

Heritage Overlay No.: 026
Citation No.: 032
Place: House 'Creighton', 1618 Gisborne-Melton Road

Other Names of Place: None
Location: 1618- Gisborne-Melton Road, Melton
Critical Dates: c.1895 (construction of main brick house); rear brick addition (1919-20)
Existing Heritage Listings: None
Recommended Level of Significance: LOCAL



Statement of Significance:

Creighton, 1618 Gisborne-Melton Road, Melton, is significant as a predominantly intact and contextually rare local example of a face brick Late Victorian style with Federation style rear additions. Built c.1895 for Isaac Robinson, and extended c.1920, the significance of the dwelling is enhanced by its front garden setting and particularly the two mature Canary Island Palm trees.

Creighton, 1618 Gisborne-Melton Road is architecturally significant at a LOCAL level (AHC D.2, E.1). It demonstrates original and contextually rare design qualities of a Late Victorian style with Federation style additions. The original Late Victorian qualities include the

symmetrical composition, single storey height, face brick wall construction, hipped roof form and encircling verandah, and the galvanised corrugated steel roof cladding. Other intact or appropriate qualities include the rendered brick chimneys, narrow eaves, cast iron verandah valances and brackets, timber framed double hung windows and the central four panelled timber door at the front. The original Federation qualities of the rear additions include the single storey gable roof forms are clad in galvanised corrugated steel, rendered brick chimneys, face brick wall construction and stuccoed upper walls. Other intact or appropriate qualities include the timber framed double hung windows arranged as banks of three (with highlights) in the gable ends, round windows under the side verandah, and the decorative gable infill (timber battening and stucco panelling and the timber brackets. The mature Canary Island Palm trees at the front, symmetrically placed and with a circular planting bed in front of them in the manner of the period, also contribute to the significance of the place.

Creighton, 1618 Gisborne-Melton Road is historically significant at the LOCAL level (AHC B2, H1). The Robinson family were leaders in the development of the highly important hay growing industry in Werribee-Melton area in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and have also been prominent in the Melton and Diggers Rest chaff mills. The family was represented on Melton Shire Council for most of the twentieth century, with Isaac Robinson of *Creighton* being a three-time Shire President. *Creighton* is also one of very few predominantly intact face brick Late Victorian styled dwellings of local cultural heritage significance in the Shire of Melton, and is situated in a prominent location on a main road.

Overall, *Creighton* at 1618 Gisborne-Melton Road is of LOCAL significance.

Description:

The property known as *Creighton*, 1618 Gisborne-Melton Road, Melton, consists of a substantial brick dwelling in a rural, landscaped setting. At the front are garden beds and two landmark Canary Island Palm trees. The front is bound by a random rubble fence and there is a mature hedge along the side.

The Canary date palms appear to date from the period of construction of the house. The palms are symmetrically placed at the front entrance to the residence in a traditional manner with a circular planting bed in front of them.

The symmetrical, single storey, face brick, Late Victorian styled dwelling is characterised by a hipped roof form clad in galvanised corrugated steel, together with an encircling verandah. Two rendered brick chimneys with multi-corbelled tops adorn the roofline. Narrow overhangs are features of the eaves.

A feature of the design is the encircling post-supported verandah. It is adorned with decorative cast iron valances and brackets.

Other early features include the timber framed double hung windows and the four panelled timber front door.

The projecting gable roof forms at the rear of the dwelling represent early additions of the Federation (c.1895-1915) era. These roof forms are clad in galvanised corrugated steel and also feature rendered brick chimneys. The rear additions have face brick wall construction with stuccoed upper walls. There are early timber framed double hung windows arranged as banks of three (with highlights) in the gable ends, together with round windows under the side verandah. Other early features of the addition include the decorative gable infill (timber battening and stucco panelling and the timber brackets.

History:

William Robinson, stonemason, and Ann Bee, school teacher, married at St John Weardale, Stanhope Parish, Durham, in 1852 and shortly before leaving for Australia on the ship *Ben Nevis*, arriving Melbourne late that year.

William and Ann spent the next two years on the Castlemaine goldfield, then in 1855 settled on the Werribee Plains and began farming activities – dairying and hay making - on 50 acres of their own land and 300 acres of leased property. Produce was carted to Footscray and Melbourne for sale. In 1872 they purchased more land, 300 acres at Tarneit, which they called *Mount Pleasant Farm* and 832 acres at Melton.

It was around this time that William erected a stone farmhouse on *Mount Pleasant Farm* from stones taken from farm paddocks cleared for cultivation: ‘He dressed them all and with the help of my brothers, erected a house of six rooms suitable and serviceable for a farm.’¹

William and Ann had a family of five living sons and one physically handicapped daughter, who traveled to Mount Cotterell to be educated, a trip of 5½ miles each way, before the Tarneit school was erected.

