

**Heritage Overlay No.:** 111  
**Citation No.:** 360  
**Place:** Mount Cottrell Homestead

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**Other Names of Place:** None  
**Location:** 167-177 Faulkners Road Mount Cottrell, Lot 2 PS 514261.  
**Critical Dates:** Construction of house and tank c.1913.  
**Existing Heritage Listings:** None  
**Recommended Level of Significance:** LOCAL



**Statement of Significance:**

Mount Cottrell Homestead at 167-177 Faulkners Road, Rockbank, is of architectural and historical significance as a moderately intact early twentieth century farm complex comprising a Victorian vernacular styled main house (with additions), machinery shed, stables, underground tank with rivetted ships tank above, and remnants of a shearing shed through the surviving concrete and brick sheep dip. These buildings and structures are a legacy of the establishment and development of the property from 1907 after the break-up of the Clarkes' *Rockbank* estate, and date to c.1913. The homestead represents one of very few surviving early twentieth century homestead complexes in the Shire, and is of added interest in being adapted from a shearers' quarters.

Mount Cotterell Homestead at 167-177 Faulkners Road is architecturally significant at a LOCAL level (AHC D2). It demonstrates important design qualities of both Victorian and early twentieth century vernacular styles which in turn provide an understanding of the function of the homestead in the early twentieth century. For the main house, these Victorian vernacular design qualities include the elongated gable roof form, together with the skillion verandah that projects at the front. Other intact or appropriate qualities include the single storey height, galvanised corrugated steel and cement sheet wall cladding, galvanised corrugated steel roof cladding, timber verandah posts, brick chimney with a multi-corbelled top, gambrel roof form of the early addition and the timber framed window and door construction.

For the machinery shed and stables, these early twentieth century vernacular design qualities include the elongated gambrel roof forms clad in galvanised corrugated steel, wide eaves with exposed timber rafters, timber louvred infill in the gambrel ends, timber posts with rudimentary timber brackets (machinery shed), galvanised corrugated iron wall cladding (machinery shed), horizontal timber weatherboard wall cladding (stables), and the timber window openings (stables).

Mount Cotterell Homestead at 167-177 Faulkners Road is historically significant at a LOCAL level (AHC A4) for its evidence of the break-up of the immense Clarke *Rockbank* pastoral estate into smaller grazing (and farming) properties in the early twentieth century. This was a watershed in the history of the Shire of Melton. The long part of the house, constructed of corrugated iron, is of interest for originally being the property's shearers' quarters, the only known surviving early twentieth structure of this type in the Shire. The domed cement rendered underground water tank, together with the rivetted steel ship's tank above, represent nineteenth and very early twentieth century water storage technology and construction, common for the period, but no longer practised. This tank has recently been demolished by excavation. The dry stone walls on the property, almost certainly dating from the Clarke era, are also significant.

Mount Cotterell Homestead at 167-177 Faulkners Road is scientifically significant at a LOCAL level (AHC C2). The sheep dip and site of the former large shearing shed has the potential to contribute to a wider understanding of the early twentieth century farm processes on the property and in the Shire of Melton.

Mount Cotterell Homestead at 167-177 Faulkners Road is socially significant at a LOCAL level (AHC G1). The property has the potential to help interpret early twentieth century mixed farming, in particular the incorporation of sheep (for wool and meat) into small farms in this period, and the associated initial use of large pastoral shearing sheds by nearby smaller farmers.

Overall, Mount Cotterell Homestead at 167-177 Faulkners Road is of LOCAL significance.

### **Description:**

Mount Cotterell Homestead at 167-177 Faulkners Road, Rockbank, consists of a complex of farm buildings. These buildings include the main house, galvanised corrugated steel machinery shed and long narrow stables building. They are set within open rural grassed land, with eucalypts and some exotic trees situated nearby. The main house has a rudimentary garden at the front comprising an open grassed area, a number of exotic trees, and concrete pedestrian path, and it is bound by a timber post and rail fence with introduced woven wire. The fence is approximately 1200 mm high and at the end of the pedestrian path is an open steel gate.

Towards the rear of the house and between the machinery shed is an early cement rendered, domical underground water tank. Unfortunately this tank has recently been demolished. Above the tank on an elevated timber stand is a riveted ship's tank. Nearby are other circular galvanised corrugated steel water tanks. The underground tank was almost certainly

constructed at the same time as the dwelling, in the early twentieth century. Its design may be a simplified version of a Waistell's tank, published in J.C. Loudon's *Encyclopedia of Farm, Cottage and Villa Architecture* in 1831.<sup>1</sup> A Waistell's tank was circular in plan form, with sides built like a well. The bottom was constructed like a flat dome, and the top was domical, with an opening in the centre.

