

Heritage Overlay No.: 098
Citation No.: 263
Place: House, ‘Nerowie’

Other Names of Place: -
Location: 155 Nerowie Rd, Parwan
Critical Dates: c. mid 1890s.
Existing Heritage Listings: None
Recommended Level of Significance: LOCAL



Statement of Significance:

The house known as *Nerowie* at 155 Nerowie Road, Parwan, has significance as an unusual example of a Victorian Picturesque style and as an historical legacy of residential and pastoral development in the Melton Shire in the late nineteenth century. Built c. mid 1890s for Stephen John Staughton, grandson of Simon Staughton of Exford, the significance of the dwelling is enhanced by its impressive elevated pastoral setting and pine shelter and ornamental plantings. The nearby weatherboard dairy and stone pine shelter plantation also contribute to the significance of the place.

The house known as *Nerowie* at 155 Nerowie Road, Parwan is architecturally significant at a LOCAL level (AHC D.2, E.1). It demonstrates original design qualities of a Late Victorian

Picturesque style. These qualities include the steeply pitched gable roof form that traverses the site, together with another steeply pitched gable that projects at one end. Other intact or appropriate qualities include the single storey height, asymmetrical composition, galvanised corrugated steel roof cladding, face brick wall construction, dichromatic brick chimney, narrow eaves, return verandah with a galvanised corrugated steel roof, timber framed window and door openings with timber framed double hung windows and timber and glazed doors with highlights, and the timber finials/pendants and trusses in the gable ends. The nearby weatherboard dairy and stone pine shelter plantation also contribute to the significance of the place. (These are located within the Shire of Moorabool.)

Nerowie is historically significant at the LOCAL level (AHC B2, H1). It was built for Stephen John Staughton, a President of the Shire of Bacchus Marsh, and third generation of the Staughton pastoral family, which, with the Clarkes and the Chirnsides, were the dominant landholders in north-western Port Phillip region in the nineteenth century. It was built in the final era of pastoral dominance, when political sentiment and economic forces combined to 'break up' huge pastoral estates in favour of 'closer settlement', or farming of the former grazing lands. Together with the other major Staughton properties (*Exford*, *Eynesbury* and *Staughton Vale*), it was sold by the family in the early twentieth century. With the nearby house at No. 285 *Nerowie* Road, it is the only surviving link with Stephen George Staughton and his demolished mansion, *Brooklyn*. The design of the homestead is also historically significant for its inclusion of a large room, with a number of internal architectural influences, including features of a church, including an apse plan, pointed arch stained glass windows, and statue niches. It would appear to have been a multi-purpose room, which could be used as a chapel by the Staughton family or, perhaps, visiting clergy of different denominations, a recreation room for the family, or a lodge for visiting hunt parties. Such use would accord with Australian pastoral homestead tradition; *Nerowie* might prove to be an outstanding expression of such practices within the actual homestead design.

Overall, *Nerowie* at 155 *Nerowie* Road, Parwan is of LOCAL significance.

Description:

The brick homestead is situated on the high point of an extensive grazing property. It is on a volcanic plain, and near two low volcanic craters.

The site includes mature shelter and ornamental trees, particularly to its immediate east and north. To the east is an impressive plantation of pines, mainly Aleppo Pines (*Pinus halepensis*), among which are some very fine specimens, and a few Canary Island Pines (*Pinus canariensis*). Aleppo Pines also dominate the remnant of a twister-battered plantation of pines to the south of the house. On the east side of the house are some old fruit trees, including two orange trees and a mulberry.

A second large weatherboard house that appears in an early photograph situated adjacent to the existing homestead is no longer *in situ*. It is believed to have been shifted onto what is now an adjacent property, at 285 *Nerowie* Road, Parwan. (HO107)

The front garden, mainly lawn, with remnant mature conifer and eucalyptus trees to the south, is enclosed within a tubular steel and wire fence. A corrugated iron water tank set high on a metal frame is also included within this area, together with a small timber outbuilding (probably a dairy) of early twentieth century date. A chimney of a former house is situated a few hundred metres north of the house. Closer to the north is a domed rendered brick former

underground water tank, likely a legacy of the original weatherboard homestead. The nearby machinery sheds are not included in the citation.

