

**Heritage Overlay No.:** 028  
**Citation No.:** 036  
**Place:** Ruin, ‘McIntosh Cottage’, 687 –777  
Gisborne–Melton Road

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**Other Names of Place:** None  
**Location:** 687-777 Gisborne-Melton Road, Toolern Vale  
(Lot 1 TP 608391, (CA 47, Parish of Yangardook)  
**Critical Dates:** Construction: by mid 1860s  
**Existing Heritage Listings:** None  
**Recommended Level of Significance:** LOCAL



**Statement of Significance:**

The McIntosh Ruin, 687-777 Gisborne Melton Road, Toolern Vale, is significant as a now scarce relic of the first farming period in the Shire, of the Scottish enclave in Toolern Vale in this period, and as the site of the first Presbyterian services in Toolern Vale. The ruin of the dwelling, built by the early 1860s, is a contributory part of an early and attractive cultural landscape of high significance in both the pastoral and farming histories of the Shire.

The McIntosh Ruin, 687-777 Gisborne Melton Road, Toolern Vale, is historically significant at the Local level (AHC A4, B2, D2). It is situated on the site of an important early 1840s outstation of the *Green Hills* pastoral station, at that time the largest and most developed sheep run in the Shire. The hills of this area, stretching to Gisborne and towards Sunbury, are also of

wider significance in the history of Victoria's settlement, as the meeting place of the two streams of Port Phillip's European settlers, the 'overstraiters' from Tasmanian and the 'overlanders' from New South Wales. This upper Toolern Creek valley, between Bensons Road and Toolern Vale, subsequently became a rich part of the farming history of the Shire. The place is a contributory part of a cultural landscape that contains a concentration of early farm dwellings and structures (including dry stone walls), now mainly ruinous due to bushfires and the passage of time, and views from Gisborne-Melton Road over the rich farmlands and attractive valley to the ranges and plains beyond. The ruin is also a now-scarce relic of the 'first farming' period of the Shire: on farms purchased from the Crown in the 1850s, rather than the later the Selection Acts, or created in the break-up of the large pastoral estates in the early twentieth century. It also testifies to the prominence of Scottish settlers in the farming history of the Shire, particularly in early Toolern Vale.

The McIntosh cottage was a centre of this community, being the site of the first Presbyterian services in Toolern Vale, prior to the building of a church. The place is also significant for its association with the McIntoshs, a very old and large Melton family which still farms in the Shire. The abandoned dwelling, finally destroyed in the major 1952 Toolern bushfire, is also expressive of the major role of bushfires in the Shire of Melton. The domed underground tank, stripped of its concrete render to reveal the bricklaying construction technique, contributes to the significance of the place as an expression of an early method of water storage no longer practised.

The McIntosh Ruin, 687-777 Gisborne Melton Road, Toolern Vale, is scientifically significant at the Local level (AHC C2). The ruin is rare, perhaps unique, in the Shire for its primitive construction with the flat sedimentary rubble stone of its immediate locality. It is a quite finely crafted vernacular structure with the potential to provide further information about early construction techniques and lifestyles in the Shire of Melton.

Overall, the McIntosh Ruin, 687-777 Gisborne Melton Road, Toolern Vale, is of LOCAL significance.

**Description:**

The ruin at 687-777 Gisborne-Melton Road, Toolern Vale is situated on a knoll on the north-east corner of McPherson Road, with a beautiful view over the Toolern Creek valley to the east, and to the Black Hills beyond and to the north, and the Melton Plains to the south.

The place was a small dwelling, perhaps of four rooms. It now consists principally of a stone chimney base and hearth, and an adjacent domed underground water tank, and peppercorn trees.

The large stone chimney base - hearth is approximately 2.5 metres high. It is a finely constructed primitive structure of rubble stone. Its larger stones are used for the corners and the lower courses of the structure. It is unusual in the Shire of Melton in that it does not use quarried and roughly squared bluestone, but the flat schistose rock that is indigenous to the hills of the Toolern Vale / Djerriwarrh Creek area, in an unworked and undressed state. It uses smaller rocks to help flatten the base for the next course and plug gaps in the face. It is not clear what if any mortar has been used originally. There are only traces of mortar and render remaining between some of the larger stones, but extensive mortar binds the small stones at the higher part of the structure; this mortar is presumably harder than any originally used, and may have been added in the twentieth century.

There are mounds, and a considerable scatter, of bricks around this structure. They are hand made bricks, but very regular in size and finish, suggesting that they were professionally

made rather than made on site. They probably come from the chimneys which appear to have collapsed, or been demolished, in the 1980s or 1990s, prior to which they were visible from the Gisborne – Melton Road. The site is now no longer readily visible from the road.