The single storey, galvanised corrugated steel and cement sheeting wall clad Victorian vernacular styled main house is characterised by an elongated gable roof form, together with a skillion verandah that projects at the front. One end of the house is a lower narrow early twentieth century vernacular styled galvanised corrugated steel clad addition. Another later gabled cement sheet extension, possibly dating from the interwar period, adjoins the end of the this addition. These roof forms are clad in galvanised corrugated steel which appears to be in poor condition. The dwelling has undergone extensive, sympathetic restoration works.

The earliest wing of the main house has an elevated timber verandah floor. This may indicate that the building has been relocated to this site and may originally have served as a shearers' quarters. The verandah is supported by irregularly arranged and rudimentary square timber posts. There is an early painted brick chimney with a multi-corbelled top that adorns the roofline of the early building. This chimney has been overpainted and its design and size suggests that it dates from the early twentieth century.

Under the verandah are timber framed window and door openings. The age and integrity of these openings could not be determined.

Behind the main house is the machinery shed. This single storey, galvanised corrugated steel, early twentieth century vernacular styled building has an elongated gambrel roof form clad in galvanised corrugated steel. Wide overhangs with exposed timber rafters are features of the eaves. The gambrel ends have early timber louvred infill. The shed is open along the longitudinal elevation facing the main house. It is supported by early timber posts and has rudimentary timber brackets.

The single storey, horizontal timber weatherboard, early twentieth century vernacular styled stables building also features an early elongated gambrel roof form clad in galvanised corrugated steel. Of narrow proportions, the building has wide overhangs featuring exposed timber rafters. Like the machinery shed, the gambrel ends also have early timber louvred infill. There are two timber framed window openings at one of the building.

Also on the property are remnants of a former 14-stand shearing shed. All that remains immediately visible is the partly collapsed concrete and pressed red brick sheep dip.

There are a number of dry stone walls on the property, notably on the Mt Cottrell Road frontage. These almost certainly date from the Clarke era, which also produced the other walls on this road.

Sympathetic restorations are being undertaken by the current owners.

## **History:**

### *Contextual History*

The homestead is situated on Crown Allotment 2, Section 12, Parish of Pywheitjorrk, which is on the northern slopes of 'Mt Cotteril'. Mt Cotteril was one of the early landmarks of John

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<sup>1</sup> J.C. Loudon, *Encyclopedia of Cottage, Farm and Villa Architecture*, Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green & Longman, London, 1831, p.72, 404.

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 Cotterell was to become infamous in the fledgling Melbourne settlement.

The 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 and his supplies pilfered. The incident inflamed the community; the whole of the fledgling Melbourne settlement attending their funeral.<sup>2</sup> Even moderate opinion thought the tragedy 'another instance of the folly of putting any confidence in the native population.'<sup>3</sup> For some time 'Mt Franks' was an alternative name for Mt Cotterell.<sup>4</sup>

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.'<sup>5</sup> And indeed, with the memory of Tasmania's Black Wars still fresh, several parties gathered at Franks' Mt Cottrell station to set out in pursuit of the murderers. A few days later a group of about 80 natives were tracked down (with the help of Aboriginal trackers, including Derrimut) to a camp on the Werribee River, and fired on.<sup>6</sup>

On 18<sup>th</sup> August the Tasmanian Colonial Secretary expressed his concern to Sydney at the 'rupture' between the Europeans and natives as a result of these incidents, advising that '...there can be little or no doubt that ten of the tribe of Port Phillip natives were killed.'<sup>7</sup> One account had it that:

'They let fly at them, killed a grate (sic) many, and what was not killed or wounded, ran away leaving all behind them.'<sup>8</sup>

A few weeks later Governor Bourke instructed Melbourne's new Magistrate William Lonsdale to investigate this alleged massacre and apprehend any offenders with a view to 'committing them to Sydney Gaol for trial'. Not surprisingly, although all the witnesses to the investigation (the pursuing party) heard shots being fired ('above their [the natives'] heads'), no-one saw

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<sup>2</sup> 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

<sup>3</sup> Brown, PL (ed), *The Narrative of George Russell of Golf Hill*, (Oxford University Press, London: Humphrey Milford, 1935), p 111.

