Heritage Overlay No.:	**060**
Citation No.:	**136**
Place:	**'Mount Aitken' Site & Ruin**

Other Names of Place:	N/A
Location:	740-794 Mt Aitken Road, Diggers Rest. (Allotment A2, Parish Buttlejorrk)
Critical Dates:	1836-1857; c.1867-68 (construction)
Existing Heritage Listings:	'Place of Interest' (Not assessed), Rural Heritage Study.[1]
Recommended Level of Significance:	LOCAL [2]

Statement of Significance:

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[1] Johnston, C, *Rural Heritage Study: Western Region of Melbourne* (Melbourne Western Region Inc., 1994), p.143

[2] The place has a high potential to be of State level significance as a relatively intact, historically important and rare 'first settlement' site of the Port Phillip district.

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

The *Mount Aitken* Site and Ruin, 740-749 Mt Aitken Road, Diggers Rest, is of at least local heritage significance as a major nineteenth century stud property under John Aitken and Henry Beattie; and also for its associations with key events in Australia's history:- the European foundation and 'first settlement' of the Port Phillip / Melbourne district; and 'first contact' period encounters between the Aboriginal and European peoples. It is the more important because of the scarcity of other recorded physical evidence of these events in the Port Phillip district.

The *Mount Aitken* Site and Ruin, 740-749 Mt Aitken Road, Diggers Rest, is historically significant at a STATE level (AHC A4, B2, D2, H1). John Aitken was the first European to settle in the Shire of Melton. He was also one of the first pastoralists to land sheep at Port Phillip. Aitken had been planning to cross Bass Strait as early as 1833, and on 20th July 1835, the day before Fawkner's *Enterprize* departed to lay claim to the foundation of Melbourne, Aitken left Launceston in the *Endeavour* to prospect the pastures which John Batman had discovered across the Strait. On 22nd March 1836 Aitken sailed again with 1600 sheep; in May 600 of these arrived at the *Mount Aitken* run which he had selected on his 1835 exploration. This has been described as Victoria's first inland occupation of sheep country. For two decades Aitken was revered as the colony's leading flockmaster, described as the 'first and most useful of our wool kings'. Historians have also judged his *Mount Aitken* stud to have been the most significant contributor to the improvement of Victoria's merino sheep up to the 1860s. In addition to being a famous sheep breeder, Aitken was also a respected and popular citizen of the pioneering European community. He named the Pentland Hills, and Governor Sir Richard Bourke named Mount Aitken after him. He was elected as mediator and representative in relation to social and pastoral issues, and for sporting occasions; citizens donated a portrait of him to the Melbourne City Council. However his relations with the local native population were tense, and his *Mount Aitken* station became the scene of an encounter which would appear to have been instigated by Aboriginal peoples' anxiety to reclaim their country. The hill district from Sunbury to Gisborne, and including Mount Aitken, was the meeting place of the two streams of Victoria's first European settlers (overstraiters and overlanders), and is of key significance in the pastoral development and history of the state. The early painting 'View from Mt Aitken looking towards the Dandenong Ranges' depicting the open woodland and prime grasslands that were the *raison d'être* for the European occupation of Victoria, is indicative of this historical significance.

The place is also significant for its associations with stud-livestock breeder Henry Beattie, whose *Mount Aitken* Hereford stud was one of the best and most famous in Australia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. His breeding of Comeback sheep (English Leicester - Merino) made a significant contribution to the development of one of Australia's most useful general-purpose wool and meat sheeps, taken up by mixed farmers in south-east Australia from the early twentieth century. His Shropshire sheep and Clydesdale horse breeding programs were also of note. Beattie served four separate terms as President of the Shire of Melton.

Despite disturbance of the property, it is likely that some archaeological evidence of the Aitken era dwellings, outbuildings or other works survives. It is also likely

that evidence survives of part of the original track to the station, which formed one of the alternative routes of Victoria's first inland road, the Mount Macedon Road (and the Mount Alexander Road during the goldrush). Early drystone walls also survive. The original purpose and date of the large ruin, likely to have been built by John Beattie, is not known at this stage. The mature conifer and other shelter plantings on the site are representative of common pastoral and farming practices of a later date, and contribute to the significance of the place.

The *Mount Aitken* Site and Ruin, 740-749 Mt Aitken Road, Diggers Rest, is scientifically significant of at least LOCAL level (AHC C2). Archaeological fabric on the site, and the ruin, have the potential to produce rare information regarding the first European occupation of Port Phillip and the Shire of Melton, and also of contact-era Aboriginal occupation of the site.

Overall, the *Mount Aitken* Site and Ruin, 740-749 Mt Aitken Road, Diggers Rest is of at least LOCAL heritage significance."

Description:[3]

The remains of the *Mount Aitken* pastoral station are situated on Aitkens Hill which is some 2.5 kilometres south of Mount Aitken. A woolshed was once situated near the northern boundary of the property.

The place is the site of John Aitken's *Mount Aitken* pastoral run. Access to the place was provided on 28th November 2008; Council's archaeologist was not permitted on this inspection. Prior to that, information about the site came from views to it from an adjacent property, aerial photographs, historical data and earlier photographs. Historical maps and other documents indicate some of the type of places that once existed on-site, and for which archaeological evidence might remain.

The place has been associated with pastoralism and farming since first European settlement of Port Phillip until recent times. Survey by a professional archaeologist is required. Fabric identified on the site by David Moloney, Sara Jane Peters and Steven Ryan on 28th November 2008 included:-

- A large, semi-ruinous, simple longitudinal gable building of masonry construction, principally of red scoria blocks and rubble, very roughly coursed. Its uneven stones and rough stonework suggest that the date of construction may be particularly early. All of its openings – a door and two windows - are situated on its east façade. Some 20 metres from the building is an outcrop of similar stone which may have been quarried. The window and door openings are quoined with alternating massive, roughly squared stones and courses of hand-made bricks. Several layers of mortar have been applied over the years. The south-end gable has a corbelled brick chimney. On one side is what appears to be an oven added later; this may relate to the building being known locally (in the late twentieth

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3 As part of the preparation for the Panel Hearing, the Shire of Melton expert witness examined a number of additional sources, including:-
- Kerr, P, Nikolajuk, G, 'Mt Aitken', 1963, Thesis (undergrad), University of Melbourne, Faculty of Architecture, Building, Planning
- *Historical aerial photographs: 'Melbourne North Project', April 1963.*
- *Lands Victoria, Survey Plans (AP 39635)*

Information from these sources provided additional information regarding the description and history of the place, which is incorporated into this report.

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

century at least) as 'the cookhouse', for workers / shearers. The roof of the building, of sawn timber and later nineteenth century corrugated iron (likely to have been added later) has now completely collapsed, as has most of the northern wall, and the lintels. Some areas of whitewash survive on the internal walls. The interior is becoming overgrown with boxthorn which will contribute to the deterioration of the building.

- The site of a large brick and cement rendered villa overlooking the valley of the Eastern Branch of the Kororoit Creek. Although damaged by bushfire, the walls of this building survived until being bulldozed in the late twentieth century. Considerable evidence of this building survives, including:-
    - o earthworks / benches for the building and driveway, including low dry stone retaining walls at the former entrance (east side);
    - o foundations of internal and external walls;
    - o a large underground cement-rendered water tank, with a square brick / rendered opening (possibly built later, of recycled handmade bricks);
    - o piles of quarried bluestone on the perimeters of the site. Some of the stones are massive; there appears to be little if any uniformity in size of these roughly squared building blocks;
    - o scatters of handmade bricks, mostly of an orange colour. There are also a few much heavier, glazed blue-grey bricks of a type that appear to have been associated with the "Allisons Patent" brickworks on nearby Jacksons Creek (from the late 1850s until c.1880s);
    - o miscellaneous iron materials, including a water pipe from the hill above, and an early clothes iron;
    - o broken ceramics, some of which appears to be high quality nineteenth century plates; and glass, including what appears to be early champagne bottles.

- Evidence of buildings, and what may have been stock yards and sheep dip, on the hill above the former villa.

- The site of a former brick building (described in the 1963 thesis as the first homestead). This appears to have been largely obliterated by a small scoria quarry. Around this site (and elsewhere) are bricks, some marked 'Ramsay', a nineteenth century fire-brick.

- The site of a former stone building (described in the 1963 thesis as Aitken's second hut), which has been demolished. Fabric, apparently from this building (rubble stone and handmade bricks with evidence of limewash or paint) survives beyond the old poplar trees into an adjacent shallow waterhole / tank.