The lack of stone mounds or rubble around the structure confirms reports that the cottage was originally timber, stone and brick.

**The adjacent underground tank is quite large, its brick dome approximately three metres in diameter. The bricks are quite intact, although most of its concrete render has been lost. It has a concrete lined interior. It is likely to have been built at the same time as the house, although the dome may have been added later. Its high hemispherical dome, rather than a low segmental dome, is consistent with this assumption.**

There are a few large, and a few younger, peppercorn trees, as were typically associated with rural cottages.

### **History:**

#### *The Pastoral Era.*

Very early maps, prior to the government surveyors marking out the parish of Yangardook for subdivision and sale, record the topography (particularly the streams) and show the beginnings of pastoral occupation of the country.

One such map, dating to the early 1840s, shows the name ‘Hyde’ in a large rectangle to the west of the Toolern Creek. The northern portion of this rectangle includes the present site – the land later occupied by the Elms – and stretches south to take in the adjacent ruin (Place No.38), and westwards over the present Gisborne – Melton Road.<sup>1</sup>

This rectangle and name marked an outstation of John Hunter Patterson’s *Green Hills* station, which from 1841 to 1843 had been taken over by George Hyde.<sup>2</sup> In 1841, months prior to Hyde taking over *Green Hills*, a census of squatters in the district showed that *Green Hills* was the largest of all the early Melton pastoral stations in terms of employees. It supported 26 persons (‘all free’), including 15 shepherds.<sup>3</sup> A shepherd, and probably a hutkeeper, would have lived somewhere within the area marked on the early map. Although it is unlikely that a shepherd’s hut would have been of a size or quality of construction that would have accommodated a late nineteenth century farming family, it is possible that either this or the other ruin (Place No.38) were built on the site of an original shepherd’s hut. It is conceivable that the chimney base of this small house, of primitive/vernacular construction, may even date to this period.

George Hyde died on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1844, travelling from *Green Hills* to Melbourne. In contrast to Aitken, Pyke, Yuille, Evans, Jackson and the other early squatters Vandemonian ‘overstraiters’, Hyde, like Howey, Coghill, Riddell and Hamilton, had been one of the New South Wales overlanders. An *Argus* article of 1945 suggested that the hills between Sunbury and Gisborne, including the areas of the *Green Hills* and *Mount Aitken* pastoral stations in the Shire of Melton, was an area of pre-eminent significance in the early pastoral history of Victoria. As

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<sup>1</sup> Land Victoria, Historical Plan: ‘Roll 113’ (184?)

<sup>2</sup> Land Victoria: Historical Plan: ‘Roll 11’ (c.1841); Starr, *op cit*, p.76

<sup>3</sup> *1841 Census, New South Wales* (Port Phillip District), Return No.13.  
*Consultants: David Moloney, David Rowe, Pamela Jellie (2006)*

the meeting place of the two streams of European settlement of Port Phillip, ‘these hills take pride of place in the pastoral and agricultural development of the State...’<sup>4</sup>

Apart from *Green Hills* headstation itself, which is similarly marked ‘Hyde’, with another large rectangle, the site on which the ruin is situated was the only other place marked in this way on *Green Hills*. While later plans show other *Green Hills* outstation sites – in the scrubby ranges near Djerriwarrh Creek, on McCorkells Road, (Place No.44), and two further downstream on Toolern Creek (Places No.26 and 57) – this place would appear to have been the second ranked pasture land, and station, on *Green Hills*.

The significance of this area is confirmed in later plans (c.early 1850s) which show a larger rectangle marked ‘Grass Paddock’ further down the Toolern Creek, on Crown Allotment 43, between the Elms (Place No.38) and the township of Toolern.<sup>5</sup> This is one of only three ‘grass paddocks’ (presumably fenced) shown on *Green Hills*: one at the headstation itself, another in the valleys just north of O’Connell Avenue, and this one. So again, the Toolern Creek valley between Toolern Vale and McPhersons Road is set apart as one of the most important parts of the *Green Hills* station.

#### *Establishment of McIntosh’s Cottage.*

This attractive and rich valley that had been prominent in the early pastoral settlement of the Toolern Vale area was also highly valued in the farming era.

On 7<sup>th</sup> June 1855 Crown Allotment No.46, Parish of Yangardook, of 78 acres 3 roods and 8 perches, was sold by the Crown to R. Flemming.<sup>6</sup> Flemming was also the purchaser of the adjacent (north side) Allotment 47, on which is located a restored bluestone cottage (Place No.37). But he barely appears in the historical record of Toolern Vale, and it seems he did not live on the property. In his ‘Melton Reminiscences’ Robert Lidgett (whose father had resided in the area since 1852, and who was himself born at *Green Hills*) recorded that ‘Snowball and Fleming owned some land at Toolern Vale in the early days but no trace can be found of them having lived there. They leased the land and finally it was sold.’<sup>7</sup>

Donald McIntosh came from Inverness, Scotland, and according to his obituary arrived in Victoria in c.1847 (he would have been 12 years old at the time).<sup>8</sup> It is believed that the family resided first in the Bulla area before moving to Toolern Vale where the family rented land between Melton and Toolern Vale, on the Toolern Road, north of Thomas Smith’s *Crichton*. At some stage the family is thought to have bought a number of parcels of land in the vicinity of Missens Lane.

