

Heritage Overlay No.: 085
Citation No.: 228
Place: House, ‘Dunvegan’

Other Names of Place: Original Melton Police Station
Location: The Willows Historical Park, 68-74 Reserve Road, Melton
Critical Dates: c.early 1870s
Existing Heritage Listings: None
Recommended Level of Significance: LOCAL



Statement of Significance:

Dunvegan within The Willows Historical Park, 68-74 Reserve Road, Melton, is significant as a moderately intact example of a Victorian style. Originally built c.1870, the house appears to be in good condition when viewed from the street. It was demolished and rebuilt on its present site in 1977.

Dunvegan within The Willows Historical Park, 68-74 Reserve Road, Melton, is architecturally significant at a LOCAL level (AHC D2). Although relocated to and reconstructed at this site, the house still demonstrates original design qualities of a Victorian style. These qualities include the simple gable roof form, together with the verandah that projects at the front. Other

intact or appropriate qualities include the symmetrical composition, single storey height, coursed, squared rubble bluestone wall construction, corrugated profile sheet metal roofing (but not the zincalume finish), narrow eaves, timber verandah columns, bevelled timber verandah valances, vertical timber boarded fretwork verandah infill at the sides, central timber framed door opening with highlight, and the timber framed 12 paned double hung windows.

Dunvegan within The Willows Historical Park is historically significant at a LOCAL level (AHC A4 B2). As well as having been a residence, the building has served a variety of public uses, including the town's first police station (for which purpose it was originally built), Mechanic's Institute library, Civil Defence headquarters and State Emergency Service store. It is a rare surviving early bluestone building within the town of Melton.

Dunvegan is socially significant at a LOCAL level (AHC G1). The relocation of the building in The Willows Historical Park is expressive the community's value of the old bluestone building, a relic of its early days, in a period of major redevelopment within the town.

Overall, *Dunvegan* within The Willows Historical Park at Melton is of LOCAL significance.

Description:

Dunvegan is situated within The Willows Historical Park, 68-74 Reserve Road, Melton. It has a small front setback with a garden setting of young shrubbery and open grassed areas. The front is bound by a recent timber picket fence that is approximately 1200 mm high.

The symmetrical, single storey, coursed, squared rubble bluestone, Victorian styled house is characterised by a simple gable roof form, together with a verandah that projects at the front. A skillion horizontal timber weatherboard wing is situated at the rear. These roof forms are clad in recent corrugated zincalume. Narrow overhangs are features of the eaves.

A feature of the design is the front verandah. It is supported by timber columns and has bevelled timber valances. At the sides are vertical timber boarded fretwork infill.

The symmetry of the design is identified in the early central timber framed door opening (with highlight) at the front and the flanking early timber framed 12 paned double hung windows. Similar windows are found on the side facades.

History:

A number of Town Allotments were offered for sale by the Crown 23 December 1861. One of these allotments, No 9 of Section 19 Parish of Djerriwarrh, nearly half an acre in area (1 rood and 32 perches) on the north-west corner of Smith and McKenzie Streets, was purchased by Alexander Blackwood.¹ Blackwood, a Scottish store keeper, erected a double storey premises and shop on Allotment 8, facing High Street.

Blackwood was involved in all aspects of the village life, especially the church, school and court and when in late 1860's the need for a purpose built police residence became urgent, Blackwood donated the land (Allotment 9) to speed the construction.

Details of the contract have not yet been located, however James Luke Robertson, a former Shire Secretary recorded in his reminiscences, held in the Historical Society files, that the portable iron cell located in the back yard of the residence echoed with the sound of boots

¹ Parish Plan, Township of Melton, Parish of Djerriwarrh

kicked against the walls.² The inmates deliberately took advantage of the structure to disturb the village in the the silence of the night. The old corrugated iron structure was still standing until recent decades.³

At that time the bluestone house consisted of four small rooms with a detached kitchen. The stone was not regularly cut but of random uniform size. A picket fence along the verandah edge separated the house from the street. Later, the verandah ends were filled in with trellis.

In 1889, a timber dwelling house, cell block and stables designed by S.E. Bindley (the court house architect) were erected on land besides the soon-to-be-erected Court House and the Police officer moved onto High Street.⁴ Thus the building, which had served as a Police Station for almost twenty years, was offered for sale.

After the Police moved out, Mrs Margaret McPherson and family took up residence and gave the building the name ‘Dunvegan’, no doubt in commemoration of a place in her Scottish heritage.