The asymmetrical, single storey, face brick, Late Victorian Picturesque styled house is characterised by a steeply pitched gable roof form that traverses the site, together with another steeply pitched gable that projects at one end. These roof forms are clad in galvanised corrugated steel. Two dichromatic brick chimneys adorn the roofline. Narrow overhangs are features of the eaves. A feature of one gable end appears to be a projecting faceted bay crowned by a chimney.

An early feature of the design is the return verandah with a galvanised corrugated steel roof. It is supported by introduced posts on introduced brick piers. The verandah has been infilled at the northern end with a three roomed brick addition.

Other early features of the design include the timber framed window and door openings, timber framed double hung windows and timber and glazed doors with highlights, and the timber finials/pendants and trusses in the gable ends.

The building has tuck pointing on the east side façade only. This eastern view is also that featured in a 1910 photograph, indicating that the main frontage of the building was originally its eastern facade.

The interior plan of the house is somewhat of a mystery. There is no sign of either kitchen or bathroom services in the original structure (although both have been added by later users). This is probably indicative of its originally having been adjacent to the large double gabled weatherboard homestead (now relocated), which no doubt included such services.

The building includes a large room, approximately 7 by 12 metres, on its south side, with access obtained by stepping over the doorway of its west end doors. The room cannot be accessed except via external doors to the east and west verandahs. It is an amalgam of styles, with gothic pointed arch windows and classical pilasters, a rounded arch, and arts-and-crafts style herring-bone timber ceiling and wainscotting. Unlike the rest of the building, the ceiling of this room is of timber beam / truss construction, with a herring-bone pattern panelled ceiling. The similar pattern wainscotting is also confined to this room. The main design feature of the room is a bay (in the form of an 'apse') at its east end, which includes both gothic (pointed arch) leadlight and stained glass windows, and a large fireplace. The two leadlight and stained glass windows would appear to be of a typical turn of the century style. They have no apparent religious symbolism, but include what may be stylised anthemion branches at the top. The west double door also incorporates similar stained glass, with highlights and sidelights, in diaper and rectangular patterns. A door onto the main east verandah, facing north, provides another entrance to this room. By contrast it is a comparatively narrow unelaborated and functional opening. At the front of the 'apse' is an enclosing arch, in the manner of a proscenium (without the stage), or church sanctuary. The walls feature classical pillasters. On the south wall are three large rectangular windows, high and approximately 1.25 metres wide.

The other main room is a very grand lounge room (or parlour, or drawing room) with a fireplace and fine timber mantelpiece, and intact ceiling rose and cornices. The room has high windows onto the verandah to its east, but its north and west sides are surrounded by a large passage or hall, which essentially form perimeters of the building on these sides. An arch towards the west end suggests there was a curtain dividing the formal and service parts of this passage. The room on the south side of the lounge, also accessed by a grand arched door, with bichrome brick voussoirs, may have been a cloak room. A small services room, recently used

for laundry / bathroom purposes is on the other side of this room. Further physical examination would reveal whether it had originally been another passage that was divided by a wall (although ventilators on this internal wall are identical to the others in this house). The narrow room / passage on the west of the house was recently converted to a kitchen.

The northern addition consists of a modern bathroom and two bedrooms, which the previous owner had built. There is evidence of alterations to original doors (one which may originally have been a window) on the west side.

History:

Contextual History

The property upon which Nerowie is situated - Crown Allotment 11A, Parish of Mooradoranook – is a small part of the Exford and Brisbane Ranges pastoral leases that were purchased by Simon Staughton from John Watten in c.1843. Staughton was fortunate to have arrived in Port Phillip with ready cash during a severe depression, and was able to purchase the squatting runs, comprising 70,400 acres, 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 in the 1850s.

While most squatters were cash-poor by the early 1850s, those who had been able to accumulate capital were able to acquire larger areas once freehold became available.¹ As a result three owners – WJT Clarke, the Chirnsides, and Staughton – soon dominated the Werribee and Keilor plains area in the freehold era.² By the time of Simon Staughton's death in 1863 the *Exford* estate was said to be approximately 100,000 acres in extent.³ Simon Staughton and WJT Clarke were by far the largest owners in the Melton Shire.

