

**Heritage Overlay No.:** 073  
**Citation No.:** 195  
**Place:** House, 54-56 Exford Road

---

**Other Names of Place:** The house and farm were originally known as *Glenloth*.  
**Location:** 54-56 Exford Road, Melton South  
**Critical Dates:** Construction: c.1910  
**Existing Heritage Listings:** None  
**Recommended Level of Significance:** LOCAL



**Statement of Significance:**

The house at 54-56 Exford Road, Melton South, formerly known as *Glenloth*, is significant as a predominantly intact example of an Edwardian style. It is a good example of a house built as a result of the activities of the Closer Settlement Board's sale of the former Staughton Exford Estate. It is also significant for its association with its original owner, Austin Exell, who conducted a model farm on the property,

The house at 54-56 Exford Road is architecturally significant at a LOCAL level (AHC D.2). It demonstrates original design qualities of an Edwardian style. These qualities include the hipped roof form, together with the minor gable and bullnosed verandah that project towards the road. Other intact or appropriate qualities include the asymmetrical composition, single

storey height, galvanised corrugated steel roof cladding, horizontal timber weatherboard wall cladding, modest eaves, face brick chimney with a multi-corbelled top, timber framed double hung windows, timber framed front doorway, bracketed timber window hood on the front gable and the timber truss and bargeboards on the front gable end.

The house at 54-56 Exford Road is historically significant at a LOCAL level (AHC A4, B2). It is one of few remaining Melton Shire houses built as a result of the Closer Settlement Board's subdivision of the major Staughton pastoral estate, *Exford*. The Exford Estate was one of the earliest, largest, and best-known of the estates created under the Closer Settlement Act 1904. It expresses one of the major themes of Australia's history - the contest between large pastoralists and small farmers for the land - and the abiding power of the yeomanry ideal well into the twentieth century. The break up of the massive pastoral estates at the beginning of the twentieth century marked a major new era in the history of Melton. The Shire was transformed by the Closer Settlement and Soldier Settlement Acts, as the emergence of new communities necessitated new roads and bridges and new primary schools. While the former *Glenloth* house is now in a suburban context and has completely lost its farming context, its proximity to and historical links with some important infrastructure products of the Exford Estate - the Melton South primary school, and the Bridge Road concrete bridge - adds to its significance. The property is significant for its association with Mr Austin Exell, for whom it was built, who conducted a model farm on the property. Other settlers of the new estates also included some of Melton's most historically celebrated residents, such as international trap shooter Hector Fraser. Other sons of the new farmers are commemorated on memorials of the world wars. The Exford Estate is also of significance as the estate in where, with Colbinabbin, the Board introduced English immigration as part of the development of its closer settlement estates, and prepared the land in anticipation of their arrival. The former *Glenloth* house is also significant for its association with Austin Exell, who established a model Fresian dairy and prizewinning stud on the property, then known as *Glenloth*.

Overall, the house at 54-56 Exford Road is of LOCAL significance.

### **Description:**

The house at 54-56 Exford Road Melton South has a grassed and treed area at the front, with some perimeter plantings near the house. There is an introduced flat roofed carport at the side of the house. The house is now situated in a suburban subdivision, and has completely lost its farming context.

The asymmetrical, single storey, horizontal timber weatherboard, Edwardian styled house is characterised by a hipped roof form, together with a minor gable and bullnosed verandah that project towards the road. These roof forms are clad in galvanised corrugated steel. Modest overhangs are features of the eaves. An early face brick chimney with a multi-corbelled top adorns the roofline.

An early feature of the design is the bullnosed verandah. It is supported by round columns on elevated rendered masonry pedestals that may have been introduced during the interwar (c.1920s-1940s) era.

Other early features of the design include the timber framed double hung windows, timber framed front doorway, bracketed timber window hood on the front gable and the timber truss and bargeboards on the front gable end.