<sup>4</sup> See, eg, CPO Map Rail 19 (March 1856)

<sup>5</sup> Canon, M (ed.) *Historical Records of Victoria, Vol.2A, The Aborigines of Port Phillip, 1835-1839* (VGPO, Melbourne, 1982), p.40

<sup>6</sup> HRV, Vol.2A, *op cit*, pp.36-52. Also, Koorie Cultural Heritage Trust, *Koorie* (Creative Solutions, Melbourne, 1991) p.19. The myths surrounding the incident appear to have lived on, and indeed grown, over time. Batey (1910), *op cit*, pp.9-10, recounts a conversation with an early squatter in the region (but unreliable witness according to another contemporary), Kenneth Clarke, who claimed he was one of the pursuing party. He said they came across the tribe camping on the banks of the Werribee, near Ballan, and fired on them without effect. At the campsite the pursuers claimed to have found "the hand of a picaninny that had been roasted and eaten". Batey's own subsequent assessment of the rugged landscape in this area confirmed to him the likelihood that "all the pursuers could do was fire at the niggers at range too long for the weapons of the era to do execution".

<sup>7</sup> HRV, Vol.2A, *op cit*, p.42. Other reports put the number killed at 10-15 (Harcourt, *op cit*, p.91) Given that Governor Arthur had declared the Black War, believing that the aboriginal people were "a most treacherous race", (Shaw, AGL, Clark, CMH, *Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol.1*, MUP, 1996, p.35), this concern is notable.

<sup>8</sup> Harcourt, *op cit*, p.91.

anyone killed. As a result of this evidence, Lonsdale reported that the accounts circulating in Sydney ‘must have been very much exaggerated’.<sup>9</sup>

Although most contemporaries described Franks as a notably mild and unprovocative man, another noted that he ‘had a great aversion to the native blacks, and would not give them food, thinking it the best way to prevent them frequenting the station’.<sup>10</sup> Another respected early squatter - von Steiglitz - reportedly said that Franks called his bullets ‘blue pills’ for the natives.<sup>11</sup> It may also be relevant that in February, five months prior to the Franks murder, JT Gellibrand recounted the Port Phillip natives’ distress at the abduction of a young woman ‘near the shepherds’ hut on No.10’.<sup>12</sup> No.10 was the section allocated to Anthony Cotterell, after whom Mt Cottrell was named by the Port Phillip Association. (The site of an ‘old hut’ is marked on an early plan, about 1.5 km south-west of the Mt Cottrell summit.<sup>13</sup>) Although Franks was not at Port Phillip at this time, it is clear that there were racial tensions in the district.<sup>14</sup>

In the early twentieth century Spreadborough and Anderson (in their *Victorian Squatters*) mapped ‘Franks’ station near the southern part of Faulkner’s Road, so maybe there is some documentary evidence for this location. However, given that Franks was only there for a few weeks it is unlikely that the exact site of the murders will ever be known, beyond having taken place ‘near Mount Cotteril on the Werribee River’.<sup>15</sup>

A number of squatters followed. G Sherwin (John Sherwin in Spreadborough and Anderson) would appear to have been most likely to have occupied the land on which the homestead is built.<sup>16</sup> However Simon Staughton was also nearby in the 1840s (his pre-emptive right was immediately to the west), as was CJ Garrard (on the *Strathulloh* site).

The Crown Land sales saw the 148 acres of Crown Allotment 2, Section 12, Parish of Pywheitjorrk being sold to WJT (Big) Clarke on 16<sup>th</sup> May 1854. Clarke also purchased the property immediately to the south and the properties to the east. Simon Staughton purchased the properties immediately to the west, while a few smaller allotments were purchased by others of comparatively small means. Over the next 30-40 years ‘Big’ Clarke (and to a lesser extent his son Sir WJ Clarke) progressively purchased these and many of the (relatively few) sites in the Parish of Pywheitjorrk that others had purchased at Crown sales, such that by 1892 he owned

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<sup>9</sup> *ibid*, pp.46-51

<sup>10</sup> Canon, HRV, Vol.2A, *op cit*, pp.43-4

<sup>11</sup> Brown, *op cit*, 112

<sup>12</sup> Sayers, *Bride, op.cit.*, pp.28-9.

<sup>13</sup> Lands Victoria Map PR E/20 (12/3/1853)

<sup>14</sup> Neither is Cotterel known to have been in Port Phillip or had sheep in the area at the time. In fact he has been cited, with Gellibrand and Collicot, as having been amongst the “most humane” of the Tasmanian people in regard to Aboriginal people; he had opposed some of Governor Arthur’s measures towards them. (Harcourt, *op cit*, p.88)

<sup>15</sup> 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. so perhaps there is some documentary evidence that enables it to be located. R. Spreadborough and H. Anderson, *Victorian Squatters* (Red Rooster Press, 1983).

