

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 Atkinson 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 Phyweijtjorkk, 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 pluro-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 Buildd*, 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 Buttlejork, 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 Cyclopaedia’ 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 dislodge 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, *op 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

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

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 of 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 Chirnsides 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

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

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

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

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 today's 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 Strathulloh 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 Djerrivarrh 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 promoters. 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

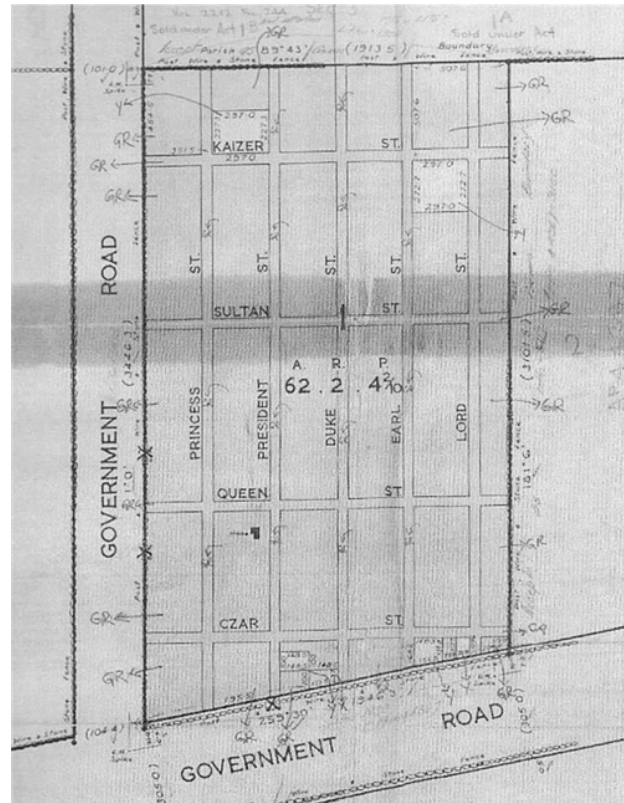
82 Lands Victoria, Survey Plan, TA 52279

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

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- 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 –

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- 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 neighbours 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 $\frac{3}{4}$ 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

11 PROV VPRS 460/P/35850

12 Parish Plans, Parishes of Kororoit and Pywheitjorrk.

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:

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

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

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 Babcock 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)



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

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 described '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.

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 Pwywheitjorrk and Kororoit.

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 be 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 Pywheitjorrk; 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/repared. 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.