- Exotic plantings, including radiata pine and eucalptus shelter plantings (probably dating from the late nineteenth or early twentieth century), a hawthorn hedge, and ornamental plantings such as stone pine, fig and poplar trees, which typically mark the locations of former dwelling or other buildings.

- Landscape features, including:- Aitkens Hill; rocky outcrops which appear to fit the description of those referred to in the 1838 incident between Aitken and the Aboriginals; views towards Mount Aitken; views over the valley of the Eastern Kororoit Creek, over the permanent waterholes described by Governor Bourke in

1837 and towards Melbourne; the essentially unwooded 'sheep plains' nature of the landscape, although without the natural open eucalyptus woodland. Although the pastoral landscape depicted in an early watercolour is still rural and essentially undeveloped on this property, the original holding has since been broken-up into numerous smaller holdings. Shelter plantings and new buildings also impinge marginally.

There was no superficial evidence of the original woolshed that was marked on early plans. The owner advised that the area had been cropped numerous times. While it is thus unlikely that any building fabric or footings would survive, artefacts may survive.

Evidence of tracks shown on early plans was not superficially visible, but should be investigated further.

While all but one building has been demolished, evidence of building materials, footings and artefacts would appear to remain. These, together with artefacts, possible cellars, or associated water tanks etc, should be subject to expert archaeological survey, as required by the Burra Charter.

History:

John Aitken: Explorer, Pioneer and Celebrated Pastoralist

The place is associated with the *Mount Aitken* pastoral run, established by squatter John Aitken. Aitken was not only the first European settler in this locality, but one of the first pastoralists to land sheep at Port Phillip. Aitken had begun planning to cross Bass Strait as early as 1833.[4] On 20 July 1835, the day before Fawkner's *Enterprize* departed to lay claim to the foundation of Melbourne, Aitken left Launceston in the *Endeavour* to prospect the pastures which John Batman had discovered across the Strait. His party returned to Launceston on 29 August 1835. On 22 March 1836 Aitken again set sail for Port Phillip, this time to settle. Some 1600 sheep were loaded aboard the brig *Chili*. It ran aground on a sandbank off Arthur's Seat, where the surviving sheep were landed and driven (with the help of local Aboriginal people) around to the embryonic settlement of Melbourne on the Yarra. On May 6th 1836 Aitken drove the 600 remaining sheep to the uplands between Sunbury and Gisborne where he had previously chosen to settle. He set up a tent, and with the assistance of three men, looked after his sheep and a horse on a ten square mile run.[5]

In March 1837 John Aitken acted as a guide for Governor Bourke's party on its climb of Mount Macedon. Bourke was impressed by Aitken, and named the hill at his station Mount Aitken.[6] Both Bourke and Captain Phillip Parker King recorded the fine pasture and water in the area to the east and north of Aitken's station. King's diary records Aitken as 'a shrewd, sensible, and persevering person, who travelled much about the country'. In c.1837 the pioneer pastoralists the Learmonth brothers, Henry Anderson, and William Cross Yuille mustered at Aitken's station for an exploratory trip around

[4]*The Argus*, 14/7/1945; Brown, PL (ed), *The Narrative of George Russell of Golf Hill*, (Oxford University Press, London: Humphrey Milford, 1935), p.92

[5] Peel, LJ, *Rural Industry in the Port Phillip District 1835-1880* (MUP, Melbourne, 1974), p.16; Spreadborough R, Anderson, H, *Victorian Squatters* (Red Rooster, 1983), p.262

[6] Boys, RD, *First Years at Port Phillip* (Robertson and Mullens, Melbourne, 1935), pp.68-9. Also:- Dixon, HP, 'Early Settlement of the Gisborne "Bush Inn" District: 1802 to the Gold Rushes', (typescript, 1981), p.5; Milbourne, J., *Mt. Macedon: Its History and Grandeur 1836-1978* (self published, Kyneton, 1978), pp.26-7.

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

central and western Victoria.[7] Aitken named the Pentland Hills near Bacchus Marsh after the range of this name near Edinburgh.[8]

John Aitken's settlement at *Mount Aitken* has been described as Victoria's '...first inland occupation of sheep country.'[9] The improvement of Victoria's merino sheep up to the 1860's owed more to Aitken than to any other sheep breeder.[10] 'No pioneering enterprise was more useful to Port Phillip', one historian concluded of the *Mount Aitken* pastoral run.[11] Fastidious with his stock, Aitken was revered as the colony's leading flockmaster. From c.1840 he crossed Leicesters with Merinos as part of he object of increasing the weight of fleece as well as retaining the fineness and density of the wool; he achieved high sale prices for his lambs and wool, both locally and in London.[12] He won half the prizes at the second Melbourne Show in 1842, and is thought to have stocked many of the local pastoral leases with Merinos.[13] He also raised William Lyall's breed of Hereford cattle.[14]

Each year some two hundred buyers attended his annual sale of Saxon sheep, which was preceded by a lavish champagne lunch and followed by an all-night carousal.[15] These sales, begun in 1845, were thought by Batey to have been the first annual ram sales in Port Phillip.[16] By 1847 reports of the event were being circulated around Australia:-

> "Mr Aitken's annual sale of rams came off yesterday at Mount Aitken, at twelve o'clock - the attendance was most numerous, including, we must justly say, the majority of the wealth and fashion of Melbourne; a most admirably prepared *dejeuner a la fourchette* was partaken of by the guests, and the happy union of business and pleasure was never more successful than on this occasion. The proceeds of the sales (allowing even, the over-estimated sum of £200 for the cost of the lunch) must have realised something very close to £2000…" [17]

A c.1852 watercolour entitled 'View from Mt Aitken looking towards the Dandenong Ranges' - one of the few illustrations contained in PL Brown's noted record of the early Port Phillip squatters - depicts the open woodland and prime grasslands that illustrate the very reason for the first European settlement of Port Phillip.[18]

Described as a taciturn Scot, Aitken was admired and liked by his squatter colleagues, and played a leading role in the early squatting society of Port Phillip. Before the arrival of Government or law, he was elected one of the arbitrators of a dispute between John Pascoe Fawkner and Henry Batman, and was a steward of Melbourne's first horse race meeting. He was also prominent in public meetings on issues such as Aboriginal access to firearms, and threat of the sheep disease catarrh amongst the squatters flocks. By the time he departed for England in 1857 he was a

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[7] Brown, *op cit*, pp.113-114.

[8] Brown, *op cit*, p.114

[9] Boys, *op cit*, p.49; Anderson, H (ed.), Gurner, HF, *Chronicle of Port Phillip*, (Red Rooster, Melbourne, 1978), p.30.

[10] Pike, D (ed.), *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, (Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1977),Vol. 1,p.4.

[11] Sayers, CE (ed), Bride, TF, *Letters From Victorian Pioneers*, facsimile edition (Lloyd O'Neill, Melbourne 1983), p.47.

[12] Peel, *op cit*, p.30

[13] Symonds, IW, *Bulla Bulla: An Illustrated History of the Shire of Bulla* (Spectrum, Melbourne, 1985), p.21; Batey, Isaac, RHSV Typescript, 27/1/1910, pp.122-3

[14] Batey, *op cit*, pp.122-3

[15] Clarke, Michael, *'Big' Clarke* (Queensberry Hill, Carlton, 1980), p.108

[16] Batey, *op cit*, pp.122-3

[17] *Morton Bay Courier*, 23rd October 1847.

[18] Brown, *op cit*, opposite p.162

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prominent and respected identity; citizens acquired his portrait and donated it for hanging at the Melbourne Town Hall (it is now held by the State Library of Victoria). In the 1850s he was Justice of the Peace for the Gisborne District.[19]A main street of Gisborne was named after him, as was the gold-rush wayside town of Aitkens Gap.

