Vol 2996/Folio 083

²¹ Shire of Melton Rate Books, 1941-42 (entry 140), 1944-45 (entry 08), 1950-51 (entry 153))

²² *Weekly Times*, 11 July 1945, p32 and *Weekly Times* 14 August 1946, p39

²³ *The Age*, 25 June 1952, p8

²⁴ 'Trotter sold to American interests' *The Age*, 16 May 1969, p14. The article refers to a George O'Shea

²⁵ Aerial photograph, Melbourne 1972 (project no. 985), run 29, frame 214, April 1927, Landata

²⁶ Certificate of Title, Vol 2996/Folio 083

²⁷ Plan of Subdivision, PS438441

Thematic Context / Comparative Analysis

City of Melton Historical Themes:

Horses Hounds and Hares

Known comparable places in the City of Melton

Historically, the buildings are of a small number of thoroughbred racehorse facilities that remain in the municipality. Other examples being:

- HO17 - Melton Park, 691-801 Bulmans Road, Toolern Vale (Place no. 008): This is the oldest thoroughbred facility in the municipality and includes a late Victorian Picturesque style, weatherboard house (1889) and weatherboard and iron stable, mature trees, underground tanks and tank stands.
- HO68 - Kippenross (Place no. 177), 429-455 Bulmans Road, Melton West. Significant fabric includes the substantial brick house constructed in 1915, an underground tank, an outbuilding and an avenue of Sugar Gums.
- Emerites Park (Formerly Stockwell Stud, Callan Park), Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road, Diggers Rest (Place no. 091). It is unclear if any early fabric remains.
- Former Melton Stud, 325 Clarkes Road, Brookfield (Place no. 183): Proposed HO as part of this study – Developed during the Federation period by E E D Clarke. Incorporates house, horse grave, stallion box and associated yard.
- Cornwell Park Stud (Place no. 18) was converted to a horse stud a few years ago.

Historically, it is one of several Interwar/mid-20th century period houses in the municipality. Most of the other houses from this time are indicative of the bungalow style with no other examples of an Old English Revival style house identified. Examples of bungalows, all weatherboard, are:

- HO72 - House, 2 Exford Road (Place no. 193): intact example c1929-30.
- HO52 – House, 932 Holden Road (Place no. 103): intact with corner verandah, 1931.
- HO64 - Plumpton Park, 412-518 Plumpton Road, Diggers Rest (Place no. 152): circa 1922, moderately intact, relatively plain example.
- HO24 – Farm complex including a weatherboard house, 1229-1279 Gisborne-Melton Road, Toolern Vale (Place no. 29): intact example, 1931.
- HO39 - House, 847-1071 Blackhill Road, Toolern Vale (Place no. 62): largely intact weatherboard house, circa 1926.
- House, McCorkells Road, Toolern Vale (Place no. 44): weatherboard house with hipped roof, appears to be an Interwar period dwelling.

Condition

Fair to good (though inspected from front boundary only)

Integrity

Largely intact

Previous Assessment

The site was first identified as being of potential heritage significance in Stage One of the *Shire of Melton Heritage Study, 2002*. It was then identified as 'Tara Stud': weatherboard house, 3 matching stables, plantings etc. and was noted to be a 'large and quite intact stud complex'.²⁸ In the final report for Stage Two, the site was included in Schedule 3A which included 'conservation desirable places'. It was one of 57 such places.

²⁸

David Moloney, *Shire of Melton Heritage Study Stage One 2002: Places of Potential Heritage Significance*, p68

Heritage Overlay Schedule Controls

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

Recommended Extent of Heritage Overlay

The proposed extent of the heritage overlay would include the house, the surrounding land (within at least 10 metres of the house), as well as two intact gable outbuildings (possibly stables), the office, the horse walker and the row of Cypress trees. Due to the larger property boundaries on which the heritage items are located, it is not necessary to include all of the relevant parcels of land (2A and 2-6 Sherwin Court, and 2 Killarney Drive).



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