

Heritage Overlay No.: 074
Citation No.: 199
Place: ‘Parklea’, 148-200 Abey Road

Other Names of Place: N/A
Location: 148-200 Abey Rd, Melton South (Off Fraser Street)
Critical Dates: Construction of house: 1935
Existing Heritage Listings: None
Recommended Level of Significance: LOCAL



Statement of Significance:

‘Parklea’ at 148-200 Abey Rd, Melton South, is significant as an intact example of a modest interwar Bungalow style house, and for its association with the locally prominent Robinson family. The rear outbuildings may be earlier than the Interwar Bungalow.

The house at 148-200 Abey Rd, Melton South, is architecturally significant at a LOCAL level (AHC D.2). It demonstrates original design qualities of a modest interwar Bungalow style. These qualities include the gable roof form that traverses the site, together with the verandah gable that projects towards the front. Other intact or appropriate qualities include the asymmetrical composition, single storey height, horizontal timber weatherboard wall cladding, green painted and lapped galvanised corrugated steel roof cladding, brick chimney, broad eaves

with exposed timber rafters, brick verandah piers, timber framed double hung windows (including the banks of three at the front), timber framed door opening with sidelight and the gable infill (sheet panelling and vertical timber battening).

'Parklea' at 148-200 Abey Rd, Melton South, is aesthetically significant at a LOCAL level (AHC E.1). The setting of the property demonstrates important visual qualities as defined by the long drive flanking mature peppercorn trees, mature cypress trees nearby the house and the rear outbuildings.

'Parklea' at 148-200 Abey Rd, Melton South, is historically significant at a LOCAL level (AHC B2, H1). It is a relatively scarce remaining example of an interwar farming property in the Shire. It is also associated with the Robinson family, who were Melton's pioneering hay making farmers. A member of the family was represented on the Melton Council for most years in the twentieth century; the Robinson family donated the 'President's Seat', the carved chair used by Melton Shire Presidents since 1966. The outbuildings, tank stand and huts and plantings constitute noteworthy evidence of an earlier farming complex.

Overall, 'Parklea' at 148-200 Abey Road, Melton South is of LOCAL significance.

Description:

Parklea at 148-200 Abey Rd, Melton South, consists of an interwar Bungalow styled house with rear hipped and gabled outbuildings and a long driveway from the Toolern Creek ford access to the property flanked by mature peppercorn trees that would appear to date from the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. Mature cypress trees are situated nearby the house.

The asymmetrical, single storey, horizontal timber weatherboard, interwar Bungalow styled house is characterised by a gable roof form that traverses the site, together with a verandah gable that projects towards the front. These roof forms are clad in green painted and lapped galvanised corrugated steel. An early brick chimney adorns the roofline towards the rear. Broad overhangs with exposed timber rafters are features of the eaves.

An early feature of the design is the verandah gable. It is supported by introduced paired timber posts on brick piers. The timber posts have possibly replaced concrete columns, the piers possibly previously featuring concrete cappings.

Other early intact features of the design include the timber framed double hung windows (including the banks of three at the front), timber framed door opening with sidelight and the gable infill (sheet panelling and vertical timber battening).

The two rear outbuildings have hipped and/or gabled roof forms clad in galvanised corrugated steel and there is a very interesting tank-stand and well. They are clad in horizontal timber weatherboard and galvanised corrugated steel. They are generally in poor condition, but constitute an interesting farming complex.

History:

The house and farm *Parklea* is situated on Allotment D of Section 11 Parish of Kororoit. The property, of 180 acres was purchased from the Crown by J Salisbury on 29th March 1853.¹

¹ Parish Plan, Parish of Kororoit.

Salisbury carried on dairying for four or five years before selling it to Mr Robert McIlwraith who lived there for a number of years, growing mostly oats and wheat before moving to Phillip Island. His eldest son Robert junior was Secretary of the Railways Department. Cameron relates that:

‘Two Americans by the names of Armstrong and Russell were the next owners who after their first year of cropping built a large stack of hay about 200-300 tons at the back of the stable.

Going through the east door of the stable one could see that the stack was cut out and the ground dug to a depth of about four to five feet which housed a first class plant in good working order of an illicit distillery together with a good supply of spirits on hand.

They also had a good crop of potatoes that year, and Mr Armstrong was talking a good load of them to Melbourne was stopped at Footscray by Inspector Royle and two mounted troopers who were asked what was in the bags. Not being satisfied when told they were potatoes they checked the load and found some sacks of spirits under the bags.

Mr Armstrong had to return home, the grog having to be emptied out and the plant destroyed, besides incurring a fine of £100 or six months imprisonment.

The troopers were well supplied with eggs etc.

The stack was about 300 yards from the house, the smoke being carried to the chimney by means of underground pipes and there were other pipes which carried refuse to a large hole in the creek over which a bridge had been built to cover them.