Donald McIntosh moved to Toolern c.1858.<sup>9</sup> A report of 1876 states that he had been on his farm for 12 years.<sup>10</sup> This date, 1864, is probably about the time that he married Mary

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<sup>4</sup>*The Argus*, 14/7/1945

<sup>5</sup> Plan L.2035: ‘Yangardook, Co. Bourke’ (nd). (These paddocks are still marked on the 1892 Shire Map Series plans for the Parish of Yangardook.)

<sup>6</sup> Parish Plan, Parish of Yangardook

<sup>7</sup> *Melton Express*, 23/9/1905

<sup>8</sup> It was stated that he had been a colonist of ‘about 56 years’ (*Melton Express*, 6/6/1903). Donald McIntosh is not to be confused with Alexander MacIntosh, of Greenhills, first President of the Melton Roads Board; or with Donald Mackintosh of *Oak Park* Mount Cotterell, World Champion trap shooter. However Donald Mackintosh the shooter and the children of Donald McIntosh were cousins (Donald ‘Dougall’ McIntosh, personal conversation, 8/3/2002).

<sup>9</sup> Obituary, *Melton Express*, 6/6/1903

<sup>10</sup> *The Australasian*, 25/11/1876

*Consultants: David Moloney, David Rowe, Pamela Jellie (2006)*

McDonald (born c.1845),<sup>11</sup> and put down roots. This ‘McPhersons Lane’ house, became the seat of the family until well into the twentieth century.<sup>12</sup> Prior to the erection of the building Toolern Presbyterian Church services were held in the McIntosh home.

Family and genealogical records indicate that Donald and Mary had four sons, John born Melton 1874, Charles born 1884, Alexander and Donald, and five daughters, Euphemia, Christina, Jessica, Annie and Sarah. However Education Department records show that in 1867 Donald McIntosh was one of the signatories to an application by Toolern Vale residents to the Board of Education to establish a school in the district. He clearly had school-aged children in 1869, because when the Toolern Vale Common School opened that year he was one of the eight members of the Yangardook Local School Committee.<sup>13</sup>

In 1876 McIntosh farm is reported to be 150 acres, so he had apparently already acquired, or rented, adjacent or nearby property.

In 1888 Peter McDonald, father of Mary McIntosh, and the McIntoshs’ northern neighbour, died, together with his son Charles.<sup>14</sup> The property, on which McDonald had built the stone cottage presently on the site (Place No.37), was acquired by the McIntosh family.<sup>15</sup>

Donald senior remained working the farm, by this time of 237 acres, with sons John and Charles assisting him. Donald junior rented 205 acres from Thomas Grant of *Glen Elgin*

On 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1903 at Toolern Vale, Donald McIntosh senior died after a short illness, aged 68 years. The *Express* reported that:

‘The late Mr McIntosh was a colonist of about 56 years and a resident of Toolern Vale for about 45 years where he and his family have always been much respected. He was known to be a man of keen judgement and honest transactions. He leaves a widow and a grown up family of three sons, Donald, John and Charles and two daughters, Mrs J.G. Wells, Bacchus Marsh and the late Mrs W Missen of Toolern.’<sup>16</sup>

In 1904 Donald junior, Charles and John acquired land from the Clarke estate in the

Parish of Kororoit (on Ryans Road Melton, Place No.237).

Although the family was generally of a retiring nature, Alexander was elected to the Melton Shire Council. However he suffered from tuberculosis (as did a number of his siblings) and died in 1905 just weeks after his wife and sister.

At some time after 1905, when Lidgett notes that the sons of McIntosh’s southern neighbour, Thomas Burton, were still living on their Toolern Vale property, the Donald McIntosh family purchased the Burtons property.

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<sup>11</sup> Mary died in 1935, in her 91<sup>st</sup> year (Melton *Express*, 15/6/1935)

<sup>12</sup> Donald McIntosh, *op cit*, notes that the family lived on McPherson Lane house.

<sup>13</sup> Toolern Vale State School Centenary Celebrations Committee, *Toolern Vale State School Centenary History 1869-1969* (1969), p.6

<sup>14</sup> Judith Bilszta, historical notes.