Isaac Batey, as a youth, observed the 'famous sheep breeder' talking to his father at Kirk Bazaar before he left for overseas, noted that he was 'a handsome old gentleman', and that there was a move to present him with a testimonial before he returned to England (in 1857).[20] Contemporary squatter John Brown described Aitken as 'A handsome, kindly man, returning help when it is needed.' Others described him as a 'kind, hospitable, generous man.'[21]

An *Argus* article of 1945 suggested that this northern part of Melton Shire, with the adjoining areas in the two adjacent municipalities, was of pre-eminent significance in the early pastoral history of Victoria, as the meeting of the two streams of European settlement of Port Phillip. While Aitken, Evans, Jackson and other 'overstraiters' ventured northwards from Williamstown, 'overlander' parties from NSW, such as Howey, Coghill, Riddell and Hamilton (and later George Hyde of *Green Hills*) penetrated southward; the two streams meeting among the hills between Sunbury and Gisborne. Thus, declared the writer, 'these hills take pride of place in the pastoral and agricultural development of the State...'[22]

Relations with the Aboriginal People

Notwithstanding the help Aboriginal people had given him in landing sheep at Dromana in 1836, relations with the local Aboriginal people on at *Mount Aitken* do not appear to have been cordial. There are several accounts of his encounters with the local Aboriginal people. The most dramatic account, by a contemporary, has him locked in hand to hand combat with a single native intent on his provisions, from whom he managed to escape by mounting his horse and fleeing.[23] Although in his late fifties during Victoria's squatting phase, Aitken was strong and powerful. In 1838 he narrowly escaped being hacked to death by a native armed with a tomahawk, apparently a deliberate act of resistance by local natives to the occupation of their land – in April 1838.[24] A party of 40-50 ranged widely around the territory, going first to John Aitken, who managed to dispossess them of two of their three guns. He recorded the incident:-

> 'I was attacked by about 40 native blacks at my station on the 14th of April last. They came to me armed with spears and three guns. I called my men about me when they came up. They stood still and we brought out what guns we had in the hut, and we called out as if there were other people about us.
>
> The blacks then retreated about a hundred yards and got behind a rock. I rode up and, when within 30 yards, two of them levelled their guns at me over the cover of the rock. I then rode around them, and came in behind them. There were three or four under cover and on my getting behind them they went up to the rest of the tribe. I followed and got the assistance of Mr White and then went up to the black and succeeded in getting two guns from them. They cocked their guns as we went up to them. When I took hold of the gun the black named De Villiers

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[19] Symonds, *op cit*, p.21

[20] Batey, *op cit*, p.143

[21] Beattie, Steward K, *The Odd Good Year: Early Scots to Port Phillip, Northern Australia, Gap, Gisborne, and Beyond* (Southward Press, Marrickville, 1999), pp.58, 60

[22]*The Argus*, 14/7/1945

[23] Brown, *op cit*, p 111.

[24] Sayers, Bridge, op cit, pp.49-50; Symonds, *op cit*, p.16

or Warra Worrock attempted to strike me with a tomahawk. Afer taking the guns, the blacks went away…'.[25]

The next day, with women and children, the party visited George Evans (*Emu Bottom*) and camped at Jackson's (at Sunbury), threatening a shepherd, spearing sheep and setting their dogs upon the flock, driving up to 50 away. They continued on to other squatting stations towards the Werribee where similar 'depredations' took place.[26] On 19th May the speared and disembowelled body of shepherd Samuel Fallon was found near Mt Macedon.[27] A party of seven natives were captured and taken to Sydney for trial.

Another view of Aitken and the natives during these episodes is recorded by Batey. Original pioneer Kenneth Scobie Clark, pastoral manager for the Great Lake Company, had told him:-

> 'Aitken would not permit the aborigines to trespass upon his run, and also that the blacks feared him. One of his [Clark's] items was to the effect that Aitken, grappling with a native, did his best to break the man's neck.'

While Batey conceded that Clark was not always the most 'strictly reliable' witness, the Clark account of the blacks' attitude to Aitken was corroborated by another, reliable, witness 'who recounted an old lubra who asked him if "Debbil debbil was dead" meaning of course, John Aitken.'[28]

Aitken's own account of the relations with local Aboriginal people was expressed in a letter to Governor La Trobe in 1853. When the 'Mt. Macedon tribe' came to his tent soon after his arrival at Mt. Aitken:-

> ' … I did all in my power to conciliate them, by giving them rations of rice, sugar, flour etc. while they remained about the place'.

The tribe in the *Mount Aitken* area however was:

> '... more savage than the Western Port tribe, a neighbour of mine (Mr Franks) and his servant being murdered by serving out food to them... I had great reason to be thankful that I succeeded in saving myself and shepherds from sharing a similar fate'.[29]

The 1850s

Aitken extended his network of pastoral leases in the area, from Jacksons Creek near Gisborne to Skeleton Creek at Tarneit, perhaps with a view to moving his flocks during droughts.[30]

Around 1851 everything changed for Aitken and other local squatters. In the wake of the unparalleled drought of 1850, and then the 'Black Thursday' fires, on 6 February, WJT 'Big' Clarke had grabbed some 183 square miles of their prime land as part of his Sunbury Special Survey.[31] Aitken's homestead allotment had been secured in 1841 by

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[25] Aitken's court statement, 15th May 1838. In Canon, M (ed) *Historical Records of Victoria, Vol.2A: The Aborigines of Port Phillip 1835-1839*', VGPO, Melbourne, 1982, pp.291-292

[26] Cannon, M, *Historical Records of Victoria*: *The Aborigines of Port Phillip, 1835-1839*, Vol 2A, (VGPO, Melbourne, 1982), pp 291-4, 299-301. Presland, G.(ed) *Journals of George Augustus Robinson, January-March 1840*, (Records of the Victorian Archaeological Society, No.5,1977) p.4. This was similar to an incident involving a shepherd described in Symonds (p 16), said to have occurred on the same day as the mass attack on Aitken.

[27]Symonds, *op cit*, p 16.

[28] Batey, Isaac, 'Further Notes on the Early Days on the Keilor and Werribee Plains', SLV Manuscript (nd), pp 16-17.

[29] Sayers, Bride, *op.cit*., p.50.

[30] Spreadborough and Anderson, *op cit* (map)

[31] Clarke, *op.cit.*, pp.110-4.

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an English land order, and as he held other runs he was not as seriously affected as most local pastoralists. Although not completely absorbed, Aitken still lost the southern portion of his run.[32] He had previously applied for security of tenure, which may have been the reaon that his pre-emptive right section was 786 acres rather than the usual 640 acres.[33] With further purchases of adjacent crown land that had not been part of the Special Survey he was able to secure a relatively small pastoral estate.[34]

In late 1854, shortly after his arrival from Scotland, Henry Beattie obtained employment with Aitken. By 1855-56 Aitken had made him the manager of the property. The regard was obviously mutual, as Beattie named his second son John Aitken Beattie in honour of the pastoralist. Around 1855 Aitken built a 'new stuccoed bluestone homestead'. There is a photograph of this double-fronted single storey Victorian villa, with a return verandah, and large rear portion in the Beattie's family history.[35]

In 1857 Aitken left on a trip for England, apparently 'to better the children's experiences of life'.[36] The *Argus* reported his leaving under the heading:- 'First and Most Useful of our Wool Kings goes to England'.[37] Aitken died in London in October 1858.[38]

Cobb & Co. Association

In 1860 *Mount Aitken* was leased by a George Watson and a Mr Hewitt for seven years.[39] Another source informs that that 'Messrs Watson and Hewitt' were 'in charge of Cobb and Co's stage coaches, and that the *Mount Aitken* estate was used by them to graze coach horses.'[40] Governor Bourke's 1837 estimation that the property afforded 'good pasture for horses, sheep and cattle' had been proven judicious.

'Cobb and Co', Australia's famous coaching company, had been inaugurated in January 1854 on the Mount Alexander Road gold diggings route. By coincidence, one of the original routes linking Melbourne with the Mount Alexander gold fields was one of the original 'Mount Macedon' tracks, one of which crossed the *Mount Aitken* home station property.[41] Early plans show the alignment of this track passing through the property in approximately in the location of the bluestone building presently remaining on the site, and then north to Gisborne along the station track towards the woolshed.[42] This alignment was competing with others, and by 1851 a road had been surveyed through the *Mount Aitken* station, but east of the eastern gully (not on the subject site).[43] Evidence of this track is said to be visible now when the grass burns off. This road in

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[32] Peel, *op cit*, p.55; Lands Victoria, Historical Map: 'Sydney H3' (1846); Aitken also held *Emmeline Vale*, near Gisborne, and leases of extensive properties in Central Victoria including *Bullock Creek*, *Tandarra*, *Open Plains*, *Myers Creek*, *Yarraberb*, and *Piccaninny Creek*. Including *Mount Aitken*, he had more than 200,000 acres of leasehold. In 1855 he sold the Central Victorian stations (Beattie, *op cit*, p.54)

[33] Historical Plan: PR M/113 (John Aitken Pre-emptive Right)

[34] Parish Plans, Parish of Holden; also PROV, Pastoral Run Papers, Run No.843 'Mount Aitken', correspondence 3/6/1851.

