

Heritage Overlay No.: 051
Citation No.: 102
Place: House, 'Arrunga'

Other Names of Place: None
Location: 77-347 Holden Rd, Plumpton (Sec.31 Parish of Maribyrnong) Lot No.3
Critical Dates: Unknown (early twentieth century)
Existing Heritage Listings: 'Local Interest' (Rural Heritage Study)¹
Recommended Level of Significance: LOCAL



Statement of Significance:

The house known as 'Arrunga' at 77-347 Holden Road, Diggers Rest, is significant as a moderately intact, although rudimentary, example of a Late Federation style. Built in the early twentieth century, the house has experienced some alterations and additions, but the original design qualities are still clearly discernible.

The house known as 'Arrunga' at 77-347 Holden Road is architecturally significant at a LOCAL level (AHC D.2). It demonstrates some original design qualities of a rudimentary Late Federation style. These qualities include the recessed hipped roof form, together with two

¹ Johnston, C, 'Rural Heritage Study: Western Region of Melbourne' (Context Pty Ltd, Melbourne Western Region Inc, 1994), Site M65, pp.34, 170-171

gable roof forms that project at the front and side and the return bullnosed verandah that accentuates the overall diagonal composition. Other intact or appropriate qualities include the single storey height, horizontal timber weatherboard wall cladding, corrugated sheet metal roof cladding, two face brick chimneys with multi-corbelled tops, narrow eaves with decorative timber brackets, turned timber posts with decorative timber brackets, timber verandah fretwork valances, interwar Bungalow styled banks of timber framed double hung box windows under the projecting gables, other timber framed double hung windows, timber window brackets, and the timber framed doorways. The mature cypresses and eucalypts also contribute to the significant setting of the place.

The house known as ‘Arrunga’ at 77-347 Holden Road is historically significant at a LOCAL level (AHC A.4). It is a representative example of the many small to medium sized farms and 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.

Overall, the house known as ‘Arrunga’ at 77-347 Holden Road is of LOCAL significance.

Description:

The house known as ‘Arrunga’ at 77-347 Holden Road, Diggers Rest, is set on a large rural allotment. It is surrounded by rows of mature cypresses, eucalypts along the double driveway, with a scatter of trees in front. The driveway has a stone entranceway and the remains of a dry stone wall which continues for some way to the west.

The single storey, horizontal timber weatherboard, rudimentary Late Federation styled house is characterised by a recessed hipped roof form, together with two gable roof forms that project at the front and side: the diagonal composition being accentuated by the return bullnosed verandah. These roof forms are clad in recent corrugated sheet metal roofing. Towards the rear are later modestly scaled additions. Two early face brick chimneys with multi-corbelled tops adorn the roofline. Narrow overhangs with decorative timber brackets are features of the eaves.

An early feature of the design is the return verandah. It is supported by recent (but appropriate) turned timber posts that also feature decorative timber brackets. The verandah also has early timber fretwork valances.

Other early features of the design include the interwar Bungalow styled banks of timber framed double hung box windows under the projecting gables, other timber framed double hung windows, timber window brackets, and the timber framed doorways.

History:

Contextual History

The house *Arrunga* is situated in the very north-east corner of Section 31, Parish of Maribyrnong, a 632 acre allotment purchased from the Crown by J Mooney on 9th June 1854. On the same day Mooney also purchased the adjacent Section 30, of 615 acres, together with Section 13A, of 600 acres, in the Parish of Holden. Virtually all the land between Mooney’s Holden and Maribyrnong (about 6 kilometres apart) properties had been purchased from the Crown by WJT Clarke.² By 1892, and probably much earlier, the three Mooney allotments had

² Parish Plans, Parishes of Maribyrnong, Holden

been added to the Clarke pastoral empire.³ 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.’⁴ 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.⁵

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.⁶

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 and selling the estate.⁷ 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

The Shire of Keilor ratebooks show that in 1906 Sir Rupert Clarke was still in possession of the 4,039 acres (and ‘houses’) of his estate that were in the Shire of Keilor, including Section 31.⁸ However, in 1908 the 621 acres (11 acres had been excised in the 1850s for the purposes of the Bendigo railway) of Section 31 was one of three allotments of Clarke’s 4,039 acre Keilor

³ Shire Map Series (1892): Maribymong; this is confirmed by Clarke’s TA 32123 (the actual dates of the Mooney to Clarke conveyances are not included).

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

⁵ *Victorian Municipal Directory*, 1898, and following years.

⁶ 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.