The residents used to remark that it was ‘good hay’.²

In 1883 the local paper carried a sale notice for Allotment D Section 11 on account of a Mr Farren. The property by this time was 202 acres in area, with ‘wooden cottage of 4 rooms, storeroom, dairy, milking sheds etc.’ The land, ‘suited for agricultural pursuits’, fenced and with permanent water, adjoined Mannings and Staughton properties and was ‘within half a mile of a proposed railway station’.³

It may have been at this time that Dr Charles Duret of Melbourne acquired the property, which included a timber house. He appears as the owner in 1892.⁴ In 1896 the local paper reported that Dr Duret’s farm had been sold to a John Robinson.⁵

By 1899 the property had passed to Alex Fraser (of 372 Flinders Lane) when Council considered a proposal to erect a bridge to connect his property to a road (at that time obstructed by gates) to the railway station.⁶

A 1916 map of the area shows a house in the location of the present house, and another about 350 metres south, on an allotment that had been purchased in that year by Cantwell (relatives

² Alec Cameron, ‘Melton Memoirs’ (M&DHS), p.11; Pollitt, JH, *An Historical Record of Melton* (Shire of Melton, nd), p.37

³ *Melton Express*, 3/11/1883.

⁴ Shire Map Series, 1892: Parish of Kororoit (SLV 821.1A)

⁵ *Melton Express*, 3/10/1896

⁶ *Melton Express*, 11/3/1899

of the Moylans of Mount Kororoit) at £12 per acre.⁷ The Cantwells added to the size of the property by acquiring land on Ferris road.⁸

In 1938 it was reported that John Robinson and family (not the previous John Robinson) had move into their new home at Melton South, formerly Cantwells.⁹ Robinson family history records that Robinson acquired the property of 370 acres in 1938 and erected the house known as *Parklea* on the site of an earlier timber dwelling house which was demolished. The outbuildings included stables (Robinson had two horse teams), a machinery shed, cow bail and dairy, tank stand and tank, and associated farm sheds etc. Farming included hay-making, barley and wheat. Most horses were disposed of in 1947 when tractors came into use (favourite horses were kept until 1955). Mrs Robinson planted some of the trees on the property, while others had been planted by previous owners.¹⁰

John Robinson was one of the sons of William and Catherine (nee Raleigh), a notable and accomplished family in the history of the Shire.¹¹ After his father died his mother bought up the family at *Kipenross* west of Melton. From 1900 until 1985 there were only three years when the name Robinson, or another member of the family, was not represented on the Melton Council. One of John's brothers, George Errol ('Eb') Robinson, served as Shire President 1938-39, 1941-42, 1947-48, and 1956-57. The Robinson family donated the President's Seat – the carved chair used by Shire Presidents since 1966.¹²

The Robinsons moved to Strathmore in 1955 to facilitate children's school and work, and John drove out to *Parklea* each day. Ron, the only son and a graduate of Dookie Agricultural College, moved onto the farm and worked grain and fat lambs. 1966 bulk handling of grain commenced at Melton railway station.¹³

Access to the property remained the ford across Toolern Creek. In times of flood it was necessary to travel across paddocks from Ferris Road.

Thematic Context / Comparative Analysis:

Shire of Melton Historical Themes: 'Farming'; 'Community'

Comparable Places in Shire of Melton:

The dwelling *Parklea* is a modest (although intact) example of an interwar Bungalow style in the Melton Shire. Other interwar Bungalows in the Shire include:

- House at 932 Holden Road, (place No.103). A more substantial homestead-type example of an interwar Bungalow, the house features a Federation-like composition having a central hipped roof form and projecting gables linked by a return verandah (that is an extension of the main hipped roof). This property is also accentuated by an early timber post and woven wire fence.

⁷ *Melton Express*, 19/12/1916

⁸ M&D.H.S. files

⁹ *Melton Express*, 26/11/1938

¹⁰ Heather Robinson, 'A History of the Robinsons Family' (1980).

¹¹ Starr, J, *Melton: Plains of Promise* (Shire of Melton, nd, c.1985), pp.232-5

¹² Starr, *op cit*, pp.232, 265, 269.

¹³ *ibid*.

- House, McCorkells Road, Toolern Vale (place No. 044). A less intact example than the dwelling at 932 Holden Road, this dwelling also has a Federation composition with a central hipped roof, projecting gables and linking return verandah. The verandah has been altered. This dwelling, like that at 932 Holden Road, are more Federation styled in composition compared to the dwelling Parklea.
- House, 2 Exford Road, Melton South (place No. 193). This is a highly intact and more substantial example of an interwar Californian Bungalow style. It features a hipped roof form that traverses the site, together with gable roof forms that project at the front and sides that are linked by a flat roofed porch. There are also projecting flat roofed bay windows under the projecting gables. A timber dwelling with wide eaves, this dwelling is possibly one of the most intact of its type in the Melton Shire.
- House, 1229 Gisborne-Melton Road, Toolern Vale (place No.029). A similarly modest interwar Bungalow, the house at 1229 Gisborne-Melton Road has a hipped roof and projecting gable with side verandah, the composition of this dwelling being more typical of the Federation and Edwardian era. The dwelling Parklea is more reflective of interwar Californian Bungalow design.

Condition:

Good/poor

Integrity:

Substantially intact

Recommendations:

Recommended for inclusion in the Melton Planning Scheme Heritage Overlay.

Recommended Heritage Overlay Schedule Controls:

External Paint Controls:	<i>No</i>
Internal Alteration Controls:	<i>No</i>
Tree Controls:	<i>Yes – peppercorn trees flanking driveway & cypress trees nearby the house.</i>
Outbuildings and/or Fences:	<i>Yes – rear hipped and gabled outbuildings</i>