[35] Beattie, *op cit*, pp.40, 52, 61

[36] Beattie, *op cit*, pp.40, 70

[37] Article in the *Argus*, 14/4/1857, cited in Beattie, *op cit*, p.40

[38] Beattie, *op cit*, p.59

[39] PROV VPRS 460/P0/39635; Symonds, *op cit*, pp.20-22

[40] *The Argus*, 6th December 1923.

[41] Historical Plans: Roll 113 (10/9/1839); Sydney H3 (1842)

[42] Historical Plan: Sydney H3 (1846)

[43] Put Away Plan: B536, Hoddle, 28/3/1851; Historical Plans: Loddon 27, 1b (7/4/1852); PR M113 (22/9/1856)

turn became less popular when the government chose to invest its roadworks in what became known as Mount Alexander Road (the Calder Highway) a little further east again. This place became a key staging post for teams and travellers to the gold-field established, which in turn grew into a settlement, then a town, known as Aitken's Gap, or The Gap.

While the lawless early days of the gold rush had passed, Aitken's Gap was still a wild place in 1858 when traveller William Kelly arrived by coach:-

> 'Arrived at the top, it was a scene of extraordinary bustle and uproar, for it was then a special camping place for drivers and carriers, and the scores upon scores of horse drays and bullock-wagons that were preparing for a start, produced an amount of tumult, altercation, blasphemy, and compound abominations which would not find many readers even if I succeeded in reproducing it.'[44]

The development of Aitkens Gap would not have been possible without the springs in the area to water the travellers' horses and bullocks. Again, Governor Bourke's early note of the 'excellent herbage and frequent waterholes' in the district had again proven perceptive.

Especially in the early days of the gold-rush, when no roadworks had been undertaken and every track was in the same disrepair, carts and bullock wagons chose which track to take depending on gradient, or seasonal variations of mud and availability of water. (One teamster reported that he and his horses arrived at the Gap 'nearly famished' during the 1850s, and found he had to buy five buckets of water, at two shillings a bucket, at a shanty.[45]) It would have been under these circumstances that many travellers would have continued to use the tracks through Aitken's land, following creeks and waterholes.

The establishment of stores and hotels, such as the Gap Inn, the Manchester and the Bald Hill hotel (owned by the family of Frank Millett, one of the key informants for the 1963 'Mt Aitken' thesis) in 1854 prompted the Government to survey a township that it named 'Aitken's Gap', after the respected pioneer pastoralist. One of the largest gold escort stations, with by far the largest forage requirement in the District of Bourke, was also established there.[46]

The Cobb & Co company introduced Australia to 'a new coaching age' which lasted until the mid 1920s.[47] Its innovatory staging, vehicles, teams, and drivers were the basis of this revolution.[48] For a period, *Mount Aitken* was an integral part of the winning Cobb & Co. strategy of fresh horses and short stages.

Its teams of thoroughbreds 'maintained a fast trot or hand-gallop up and down hills over the short stages of 10 miles.'[49] 'They are horses that stand pretty high, with a good action', Freeman Cobb noted proudly.[50] Local resident Isaac Batey concurred, noting that the best team did the last return leg from Keilor to Melbourne: six horses, 'all of

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[44] Kelly, W, *Life in Victoria...1853...1858*, (facsimile ed., Lowden, Kilmore, 1977), p.169 (1858).

[45] Chandler, John (Michael Cannon, ed) *Forty Years in the Wilderness* (Loch Haven, Arthurs Seat, 1990), p. 78

[46] PROV, 'Police Stations Victoria, 1836-1965', Compiled by the Victoria Police

[47] Austin, KA, T*he Lights of Cobb & Co: The Story of the Frontier Coaches 1854 -1924*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1972, p.59

[48] Austin, op cit, p.64

[49] Serle, Geoffrey, *The Golden Age: A History of the Colony of Victoria 1851-1861* (MUP, Carlton, 1968), p.235

[50] Blainey, G, *The Tyranny of Distance: How Distance Shaped Australia's History* (revised edition, Sun Books, Melbourne, 1988), p.143

them magnificent greys…a grand show.'[51]   The company's short stages meant fresher horses and faster travel, and by the end of 1855 Cobb & Co's two services to Bendigo took just one day, half that of its respected rival, the Royal Mail.[52]

Cobb & Co's popular 'Yankee Whips' were much admired for their progressive driving style.[53] Batey observed a 'Cobbs coach' on its run down the long straight grade of the Aitken's Gap Hill:-

'The way the driver tooled his team down at a pace a little short of a gallop without question was something grand.'[54]

With competition from the new train line, which opened to Bendigo in 1862, Cobb & Co. ceased its Mount Alexander Road service in that same year. By this time the name 'Cobb & Co' was legendary around the country; it was later immortalised in a Henry Lawson poem.[55]

The company's lease of the *Mount Aitken* estate however didn't conclude until 1867; it is not known how the property was used in the intervening five years. It is faintly possible that there would be fabric remaining on the property from this short, but historic, occupancy of Cobb & Co.

Henry Beattie's Era.[56]

In 1867 former property overseer Henry Beattie took over the lease of the property.[57] Under his direction, it again became famous, mainly for its Hereford cattle stud.

The £1000 per annum 5 year leases issued to Beatty during his term required him to paint the buildings, repair fire-damaged fences, 'keep up the external boundary fences', erect a windmill, keep the property free of thistles and noxious weeks (especially 'Bathurst Burr'), not to cut down trees, and not to crop more than 30 acres of ground (and restore it for pastoral purposes afterwards).[58]

Beattie's station records show that in 1868 he was busy repairing and building up the property. He employed pieceworkers to build nearly 700 metres of dry stone walling, and nearly twice that length of post and three-rail fencing.[59] The property had a six stand shearing shed, as there are repeated records of his employing six blade shearers in the season.[60]

In November 1869 he began his Hereford Stud with bulls and cows purchased from Cressy Stud in Tasmania. In August 1874 an advertisement in the *Argus* announced 'The First Annual Sale of the *Mount Aitken* Stock, consisting of pure and half bred Hereford Cattle, pure Leicester, South Down and Cotswald sheep, Clydesdale and

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[51] Batey, 1910, op cit, p.51

[52] Austin, op cit, pp.64-5

[53] Austin, op cit, p.64

[54] Batey, 1910, op cit, pp.50-51

[55] Austin, op cit, pp.60, 66-67; Bradfield, RA, *Flour Mill, Railway Foundary, Cobb & Co* (Castlemaine Early History series, nd)

[56] Henry Beattie was no relation to neighbouring pastoralist / farmer John Beaty (*Pinewood, Glencoe, Rocklands*), from Northern Ireland or, further south, the Beatty of Rockbank Inn.

[57] Beattie, *op cit*, p.62

[58] PROV VPRS 460/P0/39635

[59] Beattie, *op cit*, p.63; Other records show that other fences and walls were built by 1865 (PROV VPRS 460/P0/39635).

[60] *ibid*, p.64

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

thoroughbred Horses …'.[61] Beattie had re-instituted the Aitken tradition of annual stock auctions, complete with champagne lunches.

