

Heritage Overlay No.: 021
Citation No.: 020
Place: ‘Toolern Park’, 1558 – 1672 Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road

Other Names of Place: ‘The Campbell Estate’
Location: ‘Toolern Park’ : 1558-1672 Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road, Toolern Vale
Dry Stone Wall: 942-992 Gisborne Melton Rd, Toolern Vale
1714-1790 Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road, Toolern Vale
Critical Dates: Mid nineteenth century; c.1911.
Existing Heritage Listings: None
Recommended Level of Significance: LOCAL



Statement of Significance:

Toolern Park homestead, 1658-1672 Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road, Toolern Vale, is significant as a surviving nineteenth and early twentieth century farm complex still partly owned by descendents of the original owners, the Campbell family. Established before 1866, the remnants of the original house are identified by the brick rubble and nearby mature conifer and other plantings (that indicate the original driveway). The existing timber house has

significance as an intact example of an Edwardian style. Two dry stone walls contribute to the significance of the place. There is also a large dam with bluestone retaining walls on the property; a smaller dam is now on a new allotment in the same ownership.

The house at Toolern Park, 1658-1672 Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road, Toolern Vale, is architecturally significant at a LOCAL level (AHC D.2). It demonstrates original design qualities of an Edwardian style. These qualities include the recessive hipped roof form, together with the gable and skillion verandah that project towards the front. Other intact or appropriate qualities include the asymmetrical composition, single storey height, horizontal timber weatherboard wall construction, galvanised corrugated steel roof cladding, two face brick chimneys with multi-corbelled cappings, narrow eaves, timber verandah posts with simple timber brackets, timber framed double hung windows (including the tripartite windows under the front verandah and projecting gable) and the timber bargeboards and decorative timber gable infill. The nearby mature conifers (as indicated in the Description below) also contribute to the significance of the place.

The property's substantial dry stone walls and brick remnants of the ruins of the original house are scientifically significant at a LOCAL level (AHC C.2, F.1). The brick remnants have the potential to yield interpretive information about the historical development of the property, while the dry stone walls probably date to the early-mid 1850s, and represent a type of mid-nineteenth century construction that is now redundant. The larger wall incorporates the remnant of a post and top rail fence, a vestige of their use by the Oaklands Hunt Club during the twentieth century.

Toolern Park homestead, 1658-1672 Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road, Toolern Vale, is historically significant at a LOCAL level (AHC A.4, H.1) as one of the notable early farms in Melton, and for its association with James Campbell, one of Toolern Vale's earliest settlers, and his descendents, including Dr Archie Campbell.

Overall, Toolern Vale homestead, 1658-1672 Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road, Toolern Vale, is of LOCAL significance.

Description:

Toolern Park homestead, 1658-1672 Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road, Toolern Vale is situated in a rural setting on the slopes of a volcanic hill. It comprises a timber Edwardian house, dry stone wall fencing, brick rubble (representing the site of the original house) with a mature Conifer and other plantings nearby the original house and driveway. Other mature trees are situated nearby the existing homestead. Also on the property are two large dams with bluestone retaining walls.

The existing asymmetrical, single storey, horizontal timber weatherboard, Edwardian styled homestead is characterised by a recessive hipped roof form, together with a gable and a skillion verandah that project towards the front. At the rear are later additions. These roof forms are clad in deep red painted galvanised corrugated steel. Two early face brick chimneys with multi-corbelled cappings adorn the roofline. Narrow overhangs are features of the eaves.

An early feature of the design is the front verandah. It is supported by timber posts with simple timber brackets.

Other early features include the timber framed double hung windows (including the tripartite windows under the front verandah and projecting gable) and the timber bargeboards and decorative timber gable infill.

A weatherboard laundry has been added to the rear of the house.

The original house and other outbuildings (hay and machinery shed) were destroyed in the 1965 bushfire.

There are some significant exotic trees around the farmstead: an old and unusual Mexican cypress (*Cupressus lusitanica*) near the original homestead site; one Aleppo pine (*Pinus halepensis*) in the driveway; and two cypresses in a paddock (*Cupressus lusitanica orientalis*, and *Cupressus platycladus*).

A substantial dry stone wall, of about 8 courses in height with some of its coping course remaining, and 250 metres in length, also incorporates the remains of a post and single-rail fence. There is disputed information that the Oaklands Hunt Club used to maintain this top rail, which provided a solid jump on their regular hunts. The eastern part of the fence, shown on the 1916 Ordnance Map, now consists of only a low stone wall below post and wire fencing. Another smaller fence runs perpendicular to this, in an approximately southerly direction. These walls are of significance. The larger one at least is possibly an early (northern) property boundary, and so likely to have been built very early, probably by the mid 1860s. There is a smaller dry stone wall behind the shearing shed which is one or two courses high, but whose date is thought by the current owners to be much later.

