

Heritage Overlay No.: 027
Citation No.: 035
Place: **House & Outbuilding, 310-360
Gisborne - Melton Road**

Other Names of Place: Pineview
Location: 310-360 Gisborne-Melton Road Toolern Vale
(Allotment B Parish of Yangardook)
Critical Dates: Construction: 1874
Existing Heritage Listings: None
Recommended Level of Significance: LOCAL



Statement of Significance:

The house at 310 Gisborne-Melton Road Toolern Vale is significant as a moderately intact example of a Victorian style dwelling constructed in rendered brickwork and as a historical legacy of farming developments in the Melton Shire in the nineteenth century. The rear outbuilding, mature cypresses and rural setting also contribute to the significance of the place. The house and dairy were built in 1874 for John and Margaret McPherson, of a prominent pioneering Toolern Vale family.

The house at 310 Gisborne-Melton Road Toolern Vale is architecturally significant at a LOCAL level (AHC D.2). Although altered, it still demonstrates original design qualities of a Victorian style. These qualities include the hipped roof form, together with the encircling verandah. Other intact or appropriate qualities include the single storey height, rendered brick

wall construction, corrugated profile sheet metal roof cladding, brick chimney, stop chamfered timber verandah posts, timber verandah floor, timber framed, 12 paned double hung windows, front timber framed doorway with highlight, and the smooth rendered masonry quoinwork. The rear gabled outbuilding constructed of rendered brickwork with smooth rendered masonry quoinwork, narrow vertical wall openings, single door opening with timber door and the galvanised corrugated steel roof cladding, together with the nearby mature cypress trees, also contribute to the significance of the place.

The house at 310 Gisborne-Melton Road Toolern Vale is historically significant at a LOCAL level (AHC A4). It is an example of a homestead built by a successful larger farmer, of which there were a few in the northern parts of the Shire. It also testifies to the prominence of Scottish settlers in the farming history of the Shire, particularly in early Toolern Vale. It is also significant for its association with the McPherson family, a successful pioneering family in Toolern Vale.

Overall, the house at 310 Gisborne-Melton Road Toolern Vale is of LOCAL significance.

Description:

The house at 310 Gisborne-Melton Road Toolern Vale has a rural setting with the immediate surroundings comprising open grassed areas, gravel driveway flanked by agapanthas, perimeter flower and shrub beds. The rows of mature cypress trees at the rear and side of the house are a major feature. There is also a rendered brick outbuilding nearby, and a brick underground tank. The property is an equestrian centre.

The single storey, rendered brick, Victorian styled house is characterised by a hipped roof form, together with an encircling verandah. These roof forms are clad in green corrugated colorbond. The verandah is supported by stop chamfered timber posts and has a timber floor.

Other early features of the design include the brick chimney, timber framed, 12 paned double hung windows, the front timber framed doorway with highlight, and the smooth rendered masonry quoinwork.

At the side on the front façade, the verandah has been infilled with weatherboard wall cladding, windows and door opening and a bracketed timber window hood.

The nearby rendered brick outbuilding has a simple gable roof form clad in deep red painted galvanised corrugated steel. It has narrow eaves and an early face brick chimney with a corbelled top (part of the corbelling is missing). Other features include the narrow vertical openings in the wall, single timber framed doorway with timber door and the smooth rendered quoinwork.

History:

The property is situated on a table-land at the top of the long ‘Breakneck Hill’. ‘Breakneck’ is situated on the Gisborne-Melton Road crossing of Stringybark Hill (or Mt Ida) between the Black Hills and Sugaloaf in the north of the Shire.¹ It acquired its name during the goldrush, when it would appear to have been a third main route to Gisborne, after the Diggers Rest and Bulla routes, taken by diggers travelling to Mount Alexander. It was probably favoured by diggers coming directly from ships at Williamstown (or the Footscray punts). They could have taken the old track up the east side of Kororoit Creek, probably crossing it at the

¹ 1:25000 Topographical Map “Toolern Vale”; 1:63,360 Army Ordnance Map (1933)

Rockbank Inn. Alternatively they might have continued up to near present day Sydenham and met the road ‘To Green Hills and Bullangrook’ (for the most part preserved in today’s Holden-Coimadai Road) which was probably the first track across the Breakneck. This deviation from Sydenham might also have been used by those wishing to avoid the Aitkens Gap toll.² John Chandler, tossing up which way to bring his team after the Keilor bridge had been washed away, was deterred from this route by the origin of the name. There was:

