

Heritage Overlay No.: 033
Citation No.: 043
Place: ‘Norwood’, 78 – 132 Hoggs Road

Other Names of Place: ‘Melliodora Park’, Vernon Davey’s Former Bird Sanctuary.
Location: 78-132 Hoggs Road, Toolern Vale
Critical Dates: 1916: the house relocated to the site; 1933: the Naturalists Cabin built.
Existing Heritage Listings: None
Recommended Level of Significance: LOCAL



Statement of Significance:

‘Norwood’, 78 Hoggs Road, Toolern Vale, established in 1916, is significant as a bird sanctuary and bird observers centre from the early 1930s until 1965. It was well-known locally, amongst school groups from Melbourne’s western suburbs, and in the amateur ornithological community. The historical values of the place are embodied in the Federation style dwelling (albeit relocated and altered) and in the Naturalists Cabin. This latter building is also significant as an intact and unusual interwar outbuilding that continues to reflect the past bird sanctuary function of the site.

‘Norwood’, 78 Hoggs Road is historically significant at a REGIONAL level as a rare and important expression of the amateur interest in native birds, and the incorporation of this interest into the education curriculum, particularly through the Gould League’s ‘Bird Day’ in

the inter-war decades. The ‘Naturalists Cabin’ is an outstanding, and rare (perhaps unique) representation of this important Australian historical theme.

‘Norwood’, 2088-2126 Diggers Rest – Coimadai Road, is of architectural interest. Although relocated and extended in c.1928, the alterations made at this time also contribute to an appreciation of the historical value of the place today. It demonstrates design qualities of a Federation style. These qualities include the recessive hipped roof form, together with the minor gable that projects towards the front and the return broken back verandah that projects at the front and side. Other intact qualities include the elevated single storey height, asymmetrical composition, horizontal timber weatherboard wall cladding, corrugated sheet metal roof cladding, face brick chimney, modest eaves, square timber verandah posts, timber framed double hung windows, timber framed doorway with sidelights and highlights, and the rudimentary gable infill (battening and panelling).

The 1933 Naturalists Cabin outbuilding is architecturally significant at a LOCAL level (AHC D.2). It demonstrates original design qualities for a modest interwar building. These qualities include the simple gable roof form clad in galvanised corrugated steel, wide eaves with exposed timber rafters and the large vertically boarded timber doors with small early viewing windows. It is missing a small original verandah. Other intact or appropriate qualities include the cement sheet panelling with a central timber batten in the gable end. The building is distinguished by the survival of its hand painted name plate entitled ‘The Naturalists Cabin’, and the hand-painted panel of a Grey Thrush above the door.

Overall, ‘Norwood’, 78 Hoggs Road, is of LOCAL significance.

Description:

‘Norwood’, 78 Hoggs Road, Toolern Vale, has a rural bushland setting on elevated and sloping ground. There is a large timber house and an early timber outbuilding on the site that are flanked by bushland. There is also an open grassed area with smaller plantings in front of the house.

The asymmetrical, elevated single storey, horizontal timber weatherboard, relocated and altered Federation styled house is characterised by a recessive hipped roof form, together with a minor gable that projects towards the front and a return broken back verandah that projects at the front and side. These roof forms are clad in green painted corrugated galvanised steel. An early (c.1928) face brick chimney adorns the roofline. Modest overhangs are features of the eaves.

A feature of the design is the return verandah. It is supported by square timber posts and features introduced small timber brackets and timber lattice valances. There is also an open timber balustrade.

Other features of the design include the early timber framed double hung windows under the verandah and the timber framed doorway with sidelights and highlights. The timber framed multi paned double hung windows under the projecting gable may have been introduced, possibly when the house was relocated in c.1928.

Other features include the rudimentary gable infill (battening and panelling).

The nearby slightly elevated, single storey, timber, interwar Naturalists Cabin outbuilding is characterised by a simple gable roof form clad in galvanised corrugated steel. The building has wide eaves with exposed timber rafters. At one end are large vertically boarded timber doors with small early viewing windows. The gable infill comprises cement sheet panelling with a

central timber batten, and the early name plate entitled ‘The Naturalists Cabin’ and a hand-painted panel of a Grey Thrush. It is missing an original small verandah.

The building is currently precariously situated on deteriorated stumps that are leaning to one side.