Upon Simon's death the property was worked together by his four sons until 1870, when it was divided between them.⁴ The eldest, Harry Werribee Staughton, inherited the original 'Exford' homestead part of the property; Samuel Thomas acquired 20,682 acres that would become known as 'Eynesbury'; Simon Frederick Staughton inherited 17,000 acres which he named 'Staughton Vale'; while son Stephen George acquired 10,000 acres which was called 'Brooklyn'.

With freehold land tenure, and in an era of prosperity following the gold era, many pastoralists (or their heirs) built large homesteads or mansions. The Staughton family engaged architects to design Eynesbury (c.1872-75) and Brooklyn (c.1875). Brooklyn (demolished) was built overlooking the junction of the Werribee River and Djerriwarrh Creek. It was 'nothing short of a mansion ... of Government house proportions': with 30 rooms, 12 feet wide verandahs, and a 'great hall' said to be 120 feet long with ceilings 18 feet high.⁵ All this grandeur was rewarded when in 1901 the Duke of York (later King George V) stayed at Brooklyn during his Australian visit to open the first parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia.⁶

¹ Peel, LJ, *Rural Industry in the Port Phillip Region, 1835-1880* (MUP, Melbourne, 1974), pp.56,133.

² *ibid*, pp.129-131.

³ *ibid*, p.61.

⁴ Starr, J, *Plains of Promise* (Shire of Melton, nd, c.1985), p.56

⁵ JF and PW Staughton, 'The Staughtons of Eynesbury' (family typescript, nd, c.1980s), p.27

⁶ *ibid*

History of the Place

‘Nerowie’, of 9000 acres, was the part of the Brooklyn estate that Stephen George had set aside for his sons Frank and Stephen John. Frank died young and unmarried, and the property was subsequently made over to son Stephen John, who acquired it 1893, aged 23.⁷ Stephen John, born at Exford, had developed his pastoral skills by working as a jackaroo in NSW, and managing the family estate for a year before acquiring Nerowie, which comprised the great majority of the 10,000 acre property. The richer and well-watered Brooklyn property of 1000 acres remained the home of Stephen George, and was used for breeding of dairy cattle. It formed a picturesque outlook for the grand house situated on the knoll above.

Stephen John was not an absentee landlord. A 1910 report noted that:- ‘Since he first settled down on the property [in 1893] he has devoted himself consistently to the pastoral industry, and has made many improvements to the two properties, but more especially, of course, the first [Nerowie], which has been so much longer in his hands.’⁸

‘Among the most important’ of the improvements was ‘making the water supply more secure’. It was noted that ‘the Melton district is sometimes afflicted with sharp spells of drought, during which water ... may easily give out’. Nerowie, unlike Brooklyn, did not have a good natural water supply, so SJ Staughton excavated ‘tanks’ (dams) in each of the paddocks. The stiff clay below the volcanic surface soil ensured the holes held water, and Staughton ensured that they were kept clean. Other improvements included the thinning out of the box forest, by ringbarking and then sale to timber cutters for transport to Melbourne for firewood.⁹

Nerowie was principally a sheep station, with a reasonable carrying capacity of about a sheep to the acre. Its comeback sheep were noted for the hardness of their constitutions, and the property produced a clean fleece of sound staple. An advantage was that fat and surplus stock could be sent in quickly to Melbourne markets by road, ‘without loss of condition, to meet any sudden demand that may arise.’¹⁰

In 1906 Stephen John was also presented with the 1000 acre Brooklyn property, and in 1907 he married.¹¹ Like his father (Stephen George had married his English cousin Emma Mary Price), after a trip to England Stephen John also married his cousin, Amy Thirkell Price.¹² Stephen John and Amy had three children, Stephen Edward (b.1908, d.1936), Samuel Thomas (b.1909, d.1993), and Susan Mary (b.1914).¹³

During the period in which SJ Staughton built up the Nerowie property, the political and economic conditions of pastoralism were changing. The ‘break-up’ of many large pastoral estates in the early twentieth century, greatly encouraged by the Closer Settlement Board,

⁷ *The Pastoral Homes of Australia, Vol.1.* (Victoria, the Pastoralists Review, 1910), Section 20, p.228; Starr, *loc.cit.*

⁸ Pastoral Homes, *op cit*, pp.227-228

⁹ Pastoral Homes, *op cit*, pp.221, 228.