<sup>16</sup> In 1840 he had been granted 986.5 acres of land with substantial river frontage, later occupied by James Pinkerton (Section 10, Parish of Pywheitjorrk). Other early Parish Plans showed that he also occupied extensive areas of land immediately to the south of the Mt Cottrell homestead (Lands Victoria, Put Away Plans, Pywheitjorrk P/A 106). He may also have occupied the land on which the homestead is built, however it would appear that he lived amongst the forests close to the river rather than on Mt Cottrell itself.

the vast majority of the Parish, which together with his extensive Parish of Derrimut landholdings, comprised the southern part of his *Rockbank* estate.<sup>17</sup>

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. After Sir WJ Clarke's death in 1897, his son Sir Rupert Turner Havelock Clarke Bart. inherited his title, estate and membership of 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.'<sup>18</sup> 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.<sup>19</sup>

This 'break-up' of the large estates 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 Babcock separator, the development of local co-operative creameries and butter factories, and advances in refrigeration creating new export markets, dairying in particular boomed.

And so the beginning of the twentieth century marked a major new era in the history of Melton. In 1905-06 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 tendered by his grandfather and father.<sup>20</sup> While much of his land was subsequently purchased by established neighbouring farmers and smaller graziers, it also provided the opportunity for new farming families to make a living in the district.<sup>21</sup>

### *History of the Place*

While the northern part of *Rockbank* estate appears to have been put on the market in about 1905, on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> November 1906 the southern part of *Rockbank*, 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.<sup>22</sup>

Sale lots 35 and 36, which included the land on which Mt Cottrell homestead is situated, comprised all of Section 12 (with the exception of allotment 6, on which the Mt Cotterell summit is situated, which Clarke did not include in this sale), all of Section 9, and allotments 5-7 of Section 19, a total of some 1400 acres. According to a Statutory Declaration provided by Clarke's business manager William Howat on 13<sup>th</sup> May 1907, this land was sold to a 'John

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<sup>17</sup> SLV Map 821.1A (1892), Parish of Pywheitjorrk; also PROV VPRS 460/P0 (35850).

<sup>18</sup> *Sunbury News*: 31/7/1897, 7/8/1897, 4/9/1897.

<sup>19</sup> *Victorian Municipal Directory*, 1898, and following years.

<sup>20</sup> 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.)

<sup>21</sup> Melton gained one of its most famous sons, Hector Fraser, international trap shooter, when his father John Fraser came to the area 'when the *Rockbank* station was cut up into farms (Alex Cameron, 'Melton Memoirs', p.20)

<sup>22</sup> PROV VPRS 560/P0 (35850)

Cooke of Stanhope Street Malvern’ at £4.15.0 per acre.<sup>23</sup> However on 11<sup>th</sup> December 1907 a title was issued for this same land to Euler (sic) Valentine Goller.<sup>24</sup> Goller, described variously as being of Sunbury, then Ballarat, and as a ‘grazier’ and ‘investor’, had also purchased other parts of Clarke’s Rockbank estate, including 1366 Melton Highway, upon which he built and let out the house *Gollers Court* (see separate report, Place No.120).

This land was originally situated in the Shire of Braybrook, whose 1910-11 ratebook records that a John T (and Margaret) Edgar, ‘grazier’, of 268 Albert Street East Melbourne were the owners of the 770 acre northern portion of this site, including the area of the present Mt Cottrell homestead. There is no reference to any buildings or house in this ratebook entry.<sup>25</sup> By 1915-16 however the Braybrook ratebook includes reference to a ‘house’ on the property; the increase in valuation from £230 in 1910 to £260 in 1915 may confirm this improvement to the property (although there had been an upwards valuation of Braybrook property generally in this period). By this time the property was in the ownership of George and Frederick Holden, who also owned and leased other land in the Shire.<sup>26</sup>