History:

The property is situated on the 80 acre, 1 rood and 14 perches Crown Allotment 80, Parish of Yangardook, granted to an M Burke on 20th August 1873.¹ It was alienated under Section 31 of the Land Act 1869, a more unusual provision in this region, which provided a licence to reside on or cultivate small allotments on (or adjacent to) goldfields.² Small finds of gold, and exploration, was occurring at the time in the forests west of this area, towards the Djerriwarrh Creek nearby, and this was no doubt the basis for the application of this provision of the Land Acts.

While presumably there was some small cottage on the property to comply with Land Act provisions, the property was apparently largely undeveloped by the early twentieth century. The present owners, Roger and Margaret Wood (whose father Terry Fogarty purchased the property in 1958), believe that Vernon Davey brought the present house to the property from Ballarat in 1916.³

The first appearance of Vernon Davey ‘bee farmer’ in the Shire of Melton ratebooks occurs in 1912-13. However the Toolern Vale property he occupied consisted of only ‘2 acres and dwelling’. He did not own this small property, which he occupied for a few years, and it was probably not the current Norwood site.

The 1915-16 ratebook however records that Davey ‘bee farmer’ was now the owner of 240 acres and 28 perches ‘and buildings’ in Toolern Vale. This land comprised allotments 81 A-C, Parish Yangardook, being the original M Burke allotment, and the two adjacent allotments, originally granted to J Burke.⁴ Davey remained in occupation of this land at least until the 1930s.⁵

The property was to become a favourite place in the memories of older residents, and is identified by many people as a significant Melton heritage place.⁶ Pupils from Toolern Vale State School used sometimes visit the Davey property on ‘Bird Day’ in October (the Gould League Month), when schools from Melbourne came to the Davey sanctuary.⁷

The ornithological community recognise Davey’s unique contribution to bird watching in Victoria. A 1978 article fills in the story.⁸ In the early 1930s Mr AG Campbell of Toolern Vale became acquainted with Mr VR Davey, an apiarist with an interest in birds, who lived at

¹ Parish Plan, Parish of Yangardook.

² Cabena, P, McRae, H, Bladin, E, *The Lands Manual: A Finding Guide to Victorian Land Records 1836-1983* (Royal Historical Society of Victoria, 1989), p.85

³ Personal conversation, Roger and Margaret Wood, 6/3/2002.

⁴ Shire of Melton Ratebooks, 1911-1916; Parish Plan: Yangardook.

⁵ Shire of Melton Ratebooks, 1916 - 1930.

⁶ Melton Stage One Heritage Study, Community Workshop, 2002.

⁷ *Toolern Vale State School: Centenary History 1869-1969* (Toolern Vale State School Centenary Celebrations Committee, 1969), pp.15, 19

⁸ Wheeler, R, ‘The Toolern Vale Naturalist’ Cabin’, originally printed in the *Australian Bird Watcher*, September 1978, pp. 230-232.

Meliadora Park, and persuaded him to join the Bird Observers Club and the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union. Mr Davey made his 97 hectare property a bird sanctuary, which quickly became the focal point for prominent bird photographers.

On October 28th 1933 the Mr Davey built a small timber cabin which remains on the property today, with its 'Naturalists' Cabin' sign, and small painting of a Grey Thrush, still discernable above the door. The cabin was formally opened by local MLA Mr White, and a succession of speakers, including the Melton Shire Secretary, Mr AG Campbell (who spoke of the historical setting of the place, with its views to the You Yangs and Mt Cotterell) representing the RAOU, and then a speakers representing a succession of other bird watching groups, including the Bird Observers Club, the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria, the Gould League, the Leach Memorial Club, and the Geelong Naturalists Club. The cabin was the 'first such cabin ever erected in Victoria'. Mr Davey thought it would be a good place for naturalists to congregate both for pleasure and general natural observations. Prizes were presented to local children in the recent Gould League competition were presented, and in all the opening was 'a really great occasion'.

The Cabin was described as consisting of a 'lean-to kitchen and a large room that could be partitioned off and had stretchers, table and chairs, and the front had a nice verandah for relaxation after a solid days birding'. Mr CE Bryant, editor of *The Emu* from 1929 to 1960, stayed there from November 1933 to February 1934, and left a full account of his stay in the magazine.

The Gould League's 'Bird Day' outings at the property were large events. On those occasions the Cabin became a St John's ambulance first-aid post, and a distribution post for the one thousand children and teachers in attendance.

Mr Davey had erected the cabin not for profit but as a public gesture. He offered hospitality of every type of visitors. Amateur ornithologists who spent a weekend there were welcomed with a jug of milk and a dish of honeycomb oozing with *Meliadora* honey. Over 100 bird species were identified at the property during this period of its history, and these are all recorded by the bird watching organisations.