<sup>15</sup> Jeff Robinson (McDonald descendent), personal conversation, 12/2/2006; *The Australasian*, 25/11/1876. The McIntosh ownership of this site is confirmed in the Torrens Application that was made for both sites (TA 5709). The 1892 Shire Map Series: Parish of Yangardook map also confirms that the transfer had occurred by that time.

<sup>16</sup> The Bacchus Marsh *Express*, 6/6/1903

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The McIntosh farm now included the contiguous allotments 44, 46, and 47.<sup>17</sup> The house on their new allotment 44, known as *The Elms* (Place No.38) was a large house. Mary McIntosh, who had been living in the very small house on the north-east corner of McPhersons Lane since 1864, shifted into this house. After the death of Donald McIntosh senior Charles had withdrawn from the Ryans Road land to work the family's Toolern Vale property. Charles and John lived with their mother.

Mrs Mary McIntosh died at Toolern Vale on 5<sup>th</sup> June 1935. The *Express* reported her passing:

‘A very old and much respected resident of the district in the person of Mrs Mary McIntosh, widow of the late Donald McIntosh who predeceased her over 20 years ago passed peacefully away at her residence, *The Elms*, Toolern Vale, on Saturday evening. The late Mrs McIntosh had she been spared would have reached her 91<sup>st</sup> birthday on 1<sup>st</sup> July .... The deceased, who possessed a genial and hospitable nature had, during her long life, won the admiration and esteem of all with whom she had come in contact. A large circle of friends mourn her passing. The funeral, which took place on Monday, was largely attended when the remains were laid to rest in the Melton cemetery beside those of her husband and several of her children. The Rev Suitor of Gisborne Presbyterian Church officiated firstly at her home and then at the graveside. Sympathy is felt for the three sons and one daughter and many grandchildren at losing so worthy a head of family.’<sup>18</sup>

The last of the siblings, Charles died at Toolern Vale in 1962, aged 79 years. In his young days he had been a greyhound-racing enthusiast and a supporter of the Plumpton.

### *The Scots*

Although there were relatively more Scots in the Bacchus Marsh district, the Melton and Bulla Shires had a notably high proportion of people of Scots in relation to English, according to Lynette Peel's study. The Scottish people often comprised ‘pockets’ within the community. In general, they were affluent and skilled in farming relative to the Irish, of whom there were more in the Melton area, but who mostly worked as farm labourers during the 1850s. Many Scots had been able to obtain land in the 1850s and, while many moved out of the Melton district in the 1860s (poor seasons and prices), those who didn't were well-established. In contrast the Irish who had missed the first opportunities were able to purchase land that had been quitted in the 1860s.<sup>19</sup> In Melton Shire this opportunity also seems to have applied to poorer or younger people of any nationality, including perhaps Scots from the Highlands and Hebrides.

In 1861 the Melton – Toolern Vale area was one of the ‘pockets’ of Scottish people. Of the total estimated population of 947 for the district, the nascent Melton Cemetery Committee reckoned that 158 were Church of England, 197 were ‘Scots’, 252 Roman Catholics, 27 Wesleyans, 15 Baptists, 10 Independents, and 288 of unknown faith.<sup>20</sup>

In 1905 James Luke Robertson, retired Shire Secretary, remembered the Melton area in the early days:-

‘What a number of the clans were represented, there were the McDonalds, McLeods, Grants, McPhersons, McIlwraiths, McGranes, Campbells, McKenzies, McIntosh, Buchanan, Raleigh,

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<sup>17</sup> Mr Ian Hunt, personal conversation, 6/3/2002. (Ian Hunt is a McDonald and McIntosh descendent.)  
Hunt, *op cit*

<sup>18</sup> Melton *Express* 15/6/1935

<sup>19</sup> Peel, LJ, *Rural Industry in the Port Phillip Region, 1835-1880*, (MUP, Melbourne, 1974), pp.67-71

<sup>20</sup> Pollitt, JH, *An Historical Record of Melton* (Shire of Melton, nd), p.40  
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Murdie, Oldershaw, MacTaggart, Russell, Gibson, Blackwood and others whose names I forget, who were always to the front in these matters from first to last.’<sup>21</sup>

There was a notable concentration of these Scottish families in the rich Toolern Vale area. On the inaugural Yangardook Local School Committee there were 6 Presbyterians (including Donald McIntosh), one Church of England, and one Roman Catholic.<sup>22</sup>

### *The Land and the Landscape*

This part of the Toolern Creek valley was very rich. It was ‘good land at Toolern Vale’ says grandson Donald McIntosh of Ryans Road.<sup>23</sup> Ian Hunt of Bensons Road (1-2 kilometres north) relates that in the early days, prior to the ravages of the disease phylloxera in the 1870s, the small blocks on Bensons Road grew vines.<sup>24</sup> The Rural Heritage Study also reports that a vineyard on Allotment 47 (acquired by McIntosh) supplied Seppelts with vinegar grapes.<sup>25</sup>