The first Shire of Melton ratebooks to incorporate this area (1916-17) record that time Frederick Charles Holden, ‘grazier’, JP, owned the property (of 1402 acres 2 roods and 9 perches), which included ‘buildings’. It was valued at £460.<sup>27</sup> George Frederick Holden was also listed as co-owner of the property. In 1918-19 Holden is listed as owning allotments 2 & 3 of Section 11 Pywheitjorrk (land on the opposite side of Mt Cottrell Road which FC Holden had purchased from John Murphy in 1918) while Elsie Maud and Minnie Holden owned land and buildings further north along Mt Cottrell Road.<sup>28</sup> By 1921 the value of the Mt Cottrell property had increased slightly to £477.<sup>29</sup> In the following year the 1400 acre property (not including the recently acquired 222 acre property on the west side of Mt Cottrell Road) had been purchased by a John Paton ‘grazier’ (and the Net Annual Value readjusted slightly to £473).<sup>30</sup> By 1925 the property value had risen in line with general revaluations of the time to £491. During this time Paton had a GPO Box postal address, while his residential address was the Prince of Wales Hotel, Fitzroy Street, St Kilda.<sup>31</sup> Sometime between 1930 and 1933 Paton sold the property.<sup>32</sup>

The ‘house’ (then ‘buildings’) listed in the ratebooks from at least 1915 may have been the shearing shed and shearers quarters, the converted shearers quarters (the present house), or another small farmhouse at 845 Greigs Road that appears on a 1916 map of the area.<sup>33</sup>

The oral tradition of the property as related by its present owners fits this documentary evidence. Their understanding is that the house was the shearing quarters, which was added to at various stages in the twentieth century.<sup>34</sup> A neighbour confirms this, recalling the local story that ‘Charlie Holden’ (no doubt Frederick Charles Holden) had built an elaborate shearing shed on the property, and that the long barrack-style part of the present house was built as the

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<sup>23</sup> *ibid*

<sup>24</sup> Certificate of Title: Vol. 3247 Fol.649327

<sup>25</sup> Shire of Braybrook Ratebook, 1910-11

<sup>26</sup> Shire of Braybrook Ratebook, 1915-16

<sup>27</sup> Shire of Melton Ratebook 1916-17.

<sup>28</sup> Shire of Melton Ratebooks 1918-19, 1919-20.

<sup>29</sup> Shire of Melton Ratebook 1921-22

<sup>30</sup> Shire of Melton Ratebook 1922-23

<sup>31</sup> Shire of Melton Ratebooks 1927-28, 1929-30.

<sup>32</sup> Shire of Melton Ratebooks 1930-31, 1933-34

<sup>33</sup> Ordnance Map (Sunbury), 1916.

<sup>34</sup> Alan and Shirley, personal conversation, 3/5/2002. The Maynes moved to the property in c.1971. Previously it had been occupied by Russell Marriot.

shearers quarters. Improvements (probably at least part of the gable extension) were undertaken by the Valentines, who occupied the property c.1950.<sup>35</sup>

Except for the remains of a concrete and brick sheep dip, there are no above-surface remains of the large (14 stand) shearing shed that was situated a short distance to its east. This shearing shed was used by small farmers in the district as far north as Minns Road.

The Maynes had also heard that the original builder of the present dwelling had also assembled bricks to build a homestead a little to the north of the shearers quarters when he fell into financial difficulties, and instead moved (complete with butler) into the elongated, corrugated steel, barracks-style shearers quarters.

It is virtually certain that the shearing shed and residential quarters were not built earlier by the Clarke family. This is confirmed by ratebook records, and is also unlikely given that the Clarkes owned a 16-stand bluestone shearing shed not far away at the *Rockbank (Deanside)* homestation on Kororoit Creek. The bricks and construction of the partially collapsed sheep-dip also appear to date from the early twentieth century.

The interior of the corrugated iron house was fitted with a large ceiling trap door which operated as a fan to help keep the house cool (its system of pulleys and fixtures remains). The ‘Flying Doctors’ was filmed in the house.<sup>36</sup>

#### *The Domed Underground Tank:- History of Underground Tanks*

Underground tanks were a typical component of nineteenth century rural properties in Victoria, and illustrate a form of water collection and infrastructure no longer practised.

Provision of a domestic water supply was critical to the establishment of any rural property that was not beside a permanent supply of water. ‘The first essential was to secure a reliable water supply. Unless the farm bordered a permanent creek ... the selector had to dig a dam for his animals and a well [sic] for the household supply.’<sup>37</sup> Especially in low-rainfall Melton, domestic water storage was critical, and relics of these systems is a key part of the heritage of the Shire. Many underground domestic ‘wells’ (as they are usually called) around Melton are in fact ‘tanks’ which, rather than tapping groundwater, were sealed cisterns for the storage of water from the roofs of buildings.

Underground tanks became only generally necessary in Australia from the 1850s, when increased population and Crown land sales ensured that many dwellings were unable to locate beside a stream. At the same time, as a result of the goldrushes, the mass introduction into Australia of the new product ‘corrugated iron’ made it feasible for ordinary people to be able to channel water into the underground tanks from roofs and guttering.<sup>38</sup> Underground tanks on small properties generally seem to have been located at the rear of the house; this might have enabled the roof runoff from dairy and other nearby farm outbuildings to also feed the tank.