‘... a fearful hill we should have to go over before we got to Gisborne (called ‘Breakneck’, because there had been so many bullocks killed there), we decided that would not do.’³

The land on which the house is situated is Allotment B, Parish of Yangardook. It was sold, with the abutting Allotments A and C, to George Urquhart, on 11th November 1858.⁴ From the time of the Crown sales in mid 1850s, Urquhart had been purchasing all the land he could that had been associated with the *Greenhills* pastoral station, and then buying out others who had obtained the Crown grants to different parcels.⁵ However in 1861 Urquhart sold the *Greenhills* station to Alexander Macintosh. McIntosh was apparently not interested in the three parcels on top of the range, which were quite isolated from the main Greenhills holdings. They are also likely to have been covered with the forest and scrub that now abuts the property (the Yangardook State Forest).

By the early 1870s at least the properties were owned by John McPherson. In 1874 for McPherson invited tenders for a brick dwelling on bluestone foundations at Breackneck.⁶

The *Australasian’s* Travelling Reporter, who only made reference to the most salubrious houses of the farms he visited, described this building as a ‘commodious’ when he visited in 1876:

‘Leaving McDonald’s place and following the road leading to Gisborne, we soon come to a sharp rise, which on account of its steepness is called Breakneck. From the commencement of the rise to the top is a distance of about a mile and a half, and the land on either side being mostly of a poor description, and lightly timbered except at the bottom of the valleys where the soil is remarkably fertile. On the top of the rise is a large area of table land mostly of very fair quality, a good proportion being a few years back under culture, but the greater part is now used for grazing purposes. The farm of Mr John McPherson is situated at the top of the ascent, facing the road, and contains 700 acres, about half of the land being fit for cultivation. About 80 acres are under crop this season with wheat, oats, barley and potatoes, all of which generally yield fair returns English barley as a rule does better than any other grain crop, very frequently giving over 40 bushels to the acre. Wheat does better than oats being seldom affected by the rust, and over 30 bushels to the acre can generally be relied upon. Mr McPherson’s system of cropping is to sow wheat which is followed by oats and then barley after which the land is sown down with English grasses and allowed to remain undisturbed for several years. About 100 cattle are kept, mixed stock, and dairying is carried on to some extent, both butter and cheese being made, according to the season

² J Arrowsmith “Map of the Province of Victoria, principally derived from the surveys of surveyor Robert Hoddle” (1853). For Maribyrnong River crossings, see Canon, M, *Old Melbourne Town Before the Gold Rush* (Loch Haven, Main Ridge, 1991), pp.106-107; also Max Lay, *Melbourne Miles: The Story of Melbourne’s Roads* (Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne, 2003), *passim*.

³ Chandler, John, *Forty Years in the Wilderness* (Loch Haven, Main Ridge, 1990), p.67

⁴ Parish Plan, Parish of Yangardook

⁵ ‘Old Melton Times’, (MDHS typescript, author unknown, reproduced from the *Melton Express* 1905)

⁶ Bacchus Marsh *Express*, 7/3/1874

and the market prices of these commodities. Among the horse stock are seven heavy draught animals including a very promising colt by Rowan's Scotchman. Recently a commodious, neat and well arranged residence has been built, fitted up with many conveniences, the dairy and other necessary outbuildings being in keeping.⁷

It is likely that the small outbuilding behind the dwelling is the dairy referred to as being 'in keeping'; it has the same smooth rendered quoinwork as the main house.

By 1875 'John McPherson, Yangardook' was advertising 128 acres for lease.⁸ This may have been the abutting Allotment D, of 128 acres 1 rood and 25 perches, that he was purchasing, as a selector, from the Crown, and to which he obtained title in 1881. An M McPherson also obtained 60 acres of land under the Selection Acts on the opposite side of the road in 1872 (Allotment 2, Section 20).⁹ By 1892 the McPherson name (although not necessarily the same family) also owned about 400 acres at the end of McPherson Lane between Breakneck and Toolern Vale.¹⁰

In 1893 John McPherson of Toolern Vale was again advertising five year leases on his properties 'Breakneck and Brown's Gully farms'. Breakneck Farm was described as being 420 acres in size, and 'well fenced, 5 paddocks, watered by dams and springs'. (Given its size it is likely to have incorporated Allotment 2, Section 20 on the opposite side of the road, granted originally to M McPherson, who may have been his wife.) The property had a 'Brick house of 7 rooms; kitchen; dairy; stables; barn; etc.'¹¹