Hunt advises that it is ‘beautiful soil’ as far as Harold Wilsons (the original Kitson property, where Missens Road terminates at Toolern Creek, about 1.5 kilometres south of Toolern Vale. The area above Toolern Vale also had ‘good rainfall’ (26 inches).<sup>26</sup> Wheat from the Kitson farm (Place No.28) won the gold cup for wheat at a London Crystal Palace Exhibition in the 1860s, and the Governors Cup for the best field of hay grown in Victoria ‘the crop being as high as the fence and as level as a billiard table.’<sup>27</sup>

By 1876 McIntosh was shifting away from extensive cropping of the land to dairying:

‘Next to Lidgett’s place on the north is a farm of belonging to Mr Donald McIntosh, who is a resident of 12 years standing. Previous to this season it was usual to have about 90 acres under cultivation every year, but it is now nearly all under grass and the proprietor intends for the future to use the land almost entirely for dairy purposes. There are about 40 head of cattle kept, a good proportion being milkers, whose produce is turned into butter. There are also several very good farm horses. About 90 acres have been sown down with rye grass and white clover and it is intended to improve the whole of the pasture in this way, as circumstances will allow.’<sup>28</sup>

In the early twentieth century most of the farms in the area were dairying, which included growing oaten hay to feed their own cattle when feed was scarce. In the mid to late twentieth century the land was cropped again, mainly barley and peas. Some also raised sheep and (mostly dairy) cattle.<sup>29</sup>

The beautiful and lush upper Toolern Creek valley has always then been attractive to European settlers, from the pastoralists to the first wave of farmers in the Shire, evidence of which

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<sup>21</sup> Melton *Express*, 30/9/1905

<sup>22</sup> Toolern Vale State School Centenary History, *loc cit*

<sup>23</sup> McIntosh, *op cit*.

<sup>24</sup> Hunt, *op cit*

<sup>25</sup> Johnston, *loc cit*.

<sup>26</sup> Hunt, *op cit*; the valley land contrasts with other nearby land, eg on McCorkells Road, which has more clay.

<sup>27</sup> Alexander Cameron, *Melton Memoirs* (M&DHS, nd), p.2; Anders Hjorth ‘Recollections of Melton 1861-67’ (M&DHS Newsletter, Feb.2001); Christopher Crisp, ‘Melton Cemetery’ (Melton *Express*, 2/9/05).

<sup>28</sup> The Australasian, *op cit*.

<sup>29</sup> Hunt, *op cit*.

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survives in the form of bluestone ruins, and dry stone walls, and plantings. Some of the places in the cultural landscape between Gisborne Melton Road and the Black Ranges (Place No.3, on the corner of Bensons Road, and Place No.38, *The Elms*) have been destroyed in the fires that have swept down from the hills towards and beyond Toolern Vale, including the devastating 1965 fire.

#### *The House.*

An 1892 map confirms the property in the ownership of the McIntosh family. Maps of 1916 and 1938 show the house there, together with the adjacent houses which are now the restored cottage to the north (Place No.37), *The Elms* ruins to the south (Place No.38) and north (Bensons Road, Place No.3), together with the footings (probably now removed) of a house further south on allotment 43.<sup>30</sup>

There was no one living in the house in the 1930s when Mary Tolhurst was a child. She remembered it as a small (probably four roomed) house, mostly of weatherboard, with a brick chimney (hand made bricks), and an iron roof.

The building was burnt down in the 1952 Toolern bushfire (which killed Mrs Wilson on Blackhills Road).<sup>31</sup> Its masonry ruins have deteriorated considerably in the past two decades. For many years its chimney stood in the old ‘home’ paddock. Since its collapse or demolition the ruin of the cottage that remains cannot readily be seen from the Melton-Gisborne Road.

#### *Underground Tanks*

Underground tanks were a typical component of nineteenth century rural properties in Victoria, and illustrate a form of water collection and infrastructure no longer practised.

Provision of a domestic water supply was critical to the establishment of any rural property that was not beside a permanent supply of water. ‘The first essential was to secure a reliable water supply. Unless the farm bordered a permanent creek ... the selector had to dig a dam for his animals and a well [sic] for the household supply.’<sup>32</sup> Especially in low-rainfall Melton, domestic water storage was critical, and relics of these systems is a key part of the heritage of the Shire. Many underground domestic ‘wells’ (as they are usually called) around Melton are in fact ‘tanks’ which, rather than tapping groundwater, were sealed cisterns for the storage of water from the roofs of buildings.