The two dams on the original property (the smaller one near Coburns Road is now on an adjacent property, subdivided off in recent decades) were enlarged over time, and contain some rough dry stone walling on their low sides. The large dam has a rough stone lined wall of about 50 metres in length, which is of historic interest as a substantial examples of the distinctive type of ‘stone wall’ dam construction in the Shire, it is not proposed for heritage controls.

History:

Toolern Park homestead, once known as the Campbell Estate, is today owned by Mrs Joan Johnstone, whose husband Arch Johnstone’s Campbell forebears were in occupation of the property by the 1860s.¹

The original c.482 acres (195 hectares) of ‘The Estate’ comprises Crown Portion Nos. 52 to 55 and 75 Parish of Yangardook. Originally part of the *Green Hills* pastoral station, the majority of these allotments were purchased from the Crown by J Gray and W Nimmo in February 1855. The small allotment on the east side of Coburns Road that consolidated the Estate (Allotment 75, of 37 acres) was purchased from the Crown in February 1863 by a J McIntosh.²

An early version of the Parish Plan shows a fence around the boundaries of this site; a low (c.2 course) dry stone wall on the east boundary of Coburns Road (the west boundary of this property) is likely the remains of this fence. It would appear to date to the early 1850s.³

It is likely that the Campbell family purchased the property soon afterwards, as family tradition has it that James Campbell took it over from his brother in c.1866. The first Shire of Melton Ratebook, of 1872-73, confirms that the owner of the 484 acres at Yangardook was by this time ‘James Campbell, farmer’. The property was valued at £125. The ratebook also lists Archibald Campbell, ‘grazier’, who had a much larger property (1563 acres) further east in the Diggers

¹ Mrs Joan Johnstone, personal conversation, 28/2/2002

² Parish Plan, Parish of Yangardook

³ It is almost certainly prior to February 1863, as Allotment 75 remains unalienated on the plan.

Rest - Holden area.⁴ By 1882 James Campbell is still listed as the owner of 484 acres in Yangardook, which had risen in value to £145.⁵

Harry Peck, in his acclaimed memoirs of the Newmarket Saleyards from the period c.early 1870s to the 1930s, describes the six Campbell brothers as early settlers in the Gisborne-Sunbury district who were all regular suppliers of stock to the Newmarket Saleyards (where Peck was a stock broker/auctioneer).⁶ Four of the brothers - Hugh, John (on a rich sheep property at Riddell's Creek), and Dugald and Nicol (on the rich cattle property Traralgon Park on the La Trobe River) comprised the firm Campbell Bros. They were all 'big strong raw boned Highlanders'. Hugh, the eldest - 'rough of mien and speech, although he never swore, good-hearted and retaining his native Highland burr' - was the head of the company and a regular attendant at the market.

The other brothers, Archibald and James, were 'smaller and of a retiring studious disposition'. Peck recounts that Archibald's property was 'Winilba, on the slopes of the Vineyard Hill, running down to Jackson's Creek between Diggers Rest and Sunbury', before this property was purchased by Bob Watson.⁷ Peck noted that that James' Toolern Vale property was still in the family. He relates that 'Jimmy Campbell's two sons, Jack and Dr Archie Campbell, became men of mark in their respective spheres.' Jack purchased the homestead portion of his uncle's Traralgon Park, and became a Royal Show judge of light horses, and one of Victoria's best judges of beef breeds of cattle. Dr Archie, after attending Wesley College and winning a blue at cricket at University, 'followed it up successfully as an interstate player'. Peck didn't note that Dr Archie commenced his illustrious career at Toolern Vale State School, whose Centenary history proudly counts him as one of two former scholars who became doctors.⁸

The Melton Shire ratebooks and family lore fill in some of this story. By 1902 James Campbell's had increased his land holdings to c.712 acres by acquisition of lots 26 and 27 on Ryans Road, just south of the Diggers Rest - Coimadai Road.⁹

James Campbell's family lived on Toolern Park in a weatherboard house which doesn't remain today, except for some stone and brick rubble mounds which were probably chimneys, an adjacent large conifer tree, and some relics of the former driveway. The old house was being used as a chook-shed when Joan Johnstone arrived at the property in 1954, and it was destroyed in the 1965 bushfire (along with the property's hay and machinery sheds). Family history recounts that the present house was built by one of James' sons (who doesn't appear on Peck's memoir) before he was killed in a railway accident around the time of the First World War.¹⁰

The Shire ratebooks don't note buildings on any rural properties until about this time. In 1903 year the property was valued at £177, while in the next year the valuation had jumped substantially to £240. While this can suggest the construction of a new house, it is less likely in this case as there seems to have been a major revaluation by the Shire in this year. The next

⁴ Shire of Melton Ratebooks, 1872-73, 1887-88

⁵ Shire of Melton Ratebook, 1882.