In 1889 McPherson's son John had married Margaret McPherson (daughter of the James McPherson of Melton).¹² John McPherson junior was elected to the Shire Council, but resigned due to ill health. He died, and was buried at Kyneton in 1894. At the time he was described as the third of the McPherson children, and 'late of Pine View, Breakneck'.¹³

In 1903 AR Robertson MLA, leased *Pine View*. By 1908 George Robertson, 'farmer', Toolern Vale, was the occupying tenant of Mrs M. MacPherson, who retained a half share in the property of 158 acres.¹⁴ A Mr McDonald, Kensington wool scourer, leased the property for 30 years after Robertson.

'L. McPherson Stock & Station Agent and Auctioneer' who operated at Bacchus Marsh and other places prior to WW2, was of this family.

The property has been used for horse training, as an equestrian centre, since about 1970.¹⁵

The rows of mature cypress trees at the rear and side of the house are likely to be related to the name of the property.

Thematic Context / Comparative Analysis:

Shire of Melton Historical Themes: 'Farming'

⁷ *Australasian*, 25 November 1876

⁸ *Bacchus Marsh Express*, 2/6/1875

⁹ Parish Plan, Parish of Yangardook

¹⁰ Shire Map Series (1892): Yangardook.

¹¹ *Bacchus Marsh Express*, 16/12/1893

¹² *Bacchus Marsh Express*, March 1889

¹³ *Bacchus Marsh Express*, 5/5/1894

¹⁴ Shire of Melton, Ratebooks, 1908-09

¹⁵ Mr David Portelli, personal conversation, 6/3/2002

Comparable Places in Shire of Melton:

The Victorian dwelling and outbuilding at 310 Gisborne-Melton Road, although altered, is a representative example of their type. Comparable Victorian styled dwellings in rural locations in the Melton Shire include:

- Tibbermore, 687 Hopkins Road (Place No. 392). This substantially altered Victorian dwelling with Edwardian additions at the front has bluestone wall construction and similar hipped roof forms. However, the Victorian dwelling at 312 Gisborne-Melton Road is more externally intact.
- Mt Kororoit Homestead, 2-88 Leakes Road, Plumpton, Moylan (Place No. 146). This property consists of a timber Late Victorian styled main house. It has a hipped roof form and encircling verandah, with introduced corrugated Colorbond roof cladding. The encircling verandah has been altered and is now supported by introduced square timber posts. There are five outbuildings on the property and it is therefore more substantial in overall buildings on the site than the Victorian dwelling and outbuilding at 312 Gisborne-Melton Road. However, the integrity of both main houses is directly comparable, although the dwelling at 312 Gisborne-Melton Road is more substantially constructed in rendered brick.
- Rocklands Homestead, 619 Hopkins Road, Truganina (Place No. 391). The earliest section of the main house is directly comparable, with its double hipped (M) roof forms and painted bluestone wall construction, and encircling verandah (that appears to have replaced an earlier verandah). The extent of change and additions to the main house at Rocklands Homestead is also comparable to the integrity of the Victorian dwelling at 312 Gisborne-Melton Road.
- House and Shed, 53-105 McPherson Road, Toolern Vale (Place No 048). This property consists of a Late Victorian styled timber dwelling having a hipped roof form and an encircling convex verandah. At the rear is an introduced gabled addition. The Victorian dwelling at 312 Gisborne-Melton Road is of more substantial rendered brick construction but of similar integrity as the house at 53-105 McPherson Road. There is also a Federation vernacular styled 2-stand shearing shed having a gable roof form and galvanised corrugated steel construction. The outbuilding at 312 Gisborne-Melton Road is more closely associated with the main house, being of similar construction.
- Glencoe Homestead, 562 Burns Lane, Toolern Vale (Place No. 005). This Victorian styled bluestone house is of higher integrity and features a hipped roof form and encircling broken back verandah on three sides. There is a timber extension towards the rear. The homestead also has a diary/barn/horse-stall, fowl house, coach house, pig pen and shearing shed. This property is possibly more intact and substantial overall, of the Victorian dwellings with outbuildings in the Melton Shire (when comparing properties within the locally significant threshold).

Condition:

Good

Integrity:

Moderately 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>Yes – mature cypress trees</i>
Outbuildings and/or Fences:	<i>Yes – nearby rear rendered brick outbuilding</i>