

Heritage Overlay No.: 078
Citation No.: 212
Place: Staughton Memorial

Other Names of Place: N/A
Location: High Street, Melton
Critical Dates: 1903
Existing Heritage Listings: None
Recommended Level of Significance: LOCAL



Statement of Significance:

The Staughton Memorial on High Street, Melton, is significant as a memorial to Captain S.T. Staughton, D.S.O, M.L.A., scion of the locally prominent Staughton family who died at a young age.

The Staughton Memorial on High Street, Melton, is aesthetically significant at a LOCAL level (AHC. D.2). It demonstrates some important early design qualities that include the fluted cast

iron lamp stand and ovoid lamp, and the tapered pedestal with the round-arched incised panel that relates the dedication of the memorial.

The Staughton Memorial on High Street, Melton, is historically significant at a LOCAL level (AHC H.1) for its association both with Captain Staughton, awarded the DSO in the Boer War, and the Staughton family who were early settlers, large pastoral landholders, and patrons of local causes. It also conveys something of the importance of the British Empire within Australia at that time. Its form also preserves an early and evocative type of streetscape furnishing.

The Staughton Memorial on High Street, Melton, is socially significant at a LOCAL level (AHC G1). It has been maintained by the local Council and community in the main street since its construction.

Overall, the Staughton Memorial on High Street, Melton, is of LOCAL significance.

Description:

The Staughton Memorial is situated in a grassed area on High Street, Melton. It consists of a fluted cast iron lamp stand and ovoid lamp that are supported by a tapered pedestal that features a round-arched incised panel that reads: “In Loving Memory of Captain S.T. Staughton, D.S.O., M.L.A., Born 30th Dec 1876, Died 20th May 1903”. There is also the Staughton family crest, and the motto ‘Clarum reddit industria’. The memorial rests on a bluestone base.

A second plaque below tells that memorial was removed from its original High Street position when the Western Highway was reconstructed in 1975. Originally gas lit, it was restored with electric lighting in 1992.¹ The glass of the lamp has recently been damaged.

History:

Captain Simon Thomas Staughton was the son of Simon Thomas Staughton MLA who had built the mansion *Eynesbury* on his share of the *Exford* property inherited from his father Simon Staughton, the original 1840s Werribee River squatter. When the land was sold, Simon’s *Exford* station extended from Mt Cotterell to the Brisbane Ranges. ST Staughton (senior) was a reputedly the public spirited member of the family in his generation, being a member of the first Roads Board (and Melton Shire President in 1867), a JP, Magistrate and MLA for Bourke from 1883 until his death in 1901, whereupon his son became the MLA for Bourke.

Captain ST Staughton had earlier been chosen as a member of a contingent of Victorian Mounted Riflemen sent to England for Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee (1897), and was later a member of King Edward’s coronation escort.

In October 1899 he had sailed for South Africa with other Mounted Riflemen from Victorian and NSW to take part in the Boer War. There he was awarded the DSO.

He died of peritonitis in 1903, aged 27. He was buried in Boroondara Cemetery after a full military funeral, in which the coffin was borne on a gun carriage drawn by four black horses. All local newspapers reported eloquently on the funeral, and the late Captain’s virtues.

The Staughton Memorial Lamp was given to the town by his young widow in 1903. In addition a window in the (former) Christ Church bore the inscription ‘This window is erected by his

¹ Pollit, JH, *An Historical Record of Melton* (Shire of Melton, nd), p.38

brother soldiers in loving memory of Captain S Tom Staughton, DSO, ADC, MLA'. The Staughton family had been prominent benefactors of the Church, whose altar rails were also inscribed to the much respected Captain, along with a memorial stone in the new chancel.²

In the 1970s the memorial was within one of four fenced tree plantations, probably erected and planted in the 1920s or 30s.³ When High Street and its service roads were redesigned in the 1970s the plantations were completely removed, and the Melton and District Historical Society was successful in having the memorial moved about 50 metres east to its present location.

Thematic Context / Comparative Analysis:

Melton Historical Themes: 'Community'

Known Comparable Examples in Melton Shire:

This unusual and impressive monument preserves an early and evocative type of streetscape furnishing, at the same time as communicating the historical role of a family dynasty in Melton in the person of its young squire and war hero. It also expresses the importance of the idea of the British Empire in Australia at the time.

It has also been interpreted as a 'war memorial' (to the South African War) in modern times.⁴

It is a unique type of structure in the Shire of Melton.

Condition:

Good

Integrity:

Substantially intact

Recommendations:

Recommended for inclusion in the Melton Planning Scheme Heritage Overlay.

Recommended Heritage Overlay Schedule Controls:

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| External Paint Controls: | <i>Yes</i> |
| Internal Alteration Controls: | <i>No</i> |
| Tree Controls: | <i>No</i> |
| Outbuildings and/or Fences: | <i>No</i> |

Other Recommendations:

- The lamp glass has been cracked and requires replacing.

² Starr, J, *Melton: Plains of Promise* (Shire of Melton, c.1985), pp.56, 67, 72-73.

³ Mr Ray Radford, personal conversation, 7/11/2005

⁴ Parsons M, Trigellis-Smith, Bradley H, Christey B, Cook D, Williams C, *War Memorials of Victoria: A Pictorial Record* (The Returned & Services League, Victorian Branch, Melbourne, 1994), p.105