## History:

### *History of the Place: Glenloth*

The house at 54-56 Exford Road was built c.1910 for Mr Austin Exell. The land on which the house is built - Allotment 40 of the Closer Settlement Board's Exford Estate - was offered for sale April 1907. No existing buildings or improvements were listed on site at this time. Of 92 acres and 7 perches, later (in 1923) it had a two acre allotment on Exford Road excised for the purposes of a State School site. The property, situated on the west bank of Toolern Creek, was described in the Exford Estate sales literature as being 'Good soil fit for cultivation, well grassed, no stones'.<sup>1</sup>

The Closer Settlement Board's advertising for the Exford Estate lists all the virtues of the area, and provides an insight into farming in the district at the time:

'The Estate is situated close to the Melton Railway Station about 22 miles from Melbourne, on the main railway line from Melbourne to Ballarat. The land is suitable for the growth of cereals and for dairying. The soil consists of decomposed basalt, reddish in colour. The Estate has frontages to the Toolern Creek.

This portion of the property has been cultivated in the past, and has yielded good returns. The land is in good condition and by no means exhausted.

Good facilities for marketing produce are available. Both morning and evening trains to Melbourne stop to pick up milk etc at Melton.

Timber for fencing and firewood is available in the district, and building materials may be obtained from Melbourne. The climate is genial, and the rainfall 21 inches.'<sup>2</sup>

The quality of the soil, proximity to the station, and Toolern Creek frontage were no doubt major contributors to the price of £12 per acre for allotment 40, which was the equal highest value land in the Exford Estate (together with the adjoining lots 41 and 42). Total valuation was £1105, with a deposit of £34.8.0, and half yearly instalment £33.3.0.

The allotment was purchased by Austin Exell. On the opposite (west) side of Exford Road, George Exell, Austin's father, bought Allotment 47. The family also acquired Allotment no 41, south of Bridge Road, another very good cultivation allotment.<sup>3</sup> They named their property *Glenloth*.<sup>4</sup> George and Mary Exell had raised their family (including Austin born 1887) in the Glenloth, Jeruk, Lake Goldsmith areas of Victoria.

Austin Exell occupied the site immediately, as he is recorded as being a member of the deputation to meet the Premier on his tour of the Closer Settlement Exford Estate in 1909.<sup>5</sup> However his father's allotment 47 had a pre-existing dwelling ('Mrs Pattersons Homestead'), so it is possible that the family lived in this house prior to building 54-56 Exford Road.

---

<sup>1</sup> Lands Victoria, Put Away Plan D62B (1907)

<sup>2</sup> *The Weekly Times*, 23/3/1907

<sup>3</sup> Shire of Melton, *Ratebooks*, 1915-16

<sup>4</sup> Possible sources for the name are Glenloth Parish, Co of Gladstone: farming district south east of Wycheproof; or the racehorse *Glenloth*, owned by Cocks and Brown, that won the Melbourne Cup in 1892.

<sup>5</sup> *Melton Express*, 27/3/1909

Unfortunately the Melton rate collector did not record whether buildings were situated on rural allotments at this time. By 1915-16 however the rates on the property had increased from a Net Annual Value of £32 (in 1908-1911) to £58 in 1915-16. In that year the ratebook also describes the site as being of 98 acres ‘plus buildings’.<sup>6</sup> A 1916 map also shows a house on the site, so it is clear that the house was erected by 1915.<sup>7</sup>

In 1919 Austin Exell also opened an employment agency at 227 Elizabeth Street Melbourne.<sup>8</sup>

By the 1920s Austin Exell was running a very successful Friesian dairy farm and stud at *Glenloth* that the local paper thought a model for the district. Of note is the importance of adapting farming to the dry Melton climate, and hope of the local community for an irrigation scheme:-

‘Mr Austin Exell, a Friesian fancier, is building up a pedigree herd at his dairy farm known as *Glenloth* Melton South, and by working on sound lines, culling unprofitable stock from his herd etc he is obtaining very satisfactory results with steady improvement

