

**Heritage Overlay No.:** 047  
**Citation No.:** 075  
**Place:** House, 2-180 Davis Road

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**Other Names of Place:** None  
**Location:** 2-180 Davis Road, Diggers Rest (Lot 4, LP 6069)  
**Critical Dates:** c.1914  
**Existing Heritage Listings:** None  
**Recommended Level of Significance:** LOCAL



**Statement of Significance:**

The house at 2-180 Davis Road, Diggers Rest, is significant as one of the most intact and refined examples of a timber Federation style in the Shire and for its early setting amongst mature cypresses and other exotics, the front being defined by the timber picket fence. The house was built c.1914 on one of the allotments sold in the break-up of the massive Clarke pastoral estate. It appears to be substantially intact with the interior of the house intact with all its period detailing.

The house at 2-180 Davis Road is architecturally significant at a LOCAL level (AHC D.2, E.1). It demonstrates original and outstanding design qualities of a Federation style. These qualities include the steeply pitched hipped roof form, together with the minor gables that project at the front and side that are linked by a broken back return verandah. Other intact or appropriate qualities include the single storey height, horizontal timber weatherboard wall cladding, unpainted galvanised corrugated steel roof cladding, broad eaves, five face brick

chimneys with multi-corbelled tops, stop chamfered timber verandah posts with decorative incised bands, arched decorative solid timber fretwork valances with fan-light motifs, projecting rectangular bays on the gable ends with banks of three timber framed casement windows having highlights above, corner window bay with similar timber framed casements and highlights above, bracketed timber window hoods above the projecting bays, timber framed door opening with sidelights and highlights, and the decorative gable infill (stucco panelled and vertical timber battening). The mature cypresses and other exotic trees, and the front timber picket fence, contribute to the significant setting of the place. The farm buildings on the west side of the driveway contribute to the setting of the place and to an understanding of its significance as a working farm.

The house at 2-180 Davis Road is historically significant at a LOCAL level (AHC A4) as a representative example of one of the many small to medium sized farm homesteads established as a consequence of the historic break-up of the large pastoral estates in Melton Shire in the early twentieth century, in particular the Clarkes' vast *Rockbank* estate. It is also expressive of the new farming prosperity in that period.

Overall, the house at 2-180 Davis Road is of LOCAL significance.

### **Description:**

The house at 2-180 Davis Road Diggers Rest is set on a large sizeable allotment with open grassed areas and mature cypresses and other exotic trees at the front and sides. The front is also characterised by a timber picket fence, approximately 1300 mm high, which complements the setting of the place.

The single storey, horizontal timber weatherboard, Federation styled house is characterised by a steeply pitched hipped roof form, together with minor gables that project at the front and side and are linked by a broken back return verandah. These roof forms are clad in unpainted galvanised corrugated steel. Broad overhangs are features of the eaves. Five early face brick chimneys with multi-corbelled tops adorn the roofline.

An early feature of the design is the return verandah. It is supported by stop chamfered timber posts with decorative incised bands. The verandah also has early arched decorative solid timber fretwork valances with fan-light motifs.

The projecting rectangular bays on the gable ends with banks of three timber framed casement windows having highlights above, are early. The corner window bay, with similar timber framed casements and highlights above is also early.

The interior retains significant architectural and decorative detailing of the period with pressed metal on ceilings and upper walls, in some rooms, and original lathe plaster walls in others. Windows retain original coloured glass panes. Fireplaces in each room are original cast iron and tile with wooden mantles. Some rooms have original wallpapers and friezes and in general the timber work is in excellent condition. Some floors show evidence of stump movement, but overall the house retains all its original internal and external features.

Other early features of the design include the bracketed timber window hoods above the projecting bays, timber framed door opening with sidelights and highlights, and the decorative gable infill (stucco panelled and vertical timber battening). The house appears to have two phases of development; the rear 5 rooms and joining breezeway may date from the 1930s.

There is a large underground tank to the west of the house with a large concrete cap over the top. The original pump is still intact on the top. There is boxthorn hedging around the sheep/goat yards and cypresses, which are under a great deal of stress around the house and up driveway. To the east of the house is a set of concrete tanks and a corrugated formwork tank and tank stands.