¹⁰ *ibid*, p.225

¹¹ *ibid*, pp.226, 228

¹² Mrs Marian Staughton, personal conversation, 8th September 2008. de Serville, P, *Pounds and Pedigrees: The Upper Class in Victoria 1850-1880*, OUP, 1991, p.488. Stephen John’s cousin Captain S.T. (Tom) Staughton also married his cousin (Starr, *op cit*, p.62)

¹³ Bill Willett, Benalla & District Family History Group, correspondence 10th September 2008.

which was particularly active in the areas closer to Melbourne, was a major development in Australia's history. It was a movement continued by the Soldier Settlement Acts after both the First and the Second World Wars.

The view that Staughton's and other sheep-runs were holding back development was commonly held in Melton at the turn of the century, and there was political pressure on the landholders, some of whom were local parliamentary representatives (Samuel Staughton of Eynesbury, and Rupert Clarke of Rupertswood), to "break-up" their huge estates. The Victorian Municipal Directory entry for Melton Shire in 1898 provides an early clue to this political atmosphere in its report of movements by big local landholders such as Rupert Clarke and Harry Werribee Staughton to sell or lease large portions of their estates to small farmers and graziers.¹⁴ In 1909, 'because of on-going clashes with the Government and the 1906 Closer Settlement Board', Stephen John's cousin Samuel Frederick had decided to sell the Staughton Vale property.¹⁵ In the same year, Stephen John Staughton decided to sell Nerowie, retaining only the Brooklyn homestead and 700 acres.¹⁶

In November 1909 agents Thom and Capel reported the impending sale of the 'well and favourably known Nerowe Estate, Parwan', situated 27 miles from Melbourne for Councillor SJ Staughton of Brooklyn Melton, containing 8,500 acres of freehold land. The advertisement noted that the Staughton family had been the sole proprietors of the estate since its purchase from the Crown. The property would be subdivided for sale to farmers. 'Wheat growers', it said, could purchase land 'practically within the suburban area', and 'all virgin country', used for grazing purposes only for the last 70 years.¹⁷ (This slightly contradicted another contemporary report that at Nerowie, 'a good deal of the land is under the plough', with between 200 and 300 acres cultivated each year, producing 'excellent crops of both oats and wheat'. Its volcanic soil, where cleared of timber, paid 'handsomely' to till.¹⁸)

In February 1910 the auction of the estate was held at the Mechanics Hall, Bacchus Marsh. The local newspaper reported that it was 'not the success we expected ... the bidding was brisk enough, but there were not enough buyers present to absorb all the lots offered'. 'For the homestead block, No 17, with a good residence and 2,532 acres the bidding went to £6/2/0 [per acre] without business being done.' It was expected that the blocks would continue to sell privately.¹⁹ Later Stephen John wrote that he had 'sold Nerowie to Ritchie, Riddoch and Young in 1910 at £5.15.0 per acre'.²⁰

Since 1904 Stephen John Staughton had been a member of the Bacchus Marsh Shire Council, including a term as Shire President, and was said to have taken an active part in local affairs.²¹ Although it is possible that it was built earlier for a property manager, Nerowie homestead was most likely built to accommodate SJ Staughton soon after the property was excised and made over to him in 1893. The house appears to be little altered from its appearance in 1910, except for the removal of an adjacent large weatherboard house.²²

¹⁴ *Victorian Municipal Directory*, 1898, and following years.

¹⁵ The Staughtons of Eynesbury, *op cit*, p.13

¹⁶ Starr, *loc cit*

¹⁷ *Melton Express*, 20/11/1909

¹⁸ *Pastoral Homes*, *op cit*, p.225

¹⁹ *Melton Express*, 19/2/1910

²⁰ Starr, *loc cit*.