The property, which is conducted solely as a dairy farm, is within one mile of the Melton railway station and is 58 acres in area. Once rough plains country with a natural grade and brown chocolate soil it is now thoroughly cleared, the bulk of it being subdivided into 5 acre and 10 acre paddocks. Mr Exell has found paddocks of this size the most suitable when to be used for grazing as well as for the growing of crops, because with the uncertain rainfall of the Melton district he is satisfied that it is impossible to rely on grass for grazing. By varying the crops in the different paddocks, he has been able to use them advantageously for both cropping and grazing. Mr Exell classes the Melton district as essentially autumn and winter country, so that, to provide a source of green feed for summer use, an ensilage system is necessary. He considers that every farmer in the Melton district should have a silo, even if only a small one, seeing that for four months of the year nothing can be grown under existing dry farming conditions. From experience he has found a silo necessary.

From ordinary dairy farming, *Glenloth* is now changing into a Friesian stud farm and practically all the cattle are now pedigreed black and white...

Mr Exell was a successful prize winner in last year’s Show ... preparation of a team of Friesians for the Royal show next month has been in hand for many weeks and this year Mr Exell hopes to take prizes with two bulls, three cows and a heifer. Housed in white washed stalls and bedded on clean straw, these show animals were seen enjoying the painstaking attention and hand polishing necessary to make them look their best when show time comes. Those six chosen animals were not the only ones kept warmly rugged. Mr Exell believes that it pays to keep every animal in the herd rugged during winter ... [Here follows long description of individual stock, most of which have come from the Syme stud at Mount Macedon.]

Mr Exell maintains a very satisfactory output of milk which is sent by motor truck to City milk suppliers. This truck makes one trip daily during the winter and two during the summer. Altogether, Mr Exell, who is a city business man, has reason to be proud of the improvements he has made in this property which will probably become well

---

<sup>6</sup> Shire of Melton, *Ratebooks*, 1908 - 1915

<sup>7</sup> Army Ordnance Map, 1916: ‘Sunbury’

<sup>8</sup> *Melton Express*, 28/6/1919

known for its Friesians within a few years by keeping and breeding high class cattle. He is setting a good example to other dairymen to follow and if Melton district can secure a water supply, *Glenloth* will be one of the properties to utilise the service to its fullest extent.<sup>9</sup>

In 1934, Austin Exell died in a private hospital at Bacchus Marsh aged 47. He was survived by his wife May, and children Wilga, Jack, and Philip. Previously in good health, he had contracted pneumonia a week prior to his death. At this time he was conducting an employment agency in Melbourne as well as dairy farming at Melton South. As a breeder of Friesian cattle he had won conspicuous successes at the Melbourne Royal Agricultural Society Shows.<sup>10</sup>

In 1941 the local paper reported the death at Melton of Austin's father, the 88 year old Mr George Exell, who it described as 'one of the oldest pioneers of the northern district'. Born on the Bellarine Peninsula, he had taken up land at Beaufort and then Charlton, and was the original owner of Pental Island on the Murray. He had been an avid Clydedale breeder and judge and a foundation member of the Gordon Shire Council and the Charlton Agricultural Society. He then owned several properties at Warragul and Maffra, until settling at Melton South in 1906. He had been the foundation President of the Victoria Hall Committee (at Melton South), holding office for years.<sup>11</sup>

Following Austin's death in 1934 the farm was carried on by his widow and son for some years, and then leased. By then many of the improvements had begun to show signs of deterioration. The silo, cow bails, dairy and other sheds associated with the stud farm were either demolished or renovated. The residence too required extensive repair.

*Glenloth* was acquired in 1952 by Frank Coburn (of *Navan Park*) who had been farming in the Colac area. He grew potatoes on the property in addition to dairying.<sup>12</sup>

*Glenloth* subdivision plans were passed by Council in 1959, in conjunction with the application for subdivision by William Exell (Austin's brother).<sup>13</sup>

#### *Contextual History: The Closer Settlement Board*

In 1892 the land on which *Glenloth* is situated was still in its original 595 acre size, in the name of Staughton, who by that time owned virtually all of the broadacre land in the Shire west of the Toolern Creek and south of the Western Highway.<sup>14</sup>

