

HO203 – 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:	HO114
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):

HO203	
Wall No.	Nearest Road
B115	Mt Atkinson Road
B116	Mt Atkinson Road
B118	Boundary Road
B120	Boundary Road
B121	Hopkins Road
B123	Hopkins Road
B124	Hopkins Road
B125	Hopkins Road
B126	Hopkins Road
B127	Hopkins Road
B130	Hopkins Road

HO203	
Wall No.	Nearest Road
B169	Hopkins Road
B170	Hopkins Road
B38	Hopkins Road
B39	Hopkins Road
B40	Middle Road
B43	Middle Road
B45	Middle Road
B46	Middle Road
B47	Hopkins Road
G84	Mt Atkinson Road
G85	Boundary Road