In 1875 Beattie purchased *Yallock*, a rich cattle-fattening property at Westernport.[62] In 1876 he purchased more stud cattle from William Lyall's famous Harewood stud at Westernport.[63] Henry and his sons were firmly establishing themselves in stud-livestock breeding, and as dealers in fats and store bullocks, fat lambs, sheep and wool production.[64]

In his memoirs Harry H Peck (son of John Murray Peck, one of the founders of Cobb & Co and a good friend of Beattie) recalled that Henry Beattie 'the famous Hereford breeder of Mt Aitken, in the 70s, before the days of Plumptons, often welcomed a small coterie from Newmarket to private coursing matches on Mt Aitken, with John Murray Peck and Augustus P Rudd as chief organisers.' At the conclusion of the day all would adjourn to the homestead for a friendly glass before starting for home, and on the table were decanters of whisky, gin and brandy. Amusing stories of these days were retold amongst the friends for years.[65] Peck described Beattie as:-

> 'A dour Scotsman but fond of a joke, with curly hair and a full brown beard, Beattie was plain of dress, but clothed and booted with the best of hard-wearing tweed and leather.'[66]

Henry Beattie travelled to England in 1889 to purchase Hereford bulls and cows.[67] He visited England to make his own selections, which included winners at the English Royal Show. HH Peck records that his Hereford herd became famous all over Australia, both in the show ring and as sires and bulls went to all states from *Mount Aitken* and *Gisborne Park*.[68]

Reports of the purchases, sales and movements of Beattie's *Mount Aitken* stud stock circulated around the Australian media. In 1870 the *Argus* noted that he imported the Clydesdale 'Conqueror'.[69] In 1874 the *Brisbane Courier* noted the price of Hereford bulls 'At the sale of the Mount Aitken stock'.[70] In 1880 the *Maitland Mercury* noted that at the National Agricultural Society's Show, attended by the Governor Sir William Jervois, Sir Arthur Kennedy and the Duke of Manchester, 'in Herefords, Henry Beattie of Mount Aitken took all of the International gold, silver and two bronze medals.'[71]

While in England Beattie had also purchased stud Shropshire sheep and on returning established his Shropshire sheep stud on *Mount Aitken.* This was the first pedigreed sheep of this breed imported to Australia.[72]

In 1900 Beattie purchased the *Gisborne Park* property; with *Mount Aitken* and *Yallock*, this was run as a single operation: Henry Beattie and Sons.[73]

Beattie was a regular supplier of fat sheep and cattle, and often attended Newmarket, where HH Peck got to know him well. Peck described Beattie's contribution to pure stock breeding in very high terms, comparing him to the 'genius' of

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[61] *ibid*, p.49

[62] *ibid*, p.62

[63] *ibid*, p.64

[64] *ibid*, p.67

[65] Peck, Harry H, *Memoirs of a Stockman* (Stock and Land Publishing Co, Melbourne, 1972), pp.50-51

[66] *ibid*, pp.99-100

[67] Beattie, *op cit*, pp.68-69

[68] *ibid*, pp.99-100, 179

[69] *The Argus*, 8/9/1870

[70] *Brisbane Courier*, 14/11/1874.

[71] *Maitland Mercury*, 6/11/1880

[72] *ibid*, pp.68-9

[73] *ibid*, p.70

Robert Clarke (the manager of the Sir WJ Clarke's pastoral empire). Tasmanian breeders early on bought Shropshires from *Mount Aitken*, and 'Ben Aitken', and 'Pale Aitken' were two sires that later appeared in many pedigrees in that state. 'However', said Peck, it was 'in producing a definite and fixed type of Comeback as early as the 'seventies from crosses of English Leicesters and Merinos, was where Henry Beattie showed his skill and knowledge of sheep-breeding and husbandry. These Mount Aitken fixed comebacks were a beautiful type of general purpose sheep, carrying soft-handling, lustrous wool of great character covering shapely bodies, and were a very payable proposition, but the flock unfortunately was dispersed at the Mount Aitken sale after Mr Beattie's death.'[74]

Beattie also bred Clydesdales successfully, and 'altogether his studs, herds and flocks were always outstanding in class and condition.'[75]

In 1891-92 Beattie and his family were apparently shocked when the trustees of Aitken's estate sold *Mount Aitken* over his head to the Widdis family of Gippsland. However the Widdis' allowed Beattie to see out his days there undisturbed for another 15 years.[76] On the 10th August 1906 Henry Beattie died at *Mount Aitken*.[77]

Henry Beattie was a long-serving councillor of the Shire of Melton, and had served four separate terms as President.[78]

The Twentieth Century.

Charles Widdis sold the property to to Samuel and James Norman Howell.[79] In 1911 they applied to have a Torrens title issued for the 3,787 acre site. This enabled them, in 1912, to begin subdividing and selling parts of the property in small farms, mostly under 200 acres.'[80] JN Howell's homestead property passed to Mr LePatourel in 1919.[81]

In 1923 the Argus carried a series of advertisements and reports regarding the forthcoming sale of the *Mount Aitken* estate, which had been subdivided by Mr Arthur Le Patourel:-

> 'The property was for many years the home of the Hereford cattle of the late Mr Beattie. It is particularly good agricultural, grazing and fattening country, and all classes of stock from this property invariably topped the Melbourne markets.' It includes some 'magnificent black volcanic land', the hay from which has 'realised top prices'.[82]

In September a more detailed account provided some insights into the estate as it was then:-

> 'The Homestead block contains 896 acres, lying between the East and the West Kororoit Creeks, both of which are absolutely permanent. Nearly all of this land is capable of being put under cultivation and could be used for growing any kind of crop, such as hay, barley, mangolds, the latter having grown with great success for feeding stock by the late Mr Henry Beattie during the many years the property was used by him for a stud farm.'

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[74] Peck, *op cit*, pp.99-100.

[75] Peck, *op cit*, pp.99-100.

[76] *ibid*, p.71

[77] Beattie, *op cit*, p.63

[78] Starr, *op cit*, p.265

[79] Symonds, *op cit*, pp.20-22

[80] PROV VPRS 460/P0/39635; also Symonds, *op cit*, pp.20-22

[81] Symonds, *op cit*, pp.20-22

[82] *The Argus*, 16/6/1923

The Homestead, which commands a splendid view, is built of brick and cement, and contains nine spacious rooms, besides bathroom, kitchen, laundry, dairy etc, and is fitted with all modern conveniences, such as hot and cold water service, lighting, sewerage, telephone, etc. The outbuildings are practically new and comprise brick cottage of five rooms, with kitchen, and men's dining-room, men's brick cottage of three rooms, stabling for ten horses, chaffhouse, implement sheds, motor garage, wool shed, sheep yards and dip. Mount Aitken has been fattening a bullock to three and a half and four acres, and the fat cattle walk from their paddocks to the Newmarket sale yards in nine hours, making the blocks well worth the attention of anyone requiring depot paddocks.'[83]

In December the *Argus* advised:- 'Mount Aitken Estate Sold':-
'Mount Aitken homestead and 1,523 acres of rich grazing and agricultural land, three miles from Sunbury, on the main Melbourne to Bendigo road, together with the homestead of brick and cement, and outbuildings.
Mr John Aitken the original owner acquired this land in 1835 [sic]. In 1860 Mount Aitken was leased from Mr Aitken by Messrs Watson and Hewitt, at that time in charge of Cobb and Co's stage coaches, and the estate was used by them to graze the coach horses. When Messrs Watson and Hewitt's lease expired, in 1867, Mt Aitken was leased by Mr Henry Beattie who remained in possession for about 40 years, until the time of his death. After being in possession of Mr Aitken for more than 70 years [sic], the property changed ownership for the first time in 1907, the purchaser being Mr Charles Widdis of Gippsland. Mr Widdis retained the property for some three years and then sold it to Messrs S and JN Howell. Nearly four years ago the estate again changed hands, and was bought by Mr Le Patourel, who has now sold the homestead and 1,523 acres to Mr F Gervis-James, of Aroka, Malvern.'[84]

On 14th January 1944 a fire burnt from Woodend to the Gap, destroying 30 houses and devastating the Couangalt area just north of the Shire. The Toolern Brigade, at work on the west side of the front, were unable to prevent 2100 acres of the *Mount Aitken* estate, now in the ownership of Mr Scott, and its 'historic 14 room stone house', being burnt out.[85]

The part of the former estate north of Aitken's Road was subdivided under the Soldier Settlement Act 1946 into five allotments. Allotment A3, the former homestead site with the ruin, was purchased by EWS Charlton, who obtained freehold title 21st June 1961.[86] Scott Charlton had occupied the site in 1950, and built his home not far from the original Aitken homestead.

The Historical Development of John Aitken's 'Mount Aitken', and its Physical Remnants

Aitken's station is marked on an 1839 map of Melbourne's west and north.[87] An 1842 map shows his dwelling in about the same position, and the country as 'sweet pasture land'.[88] Another marked it as 'rich grassy lands'.[89] Another describes the

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[83] *The Argus*, 8/9/1923

[84] *The Argus*, 6/12/1923.

[85] *Gisborne Gazette*, 21st January 1944

[86] Parish Plan, Parish of Buttlejorrk

[87] Lands Victoria, Historical Plan: 'Roll 113' (10/9/1839)

[88] Lands Victoria, Historic Map, 'Sydney H3' (28/6/1842)

[89] Lands Victoria, Put Away Plan: 'B535' (c.1851)

northern part of the Aitken run as as 'fine undulating grazing country', 'lightly timbered with she-oaks and blackwood', 'partially covered with fragments of trap'.[90]

By 1846 both 'Aitken's Homestead' and 'Woolshed' sites are mapped. Both of these complexes were on the subject allotment.[91] While no buildings on these sites are evident in aerial photographs now, archaeological evidence of them, particularly the masonry homestead, with a cellar, may survive.