The construction of wells goes back thousands of years, and designs for underground wells and tanks, such as contained in JC Loudon’s *Encyclopaedia of Agriculture*, had been available to English farmers since at least the early nineteenth century.<sup>39</sup> These generally advocated cigar shaped cross-sections, with the domed top being mostly underground. This shape was also used

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<sup>35</sup> Mr John Morton, 19/7/2006 (his father moved to the area in 1920).

<sup>36</sup> *ibid*

<sup>37</sup> Cannon, Michael, *Life in the Country: Australia in the Victorian Age: 2* (Nelson, West Melbourne, 1978), p.149

<sup>38</sup> Hughes, Trueman, Ludlow, ‘Wells and Underground Tanks’, prepared for the Heritage Council of NSW (nd), *passim*; Cannon, *op cit*, p.150

<sup>39</sup> J.C. Loudon, *Encyclopaedia of Agriculture*, Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green & Longman, London, 1826.



in Australia, but on Melton rural properties they do not appear to have been used on early farms. Instead, the early tanks had vertical walls, and no domed covers. Most appear to have been constructed of local stone rather than brick, and without a low wall (as in romantic images of European wells) to ensure safety. Isolation and cost probably meant that they may have been sunk by the property-owners, at least in the case of early small farms. Examples of such tanks on small farms are the former Scarborough and Moloney properties on Mount Cottrell Road (Place Nos.293 and 292) which were constructed of bluestone in the 1850s and 1871, and for which no evidence of a cover remains. In terms of larger early (1850s) properties, *Glen Elgin* (Place No.39) has a low timber-framed gabled roof, clad in corrugated iron; and the tanks of *Tibbermore* (Place No.392), Mount Ida (Place No.002) and the Diggers Rest Hotel (Place No.067) both have flat corrugated iron covers on raised stone sides. (These covers, and sides, might have been added later, as gradual modernisation of the tanks was common.)

While domes were advocated in early British architectural literature, they appear to have only begun to be built in Australia in the 1860s. At that time there was a growing realisation of the dangers of uncovered wells and tanks in terms of sanitation, as well as safety. Unclean water could wash into uncovered tanks from dairies, and sometimes from cesspits, and vermin also obtained easy access:

‘The typical countrywoman of the early days hardly moved a step from her threshold “to cast away indescribable filth”. The contents of chamber pots, vegetable peelings, grease-laden water – all festered around the hut and blended with the nearby latrine to create a “peculiarly offensive” odour which attracted swarms of flies. Sometimes the fluids soaked through the soil into the well [sic], so that the family suffered from an intermittent “low typhoid” fever whose cause they did not suspect.’<sup>40</sup>

In 1885 *Martins Home and Farm* described uncovered underground tanks and wells as ‘the family rat-trap’.<sup>41</sup> ‘Common infections of the nineteenth century, such as typhoid, scarlet fever, diphtheria (which was known to have proved tragically fatal in the case of Melton’s Kerr, Moloney and Wood families), tuberculosis and gastro-enteritis, spread rapidly in many country towns .... Efficient disposal of human excreta was a major problem.’<sup>42</sup> The connection between water pollution and public health, in particular diseases like dysentery, typhoid and even cholera were beginning to be appreciated.<sup>43</sup>

At the same time, technology was contributing to better health. As long as a bucket was necessary to draw water, it was not possible to cover the tops of tanks, or at best only to provide a rudimentary cover. Once a small and reasonably priced pump became available there was no further need for an open tank. The availability of domestic hand-pumps grew in the 1850s, and by 1860 NSW public buildings (schools and railway stations) specified domes as the standard form of construction for tanks.<sup>44</sup> It is also highly likely that the increasing access to good quality bricks, professional bricklaying skills, and cement, over the course of the late nineteenth century contributed to the proliferation of covered tanks in places like Melton.

The new tanks were still circular in plan, but constructed of brick, with approximately 9 inches of clay puddle behind the brick wall to keep the tank water-tight. The hemispherical dome, or segment of a dome, was also constructed with bricks. Both the interior of the tank, and the exterior of the dome, were cement rendered according to recommended practice.<sup>45</sup> Without internal inspection it is not known whether the cross-section of the tanks typically remained

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<sup>40</sup> Cannon, *op cit*, p.151

<sup>41</sup> Cited in Hughes *et al*, *op cit*, p.19.