## History:

### *Contextual History*

Crown Allotment A, Section 13, Parish of Holden, was granted by the Crown to John Mooney on 9<sup>th</sup> June 1854.<sup>1</sup> The allotment, described as ‘good grazing land clear of timber’, had as its western boundary the Eastern Branch of the Kororoit Creek. It was largely encircled by the holdings of large pastoralist J Aitken, and giant pastoralist WJT Clarke.<sup>2</sup> By 1892 it, and another two square mile allotments purchased by Mooney south of the Holden Road, were in the ownership of Sir WJ Clarke.<sup>3</sup> His father WJT Clarke was reputedly the largest pastoralist in Australia in the mid nineteenth century.

By the end of the nineteenth century historical changes were stirring. A new generation of farmers restlessly surveyed the vast pastoral estates surrounding them. In 1897 Sir Rupert Turner Havelock Clarke Bart, the son of Sir WJ Clarke, had mused in Parliament about cutting up 40,000 acres of his empire to lease to dairy farmers. He was under some local pressure to make land available for farming, and declared he was keen not to ‘disappoint public expectations.’<sup>4</sup> The Victorian Municipal Directory 1898 entry for Melton Shire made the first of a series of unprecedented reports on movements by big local landholders such as Rupert Clarke, Harry Werribee Staughton, and Harvey Patterson to sell and lease (often under the ‘share system’) large portions of their estates to small farmers and graziers.<sup>5</sup>

This ‘break-up’ of the large estates coincided with major developments in farming in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, as new science, technologies, fertilisers, transport and markets enabled great productivity increases. With inventions such as the Babcock separator, the development of local co-operative creameries and butter factories, and advances in refrigeration creating new export markets, dairying in particular suddenly boomed.

And so the beginning of the twentieth century marked a major new era in the history of Melton. It saw the subdivision and sale of thousands of acres of the Clarke, Taylor, and Staughton pastoral empires, and after the First World War, of smaller pastoral estates such as *Melton Park*, *Greenhills* and the *Mount Aitken* estates. In 1905 the Closer Settlement Board purchased Taylor’s *Overnewton* estate and shortly after Staughton’s *Exford* estate to subdivide into smaller farming allotments. Around 1905-6 Sir RTH Clarke began subdividing and disposing of the vast *Rockbank* estate (and most of *Rupertswood*, *Red Rock* and *Bolinda Vale* estates) that had been so carefully acquired and tended by his grandfather and father.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Parish Plan, Parish of Holden

<sup>2</sup> Land Victoria, Put Away Plan: H98 (bii) (1868)

<sup>3</sup> Shire Map Series: Parish of Holden (1892); Parish Plan: Parish of Maribyrnong

<sup>4</sup> *Sunbury News*: 31/7/1897, 7/8/1897, 4/9/1897.

<sup>5</sup> *Victorian Municipal Directory*, 1898, and following years.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Clarke, ‘Big’ Clarke (Queensberry Hill Press, Melbourne, 1980), *passim*; Sir RTH Clarke Bart. sold the vast section of the Rockbank Estate that lay south of the Western Highway in November 1906; it would appear that he sold the northern portion about a year earlier. (PROV VPRS 560/P0 (35850); also CT Vol.3211 Fol.642206, pertaining to an 8000 acre portion south part of this estate; and also Shire of Melton Ratebooks from 1905-06 which record local farmers as owners of parts of the *Rockbank* estate.

On 16th October 1899 RTH Clarke applied to bring under the Transfer of Land Act 1890 some 14,200 acres which had been a portion of the northern part of the Rockbank estate. This was for the purposes of having a Torrens title issued, a prelude to breaking-up or selling the estate.<sup>7</sup> Unlike the Closer Settlement Board Clarke did not go to the trouble of subdividing his original Crown parcels in order to maximise small farming on the land. Much of his land was purchased by established neighbouring farmers and smaller graziers.

### *History of the Place*

Shire of Melton ratebook information prior to WW1 is generally very scant, and it is difficult to identify the allotment. The first ratebook record of the present site that could be found shows WL Sides, 'farmer' of Diggers Rest, rated as the owner of 210 acres 'Holden', valued at £90 in 1911-12.<sup>8</sup> In 1915-16 Alexander McIntosh, farmer of Diggers Rest, is identified as the owner of a property that was also identified as 'late Sides'. This property was described as 'part' of Crown Allotment A, Section 13, Parish of Holden, whose description was given as '351 acres and buildings', and valued at a much increased £175. Other owners of part of CA A Section 13 were Percy and Alfred Davis, and the Howells, but neither of these properties was described as including buildings.<sup>9</sup> The house then would appear to have been built between the years 1912-1916. It appears on a 1916 map.<sup>10</sup>