The northern boundary of the subject site is shown as 'John Aitken's Northern Boundary' is shown on early map.[92] This map probably may date to the post 1851 Clarke Special Survey. Another early map marks this boundary as 'Aitken's Fence', and shows a fence marked between the western and eastern branches of the Kororoit Creek.[93] 'Aitken's Woolshed' is also shown beside this boundary.

On the same 1846 map, abutting the East Branch of Kororoit Creek (not now on the ruin site), were two large fenced areas marked 'Paddock'.[94] This paddock is still shown on an 1892 map.[95]

Early maps showing 'Mr Aitken's House', 'J Aitken's (Homestead)' and 'Aitkens Home Station' suggest that the main homestead was several hundred metres south of the ruin.[96] The woolshed was some 300 metres north of the ruin.[97] The next map showing buildings is not until 1916. It shows four buildings in the homestead complex, of which the current ruin would appear to be the northernmost.[98] By 1938 two buildings are shown in a complex notated 'Mount Aitken'.[99]

A Melbourne University Department of Architecture undergraduate thesis entitled 'Mt Aitken' provides photographs and architectural plans and drawings of buildings (then essentially ruins) ruins on the property in 1963, and theories on the purpose and dates of these buildings.[100] The dates of the construction of the buildings had been unable to be established from any historical documentation. The historical information regarding buildings was instead based largely on information provided by respected locals (Frank Millett and Jack Beaty) whose families who had been neighbours of *Mount Aitken* since the 1850s.

The following discussion of the physical development of the site in regard to buildings develops the information contained in this thesis. Further such investigation is possible, and should be taken as part of more definitive assessment of the site.

What the 1963 thesis described as Aitken's 'first hut' was situated on the western bank of Eastern Kororoit Creek (not on the subject site). The evidence of the building was rubble stone with a mud mortar. It was situated near a spring (perhaps one of the

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[90] Lands Victoria, Historic Map, 'Sydney H3' (1846): 'Plan showing the land marked at the Parish of Holden … on application of Mr John Aitken'.

[91] Lands Victoria, Historic Map, 'Sydney H3' (1846): 'Plan showing the land marked at the Parish of Holden … on application of Mr John Aitken'.

[92] Lands Victoria, Historical Map: 'Features 483' (nd)

[93] Lands Victoria, Historical Map: 'Loddon 27, 1(b)' (nd)

[94] Lands Victoria, Historic Map, 'Sydney H3' (1846): 'Plan showing the land marked at the Parish of Holden … on application of Mr John Aitken'.

[95] Shire Map Series: Parish of Holden (1892)

[96] Lands Victoria, Historical Map: 'Unproclaimed Road 22' (1856): 'Plan of the proposed road from the Bush Inn near Mt Macedon to the Portland Road near Keilor'; also Geological Survey of Victoria, Map No.7 NW (c.1862); also SLV Map: 'County of Bourke corrected up to 1857; compiled by T Bibbs 1855'.

[97] GSV, No.7 NW.

[98] Army Ordnance Map: 'Sunbury' (1916)

[99] Army Ordnance Map: 'Sunbury' (1938)

[100] Kerr, P, Nikolajuk, G, 'Mt Aitken', Thesis (undergraduate), University of Melbourne, Faculty of Architecture Building and Planning, 1963.

'waterholes' that Governor Bourke had identified in this location in 1837). This would fit the pattern of first settlement, in which the squatters initially selected sites on streamside grasslands to erect a 'tent' or 'hut', not only to access water, but to provide views and safety from attack.[101] They built with timber slabs, or sod, and an eye to weather patterns. Local stone was also used where available, so it is feasible that it was built by Aitken for his first hut. However, the *Mount Aitken* station was a sizeable establishment, inhabited by 19 people in 1841, so any stone building that had been built then could have provided accommodation for others; alternatively it could have been built later.

The thesis goes on to state that a number of other ruinous buildings on the subject site were successive dwellings of John Aitken. They are described as the 'second hut' (a single room rubble bluestone construction, with lime mortar); the 'first homestead', a single room (perhaps a kitchen) of hand-made bricks, the remaining portion of a once larger building; and the 'second homestead', which was a large decorated rendered stone and brick villa, the remains of which were bulldozed sometime after 1963. The thesis also states that the stone building that still stands in a derelict condition was the 'shearers shed', being a kitchen (with a large hearth and wood oven) for feeding workers. This would fit the current designation of the building as the 'cookhouse' by local people.

The historical record provides clues, and sometimes more solid information, regarding the types and locations of Aitken's dwellings at various periods. Aitken is said to have set off with his sheep from the embryonic settlement of Melbourne to his run at *Mount Aitken* on 6th May 1836.[102] In November 1836, at the time of Lonsdale's census of Port Phillip, Aitken is recorded as still living in a 'tent'.[103] Many years later, in a letter to LaTrobe, Aitken also refers to his first accommodation:- 'The Mount Macedon tribe of natives came to my tent soon after my arrival at Mount Aitken'.[104]

However, in describing the attack on him by Aboriginal people in April 1838, Aitken refers to them coming to his 'hut'. During this skirmish, the Aboriginals retreated 'about a hundred yards and got behind a rock', which gave them cover from the guns of Aitkens men.[105] This would suggest that the 'hut' was situated near the volcanic Aitken's Hill, with its rocky outcrops, rather than on the alluvial flat of Kororoit Creek.

That this new dwelling (his 'hut') was in a different location appears to be confirmed by early plans. The earliest known plan, of September 1839, locates Aitken's dwelling in the general vicinity of the later buildings on the subject site, that is, near, and to the east (perhaps north-east) of Aitken's Hill.[106] The next plan (June 1842) shows the area in more detail: here the dwelling appears to be situated near the site of the present bluestone 'cookhouse' building, on a track that went to Gisborne in the north and Melbourne via Keilor to the south.[107] Census records reveal that in 1841 Aitken was

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[101] Based on my own extensive survey of early maps and some early surveyors fieldnotes, for the Hume and Melton Heritage Studies. Also Hill, Valerie R, 'The Port Phillip Pastoral Frontier: A Study in Historical Archaeology', Archaeology PhD Thesis, La Trobe University, 2003.

[102] Billis, RV, Kenyon, AS, *Pastoral Pioneers of Port Phillip*, Stockland, Melbourne, 1974, p.13; Symonds, IW *Bulla Bulla: An Illustrated History of the Shire of Bulla*, Spectrum, Melbourne, 1985, p.21.

[103] Cannon, M (ed), *Historical Records of Victoria, Vol.3* 'The Early Development of Melbourne', VGPO, Melbourne, 1984, p.423.

[104] Sayers, CE (ed), Bride, TF, *Letters From Victorian Pioneers*, facsimile edition (Lloyd O'Neill, Melbourne 1983), p.49

[105] Canon, M (ed) *Historical Records of Victoria, Vol.2A: The Aborigines of Port Phillip 1835-1839'*, VGPO, Melborne, 1982, pp.291-292

[106] Historical Plan: Roll 113 (10th September 1839).

[107] Historical Plan: Sydney H3 (26th June 1842)

living in a 'wood' dwelling. This was likely the 'hut' referred to by Aitken, which was situated to the north-east of the hill. There were nineteen people (all of whom were over the age of 14) living on the station at this time, 17 of whom were single males, and one married couple.[108] Eight of these workers were shepherds, a number of whom would have lived at outstations. By 1846, Aitken, like many Victorian squatters, employed Chinese labourers.[109]

In 1840 Aitken married a young Emmeline Harvey at the Presbyterian Church of Melbourne.[110] The presence of a woman on the frontier was typically associated with upgrades of primitive homesteads,[111] and it is probable that this event, and the raising of a family, required a more substantial dwelling than Aitken's original bark hut. Most squatters did not marry and raise families on their stations; Aitken also maintained 23 servants at *Mount Aitken*.[112]

In 1841 Aitken had, through an English Land Order, managed to obtain security over his homestead allotment.[113] Lack of security of tenure was the major obstacle to squatters investing in improvements on the runs, including the building 'permanent' houses. With this in mind, the memoir of his neighbour, Isaac Beaty, that 'Evans and Aitken our way were the only men that put up stone buildings', is of note.[114] Batey raises this in the context of a discussion on the squatters' 1840s struggle for pre-emptive right so, although not explicit, it is very likely that he was referring to the 1840s. It may be that he was referring to the bluestone building referred to in the 1963 thesis as the 'second hut', situated south of Aitkens Hill. Or it might have been the the stone building currently standing in a ruinous state on the property.