With Mrs McPherson’s death in 1937, the building again became vacant and was purchased by Mr G.H. Dodds, owner of the adjacent Golden Fleece Hotel. The building was rented out for a time before being offered to the Mechanics’ Institute as a reading room for the Institute’s library collection. However this did not last very long and tenants continued to occupy the dwelling until the Government took occupation of the building as a Civil Defence Headquarters during the Second World War. It reverted to tenant occupation until the mid-1970’s, at which time it failed the Health Inspection.⁵

The State Emergency Service used the building as a store come headquarters until plans were formulated for the construction of Bakery Square on the site c.1977. This was a period of rapid development in Melton associated with its declaration as a ‘satellite city’, and a period in which preservation of the ‘old’ Melton was also a high priority for many residents and municipal councillors. The Council had recently acquired *The Willows* property, which was in the process of development as the ‘Willows Historical Park’, which included the relocation of ‘Mac’s Cottage’ to the property.⁶ It was in this context that, to wind up a deceased estate, *Dunvegan* was offered to the Shire for reconstruction in the Willows Park.

The building was carefully demolished, each stone being numbered and transported to the Park where however it was found that much of the material was unsuitable for reconstruction. With careful consideration of available stone, the demolition of Mac’s hotel and the recutting of original blocks, the house was rebuilt with the original façade by local stonemason, Peter Bee. The exterior of the building appears to be a very good reconstruction of the original building shown in historical photographs.⁷ The interior however has been gutted and the rear of the building rebuilt to suit recreation purposes. The corrugated iron lock-up does not survive.

² James Luke Robertson, ‘Melton Reminiscences’, in the *Melton Express*, Sept-Oct 1905.

³ Pollitt, JH, *An Historical Record of Melton* (Melbourne, nd), p.43

⁴ Melton & District Historical Society files. Note however that a photograph of another building described as ‘the police station’, on the ‘north side of Ballarat Road in charge of Constable McKenney’, appears in Pollitt, *op cit* (p.40)

⁵ M&DHS files.

⁶ Johnstone, C, ‘Rural Heritage Study: Western Region of Melbourne’ (Context P/L, Melbourne Western Region Inc, 1994), p.126; Starr, J, *Melton: Plains of Promise* (Shire of Melton, nd, c.1985), p.129)

⁷ Pollitt, *op cit*, p.43

Thematic Context / Comparative Analysis:

Shire of Melton Historical Themes: ‘Community’

Comparable Places in Shire of Melton:

Historically, there are very few nineteenth century buildings of any type remaining in the town of Melton. The only other known nineteenth century buildings (of any type) remaining within the town of Melton are the Melton State School, and the Uniting, Catholic, and former Methodist churches, and the Honey Shack shop on High Street.

Dunvegan is a relocated and altered example of the few remaining nineteenth century stone cottages, or ruins of stone cottages in the Melton Shire. Intact (but modified) examples of small stone cottages include:

- The small cottage on Blackhills Road (Place No.061), which has been substantially repaired (including chimneys, roof, and verandah).
- The abandoned bluestone cottage on the former *Mt Kororoit Farm* property, west of Kororoit Creek (Place No.144);
- The half derelict, half intact bluestone Paynes Cottage (Place No.373).
- The small cottages on *Glen Elgin* (Place No.039) opposite *The Elms*, also of sedimentary stone, were apparently built in the mid twentieth century.
- The stone cottages and outbuildings that are part of the large pastoral stations of *Rockbank* (Place No.428), *Exford* (Place No.269), and *Eynesbury* (Place No.281).
- The considerably altered former *Fulham Park*, on Beatty’s Road, Rockbank (Place No.316)
- *Yandardook* Cottage, 575 Gisborne-Melton Road, Toolern Vale (Place No. 037) is moderately intact, modestly scaled, single storey, squared coursed bluestone, Victorian vernacular styled dwelling characterised by a hipped roof form clad in recent corrugated sheet metal, later brick chimney early window openings, central front doorway and timber framed multi-paned double hung windows.
- *Evansdale* (Place No.327): a now uninhabitable early stone cottage and earlier stone outbuildings.
- The *Honey Shack*, High Street Melton (Place No.221): an altered bluestone and brick cottage, formerly associated with the Raglan hotel.

Condition:

Good

Integrity:

Moderately intact

Recommendations:

Recommended for inclusion in the Melton Planning Scheme Heritage Overlay.

Recommended Heritage Overlay Schedule Controls:

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