

Heritage Overlay No.: 015
Citation No.: 006
Place: House, ‘Angus Downs’, Blackhill Road

Other Names of Place: N/A
Location: 546-570 Blackhill Road, Toolern Vale
Critical Dates: c.1880s: erected on the site.
Existing Heritage Listings: None
Recommended Level of Significance: Local



Statement of Significance:

The house known as *Angus Downs*, 546-570 Blackhill Road, Toolern Vale, is significant as a moderately intact example of a Victorian vernacular style and as an historical legacy of the original family subdivision of Andrew Beaty’s *Glencoe* homestead in the late nineteenth century.

The property is of LOCAL level historical significance (AHC A4, H1) for its association with the Beaty family, an early and prominent Melton pastoral family; it remains in the ownership of a descendent of this family. It is also of significance for its association with the 1970s alternative lifestyle movement, which saw numerous groups of mainly young people experiment with back-to-the-land and community lifestyles.

The house known as *Angus Downs* is of architectural interest. Although possibly relocated and undergoing restoration works, the house still demonstrates some original design qualities of a Victorian vernacular style. These qualities include the simple gable roof form, together with the skillion verandah that projects at the front. Other intact or appropriate qualities include the symmetrical composition, single storey height, modest scale, horizontal timber weatherboard wall cladding, galvanised corrugated steel roof cladding, narrow eaves, central timber framed doorway with four panelled timber door, and the flanking early timber framed 12 paned double hung windows, and the timber verandah posts.

Overall, the house known as *Angus Downs*, 546-570 Blackhill Road, is of LOCAL significance.

Description:

The house known as *Angus Downs*, 546-570 Blackhill Road, Toolern Vale, which is undergoing restoration works, is set on a large site with a sizeable open grassed front setback and open side setbacks. There are some trees and plantings to the side and a galvanised corrugated steel shed at the rear.

The symmetrical, single storey, horizontal timber weatherboard, Victorian vernacular styled house is characterised by a simple gable roof form, together with a skillion verandah that projects at the front. A skillion addition is situated at the rear. These roof forms are clad in green painted galvanised corrugated steel. Narrow overhangs are features of the eaves. The lack of a brick chimney suggests that the house may have been relocated to the site.

The symmetry of the design is accentuated by the early central timber framed doorway with four panelled timber door, and the flanking early timber framed 12 paned double hung windows.

A feature of the design is the front verandah. It is supported by introduced timber posts and has an introduced decorative timber valance. The sides also have weatherboard wall cladding. The concrete verandah floor has also been introduced.

History:

Angus Downs is situated near to the *Glencoe* property of which it was once a part. This area had earlier been a part of the early *Green Hills* pastoral run, the homestead of which is situated not far south-west of *Angus Downs*. Crown Allotment 18, on which *Glencoe* was built sometime in the late 1870s or 1880s, had been purchased in April 1855, along with much other land, by John Batey of *Pinewood* (which is situated to the south east of *Angus Downs*).¹

John Beaty, who arrived in the colony from County Tyrone, Ireland, in 1848,² was the brother of John Beatty (sic), who owned the Rockbank Inn for the greater part of the late nineteenth century. He was probably also related to the 'John Beattie' with whom he made the first of his Crown purchases in this area, but probably not related to the Henry Beattie family of nearby *Mt Aitken* station, who hailed from Scotland.

¹ Parish Plan: Yangardook

² Starr, *op cit*, p.29. There is some suggestion that the Beaty may have been in possession of the property from 1848 (John Beaty, personal conversation, 8/5/2002)

Between 1854-57 John Beatey purchased some 1547 acres of land at Crown sales, and added to this over the rest of the nineteenth century as adjacent land became available to purchase. The majority of his holding was situated on the west side of the West Branch of Kororoit Creek, where *Pinewood* (the second), *Glencoe*, and *Angus Downs* were later built.

John Beatey senior apportioned his estate between his sons John junior, Andrew and William. John junior was obtained the property (about 716 acres by the late 1880s) west of the West Branch of Kororoit Creek as far as Blackhill Road in 1872, where *Pinewood* was built.³ In 1879 he transferred some 318 acres of land on the east side of the West Branch of Kororoit Creek (which had increased to some 739 acres in the late 1880s), to William who built the *Rocklands* homestead there.⁴ The next day he transferred to Andrew the property (some 803 acres by the late 1880s) on which the *Glencoe* homestead was built.⁵ John senior retained some 600 acres in his own name.⁶

Andrew and William went back to Ireland where they both married before returning home.⁷ *Glencoe* was likely built in the late 1870s or early 1880s, perhaps to accommodate Andrew's wife. It was built of stone quarried behind the house.⁸ The Melton Shire ratebooks of 1887-88 describe the land rated to Andrew Beatey, 'grazier' of Toolern, as being 'house and 803 acres', with a Net Annual Valuation of £196.⁹ John Beatey senior died on 18th November 1999.

In 1900 Andrew Beatey transferred various parcels of land south of *Glencoe* homestead, totalling some 240 acres, to George, who was his only son.¹⁰ (He may also have transferred other land at another time, as it is not certain that these parcels included the *Angus Downs* house. The *Angus Downs* property was in excess of 330 acres by the early twentieth century.) The family tradition is that George was expected to inherit *Glencoe*, so *Angus Downs* was regarded as something of a temporary home until this occurred. However George died in c.1902,¹¹ some eight years before his father Andrew (on 27th November 1910). As a result of his son predeceasing him, the *Glencoe* property was eventually passed to Mrs Wilson, a daughter.