Vernon Davey died in April 1949 aged 74, and his wife a few years afterwards. The Melton history includes a photograph of him demonstrating his methods of extracting honey in his apiary; and another of him as an old man, dressed formally in an old-fashioned suit and hat, with a native bird perched on his shoulder.⁹

In c.1958 the property was purchased by Terry Fogarty, who continued to allow members of bird watching groups to camp there until 1965. Mr Fogarty's daughter Margaret and her husband Roger Wood now live in the property. They explain that the house verandahs were used to serve Devonshire Tea during the property's Naturalist days. It formerly had a fly-wire screen to facilitate these.

Thematic Context / Comparative Analysis:

Melton Historical Themes: 'Farming', 'Community'

Known Comparable Examples in Melton Shire:

Historically, the site is a rare and important expression of the amateur interest in native birds, and the incorporation of this interest into the primary school curriculum in the early decades of

⁹ Starr, J *Melton: Plains of Promise* (Shire of Melton, nd), pp.193-4

the twentieth century. This was particularly promoted through the Gould League's 'Bird Day' (which was sometimes combined with schools' tree planting activities on 'Arbor Day'), and the images of Australian native birds on contemporary school exercise books. In 1930 it issued a certificate and pledge for children in Australian schools, and in 1940 bird protection became a part of the school curriculum. The Gould League was founded in 1909 with Alfred Deakin, Australia's second Prime Minister as its first president.

The 'Naturalists Cabin' is an outstanding, and rare (perhaps unique) representation of important historical theme.

Architecturally, there are no other interwar outbuildings in the Melton Shire that can be readily compared with the Naturalists Cabin.

There are more intact examples of Federation styled dwellings in the Melton Shire, when considering the architectural context of the house. These examples include the following:

- Toolern Park homestead, 1658 Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road (Place No.020). Built in c.1911, this dwelling features a similar hipped roof form with projecting gable at the front, but also a return verandah supported by timber posts. There are timber framed double hung tripartite windows. This dwelling also has a rudimentary appearance.
- House, 786 Blackhill Road (Place No.064). This dwelling is more modest in scale, with a hipped roof form and a projecting minor gable and skillion verandah at the front. Like the house 'Norwood', the dwelling at 786 Blackhill Road has been relocated to this site and overall, it has a more rudimentary appearance.
- House, 2-200 Porteous Rd (Place No.007). This Edwardian dwelling appears to largely intact although its overall roof composition is more similar to the dwelling at 786 Blackhill Road. It features a more steeply pitched hipped roof form, and projecting minor gable and verandah at the front clad in red painted galvanised corrugated steel. The verandah is supported by early timber posts and has an early timber verandah fretwork valance and brackets.
- House, 895 Exford Road (Place No.276). This house also appears to have been altered, including the front skillion verandah and the front windows. It is a modest example of the style.
- House, 1/6 Judd Court, Rockbank (Place No.407): this dwelling has a steeply pitched gambrel roof form with projecting minor gables and a return verandah. There are also interwar styled timber framed double hung windows.
- "Arunga", 77-347 Holden Road, Plumpton (Place No.102): a Federation styled dwelling with prominent face brick multi-corbelled chimneys, the house has a central hipped roof form and projecting gables at the front and side linked by a return bullnosed verandah. The verandah is supported by turned timber posts and has timber fretwork valances. The box windows are distinctively interwar in design, being timber framed and double hung, and arranged in banks of three.
- "Kuloomba", 2187 Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road (Place No.24): a late Federation styled dwelling have a steeply pitched gambrel roof form and projecting gables at the front and side linked by a return bullnosed verandah. The gable infill (battening and panelling) is interwar in design, as are the paired timber framed double hung windows.

- Possibly the most intact example of an Edwardian or Federation style in the Melton Shire constructed in horizontal timber weatherboards is the house at 2-180 Davis Road, Diggers (Place No.75). It has a central steeply pitched hipped roof form and projecting front and side gables linked by a return broken back verandah. The verandah valance, timber framed casement windows arranged in banks and at the corner under the verandah, face brick multi-corbelled chimneys, gable infill and galvanised corrugated steel roof cladding represent the intact fabric.

Condition:

Good-Fair

Integrity:

Moderately Intact (Overall)
Naturalists Cabin – Substantially Intact
House - Low

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 – Naturalists Cabin outbuilding</i>

Other Recommendations:

- The Naturalists Cabin requires repair and restoration work.



‘Norwood’



Painting of Grey Thrush on Cabin Façade