Underground tanks became only generally necessary in Australia from the 1850s, when increased population and Crown land sales ensured that many dwellings were unable to locate beside a stream. At the same time, as a result of the goldrushes, the mass introduction into Australia of the new product ‘corrugated iron’ made it feasible for ordinary people to be able to channel water into the underground tanks from roofs and guttering.<sup>33</sup> Underground tanks on small properties generally seem to have been located at the rear of the house; this might have enabled the roof runoff from dairy and other nearby farm outbuildings to also feed the tank

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<sup>30</sup> Shire Map Series, *op cit*; Army Ordnance Maps (‘Sunbury’): 1916, 1938

<sup>31</sup> Hunt, *op cit*

<sup>32</sup> Cannon, Michael, *Life in the Country: Australia in the Victorian Age: 2* (Nelson, West Melbourne, 1978), p.149

<sup>33</sup> Hughes, Trueman, Ludlow, ‘Wells and Underground Tanks’, prepared for the Heritage Council of NSW (nd), *passim*; Cannon, *op cit*, p.150

*Consultants: David Moloney, David Rowe, Pamela Jellie (2006)*



The construction of wells goes back thousands of years, and designs for underground wells and tanks, such as contained in JC Loudon's *Encyclopaedia of Agriculture*, had been available to English farmers since at least the early nineteenth century.<sup>34</sup> These generally advocated cigar shaped cross-sections, with the domed top being mostly underground. This shape was also used in Australia, but on Melton rural properties they do not appear to have been used on early farms. Instead, the early tanks had vertical walls, and no domed covers. Most appear to have been constructed of local stone rather than brick, and without a low wall (as in romantic images of European wells) to ensure safety. Isolation and cost probably meant that they may have been sunk by the property-owners, at least in the case of early small farms. Examples of such tanks on small farms are the former Scarborough and Moloney properties on Mount Cottrell Road (Place Nos.293 and 292) which were constructed of bluestone in the 1850s and 1871, and for which no evidence of a cover remains. In terms of larger early (1850s) properties, *Glen Elgin* (Place No.39) has a low timber-framed gabled roof, clad in corrugated iron; and the tanks of *Tibbermore* (Place No.392), Mount Ida (Place No.002) and the Diggers Rest Hotel (Place No.067) both have flat corrugated iron covers on raised stone sides. (These covers, and sides, might have been added later, as gradual modernisation of the tanks was common.)

While domes were advocated in early British architectural literature, they appears to have only begun to be built in Australia in the 1860s. At that time there was a growing realisation of the dangers of uncovered wells and tanks in terms of sanitation, as well as safety. Unclean water could wash into uncovered tanks from dairies, and sometimes from cesspits, and vermin also obtained easy access:

‘The typical countrywoman of the early days hardly moved a step from her threshold “to cast away indescribable filth”. The contents of chamber pots, vegetable peelings, grease-laden water – all festered around the hut and blended with the nearby latrine to create a “peculiarly offensive” odour which attracted swarms of flies. Sometimes the fluids soaked through the soil into the well [sic], so that the family suffered from an intermittent “low typhoid” fever whose cause they did not suspect.’<sup>35</sup>

In 1885 *Martins Home and Farm* described uncovered underground tanks and wells as ‘the family rat-trap’.<sup>36</sup> ‘Common infections of the nineteenth century, such as typhoid, scarlet fever, diphtheria (which was known to have proved tragically fatal in the case of Melton’s Kerr, Moloney and Wood families), tuberculosis and gastro-enteritis, spread rapidly in many country towns .... Efficient disposal of human excreta was a major problem.’<sup>37</sup> The connection between water pollution and public health, in particular diseases like dysentery, typhoid and even cholera were beginning to be appreciated.<sup>38</sup>

At the same time, technology was contributing to better health. As long as a bucket was necessary to draw water, it was not possible to cover the tops of tanks, or at best only to provide a rudimentary cover. Once a small and reasonably priced pump became available there was no further need for an open tank. The availability of domestic hand-pumps grew in the 1850s, and by 1860 NSW public buildings (schools and railway stations) specified domes as the standard form of construction for tanks.<sup>39</sup> It is also highly likely that the increasing access to good quality bricks, professional bricklaying skills, and cement, over the course of the late nineteenth century contributed to the proliferation of covered tanks in places like Melton.

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<sup>34</sup> J.C. Loudon, *Encyclopaedia of Agriculture*, Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green & Longman, London, 1826.

<sup>35</sup> Cannon, *op cit*, p.151

<sup>36</sup> Cited in Hughes *et al*, *op cit*, p.19.