⁶ Peck, HH, *Memoirs of a Stockman* (Stock and Land Company, Melbourne, 1972), pp.100-101

⁷ Part of the property was also a substantial vineyard in the 1860s. It is situated on the north-west side of Vineyard Road.

⁸ *Toolern Vale State School, Centenary History 1869-1969* (Toolern Vale State School Centenary Celebrations Committee, 1969) p.28. Archibald James Campbell, grandson of early Melton squatter James Pinkerton would appear not to be a relation (Starr, J, *Melton: Plains of Promise*, Melton Shire Council, nd, pp.83-84)

⁹ Shire of Melton Ratebooks, 1902-03.

¹⁰ Johnstone, *op cit*.

jump in the property's valuation occurred in 1912, when the Net Annual Value of the (482 acre section of the property only) rose from £174 to £265. By 1915, when the Ratebooks were recording more detailed information, the presence of 'buildings' is noted on the property.¹¹ The 1916 Ordnance Map also shows the presence of a house on the property.¹² Historical evidence then suggests that the present house was built c.1911.

James would appear to have died by 1909 when the property ownership changes, to Hugh, Isabella, and William D Campbell. By 1912 another child - 'Ada' (probably Archie) - is included amongst the owners, who each have a quarter share in the property. In 1913 Hugh and William are the listed owners, and by 1915 Hugh, farmer, is the only one remaining. By 1922 the property is described as the 'Campbell Estate, C/- Mrs I Johnston, 26 Aberfeldie Street Essendon'. Family history explains that James in fact had four sons and a daughter, and that the three sons either died or relinquished their interest in the property, which was then left to the daughter. The Johnstones' two sons worked the property until 1966 when Archie (the husband of present owner Joan Johnstone) bought out his brother's share of the property.

The Johnstones operated dairy cattle, sending cream to Sunbury. Crops included barley, wheat, oats, sunflowers and other oilseeds, peas, and grass hay for animals. The property, on the slopes of a volcanic hill, provided beautiful pasture for sheep and fat lambs. They kept hens, and won a prize for a pig in the Gisborne Show. Mrs Johnston the current owner of the drystone walls and shearing shed, subdivided the property into 5 lots, retaining the paddocks, but selling the Edwardian house and land fronting Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road.

Thematic Context / Comparative Analysis:

Shire of Melton Historical Themes: 'Pastoral', 'Farming'

Comparable Places in Shire of Melton:

Historically, the house is one of many farm houses built in the Shire and across Victoria in the early years of the twentieth century. They are generally reflective of both a new era of rural prosperity, and the passing of the original settlers about this time.

Architecturally, the house known as *Toolern Park* is a representative rudimentary example of an Edwardian style in the Melton Shire. Other examples include:

- House, 786 Blackhill Road (Place No.064). This dwelling has a similar composition of roof forms as the subject, with a hipped roof form and a projecting minor gable and skillion verandah at the front. The dwelling may have been relocated to this site and overall, it shares a similar rudimentary character and appearance.
- House, 2 Porteous Road (Place No.007). This Edwardian dwelling appears to be of similar integrity as the subject house. It features a more steeply pitched hipped roof form, and projecting minor gable and verandah at the front clad in red painted galvanised corrugated steel. The verandah is supported by early timber posts and has an early timber verandah fretwork valance and brackets. Overall, the character and appearance is also similarly rudimentary.

¹¹ Shire of Melton Ratebooks, 1905-1912

¹² Ordnance Map, 'Sunbury' 1916

- House, 895 Exford Road (Place No.276). This house also appears to have been altered, including the front skillion verandah and the front windows. The dwelling has a similar rudimentary Edwardian character and appearance.

Condition:

Good

Integrity:

Substantially intact

Recommendations:

Recommended for inclusion in the Melton Planning Scheme Heritage Overlay

The brick remnants representing the ruins of the original house are recommended for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Inventory.

Recommended Heritage Overlay Schedule Controls:

External Paint Controls:	<i>No</i>
Internal Alteration Controls:	<i>No</i>
Tree Controls:	<i>Yes – mature conifers</i>
Outbuildings and/or Fences:	<i>Yes – dry stone fences.</i>



***Relics of the original Campbell Homestead and associated Mexican cypress.
The house was destroyed in 1965 bushfire.***



Dry Stone Wall: cope stones, and remnant of composite post and top-rail fence.