

Heritage Overlay No.: 029
Citation No.: 037
Place: Former ‘Yangardook’ Cottage, 575-685 Gisborne–Melton Road

Other Names of Place: None
Location: 575-685 Gisborne-Melton Road, Toolern Vale (CA 47, Parish of Yangardook)
Critical Dates: Construction: unknown (c.1860s); Restoration: 1970s.
Existing Heritage Listings: ‘Place of Interest’ (Rural Heritage Study)¹
Recommended Level of Significance: LOCAL



Statement of Significance:

The former *Yangardook* Cottage, 575-685 Gisborne Melton Road, Toolern Vale, is significant as a rare stone cottage surviving from the first farming period in the Shire, and of the Scottish enclave in Toolern Vale in this period. The cottage, built c.1860s, is the major contributory element of an early and attractive cultural landscape of high significance to both the pastoral

¹ Johnston, C, ‘Rural Heritage Study: Western Region of Melbourne’ (Context Pty Ltd, Melbourne Western Region Inc, 1994), Site M25, pp.35, 175-6

and farming histories of the Shire. The place is now situated near a large new house and ornamental lake, which provide an interesting contrast to the restored small cottage, which represents a comfortable farming lifestyle in pioneering times

The former *Yangardook* Cottage, 575-685 Gisborne Melton Road, Toolern Vale, is architecturally significant at the Local level (AHC D2). Although partially reconstructed, the cottage demonstrates original design qualities of a Victorian vernacular style. These qualities include the hipped roof form, squared coursed bluestone wall construction and the window and door openings. Other intact or appropriate qualities include the single storey height, modest scale, symmetrical arrangement of the windows and door on the main façade, timber framed multi-paned double hung windows and the corrugated profile sheet metal roof cladding.

The former *Yangardook* Cottage, 575-685 Gisborne Melton Road, Toolern Vale, is historically significant at the Local level (AHC A4, B2, D2). It is situated in the vicinity of an important early 1840s outstation of the *Green Hills* pastoral station, at that time the largest and most developed 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 the major contributor to 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, which date to the creation of 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 is one of only four known reasonably intact stone farming cottages remaining in the Shire. It also testifies to the prominence of Scottish settlers in the farming history of the Shire, particularly in early Toolern Vale. It was built by Peter McDonald, a leading member of the large Scottish community in the Shire, and a forebear of numerous large and prominent Melton families, including the Robinsons, Raleighs, and McIntoshs. It is also associated with the McIntosh family, which acquired the property after McDonald's death in 1888.

The former *Yangardook* Cottage, 575-685 Gisborne Melton Road, Toolern Vale, is socially significant at the Local level (AHC G1). It was identified as a place of heritage significance to the local community in a community forum held as part of this heritage study.

Overall, the former *Yangardook* Cottage, 575-685 Gisborne Melton Road, Toolern Vale, is of LOCAL significance.

Description:

The cottage *Yandardook* is situated on the east side of the Gisborne-Melton Road, Toolern Vale. It is built on a small knoll, within the Toolern Creek valley, and prominently sited next to main road. There are some younger pepper trees nearby. The cottage is also located amongst a substantial residential allotment, with a large new house and ornamental lake.

The modestly scaled, single storey, squared coursed bluestone, Victorian vernacular styled cottage is characterised by a hipped roof form clad in recent corrugated sheet metal. A later brick chimney adorns the roofline.

The symmetry of the design is revealed in the early windows that flank the central doorway at the front. These window openings and the other early openings feature timber framed multi-paned double hung windows.

Although possibly planted in modern times, the adjacent peppercorn trees are appropriate plantings to a mid nineteenth century cottage.

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. This rectangle incorporates the adjacent sites to the south of the Cottage, and westwards over the present Gisborne – Melton Road.²

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.³ 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.⁴ 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 1st 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 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...'⁵

Apart from *Green Hills* headstation itself, which is similarly marked 'Hyde', and with a large rectangle, this was the only other place marked in this way on the station. While later plans show other *Green Hills* outstation sites – in the scrubby ranges near Djerriwarrh Creek, on McCorkells Road, (Place 44), and two further downstream on Toolern Creek (Places 26 and 57) – this place would appear to have been the second ranked pasture land, and station, on the *Green Hills*.

² Land Victoria, Historical Plan: 'Roll 113' (184?)

