

**Heritage Overlay No.:** 022  
**Citation No.:** 024  
**Place:** House, 'Kuloomba', 2203 Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road

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**Other Names of Place:** Original name: 'Oakbank'.  
**Location:** 2203 Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road, Toolern Vale  
**Critical Dates:** Construction: Circa early twentieth century.  
**Existing Heritage Listings:** None.  
**Recommended Level of Significance:** LOCAL



**Statement of Significance:**

The house known as *Kuloomba* at 2203 Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road, Toolern Vale is significant as a predominantly intact example of a late Federation style. Built c.1904-1907 the eucalypt trees, outbuildings and farm sheds within the property also contribute to the significance of the place.

The house and outbuildings known as *Kuloomba* at 2203 Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road are architecturally significant at a LOCAL level (AHC D.2). The main house demonstrates original design qualities of a late Federation style. These qualities include the steeply pitched hipped roof form, together with the projecting minor gables at the front and side that are linked by the return bullnosed verandah. Other intact or appropriate qualities include the single storey height, horizontal timber weatherboard wall cladding, green painted and lapped galvanised  
*Consultants: David Moloney, David Rowe, Pamela Jellie (2006) Sera Jane Peters (2007)(2009)*

corrugated steel roof cladding, four brick chimneys, three with dentillated and corbelled tops, and one with terracotta pots, modest eaves, timber verandah posts, decorative timber fretwork verandah valance, timber framed double hung windows, decorative gable infill (stucco panelling, vertical timber battening and the timber brackets), galvanised steel finials at the apex of the main roof and the window hood at the front. The timber outbuilding to the rear of the house, probably an accommodation building for farm workers, has original design qualities of a Victorian vernacular style. These qualities include a steeply pitched gable roof, timber weatherboard cladding and a brick and metal chimney. The laundry building to the east of the house has a similar design with a steep gable roof and weatherboard cladding, though it appears to be of a later date, with both outbuildings contributing to the setting of the place.

The house known as *Kuloomba* at 2203 Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road is historically significant at a LOCAL level (AHC A4, B2). Known originally as 'Oakbank', the property and house were the product of the historic break-up of the well-known *Greenhills* and then *Melton Park* pastoral estates at the end of the nineteenth century. The property is also of local historical significance for its association with the locally prominent Barrie family.

Overall, the house known as *Kuloomba* at 2203 Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road is of LOCAL significance.

### **Description:**

The house now known as *Kuloomba* at 2203 Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road, Toolern Vale, has a rural setting with the immediate surrounds comprised of open grassed areas, perimeter shrubbery and mature eucalypts and cypress trees.

The single storey, horizontal timber weatherboard, late Federation styled house is characterised by a steeply pitched hipped roof form, together with projecting minor gables at the front and side that are linked by a return bullnosed verandah. These roof forms are clad in green painted and lapped galvanised corrugated steel. Three early chimneys (now painted) with dentillated and corbelled tops adorn the roofline, with a later chimney with terracotta pots at the rear skillion kitchen extension. Modest overhangs are features of the eaves.

An early feature of the design is the return verandah. It is supported by timber posts and has a decorative timber fretwork valance.

Other early features of the design include the timber framed double hung windows (the scale and proportions of the windows more reflective of interwar design), decorative gable infill (stucco panelling, vertical timber battening and the timber brackets), galvanised steel finials at the apex of the main roof and the window hood at the front.

Two timber outbuildings are located to the rear and side of the house. They have timber framing and horizontal weatherboard cladding, corrugated iron gable roofs and contribute to the setting of the place.

### **History:**

#### *Contextual History*

The property is situated on Crown Allotment 57, Parish of Yangardook, of 299 acres, 1 rood, which was originally purchased from the Crown by John Robert Nowlan on 20<sup>th</sup> April 1855.<sup>1</sup> At the same sale, held at the nearby Dennistoun *Greenhills* homestead, Adolphus Robert Porter and his father Benjamin Coombs Porter (who became a very prominent Melton citizen) purchased adjacent allotments 56 and 64 upon which they established the farm *Inwood Park*, part of which would later be incorporated into the *Kuloomba* property.