In the early 1880’s the brothers George, William, Isaac and Thomas moved to Melton to work the newly acquired property on the Djerriwarrh Creek and Toolern road. John remained with his parents. Father, William died in 1890 having established the hay making industry on the Werribee Plains. The Melton property was left to the three brothers, the Tarneit land to John and Mary. (Ann died in 1898 following which the *Mount Pleasant* farm was let until sold c.1920. Only a few stones mark the place where the farm house stood.)

All brothers resided on their property on the Djerriwarrh Creek for a time, producing hay, to the astonishment of local farmers who considered such an undertaking uneconomical due to poor rainfall. The Robinsons have been recognized as being the first to ‘grow hay’ ... ‘commercially on a large scale at Melton’.²

The Djerriwarrh property house was erected in 1888. William Robinson who married Catherine Raleigh resided here. Today, only a few red bricks mark the site.

On 6 November 1895, George and Isaac Robinson purchased c.180 acres of Allotment D Section 16 Parish of Djerriwarrh from Harvey Patterson when he broke up his *Melton Park* estate. This land, on the south-west corner of Toolern and Minns Roads, adjoined the land already owned by the Robinsons. They named the property *Creighton* (not to be confused with the McCorkell property, *Crichton*, at Toolern Vale). Isaac, George and Thomas worked this land as a whole, first living in a tent, then in a timber house of five rooms. The house was situated further north on the Toolern Road, on Crown Allotment 72, Parish of Yangardook.³

After Isaac’s marriage to Catherine’s sister Henrietta Raleigh in 1894, the brick house of five rooms was built in front of the wooden home part of which was then used as the kitchen and

¹ Robinson, John, ‘Milestones in the Journey of Life’ (private publication, 1955)

² Starr, J, *Melton: Plains of Promise* (Shire of Melton, nd, c.1985), p.217

³ Parish Plan, Parish of Yangardook.

laundry. (This was described in 1985 as being in the area of the garage and aviary). Isaac and Henrietta had eleven children so space must have been somewhat cramped.

Of the other brothers associated with the property George Robinson, a bachelor, continued to reside in rooms in the timber dwelling at *Creighton* until his death in 1918, aged 63 years.

Thomas Robinson who followed his brothers to Melton also lived for a time with Isaac, then purchased land alongside *Creighton* where he resided with his wife, the former Harriet Radford and his three children.

Henrietta planted the palm trees, which were well grown when Beryl Robinson was born in 1946.⁴

For the marriage of Isaac's and Henrietta's eldest daughter Katherine in 1920 the brick house was extended by adding three rooms to the rear. The alterations, costing £47.6.0 were begun on 23rd December 1919, and took 20 weeks to complete.⁵

Before the son George married (1943), further alterations were made with a bedroom becoming a new kitchen and erection of final section. The remains of the timber building were demolished, leaving just the outdoor timber laundry. When the garage was erected it too was demolished.⁶

Isaac died in 1947 and Henrietta died in 1952.

A sketch plan of the house prepared by Jeanette Robinson shows a house of seven rooms, four bedrooms, lounge or 'south room', lounge/dining room, kitchen and bathroom, a hall/passage way bisects the floor plan. A laundry and toilet are rear additions. A feature of the house is the verandah, with its decorated cast iron trim, which encompasses three sides of the 'first' section of the house.

Creighton was threatened with fire on more than one occasion. The 1965 wildfire was by far the most serious and only for several hundred acres of fallow land on the property was the town of Melton saved, while shotgun blasts into a 1500 gallon water tank saved the farm sheds. Although the wooden tank stand was ablaze and the water boiling, the spray of water was sufficient to dampen the flames.⁷

During the late 1960's two acres of land was excised from the property for the erection of a house and shedding for the eldest son Kenneth following his marriage.

In 1985, Murray Robinson, younger son of George and grandson of Isaac, sold the property, now of 320ha, in nine allotments. The family had held title for ninety-eight years. Encroaching residential subdivision, vandalism and marauding dogs had made the life of a farmer residing close to the Melton town ship too difficult.⁸ Three generations of Robinsons had lived in *Creighton*.

The Robinson family was also renowned for haystack building. The following extract from the *Melton Express* regarding the 'Melton Hay Stack Competition' in 1925 reveals some

⁴ Judith Bilstza, personal conversation with Beryl Harrington (nee Robinson).

⁵ TH Collins' (builder) Day Book.