<sup>37</sup> Cannon, *op cit*, pp.255-6

<sup>38</sup> Hughes *et al*, *op cit*, pp.19-24

<sup>39</sup> *ibid*, pp.32-33

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The new tanks were still circular in plan, but constructed of brick, with approximately 9 inches of clay puddle behind the brick wall to keep the tank water-tight. The hemispherical dome, or segment of a dome, was also constructed with bricks. Both the interior of the tank, and the exterior of the dome, were cement rendered according to recommended practice.<sup>40</sup> Without internal inspection it is not known whether the cross-section of the tanks typically remained vertical, or cigar-shaped, which were both described in textbooks. Numerous domes in Melton appear to be segmental spheres, rather than hemispheres, and may have spread underneath the surface to a wider diameter tank cylinder, as per the textbooks. The domes were provided with a manhole on top (covered with a concrete cover), of minimum width 16 inches, to provide access for cleaning. Mr Jeff Robinson of Melton West recalls entering the tank on the family farm to repair internal render.<sup>41</sup> The opening also enabled the cool water to be used for refrigeration: perishables and jellies (for setting) were lowered into the water in a bucket.<sup>42</sup>

The only known Australian heritage study of underground tanks (conducted in NSW), claims that they were only superseded by the familiar corrugated iron tanks (on tankstands to provide water pressure) in the 1890s, when ‘the galvanised above-ground tank was in widespread use.’<sup>43</sup> In Victoria however Miles Lewis claims that ‘*the corrugated iron rainwater tank was manufactured in Melbourne by the later 1850s, and spread very rapidly despite claims that the zinc coating would poison the water.*’<sup>44</sup> Anders Hjorth’s recollections of Melton in the 1860s state that: ‘*The water supply was very deficient; a few had iron tanks, and some under-ground ones.*’<sup>45</sup> He may however have been referring to the square plate-metal ‘ships tanks’ (shipping containers, usually for foodstuffs, that were designed in Britain for recycling in this manner) that are most usually found these days on larger properties, rather than the larger corrugated steel version that became more common. A survey of remaining underground tanks on nineteenth century Melton properties might reveal the extent to which galvanised iron (or steel) header tanks were used as an alternative. We know that underground tanks continued to be built in the early twentieth century, and that today there are many properties that have both underground tanks (most not in use) and corrugated steel header tanks. As access to hand, petroleum or electric pumps permitted, they may have been used in conjunction.

While domes probably became widespread from the 1860s for domestic use, it cannot be categorically inferred that the absence of a dome means that the tank was built before that time. On the other hand, the presence of a dome does not necessarily mean that the tank was built after this time, as apparently the building of a dome over a tank often took place many years after the original construction.<sup>46</sup> The best assumption that can be made in terms of dating tanks is that, water being essential to habitation, they were built at or very soon after the construction of the original dwelling on a site.

In the case of this property, it is very likely that the tank was built at the time of settlement in the mid 60s, and the dome was added later. (The hemispherical rather than segmental design of the dome is consistent with this assumption.)

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<sup>40</sup> Eg, Albrecht, CE, *Measurements and Dimensions of Tanks and Dams* (Melbourne, Arnell and Jackson [1885?]), pp.30-33

<sup>41</sup> Mr Jeff Robinson, personal conversation, 14/2/2006. This contradicts the Hughes *et al* survey of tanks in NSW, which found that internal render was rare in domestic tanks (pp.55-56).

<sup>42</sup> Hughes *et al*, *op cit*, pp.32-80.

<sup>43</sup> Hughes *et al*, *op cit*. (Austral Archaeology also conducted a study of early Chinese wells on the Koorong, South Australia.)

<sup>44</sup> Lewis, Miles, *Physical Investigation of a Building: National Trust Technical Bulletin 9.1* (National Trust of Australia, Victoria, 1989).

<sup>45</sup> Hjorth, Anders, ‘Recollections of Melton 1861-67’, in M&DHS Newsletter, February 2001.

<sup>46</sup> Hughes *et al*, *op cit*, p.3

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Tankbuilders known to have operated in Melton in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries include WA Cecil, Tom Collins (c.1890-1913), and Augustus Schebler ('known for his workmanship' according to Collins).<sup>47</sup>

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

*Melton Historical Themes:* 'Pastoral'; 'Farming'

*Known Comparable Example in Melton Shires:*

The McIntosh Ruin is one of few remaining stone cottages, or ruins of cottages, from the 'first farming' period of the Shire (ie, on farmland purchased from the Crown in the 1850s, rather under the Selection Acts in the 1860s and 70s, or the break-up of the large pastoral estates in the early twentieth century).

It is most directly comparable with the ruins of the adjacent Elms (Place No.38), which was also occupied by the McIntosh family.