The next plan (1846) shows the site in more detail, and provides a different picture again. It marks, very neatly and apparently carefully, the location of 'J Aitken's Homestead', along with a 'Woolshed' to the north, and a 'Paddock' in the north-east corner of the property, across the gully / intermittent stream.[115] This 'homestead' is in a new location again: south-east of, and closer to Aitkens Hill.

Aitken appears to have graduated from a 'hut' to a new 'homestead' between 1842 and 1846. (It is possible that there may even have been another dwelling in between these two, the stone 'second hut' of the thesis.) The building of a homestead would appear to be confirmed by descriptions of the *Mount Aitken* station in the mid 1840s. In 1846 the Rev. John Dunmore Lang described Aitken's dwelling as a 'silvan cottage', with vines, orchard and flower garden:-

> 'Mr Aitken's silvan cottage is situated on the face of a hill of volcanic origin, of which the soil is a deep chocolate colour. Soil of this kind is always of exhuberant fertility, as indeed Mr Aitkin's garden, which is situated on a steeper face of the hill than the one on which his house is built, abundantly shows; and in particular, it is admirably adapted for the growth of all descriptions of fruit trees, and especially of vines.' [116]

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[108] 1841 Census (Port Phillip District), Return No.17 'Mount Aitken, Duck Ponds'.

[109] Batey, 1910, *op cit*, p.22

[110] Beattie, *op cit*, pp.54-55

[111] Hill, Valerie R, 'The Port Phillip Pastoral Frontier: A Study in Historical Archaeology' (Archaeology PhD Thesis, La Trobe University, 2003) p.185

[112] Clarke, *op cit*, p.108

[113] Note by Robert Hoddle on Historic Map: Sydney H3 (1846)

[114] Batey, Isaac, RHSV Typescript, 27/1/1910, p.125

[115] Historical Plan: Sydney H3 (1846). Both of the buildings and part of the Paddock fence shown in this plan would appear to have been situated on the subject site.

[116] Lang, John Dunmore, *Port Phillip, or the Colony of Victoria*, (Glasgow, 1853), p 97; Brown, ADB, *loc cit*; Beattie, *op cit*, p.52

Lang also found the place a local social centre: Aitken's other guests at the time included several passing squatters and the two John Batman daughters - effectively orphans at this time - whom he had taken in. It was evidently a reasonably capacious building. Such a standard of dwelling would seem to fit his new life as a married man, and the arrival of children. It would also be commensurate with the annual sheep auctions he hosted from 1845. A newspaper report of December 1845 related how at the completion of the stock auction his 'guests adjourned to the shearing shed, where festivities carried on to twilight with toasts and songs'. Station employees then carried Aitken, shoulder high, to 'his hospitable mansion', where house-guests continue to dance and sing until daylight.[117]

Described as a 'silvan cottage' by day and a 'hospitable mansion' by twilight, by the mid-1840s Aitken was living in a commodious, presentable and comfortable dwelling, in contrast to other local squatters, who were living in 'rude comfort'.[118] The location of this dwelling is clearly that which is carefully plotted on the 1846 plan. This appears to be very near to the location of the building described in the 1963 thesis as the 'first homestead'. If it was, the additional information in the 1860 inventory (below) that it was 'brick' also fits the 1963 assignation of the 'first homestead' as a brick building. However sometime after 1963 this building was demolished as part of a small scoria quarry: it is possible that the associated water source described in 1963 thesis, and other artefacts, may survive but all that could be seen in an initial inspection in November 2008 was a scatter of bricks.

Henry Beattie who obtained employment with Aitken in late 1854 is said to have overseen the construction of Aitken's 'new stuccoed bluestone homestead' in 1855, or 'certainly sometime after 1854'.[119] The photograph of this house in the Beattie's family history is clearly the same building that was photographed in 1963 (by which time a bushfire had reduced it to its external and internal walls).[120]

An 1860 lease of the property provides what appears to be a comprehensive inventory of the buildings at that time:-

- 'A brick cottage of 11 rooms in all including kitchen, pantry and … room with food cellar underneath.' It had a 'settlement' in the north and south walls.
- 'A five stall stable and coach house with Mans … Room attached; built of slabs with shingle roof.
- 'A two roomed wooden hut with shingle roof used as store.'
- 'A shearers hut of one room built of slabs with wooden roof.'
- 'The woolshed built of round [?] sapling with skillions all round …. pailing [sic] roof and batten floor.'
- 'An iron building about 12 ft by 14 ft'.
- 'The building known as the laundry built of stone; 2 rooms with ... 12,000 gal water tank adjoining.'[121]

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[117] Beattie, Steward K, *The Odd Good Year: Early Scots to Port Phillip, Northern Australia, Gap, Gisborne, and Beyond* (Southward Press, Marrickville, 1999), p.56

[118] Batey, 1910, *op cit*, p.125. This statement was made in the context of a discussion of the 1840s campaign by squatters for security of tenure and pre-emptive rights. It has been suggested by later historians that John Brock at Bullando Vale station (between Sunbury and Lancefield) also replaced his original hut with a four room bluestone cottage at an early date; the Plover Plains property on Konagaderra Creek also had at least two bluestone buildings, and one probably of timber with a stone hearth, built c.1842 (Hill, *op cit*, pp.86-92, 184-5, passim).

[119] Beattie, *op cit*, pp.40, 52, 61

[120] See also aerial photographs 'Melbourne North Project', April 1963.

[121] PROV VPRS 460/P0/39635

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

It should firstly be noted that, while it appears detailed, this inventory is not necessarily comprehensive.

It is possible that the main building in the inventory (the brick cottage) might in fact be the homestead that was described in the 1840s as Aitken's 'sylvan cottage'.

The only stone building on the inventory is the 'laundry'. However the construction of a masonry ('permanent') structure as a laundry is questionable and it is possible that it might originally have been an early dwelling, converted to a laundry after the construction of a newer dwelling. The 'laundry' might then have been the stone 'second hut' described in the 1963 thesis. Or, again, it might be the partly ruinous stone building that stands on the site today.

It is also of note that there does not appear to be any mention of the large rendered villa in 1860 (unless this is the 'brick cottage' which, with 11 rooms, was very large), which contradicts the Beattie biography. Perhaps the Beattie family papers contain information which confirms that this villa was indeed constructed by Beattie for Aitken.

One of the maps that was drawn up by surveyor Bagot as part of the 1860 lease shows external fences, internal fences, and three buildings of the *Mount Aitken* homestead block. It is of note however that the only structures to be detailed (very carefully) in the legend on this map are the boundary walls. This was clearly the main intent of this map, in which the layout of the internal walls are not annotated and appear suspiciously stylised (and do not match other more detailed maps of the property[122]), and which shows only three of the seven buildings noted in the inventory, without annotation.[123]

It cannot however simply be assumed that the ruins of the other buildings identified in 1963 (to the extent that they survive now) do in fact date from the Aitken era (as appears to have been done in the 1963 thesis). This was a flourishing property during the long Beattie occupation, and it should be expected that there would have been numerous nineteenth century buildings erected by him. There is some historical evidence which already suggests this, for example a 1923 advertisement for the property, which noted that:-

> 'The outbuildings are practically new and comprise brick cottage of five rooms, with kitchen, and men's dining-room, men's brick cottage of three rooms, stabling for ten horses, chaffhouse, implement sheds, motor garage, wool shed, sheep yards and dip.'[124]

Having as its intention the marketing of the property, this information might be taken with a grain of salt. The statement does not mean, for example, that all of the outbuildings were recently constructed (or perhaps just in as-new condition). It does however underline the need for further historical investigation of this question. Further information from the Beattie family's historical records might resolve the issue.[125] Ultimately, archaeological investigation of fabric will be necessary, and probably decisive.

If in fact the site of the stuccoed bluestone building dates not to the Aitken era, it would still be historically significant for its association with Henry Beattie whose breeding programs, especially for cattle and sheep, were of national and state significance, and who also seems to have been the progeny of his mentor Aitken. Its archaeological evidence is still of heritage significance given its context within and continuing association with the Aitken story and site. Similarly other buildings or fabric

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[122] Lands Victoria, Historic Map, 'Sydney H3' (1846): 'Plan showing the land marked at the Parish of Holden … on application of Mr John Aitken'.