³ Land Victoria: Historical Plan: 'Roll 11' (c.1841); Starr, *op cit*, p.76

⁴ 1841 Census, New South Wales (Port Phillip District), Return No.13.

⁵ *The Argus*, 14/7/1945

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 Allotment 43, between the Elms (Place No.38) and the township of Toolern.⁶ 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 the Cottage 'Yangardook'.

The 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 7th June 1856 Crown Allotment No.47, Parish of Yangardook, of 84 acres and 25 perches, was sold by the Crown to R. Flemming.⁷ Flemming was also the purchaser of the adjacent (south side) Allotment 46, on which is located the ruin of the McIntosh family (Place No.36). Flemming 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.'⁸

Documentary records show that in fact the property was transferred by Robert Flemming to George Urquhart (of *Greenhills*) in 1857 for a very handsome profit. In 1860 Urquhart apparently sold *Greenhills* to Alexander McIntosh.⁹ The record of the sale of Crown Allotment 47 to Peter McDonald has not been found; this is likely to have occurred when Urquhart sold *Greenhills* in 1860, or soon afterwards.

Peter McDonald, from the Isle of Skye in Scotland, is recorded as having purchased Crown Allotment No.67 Parish of Yangardook, well south of this allotment, on the corner of McCorkells Road and the Melton-Gisborne Road, on 10th December 1855.¹⁰ McDonald was one of the forebears of the numerous and prominent Robinson / Raleigh / McIntosh families of the Melton district. Family lore, handed down the generations, is that he erected this bluestone cottage following his arrival in Victoria from NSW, and called it *Yangardook*.¹¹

In his 1905 'Melton Reminiscences', retired Shire Secretary James Luke Robertons, recalled the Scottish people who were to the fore in the community. The 'McDonalds' headed the list of the 17 families named.¹² Similarly, the influential editor of the Bacchus Marsh (later Melton) *Express*, wandering through the Melton Cemetery in the same year, noted that 'Carberry, Carew and Peter McDonald are names familiar to old residents.'¹³ Peter McDonald made an impression during his time in the district.

⁶ Plan L.2035: 'Yangardook, Co. Bourke' (nd). (These paddocks are still marked on the 1892 Shire Map Series plans for the Parish of Yangardook.)

⁷ Parish Plan, Parish of Yangardook. The date 7/6/1856 on the Parish Plan may be a mistake, as the other adjacent allotments were sold in 1855, and the immediately adjacent allotment was sold 7/6/1855.

⁸ *Melton Express*, 23/9/1905

⁹ PROV VPRS 460/P0/507 (TA 5709)

¹⁰ Parish Plan, Parish of Yangardook

¹¹ Mr Jeff Robinson, personal conversations, 19/5/2002, 12/2/2006 (Mr Robinson is a direct descendent of Peter McDonald); also Heather Robinson, family history manuscript (June 1981)

¹² *Melton Express*, 30/9/1905

¹³ Christopher Crisp, 'Melton Cemetery', in *Melton Express*, 2/9/1905

The Western Region Commission's 1994 Rural Heritage Study says that the *Yangardook* property had at one stage been a vineyard producing grapes for vinegar production by the Seppelts company.¹⁴

An unsubstantiated local story is that the stone used for the cottage was quarried from the came from the 'school-ground quarry' the same source of stone as was used for the school (built 1869).¹⁵ This may have been the basis for the Western Region Commission's note (citing the Melton & District Historical Society) that the restored bluestone cottage dated from 'c.1870s'. No further information has been found regarding the date of the building.

The first Shire ratebook of 1871-72 shows the property as being in the ownership of Charles McDonald 'farmer'.¹⁶ In February 1873 Charles and Donald McDonald, 'both of Green Hills ... farmers', applied to have titles issued for Crown Allotments 46 and 47. Whereas allotment 46 was 78 acres 3 roods and 8 perches, and allotment 47 was 84 acres and 22 roods, the McDonalds (perhaps brothers and equal beneficiaries of the land) transferred the boundary approximately 20 metres so that both allotments were exactly the same area: 81 acres 1 rood and 35 perches. The record of previous transactions for the property shows that it had been transferred by Robert Flemming to George Urquhart (of *Greenhills*) in 1857 for a very handsome profit. In 1860 Urquhart apparently sold *Greenhills* to Alexander McIntosh, but there is no record of the sale of Crown Allotments 46 and 47 to McDonald;¹⁷ it is likely to have occurred when Urquhart sold *Greenhills* in 1860, or soon after.