The house at 54-56 Exford Road, Melton South, was the product of one of the major themes in Australia's history, the struggle between pastoralist interests and popular legislators for the land. It was a movement which reached its height in the 1860s Selection Acts which were a result of agitation by gold diggers to 'unlock the lands' dominated by the 'squatters'. The success of these Acts in distributing Victoria's unalienated Crown Lands was mixed, and by the

---

<sup>9</sup> Melton *Express*, 31/8/1929

<sup>10</sup> Melton *Express*, 26/5/1934

<sup>11</sup> Melton *Express*, 6/12/1941

<sup>12</sup> Mrs Coburn was the daughter of Martin McDonald of Melton South. Her parents had come to Melton around 1900 to work on Eynesbury Station. After Mr McDonald's very early death Mrs McDonald moved to Melton South.

<sup>13</sup> Janet Dyte, *Glenloth*, Bridge Road – conversation per telephone June, July 2005 provided all information post 1952

<sup>14</sup> Shire Map Series (1892): Parish of Djerriwarrh

1890s popular discontent revived, this time calling for the repurchase of much of these alienated Crown Lands which appeared too fertile to be wasted as ‘sheep walks’. These should be subdivided and redistributed as small farms in fulfilment of the ‘yeoman ideal’. The Closer Settlement Act under which this property was created was the realisation of this movement; it would be adapted and reincarnated after both the World Wars as Soldier Settler Acts.

During the 1850s most of the land in the Shire of Melton was sold by the Crown. The change of land tenure exposed those without the capital that was now required to retain their pastures. But those with accumulated capital could acquire much larger areas once freehold became available.<sup>15</sup> As a result three owners - Clarke, the Chirnsides, and Staughton - soon dominated the whole Port Phillip district.<sup>16</sup>

Simon Staughton and WJT Clarke were by far the largest owners in the Melton Shire. Staughton was fortunate in that he had arrived, cashed-up, at Port Phillip during the depression, and purchased the Brisbane Ranges and Exford pastoral lease and stock at favourable prices. He prospered and so was able to start purchasing the freehold to his land as soon as it came up for sale. By the time of his death in 1863 the Exford estate was said to be approximately 100,000 acres in extent.<sup>17</sup> His freehold now included land to the east of the Werribee River. At his death, this property was divided between his four sons. Apart from Exford, the home station, two of these new estates were situated in the Shire of Melton: Eynesbury, and Brooklyn/Nerowie.

But by 1898 changes were abroad. To add to the inherent difficulties of the pastoral industry (when all Taylor’s pastoral mortgages were discharged after his death in 1903 his estate was in deficit), the next generation of farmers restlessly surveyed the vast pastoral estates surrounding them. In 1897 the new owner of the Clarke empire, Sir Rupert Turner Havelock Clarke Bart had mused in Parliament about cutting up 40,000 acres of his estate 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>18</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>19</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 huge 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, Staughton, and Taylor pastoral empires, and after the First World War, of smaller pastoral estates such as *Melton Park* and *Green Hills*.

State legislators fostered this change. The Land Act 1898 had established the “closer settlement” branch of the Lands Department, but it was not until the Closer Settlement Act

---

<sup>15</sup> Peel, LJ, *Rural Industry in the Port Phillip Region, 1835-1880* (MUP, Melbourne, 1974), pp.56,133.

<sup>16</sup> Peel, *op.cit.*, pp.129-131.

<sup>17</sup> Peel, *op.cit.*, p.61.

<sup>18</sup> *Sunbury News*: 31/7/1897, 7/8/1897, 4/9/1897.

<sup>19</sup> *Victorian Municipal Directory*, 1898, and following years.

1904 that the scheme really developed. This Act introduced the possibility of compulsory acquisition by the government, and increased five-fold the amount that the Closer Settlement Board could expend on repurchasing land. The scheme only commenced operations when the Board was appointed on 16<sup>th</sup> January 1905.