George Beatey's son John George Beatey was born at *Angus Downs* in 1896. John George's three sisters, the eldest of whom was about four years older than him, were also born at the house.¹² It would then that the house was occupied by George Beatey by c.1892. It is possible that it had been erected (or moved to the site) to accommodate George on the occasion of his marriage to wife Eliza.

John George Beatey raised a family of three daughters, Zelma, Verna and Jean on *Angus Downs*. In the 1930s a large new kitchen was built onto the rear of the old house. John George lived

³ PROV Torrens Application file: VPRS 460/P0 (39493), Conveyance John Beatey to John Beatey the Younger, 12/2/1872.

⁴ PROV Torrens Application file: VPRS 460/P0, Unit 817 (48954), Conveyance John Beatey to William Beatey, 19/9/1879; also Shire of Melton Ratebooks, 1887-1888.

⁵ PROV Torrens Application file: VPRS 460/P0 (37508), Conveyance John Beatey to Andrew Beatey, 20/9/1879; also Shire of Melton Ratebooks, 1887-1888.

⁶ Shire of Melton Ratebooks, 1887-1888.

⁷ *ibid*

⁸ John Beatey, personal conversation, 8/5/2002

⁹ Shire of Melton Ratebooks, 1882-1888.

¹⁰ VPRS 460/P0 (37508)

¹¹ Personal conversation, Mrs Verna Hornbuckle, granddaughter of George Beatey, 12/10/04.

¹² *Ibid*.

there until about a week before his death in 1968.¹³ This was the end of an era for *Angus Downs*.

In the 1970s the vacated property became the setting for a ‘back to the land’ experiment by a ‘community’ of university students and young teachers seeking to go ‘back to basics’. In 1973 Carolyn and Larry Langdon, young children and friends were able to rent out the ‘100 year old farmhouse surrounded by a picket fence and an old fashioned garden growing out of control’ for just \$20 a week.¹⁴ There was a ‘huge shed’ with tractor, ‘another small shed for grain storage, a chook shed, good solid cattle yards with a brick and timber loading race’, and 20 acres of land. The young city ‘community’ set to learning how to breed (and kill) chickens, raise a few farm animals (as pets), and once the tractor was tamed, plant a kitchen garden.

It was a photograph of this group beside their first crop of corn that was chosen as the cover photograph of the inaugural edition of the magazine ‘Grass Roots’.¹⁵ The *Angus Downs* community had become something of an emblem for a magazine that would become a part of the 1970s alternative movement. *Grass Roots* was dedicated to sharing information between those who would turn their backs on ‘big business’ by co-operativism and subsistence, growing vegetables, making candles, and moulding mud bricks.

The group was surprised to find that the property had been left with its original furniture, farming machinery, and even an extensive photographic collection, intact. These included ‘a man sitting proudly on a stock horse with his legs stuck forward heels down, a young man in uniform going off to WW1 [and] a farmer with his team of plough horses working in the paddock.’ In the frame behind one of these was a daguerreotype of the original settlers: ‘a man and a woman staring at us as if they were judging our very souls.’ There were also two 1890s death notices in fine calligraphy. The last of the small commune left three years later when the owners returned to the place.

The house is still in the ownership of the Beaty family. In 2002 Andrew Robinson, the son of Jean Beaty of *Angus Downs*, owned the property, and was undertaking repairs, restoration and extensions to his family home. Apart from structural works, the alterations were confined to the rear part of the house.

The Beaty family have played a prominent part in the history of European settlement of the Toolern Vale area and Shire of Melton. In the early twentieth century John Beaty was for 36 years a Melton Councillor, and served six terms as Shire President. ‘Beaty’s Bush Paddock’ was for many years the site of annual ‘Bird Day’ excursions for scholars at the nearby Toolern Vale State School.¹⁶

Thematic Context / Comparative Analysis:

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

Comparable Places in Shire of Melton:

¹³ *ibid*

¹⁴ An article on the community was written for the 25th Jubilee edition of *Grass Roots* (No.127, June/July 1998).

¹⁵ *Grass Roots* (the Craft and Lifestyle Magazine, for Down to Earth People), No.1, April-June 1973.

¹⁶ Toolern Vale State School Centenary History 1869-1969 (Toolern Vale State School Centenary Celebrations Committee, 1969),

Other comparable Victorian vernacular styled timber dwellings in the Melton Shire include:

- House, Mt Cotterell Road (Place No.298). A Late Victorian vernacular styled dwelling, this building shares a similar rudimentary gabled roof form, modest scale, symmetrical composition at the front with the central doorway and flanking timber framed double hung windows. The front verandah has been altered, but this dwelling also includes a complex rear wing. The condition of this dwelling appears to be slightly higher than that at Angus Downs.
- Paine's Cottage, 152-176 Chapmans Road, Toolern Vale (Place No.009). A Victorian vernacular styled dwelling, this house has a broad simple hipped roof form and a modest scale. This dwelling might also have been relocated to its site, given the location, character and appearance of the brick chimneys. The front façade has a similar symmetrical composition with central timber framed doorway and flanking timber framed windows that are currently obscured by timber shutters. The building lacks a front verandah. It is of moderate integrity, similar to the dwelling at Angus Downs.

Condition:

Fair-poor

Integrity:

Moderately intact - altered

Recommendations:

Recommended for inclusion in the Melton Planning Scheme Heritage Overlay.

Recommended Heritage Overlay Schedule Controls:

External Paint Controls:	<i>No</i>
Internal Alteration Controls:	<i>No</i>
Tree Controls:	<i>No</i>
Outbuildings and/or Fences:	<i>No</i>