<sup>42</sup> Cannon, *op cit*, pp.255-6

<sup>43</sup> Hughes *et al*, *op cit*, pp.19-24

<sup>44</sup> *ibid*, pp.32-33

<sup>45</sup> Eg, Albrecht, CE, *Measurements and Dimensions of Tanks and Dams* (Melbourne, Arnell and Jackson [1885?]), pp.30-33

vertical, or cigar-shaped, which were both described in textbooks. Numerous domes in Melton appear to be segmental spheres, rather than hemispheres, and may have spread underneath the surface to a wider diameter tank cylinder, as per the textbooks. The domes were provided with a manhole on top (covered with a concrete cover), of minimum width 16 inches, to provide access for cleaning. Mr Jeff Robinson of Melton West recalls entering the tank on the family farm to repair internal render.<sup>46</sup> The opening also enabled the cool water to be used for refrigeration: perishables and jellies (for setting) were lowered into the water in a bucket.<sup>47</sup>

The only known Australian heritage study of underground tanks (conducted in NSW), claims that they were only superseded by the familiar corrugated iron tanks (on tankstands to provide water pressure) in the 1890s, when ‘the galvanised above-ground tank was in widespread use.’<sup>48</sup> In Victoria however Miles Lewis claims that ‘*the corrugated iron rainwater tank was manufactured in Melbourne by the later 1850s, and spread very rapidly despite claims that the zinc coating would poison the water.*’<sup>49</sup> Anders Hjorth’s recollections of Melton in the 1860s state that: ‘*The water supply was very deficient; a few had iron tanks, and some under-ground ones.*’<sup>50</sup> He may however have been referring to the square plate-metal ‘ships tanks’ (shipping containers, usually for foodstuffs, that were designed in Britain for recycling in this manner) that are most usually found these days on larger properties, rather than the larger corrugated steel version that became more common. A survey of remaining underground tanks on nineteenth century Melton properties might reveal the extent to which galvanised iron (or steel) header tanks were used as an alternative. We know that underground tanks continued to be built in the early twentieth century, and that today there are many properties that have both underground tanks (most not in use) and corrugated steel header tanks. As access to hand, petroleum or electric pumps permitted, they may have been used in conjunction.

While domes probably became widespread from the 1860s for domestic use, it cannot be categorically inferred that the absence of a dome means that the tank was built before that time. On the other hand, the presence of a dome does not necessarily mean that the tank was built after this time, as apparently the building of a dome over a tank often took place many years after the original construction.<sup>51</sup> The best assumption that can be made in terms of dating tanks is that, water being essential to habitation, they were built at or very soon after the construction of the original dwelling on a site. So in the case of this property, it is very likely that the tank was built c.1910-20.

Tankbuilders known to have operated in Melton Shire in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries include WA Cecil, Tom Collins (c.1890-1913), and Augustus Schebler (‘known for his workmanship’ according to Collins).<sup>52</sup>

### **Thematic Context / Comparative Analysis:**

*Shire of Melton Historical Themes: ‘Pastoral’, ‘Farming’*

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<sup>46</sup> Mr Jeff Robinson, personal conversation, 14/2/2006. This contradicts the Hughes *et al* survey of tanks in NSW, which found that internal render was rare in domestic tanks (pp.55-56).

<sup>47</sup> Hughes *et al*, *op cit*, pp.32-80.

<sup>48</sup> Hughes *et al*, *op cit*. (Austral Archaeology also conducted a study of early Chinese wells on the Koorong, South Australia.)

<sup>49</sup> Lewis, Miles, *Physical Investigation of a Building: National Trust Technical Bulletin 9.1* (National Trust of Australia, Victoria, 1989).

<sup>50</sup> Hjorth, Anders, ‘Recollections of Melton 1861-67’, in M&DHS Newsletter, February 2001.

<sup>51</sup> Hughes *et al*, *op cit*, p.3

<sup>52</sup> Robinson, *op cit*; also Tom Collins memoirs, part of which were reproduced in the M&DSH Newsletter of December 2000.