The property was afterwards associated with the Cullinan family for most of the twentieth century.<sup>11</sup>

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

*Shire of Melton Historical Themes:* 'Farming'

*Comparable Places in Melton Shire:*

*Historical comparison:*

The sale of the vast Clarke pastoral estate as small farms in the early twentieth century was a turning point in the history of Melton Shire. Only 24 houses and substantial sites associated with this event now remain. Of these places, heritage citations have been prepared for 11 places, including 111 Davis Road. These places are:-

Places for which heritage controls are proposed:-

Place No.438	House, <i>Bonnie Doon</i> , Rockbank (1906)
Place No.120	House, <i>Gollers Court</i> , Melton Highway Plumpton (1906-11)
Place No.372	House, 63 Greigs Rd, Rockbank (c.1910)
Place No.360	House, <i>Mount Cottrell</i> Homestead, Rockbank (c.1910)

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<sup>7</sup> PROV, VPRS 460/P/32123

<sup>8</sup> Shire of Melton, *Ratebooks*, 1909-12

<sup>9</sup> Shire of Melton, *Ratebook*, 1915-16.

<sup>10</sup> Army Ordnance Map, Sunbury (1916)

<sup>11</sup> Charles Watson, personal conversation, 8/2/2006; Ben Davis, personal conversation, 8/2/2006

Place No.407	House, 1967 Melton Hwy, Melton (c.1910): one of six houses on Clarke Estate reputedly by the same builder (c.1910)
Place No.237	House, 2120 Ryans Road, Melton: one of six houses on Clarke Estate reputedly by the same builder; with scarce hand-pump still attached to underground tank (c.1914)
Place No.457	House (former Casey), Water Reserve Road, Rockbank
Place No.102	House, <i>Arrunga</i> (early 20C)
Place No.075	House, 2-180 Davis Road, Diggers Rest (c.1914).
Place No.152	House, <i>Plumpton Park</i> , Diggers Rest (c.1922)
Place No.103	House (Tyquins), 932 Holden Road, Diggers Rest (1931)

Places for which heritage controls are not proposed:-

Place No.084	House, 219 Diggers Rest – Coimadai Road, Diggers Rest
Place No.470	House, Beattys Road, Rockbank, much altered
Place No.401	House, <i>Fairview Park</i> , 686 Leakes Road, Rockbank (1905-08)
Place No.315	House, Beatty's Road, Rockbank (early 20C)
Place No.456	House, Water Reserve Road, Rockbank (c.1900-10, 1960s)
Place No.299	House, <i>Penlee Farm</i> , Mount Cottrell Road, Mount Cottrell
Place No.348	House, <i>Kintbury</i> , 318-386 Faulkners Road, Mount Cottrell
Place No.452	House, <i>Stoneleigh</i> , Troups Road, Tarneit
Place No.453	House, <i>Camelot Lodge</i> , 230 Troups Road, Rockbank
Place No.371	House, 405 Greigs Road, Rockbank
Place No.107	Trees, Holden Road, Diggers Rest: large avenue of cypress trees, remains of <i>Lyndhurst Lodge</i> .
Place No.095	Outbuilding, bluestone blacksmith, Finches Road, Melton; date 1913 inscribed.
Place No.344	Ruinous house near Kororoit Creek, ruinous, concrete.

Most surviving Clarke estate places are located in the centre and north of the Shire, in the Parishes of Kororoit and Holden. In the southern parishes of Derrimut and Pywheittjorrk, which were vast Clarke landholdings, only eight places survive, two of which are recommended for heritage controls.

### *Architectural Comparison*

The house at 2-180 Davis Street, is a highly intact representative example of an Edwardian / Federation style in the Melton Shire. Other examples include:

- 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 has a more 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. The dwelling may have been relocated to this site and overall, it has a more rudimentary appearance.
- House, 2-200 Porteous Bulmans Road (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. Overall, the character and appearance is more rudimentary.
- House, 865 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, 1967 Melton Highway, Plumpton (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, Diggers Rest (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.

The dwelling at 2-180 Davis Street is possibly the most intact example of an Edwardian or Federation style and of the highest design quality for a locally significant building in the Melton Shire.

**Condition:**

Good

**Integrity:**

Substantially 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 – front and side cypresses &amp; other exotics</i>
Outbuildings and/or Fences:	<i>Yes – front timber picket fence, outbuildings to the west of driveway.</i>