The Board's second scheme was the repurchase of William Taylor's *Overnewton* in the north and east of Melton Shire in 1905. In 1907 it put Harry Werribee Staughton's even larger *Exford* estate up for sale.<sup>20</sup> By this time the Board was experimenting in different ways. At the Exford and Colbinabbin schemes it set aside 5700 acres especially for British immigrants. To prevent the loss of a season while awaiting their arrival, the land was 'put in a productive condition by sowing down 1825 acres at Exford, and fallowing 3947 acres at Colbinabbin.'<sup>21</sup>

The *Overnewton*, *Exford* and the *Werribee* (Chirnsides) estates were the only rural Closer Settlement Schemes close to Melbourne.<sup>22</sup>

The Shire was transformed by the Closer Settlement and Soldier Settlement Acts of the early twentieth century. New roads were surveyed and 'macadamised', and the occasional bridge was thrown up (eg, the Bridge Road concrete bridge south of Melton). The establishment of new primary schools at places such as Exford, Melton South, Sydenham West, and Melton Park reflect the emergence of whole new communities. Some of Melton's most historically celebrated residents, such as international trap shooter Hector Fraser, were amongst the new settlers. Other sons of the new farmers are commemorated on memorials of the world wars.

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

*Melton Historical Themes:* 'Farming'

*Known Comparable Examples:*

Historically, the former *Glenloth* property, 54-56 Exford Road Melton South is most comparable with other farm houses established as a result of the Closer Settlement Board's subdivision of the Exford Estate. Surviving examples identified in this study, and recommended for planning scheme controls, are:

- Place No. 274: House at 1180 Exford Road is a late Victorian style house that was relocated to the site c.1907. Retains a rural context. Prominent from the road in an open landscape.
- Place No. 276: 865 Exford Road, Exford. A smaller house, relocated early, and altered. Visible from the road.
- Place No. 282: *Glengallon*, Greigs Road Exford. A larger and successful model farm in the mid twentieth century. Not visible from the road.
- Place No.288:- (the Hickey House) although within the Exford Estate, pre-dated the CSB subdivision and is not directly comparable historically. Retains a rural context. Visible from the road.

---

<sup>20</sup> Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 1905, Vol.3(1), 'Report of the Lands Purchase and Management Board'

<sup>21</sup> VPP, 1907, Vol.2, pp.175-186

<sup>22</sup> VPP, 1908, Vol.2, pp.31-42

- Place No. 298: former Cochrane house on Mt Cottrell Road, 1907-1914. Not visible from the road.

Examples identified in this study, and not recommended for planning scheme controls at present are:

- Place No. 271: House on Exford Road, opposite Exford main gate. Only moderate integrity. Retains a rural context. Visible from the road.
- Place No. 478: *Riverside*, 105 Murphy's Road Exford. Barely visible from the road among plantings.
- Place No. 273: House, 1055 Exford Road, built from parts of different houses, and re-clad in false brick. Recently demolished. Original handpump beside underground tank may remain.

There were originally 28 houses in the Exford Closer Settlement Estate. No.54-56 Exford Road is one of nine original or early Exford Estate identified in Stage One of the Melton Heritage Study, eight of which now remain, and six of which have been subject of citations in this heritage study with a recommendation for planning scheme controls.

Architecturally, the house at 54-56 Exford Road, Melton South, is a representative rudimentary example of an Edwardian 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 is of a similar rudimentary character and 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 shares a similar rudimentary character and appearance.
- House, 685 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 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 similarly rudimentary.
- House, 895 Exford Road (Place No.276). This house also appears to have been altered, including the front skillion verandah and the front windows. The composition of roof forms is similar to the house at 54-56 Exford Road. The dwelling has a similar rudimentary Edwardian character and appearance.

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. The dwelling at 111 Davis Street is also of higher design quality.

**Condition:**

Good

**Integrity:**

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

Other Recommendations:

- Opportunities are available to reinstate/reconstruct stop chamfered or turned timber verandah posts, timber fretwork valances and/or timber brackets to reflect the Edwardian design of the dwelling. Any available historical photographs of the dwelling should be used as a guide for the reinstatement/reconstruction.