*Comparable Places in Shire of Melton:*

*Historical Comparison:*

The sale of the vast Clarke pastoral estate as small farms in the early twentieth century was a turning point in the history of Melton Shire. Only 24 houses and substantial sites associated with this event now remain. Of these places, heritage citations have been prepared for 11 places, including *Mt Cottrell Homestead*. These places are:-

Places for which heritage controls are proposed:

Place No.438	House, <i>Bonnie Doon</i> , Rockbank (1906)
Place No.120	House, <i>Gollers Court</i> , Melton Highway Sydenham (1906-11)
Place No.372	House, 63 Greigs Rd, Rockbank (c.1910)
Place No.360	House, <i>Mount Cottrell Homestead</i> , Rockbank (c.1910-20)
Place No.407	House, 1/6 Judd Court, Rockbank (c.1910): one of six houses on Clarke Estate reputedly by the same builder (c.1910)
Place No.237	House, 2120 Ryans Road, Melton: one of six houses on Clarke Estate reputedly by the same builder; with scarce hand-pump still attached to underground tank (c.1914)
Place No.457	House (former Casey), Water Reserve Road, Rockbank
Place No.102	House, <i>Arrunga</i> (early 20C)
Place No.075	House, 2-180 Davis Road, Diggers Rest (c.1914).
Place No.152	House, <i>Plumpton Park</i> , Diggers Rest (c.1922)
Place No.103	House (Tyquins), 932 Holden Road, Diggers Rest (1931)

Places for which heritage controls are not proposed:-

Place No.084	House, 219 Diggers Rest – Coimadai Road, Diggers Rest
Place No.470	House, Beattys Road, Rockbank, much altered
Place No.401	House, <i>Fairview Park</i> , 686 Leakes Road, Rockbank (1905-08)
Place No.315	House, Beatty's Road, Rockbank (early 20C)
Place No.456	House, Water Reserve Road, Rockbank (c.1900-10, 1960s)
Place No.299	House, <i>Penlee Farm</i> , Mount Cottrell Road, Mount Cottrell
Place No.348	House, <i>Kintbury</i> , 318-386 Faulkners Road, Mount Cottrell
Place No.452	House, <i>Stoneleigh</i> , Troups Road, Tarneit

Place No.453	House, <i>Camelot Lodge</i> , 230 Troups Road, Rockbank
Place No.371	House, 405 Greigs Road, Rockbank
Place No.107	Trees, Holden Road, Diggers Rest: large avenue of cypress trees, remains of <i>Lyndhurst Lodge</i> .
Place No.095	Outbuilding, bluestone blacksmith, Finches Road, Melton; date 1913 inscribed.
Place No.344	Ruinous house near Kororoit Creek, ruinous, concrete.

Most surviving Clarke estate places are located in the centre and north of the Shire, in the Parishes of Kororoit and Holden. In the southern parishes of Derrimut and Pywheitjorrk, which were vast Clarke landholdings, only eight places survive, two of which are recommended for heritage controls.

*Architectural Comparison:*

Other architecturally comparable early twentieth century homestead complexes in the Melton Shire considered to have cultural heritage significance include:

- *Mt Koroit Homestead*, Mt Koroit Road, Moylan (Place No.146). This homestead complex features a grouping of Victorian styled timber buildings comprising the main house with detached kitchen/cottage, small outbuilding, stables, dairy and shearing shed. The homestead setting is enhanced by the layout and location of the buildings and yards, dry stone walls, peppercorn and palm trees and the quarry faced sheep holding yard beside the Kororoit Creek.
- *Glengallon*, Greigs Road, Exford (Place No.282). This property is not of the same scale as Glengallon Homestead. There is a rear shearing shed that does contribute to the significance of the property, comprising a Federation vernacular styled 2-stand galvanised corrugated steel shearing shed having a simple gable roof.
- *Mt Ida Homestead*, 447 Bensons Road, Toolern Vale (Place No.002). This homestead has a Late Victorian styled main house, gabled underground tank, water tank and timber stand, rear hipped timber outbuilding, rare surviving draughthorse stabling and altered shearing shed. The homestead complex is enhanced by the mature Canary Island plums and other exotic trees and plantings that contribute to the landscaped setting.

**Condition:**

Good/Fair

**Integrity:**

Moderate-Low

**Recommendations:**

Recommended for inclusion in the Melton Planning Scheme Heritage Overlay.

*Consultants: David Moloney, David Rowe, Pamela Jellie (2006)*

Recommended for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Inventory (sheep dip and shearing shed remnants).

Recommended Heritage Overlay Schedule Controls:

External Paint Controls:	<i>No</i>
Internal Alteration Controls:	<i>No</i>
Tree Controls:	<i>No</i>
Outbuildings and/or Fences:	<i>Yes – machinery shed, stables</i>

Other Recommendations:

- It is recommended that the sheep dip and any archaeological remains be accurately recorded and that Heritage Victoria be notified before any ground disturbance in the vicinity of the former shearing shed.