Like all of the large portfolio of property JR Nowlan purchased from the Crown in Melton Shire, CA 57 was soon incorporated into the *Greenhills* pastoral estate, which dominated the Toolern Vale area. In turn it became part of the large *Melton Park* estate, which was later subdivided off from *Greenhills* and sold first to solicitor Sir Samuel Gillot, and then to NSW pastoralist Harvey Patterson c.1889.<sup>2</sup>

By the turn of the century farming was resurgent and historical changes were at hand. A new generation of farmers restlessly surveyed the vast pastoral estates surrounding them. In Melton there had long been a belief that the large pastoral estates surrounding the town on three sides ‘acted as a check’ on both the progress of the village, and employment of landless working men.<sup>3</sup> In 1897 Sir Rupert Clarke Bart mused in Parliament about cutting up 40,000 acres of his estate to lease to dairy farmers. He was under local pressure to make land available for farming, and declared he was keen not to ‘disappoint public expectations.’<sup>4</sup> In 1898 the Victorian Municipal Directory entry for Melton Shire made the first of a series of unprecedented reports on movements by the district’s big landholders (including Harvey Patterson of *Melton Park*):

‘Farming and grazing - Harvey Patterson dividing his estate into farms, by sale and also under the share system. Sir Rupert Turner Havelock Clarke, Bart., has leased a large portion of his estate near Melton for grazing and farming; Mr Harry Werribee Staughton also dividing his estate under the share system ...’<sup>5</sup>

#### *Kuloomba History*

At the *Melton Park* subdivision of 1895, CA 57 was purchased by Thomas and John Oppy. Melton Shire ratebooks list a house on this land during this period. In c.1902 the property was sold by Oppy to Robert Barrie, son of William Barrie, of Werribee and Melton. Robert was one of seven brothers, all of whom were associated with the land in Melton Shire. The Barrie family had become prominent in the Shire through their mobile chaff cutter and threshing machine, and then (1905) construction of chaff mill at Melton South Railway Station. Many members of the family have also been leading members of the fire brigade (‘Bon’ received the CFA’s Queen’s Long Service and Good Conduct Medal in 1979), and also the Melton and District Historical Society.<sup>6</sup>

Robert Barrie was newly married at the time he arrived in Toolern Vale. He and his family quickly established themselves on the property, which they called *Oakbank*. His young wife died unexpectedly, leaving a family of young children.

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<sup>1</sup> Parish Plan: Parish of Yangardook,

<sup>2</sup> Cameron, A, ‘Melton Memoirs’ (M&DHS), p.24

<sup>3</sup> Hjorth, Anders, ‘Recollections of Melton 1861-67’, in M&DHS Newsletter, Feb 2001

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

<sup>5</sup> *Victorian Municipal Directory*, 1898, and following years.

<sup>6</sup> Starr, J, *Melton: Plains of Promise* (Shire of Melton, nd, c.1985), pp.189-190, 213-215.

Barrie found the Toolern property ideal for the growing of crops. At the sale of the adjacent *Inwood* property by Edmund A Porter on the 16 May 1907, Barrie purchased the adjacent CA 56 to add to his *Oakbank* property.<sup>7</sup>

In 1907 a house first appears on the ratebooks associated with Barrie's ownership.<sup>8</sup> A house is also marked on the property in 1916.<sup>9</sup> At the time of the sale of the property by Barrie in 1928, its buildings were described as comprising:- 'a six-room weatherboard house with dairy, sheds and other improvements'.<sup>10</sup>

The property was sold to Denis Ryan, a carrier from Clarke Street, Port Melbourne. Ryan, the brother of Mrs Nolan, of Toolern Vale, also owned and leased land in the Parish of Kororoit. It is not known whether he resided on the property himself during his 11 year ownership of *Oakbank*.<sup>11</sup>

Stock sales for Newmarket, as reported in the *Melton Express* 1931-32, indicate that the property was carrying fat lambs in Ryan's ownership. Ryan died in 1938 and *Oakbank* was offered for sale 7 July 1939.