The 1881 ratebook shows Euphenia McDonald listed as the owner of the property.¹⁸ However Charles McDonald and his father Peter are said to have resided in the house until the death of both in 1888. McDonald's daughter Mary and son-in-law Donald McIntosh, who lived next door (Allotment No.46, south side), then acquired the property.

An 1892 map confirms that the property is by this time in the ownership of the McIntosh family. Maps of 1916 and 1938 show the cottage there, together with adjacent houses which are now the ruins to the south (The McIntosh Ruin, Place No.36, and *The Elms*, Place No.38). There were other houses to the north, on the corner of Bensons Road (Relic remaining, Place No.3), and further south on allotment 43 (footings only remained in 2002, may now have been removed).¹⁹ In the early twentieth century the McIntoshs owned the three contiguous allotments Nos.44, 46, 47.

The house had a large weatherboard skillion. When Donald and Mary McIntosh's granddaughter Jessie (daughter of Alexander) married Walter Missen, this weatherboard portion was removed and erected as part of their new home in Missens Road (Place No.53).

In the early twentieth century *Yangardook* was rented out by Charles and John McIntosh, who lived with their mother Mary at *The Elms* (Place No.38) further south. Mary died in 1935. By the Second World War the cottage was vacant and derelict.

In the mid 1970s, after building a new house and lake, the owners of the property turned their attention to restoring the house as a recreation room. The walls were still standing, but the roof

¹⁴ Johnston, *loc cit.*

¹⁵ Mary Tolhurst, personal conversation, 12/2/2006

¹⁶ Shire of Melton, *Ratebook*, 1871-72

¹⁷ PROV VPRS 460/P0/507 (TA 5709)

¹⁸ Shire of Melton, *Ratebook*, 1881-82

¹⁹ Shire Map Series, *op cit*; Army Ordnance Maps ('Sunbury'): 1916, 1938

was partly off and had to be replaced, as did the floor, the windows, and the doors. It is not known if the chimney was rebuilt at this time.

The restored building is now situated in a grand new residential allotment, with the large new house and ornamental lake nearby providing an interesting contrast to the small cottage, which reflects a comfortable lifestyle in the pioneering generation.

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.²⁰ 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.²¹

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, 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.²²

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, one Church of England, and one Roman Catholic.²³

The Land and the Landscape

This part of the Toolern Creek valley was rich. It was 'good land at Toolern Vale' says grandson Dougall McIntosh of Ryans Road.²⁴ 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.²⁵

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).

²⁰ Peel, LJ, *Rural Industry in the Port Phillip Region, 1835-1880*, (MUP, Melbourne, 1974), pp.67-71

²¹ Pollitt, JH, *An Historical Record of Melton* (Shire of Melton, nd), p.40

²² *Melton Express*, 30/9/1905

²³ Toolern Vale State School Centenary History, *loc cit*

²⁴ McIntosh, *op cit.*

²⁵ Hunt, *op cit*

The area above Toolern Vale also had ‘good rainfall’ (26 inches).²⁶ 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.’²⁷

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 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 place was identified as being of significance at a community workshop held in association at Dunvegan, Melton, on 7th September 2001.

Thematic Context / Comparative Analysis:

Melton Historical Themes: ‘Pastoral’; ‘Farming’

Known Comparable Example in Melton Shires:

Yangardook is one of few remaining stone cottages, or ruins of stone 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). Intact (but modified) examples of small stone cottages include:-

- The small cottage on Blackhills Road (Place No.61), which has been substantially repaired (including chimneys, roof, and verandah).
- 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 small cottages on *Glen Elgin* (Place No.39) opposite *The Elms*, also of sedimentary stone, were apparently built in the mid twentieth century.
- The stone cottages and outbuildings that are part of the large pastoral stations of *Rockbank* (Place No.428), *Exford* (Place No.269), and *Eynesbury* (Place No.281).
- 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 town cottage.

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

²⁷ 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).

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

There are also a number of ruins of cottages, or their outbuildings, of this era. The most comparable are the adjacent ruins of McIntosh Cottage and *The Elms* (Places No.036, and 038).

Condition:

Fair-Good

Integrity:

Moderately intact

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>No</i>
Outbuildings and/or Fences:	<i>No</i>