⁶ Robinson, Jeanette: The Robinson family, 1981

⁷ *The Express*, 18th March 1965

⁸ Interview Murray and Jeanette Robinson, *The Express*, 1985

significant names associated with the hay and chaff industry in the district:- Thomas Trethowan, Rockbank, first 89 points; Gilbert Taylor, Melton Park, second 81 points; Leslie Robinson, Melton, third 74 points; George Robinson, Melton, fourth 71 points; Albert Paulet, Melton South, fifth 69 points; Henry Robinson, Melton and Jim Hornbuckle, Melton Park, equal sixth 68 points; William Robinson, Melton, seventh 62 points; C.E. Barrie, Melton eighth, 52 points.⁹ During the 1935 hay season, the *Express* correspondent drew the attention of readers to the stack erected by Les Robinson and thatched by Eb (GE) Robinson. The art of stack building was disappearing from the district.

The Robinsons of Truganina were also prominent through their involvement with the district's important chaff milling industry. In 1926 Henry Robinson of *May Farm* Truganina became a partner in the 'Shutt Barrie and Robinson', which established the 'Austral' mill at Diggers Rest (burnt down c.1939). Robinson's sons David and Douglas remained with the company as it diversified into flour milling and other produce activities before closing c.1968. Before the War the Robinson Brothers (trading under the name of S & D Robinson) bought out the Ebbot and Kebby mill at the Melton South station.¹⁰

Since 1900 there have been only a few years in which a Robinson family member has not been represented on the Melton Shire Council.¹¹ Isaac Robinson of *Creighton* was a long-serving Councillor of the Shire of Melton, and President three times (1920-11, 1924-25, 1932-33).¹²

The current owners, Kevin and Joan Grogan have been in ownership of the property since 1985.

Thematic Context / Comparative Analysis:

Shire of Melton Historical Themes: 'Farming'; 'Community (Towns and People)'

Comparable Places in Shire of Melton:

The dwelling known as *Creighton* at 1618 Gisborne-Melton Road represents one of very few predominantly intact face brick Late Victorian styled dwellings of local cultural heritage significance in the Melton Shire. Another known intact face brick dwelling of the late Victorian era is *Nerowie* off Buckler's Road, Parwan. This dwelling has been designed in a Victorian Picturesque style.

Other comparable Late Victorian styled dwellings in the Melton Shire that have been constructed in timber and include:

- *Hickey*, 30 Hickey Road, Exford (Place No. 288) a single storey hipped roof dwelling with a hipped verandah that projects towards the road frontage. This dwelling has a decorative timber fretwork verandah valance more typical of the Federation era. The house appears to be substantially intact although it is in fair condition.
- *Glengallon*, 77 Butlers Road, Mt. Cottrell (Place No. 282): a symmetrical, single storey, hipped roof dwelling with an encircling bullnosed verandah. The lattice valance has been introduced. Like *Creighton*, the dwelling *Glengallon* also features early gabled

⁹ *The Express*, 21st January 1925. Mr HD Brady of Mount Cotterill was the judge and Evan Macdonald the Steward.

¹⁰ Vines, G 'Outline of Chaff Milling' (Living Museum of the West), pp. 32, 40-41; Starr, *op cit*, p.215.

¹¹ Starr, *op cit*, pp.232-33

¹² *ibid*, pp.265, 269

additions at the rear that also contribute to the significance of the place. These additions are reflective of the interwar period.

- Dwelling, 161 Bulmans Road, Melton West (Place No. 174) a modest single storey symmetrical dwelling with a hipped roof form and skillion verandah that projects towards the front. Like *Creighton*, the symmetry of the design is promoted by the central doorway with single timber framed double hung windows. The dwelling at 161 Bulmans Road does not appear to be as intact as *Creighton*, as the verandah detailing and balustrade have been introduced.
- Dwelling, 53-105 McPherson Road, Toolern Vale (Place No. 48): a single storey homestead featuring a hipped roof form and encircling convex verandah clad in galvanised corrugated steel. The dwelling features a face brick multi-corbelled chimney and decorative eaves brackets, together with the symmetrical front doorway and flanking timber framed double hung windows. Like *Creighton*, there is a gabled addition that probably dates from the interwar period and contributes to the significance of the dwelling.

The Federation style additions at *Creighton* contribute to the significance of the dwellings, like the additions on the comparable Late Victorian styled dwellings mentioned above.

Condition:

Good

Integrity:

High

Recommendations:

Recommended for inclusion in the Melton Planning Scheme Heritage Overlay.

Recommended Heritage Overlay Schedule Controls:

External Paint Controls:	<i>Yes</i>
Internal Alteration Controls:	<i>No</i>
Tree Controls:	<i>Yes – two Canary Island Palm trees at the front</i>
Outbuildings and/or Fences:	<i>No</i>