Sometime in the 1930s, during Ryan's ownership, a fire swept down from the Hoggs Road area and burnt out properties on the south side of Coimadai-Toolern Road. 'Oppy's' house was lost.<sup>12</sup> Apparently Ryan rebuilt the house, as the 1938 sale notice refers to a six room weatherboard house. The property itself was described as:

'Originally portion of Melton Park; subdivided many years ago. Noted for early fat lamb production. Noted fattening country – sheep and cattle thrive on best pastures. Average rainfall 23 inches. Further improvement by top dressing and sowing of pasture.'<sup>13</sup>

Llewellyn B Lloyd purchased the property. Stock sales reports in the *Melton Express* in the early post-war period indicate that the property continued to be used for fat lamb production.

Unusually, the value of the property (522a 1r 39 perches 'and buildings', being CAs 56 and 57) declined steadily from a Net Annual Value of £392 in 1925-26, to £365 in 1929-30, to £274 in 1949-50.<sup>14</sup> No doubt it recovered quickly in the 1950s during the Korean War driven pastoral boom.

In 1950 the Lloyd sold the property to Terence Huntly and Mavis Maud Fogarty of 18 Riversdale Road Hawthorn, and Frederick Walter and Gwenell Jean Rowlands of 209a Walsh street, South Yarra. The partners purchased the *Oakbank* property, and an adjoining 180, being the Porters' *Inwood Park* homestead block on part of CA 64.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Shire of Melton, *Ratebooks*, 1907, 1908

<sup>8</sup> Shire of Melton Ratebook, 1907

<sup>9</sup> Army Ordnance Map, 1916: Sunbury district.

<sup>10</sup> *Melton Express*, ??/1928. [ADD exact date if possible]

<sup>11</sup> Directory entries for the period give both his business and private address as Port Melbourne. Older residents of the district cannot recall if there was a resident manager on the property.

<sup>12</sup> Mary Tolhurst, personal conversation (Judith Bilszta), January 2006

<sup>13</sup> *Melton Express* 17/6/1939

<sup>14</sup> Shire of Melton, *Ratebooks*: 1925-26, 1929-30, 1949-50

<sup>15</sup> Shire of Melton, *Ratebooks*: 1950-51

This property was later subdivided into 16 allotments.<sup>16</sup>

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

*Shire of Melton Historical Themes:* ‘Farming’

*Comparable Places in Shire of Melton:*

Architecturally, the dwelling *Kuloomba* is a representative and predominantly intact example of a common Late Federation style in the Melton Shire. Other comparable dwellings include (in terms of form, scale, construction and detailing):

- House, 2 – 180 Davis Road, (Place No.075). Possibly the most distinctive and intact timber Federation styled dwelling in the Melton Shire.
- *Arrunga*, 77 – 347 Holden Road, Diggers Rest (Place No.102). The dwelling is a more altered example of the type.
- House, 1/6 Judd Court, Rockbank (Place No.407). An example of a transitional Late Federation and interwar Bungalow, this house has a steeply pitched central gambrel roof form, together with the familiar projecting gables at the sides and the linking return verandah. The house has interwar Bungalow styled timber framed double hung windows arranged in banks of three. This house does not appear to be as intact as the house *Kuloomba*.

Historically, this is one of six houses identified as having been associated with the break-up of the Melton Park estate around the turn of the twentieth century.

Places associated with the break-up of *Melton Park* for which heritage overlay controls are proposed in this study:-

Place No.175	488 Bulmans Rd West Melton (c.1910)
Place No.177	<i>Kippenross</i> , 429-455 Bulmans Road (1915).
Place No.018	Cornwell Park Stud (former Gnotuk Park), 2389 – 2485 Diggers Rest – Coimadai Road (c.1897).
Place No.024	<i>Kuloomba</i> , 2187 – 2225 Diggers Rest – Coimadai Road (early twentieth century).

Places associated with the break-up of *Melton Park* for which heritage overlay controls are not proposed in this study:-

Place No.174	161 Bulmans Road
Place No.203	Hardy’s Road

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<sup>16</sup> Lodged Plans: 89727, 89728

Of these houses, two (*Kippenross* and Cornwell Park Stud) are exceptions to the typical modest farm homestead established during the break-up of the pastoral estates. The most typical farm house is Place No.175 (488 Bulmans Road).

**Condition:**

Dwelling: Fair  
Outbuildings –Fair/poor

**Integrity:**

Dwelling: Substantially intact  
Outbuildings – Substantially intact

**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>Yes - Two gable timber outbuildings</i>