[123] PROV VPRS 460/P0/39635

[124] *The Argus*, 8/9/1963

[125] I have thus far been unsuccessful in attempting to contact Stewart Beattie, the author of this work.

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would still be significant if found to be associated with Beattie (or Cobb & Co.), although possibly of less than the State significance that they would be if directly associated with Aitken.

The c.1855 stuccoed bluestone villa was razed by fire in 1936.[126] The late Mr Charlton recalled that there had been 'but little' left of the Aitken's home in 1950. Its bluestone ruins were buried by a bulldozer in recent decades.[127]

A 1963 school local history essay reported that there was evidence of 'the first and second hut, sheep-wash on Kororoit Creek, and the existence of a vineyard and produce garden.'[128] A sheep-wash on the East Branch of the Kororoit Creek (not on the subject site) was also mentioned in the 1963 thesis.

The substantial, but now partly-ruinous stone building on the site is known in local tradition as the 'cookhouse'. Since 1980 it has deteriorated badly; this has included its roof falling-in.[129]

Dray tracks towards Melbourne were still visible across the open paddocks of the site in the late twentieth century,[130] and it is possible that evidence of the early track to *Mount Aitken* homestead survives in the vicinity of the ruin. Originally this track was the major route between Gisborne and Keilor, and was taken up as one of the routes to the Mount Alexander goldfields in 1851. Within a few years the present route (of the Calder Freeway) through Aitkens Gap (the Gap) to the east of this original track became the main route. However, the *Mount Aitken* track still appeared on surveyors' maps as a possible main route in the mid 1850s. It still appears on maps at the turn of the century, apparently still in use.[131] This formalised route was situated to the east of the watercourse immediately east of the ruin (not on the current property). The present owner of this property (adjacent to the subject site) land advises that it can still be seen when the grass dies off.[132]

Thematic Context / Comparative Analysis:

Shire of Melton Historical Themes: 'Exploration', 'Pastoral', 'Farming'.

Comparable Places in Victoria:

After Batman's initial exploration, both John Aitken and John Pascoe Fawkner organised exploratory parties to Port Phillip in 1835. In March 1836 Aitken claimed to have been the third pastoralist, after Batman and Arthur (although Batman and Arthur were probably a joint operation), to land sheep at Port Phillip, and in May 1836 established by far the most important sheep stud in Victoria in its early era. Evidence of Aitken's *Mount Aitken* home station would be significant in the history of Port Phillip for any of these reasons. It is possible that the ruin dates to the Aitken era, and it is very likely that there will be other archaeological evidence of Aitken's occupation of this property.

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[126] Beattie, *op cit*, pp. 40, 52, 61
[127] Mr John Dickson, personal conversation, 28/2/2002
[128] Beattie, *op cit*, p.40
[129] Dickson, *op cit*
[130] Symonds, *op cit*, p.22
[131] Shire Map Series: Parish of Holden (1892)
[132] Dickson, *op cit*

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The physical remains of Australia's colonial period represent a crucial time in the history of the nation, and the shaping of its identity.[133] These ruins are even more significant because so little evidence remains of Melbourne's foundation years. The most substantial and verifiable evidence of the three Port Phillip exploration parties is associated with George Evans, one of the members of the Fawkner expedition. His *Emu Bottom* homestead dates to c.1848, although there might be archaeological evidence of buildings from his occupation of the site c.1836-37. Apart from possible archaeological evidence (yet to be investigated) of two of John Batman's outstations on the Merri Creek near Craigieburn (which Batman himself did not occupy), nothing associated with John Batman survives in Victoria. Fragments of the present Pascoe Vale homestead in Pascoe Vale may have been associated with Fawkner.

This is a highly significant site historically. There will also be archaeological evidence of other 'first settlement', or at least early squatting, settlements in the Port Phillip district. However these will not have the same historical associations in terms of the foundation of European settlement in Port Phillip, and few will have significant above-ground evidence remaining.[134]

Comparable Places in Shire of Melton:

A major exception is in the Shire of Melton:- the immensely significant pise *Exford* homestead (Place No.269) which dates to the 1840s. A bluestone fence is believed to define an original garden paddock. This place is however an 'early' rather than 'first' settlement place, and is not associated with a figure who was one of Port Phillip's explorers and first settlers.

Some of the early Port Phillip pastoral places of potential archaeological significance are situated in the Shire of Melton. These include the places listed in the schedule and map of 'Potential Archaeological Places'. They include:-

- Place No.283: low bluestone ruins of an early dwelling, possibly associated with Cotterell, or Watton, on the *Strathtulloh* property.

- Place No.264: *Surbiton Park*. The low ruins of a bluestone building associated with Pinkerton's second settlement.

- Place No.467: remnant dry stone walls, and a recently bulldozed building site that appears to have been an early outstation associated with Hyde and Yuille. Appears to have been destroyed by recent development Caroline Springs estate road building.

- Place No.44: ruins of small building that may have been a *Greenhills* outstation.

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[133] Connah, Graham, *The Archaeology of Australia's History* (CUP, New York, 1993), p.157

[134] For example the Chirnsides' *Point Cook* run does have a bluestone homestead, but the run was only established in 1852. The valleys of the Maribyrnong River, Jacksons Creek, Deep Creek and Emu Creek held the largest concentration of 'first settlers' in Port Phillip, and given their distance from Melbourne had considerable potential to retain archaeological evidence. Apart from *Emu Bottom*, these places have only below-ground archaeological potential (Moloney, D, Johnson, V, 'City of Hume Heritage Study: Former Shire of Bulla District, 1998:- Vol.1, Schedule 3, Map 2; Vol.2, Environmental History). The one with above ground fabric (building foundations), *Plover Plains* on Konagaderra Creek, occupied from the late 1830s to c.1852 by squatters of no historical note, was the subject of an archaeological dig in recent years. Within the last few years Heritage Victoria commissioned a survey potential archaeological places associataed with squatting in the Geelong region.

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- Place No.81: remnant drystone wall, and small cave, that local tradition has it is the remains of an early shepherd's sheep enclosure, and dwelling, overlooking Kororoit Creek.

The conifer shelter belt plantings on the site were popular shelter plantings in Victoria's western plains areas, however these plantings are relatively uncommon within the Shire of Melton. The particularly dry climate in the southern part of the Shire may have contributed to this. Surviving examples generally associated with large pastoral estates (Clarke, and Taylor), and in the Aitkens Gap area.

Condition:

Ruinous, and partly disturbed.

Integrity:

Partly Damaged/Disturbed (with archaeological potential); partly substantially intact.

Recommendations:

Recommended for inclusion in the:-
- Victorian Heritage Inventory
- Melton Planning Scheme Heritage Overlay

Recommended Heritage Overlay Schedule Controls:

External Paint Controls:	*Yes*
Internal Alteration Controls:	*No*
Tree Controls:	*Yes (the conifer shelter plantings, and other mature exotic trees and plantings)*
Outbuildings and/or Fences:	*Yes (Any remnant drystone walls)*

Other Recommendations:

- An archaeological survey of the fabric of the place, and the ruin, have the potential to produce rare information regarding the first European occupation of Port Phillip and the Shire of Melton, and both pre-historic and contact-era Aboriginal occupation of the site. Given the significance of the place, this is also required by the Burra Charter.[135] It is recommended that, prior to archaeological survey, geo-rectification be undertaken for buildings shown on key historical maps.[136]

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[135] Australia ICOMOS, *The Burra Charter*, 1999: Article 4.1; and *Guidelines to the Burra Charter: Cultural Significance*: Article 1.4.

[136] Particularly:- Sydney H3 (1846): 'Plan showing the land marked at the Parish of Holden … on application of Mr John Aitken'; Bagot's survey (c.1860) from PROV Torrens Application file; GSV Map No.7 NW (c.1862). Also if possible:- Sydney H3 (1842); Army Ordnance Maps 1916 & 1938.

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- Preparation of a Conservation Management Plan, to the satisfaction of the Responsible Authority, and to include archaeological investigation, further historical research, and management recommendations.

- The place be nominated to the Victorian Heritage Register if evidence of Aitken association confirmed in archaeological survey.

- No potentially destructive development should be approved prior to the preparation of a Conservation Management Plan, and resolution of the potential state heritage significance of the place.

Site of possible hut on south side of Aitken's Hill

Site of homestead with garden walls and cypress trees

Site of possible farm sheds/stables