⁷ PROV, VPRS 460/P/32123

⁸ Shire of Keilor, *Ratebooks*, 1905-1908

holdings that had either been sold to, was in the process of being sold to, or was being leased to, Reginald Charles Deed, of Sydenham.⁹ There is no reference to a house, or the Net Annual Value. By 1915 the 621 acres of Section 31 was in the ownership of ‘Hobbs & Peart’, and was occupied by Vivian Butler, farmer, of Sydenham. Again, there is no reference to a house, even though the ratebooks were recording houses in the ratebooks of this era. The Net Annual Value (NAV) record for the property had actually reduced from £275 to £245 in this period, and so offers no clue to improvements. By 1919 Sydney Hartley was the owner, and ‘occupier’, although W Blair, of Oakleigh, is also listed, apparently as the tenant of the 621 acres. Again, no house is listed.¹⁰ No record at all of Section 31 could be found in later ratebooks (up until 1926). The style of the house makes it unlikely to have been built later than this.

Given the inconsistencies in the rate record regarding this property, it is possible that a house was erected on the property in the first few decades, but not recorded in the ratebook. Clarke’s estate of 4,039 acres included ‘houses’ in 1905, and it is possible that the house on Section 31 was one of these. More likely is that it was built at the time Reginald Charles Deed became associated with the property, in 1907-08. Alternatively the house could have been built at the time during which it is certain that Clarke disposed of the property, in the period 1909-1915, or later again.

According to the The Rural Heritage Study some locals reported that it had been a Soldier Settlement block after the First World War, but this is not supported by the Parish Plans, which show no reacquisition of the allotment by the Crown.¹¹

A photograph of the house in the 1994 Rural Heritage Study shows that it had non-original ‘crazy paving’ masonry posts at that time, supporting the original fretwork valances that remain today.¹² These have since been replaced by appropriate style turned timber posts and ornamental brackets.

Thematic Context / Comparative Analysis:

Shire of Melton Historical Themes: ‘Farming’

Comparable Places in Shire of Melton:

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 Arrunga. These places are:

Places for which heritage controls are proposed:

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| Place No.438 | House, <i>Bonnie Doon</i> , Rockbank (1906) |
| Place No.120 | House, <i>Gollers Court</i> , Melton Highway Plumpton (1906-11) |

⁹ Shire of Keilor, *Ratebooks*, 1907-09. This information is recorded in a different colour pen underneath the Clarke entry.

¹⁰ Shire of Keilor, *Ratebooks*, 1915-19

¹¹ Johnston, *op cit*, p.171; Parish Plan, Parish of Maribyrnong.

¹² Johnston, *op cit*, p.170

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|--------------|---|
| Place No.372 | House, 63 Greigs Rd, Rockbank (c.1910) |
| Place No.360 | House, <i>Mount Cottrell</i> Homestead, Rockbank (c.1910) |
| Place No.407 | House, 1/6 Judd Court, Rockbank (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:

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| 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 Cotterell |
| Place No.348 | House, <i>Kintbury</i> , 318-386 Faulkners Road, Mount Cotterell |
| 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 Federation design and timber construction of the *Arrunga* – with interwar styled timber framed windows – is not unusual in the Melton Shire. Other similar Edwardian and Federation style examples with interwar design qualities include:

- House, 107-121 Water Reserve Road, Rockbank (Place No.457): an Edwardian styled dwelling is an asymmetrical composition characterised by a hipped roof form, together with a gable that projects towards the front. On the other side of the gable roof is a slightly lower hipped roof wing that appears to be a later addition. There is an original convex return verandah, together with a similar verandah on the later work. These verandahs are supported by timber posts with framed timber fretwork valances. A multi-corbelled painted brick chimney adorns the roofline. Narrow overhangs with paired timber brackets are features of the eaves. The timber framed double hung windows arranged in banks of three on the original building are reflective of the interwar period. Similar windows are identified on *Arrunga*.
- House, 1967 Melton Highway, Sydenham West (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.
- *Kuloomba*, 2187 Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road (Place No.24): a late Federation styled dwelling with 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 111 Davis Street (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. ‘*Arrunga*’ is architecturally more rudimentary by comparison.

Condition:

Good

Integrity:

Moderately intact

Recommendations:

Recommended for inclusion in the Melton Planning Scheme Heritage Overlay.

Recommended Heritage Overlay Schedule Controls:

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| External Paint Controls: | <i>No</i> |
| Internal Alteration Controls: | <i>No</i> |
| Tree Controls: | <i>Yes - Cypressess and Eucalypts in three rows along the edge of the two driveways.</i> |
| Outbuildings and/or Fences: | <i>No</i> |