The McIntosh Ruin is a rare dwelling built of sedimentary stone in the Shire, reflecting the 'schistose' ranges nearby. The most comparable construction in the Shire is the small cottage on Blackhills Road (Place No.061), which has been substantially repaired (including chimneys, roof, and verandah). Although much more intact, the Blackhills Road cottage does not appear to have been as finely built as the McIntosh cottage in regard to the use of the flat stones for horizontal construction.

The small cottages on *Glen Elgin* (Place No.39) opposite *The Elms*, also of sedimentary stone, were apparently built in the mid twentieth century.

The adjacent cottage (Place No.37) utilises bluestone, mainly unworked, but with roughly squared corners. It appears from a distance not to use the horizontal sedimentary stones.

Outbuildings on major pastoral estates include some small cottages: *Exford* (Place No.269); *Eynesbury* (Place No.281) and *Rockbank / Deanside* (Place No.428). Larger villas which retain unrendered stone walls in the Shire include: *Pinewood* (Place No.059), *Glencoe* (Place No.005), *Strathulloh* (Place No.286), and *Rocklands* on Hopkins Road (Place No.391).

Otherwise the only remaining stone small-farming or township cottages in the Shire with reasonable integrity are:-

- The abandoned bluestone cottage on the former *Mt Kororoit Farm* property, west of Kororoit Creek (Place No.144);
- The half derelict, half intact bluestone Paynes Cottage (Place No.373).
- The considerably altered former *Fulham Park*, on Beatty's Road, Rockbank (Place No.316)
- The Honey Shack, 7-9 High Street Melton (Place No.221). Restored and altered.

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<sup>47</sup> Robinson, *op cit*; also Tom Collins memoirs, part of which were reproduced in the M&DSH Newsletter of December 2000.

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- *Evansdale* (Place No.327): a now uninhabitable early stone cottage and earlier stone outbuildings.
- *Dunvegan* (Place No.228): a relocated and altered township dwelling.

**Condition:**

Ruinous

**Integrity:**

Damaged/Disturbed

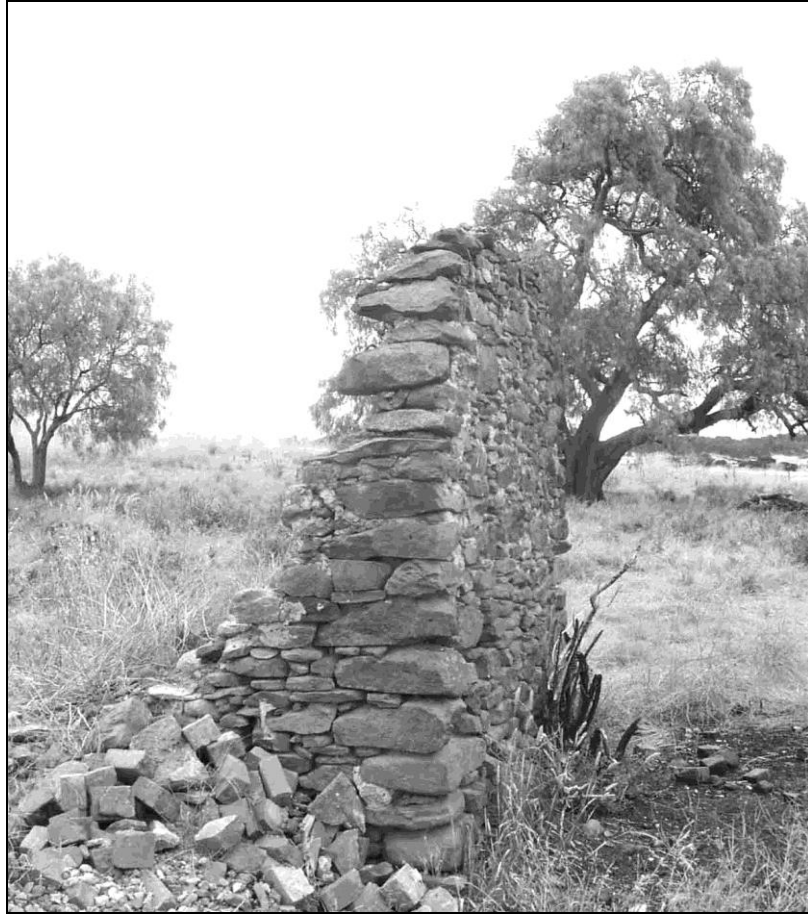
**Recommendations:**

Recommended for inclusion in the: -

- Melton Planning Scheme
- Victorian Heritage Inventory

Recommended Heritage Overlay Schedule Controls:

External Paint Controls:	<i>Yes</i>
Internal Alteration Controls:	<i>No</i>
Tree Controls:	<i>Yes (old pepper tree)</i>
Outbuildings and/or Fences:	<i>No</i>



Construction of corners using essentially unworked sedimentary stone.