²¹ *Pastoral Homesteads*, *op cit*, p.228

²² *Pastoral Homes*, *op cit*, p.226

In 1915 the *Melton Express* reported that ‘2450 acres of Nerowie’ had been sold to the Brown Brothers.²³ By the early 1940s the property was in the possession of Lou and Bert Davis, relations of the Craigs, who were in the property from 1963 to 2001.²⁴

The weatherboard house that appears in the 1910 photograph is believed by owners of the two properties to have been rolled on logs down the hill, using 60 draught horses, to its present location north-east of Nerowie (at 285 Nerowie Road).²⁵ It is not known when this occurred.

In 1950 an advertisement appeared for the sale of ‘Nerowie’, a property of 700 acres of red volcanic gently undulating land, 560 acres of which had been cultivated with barley, wheat and sub-clover. The district was well known, said the advertisement, as healthy grazing and fattening sheep country, and for the production of high-grade malting barley. Curiously, the house on the property was described as a ‘five roomed brick and weatherboard homestead, bathroom, washhouse ...’.²⁶ The property had been subdivided by this time, and the advertisement may have been for another part of the former Nerowie property, perhaps that part that is now 285 Nerowie Road.

Much of the garden, including many shelter trees to the south of the house, was destroyed by a twister in 1999.²⁷

The Staughton Family and the Nerowie ‘Chapel’.

Stephen John Staughton wrote a short history of the Staughton family, recently in the possession of his grandnephew Michael Loader.²⁸ He had also purchased, for a large sum, ‘the Simon Staughton family bible’ from his cousin Harold Werribee Staughton (of *Exford*).²⁹ He was, then, a man who respected his family history. And ‘preserving the English traditions’ was a hallmark of the Staughton family.³⁰ The Werribee River was originally known as the River Exe, presumably after the river of the same name in Simon Staughton’s birthplace. The name is preserved in the early *Exford* homestead at Melton, the Staughton family’s foundation homestead. The Staughtons would also appear to have been the leading Church of England family in Melton. Stephen John’s uncle Samuel Thomas Staughton (of *Eynesbury*) had helped fund the town’s bluestone Christ Church (since demolished) in the 1860s; one of its windows memorialises his father Simon. The tradition continued in the early twentieth century (when *Nerowie* was being established) when a new chancel was built as a memorial to Samuel Thomas Staughton. Also in 1904 a stained glass window and altar rails were dedicated to Samuel Thomas’ son, Captain S Tom Staughton. The unveiling ceremony was performed by General Sir Edward Hutton, and Alfred Deakin, former Prime Minister was among those present.³¹

²³ *Melton Express*, 22/5/1915

²⁴ Owner Mrs Craig, personal conversation, 19/12/2001

²⁵ Owner, personal conversation, 19/12/2001

²⁶ *Melton Express* (nd), M&DHS. The auction was to be held on 7th September 1950.

²⁷ Personal conversation with owner Mrs Craig, 19/12/2001.

²⁸ Starr, *op cit*, p.53; PROV, VPRS 7591/P00003 Unit 175, ‘Last Will and Testament, SJ Staughton’.

²⁹ PROV VPRS 7591/P00003 Unit 175, ‘Last Will and Testament, SJ Staughton’.

³⁰ Peter Staughton, personal conversation, 13th September 2008.

³¹ Starr, *op cit*, p.73

Peter Staughton, retired church and heritage architect, another family historian, describes the family as being ‘earnest conservationists of the faith’.³²

Stephen John died in 1956, by which time his surviving son Samuel Thomas (by then known as Major Tom) was a grazier of *Wolbunya*, Benalla. He and his wife Sheila had three children, Samuel John (Sam), Simon and Sarah. The Emu Bridge (Benalla) property *Wolbunya* was later sold by Sam and his wife Marian.

A photograph published in 1910 shows the brick *Nerowie* homestead was originally adjacent to the large double gable weatherboard homestead that was later moved down the hill (it survives today). The photograph is taken from the east side, which, given the grandeur of the doors on that side in comparison to the west side, and the fact that only the brickwork on this side of the house is tuck-pointed, was clearly the front. Given the brick building’s grand parlour / lounge room, the well appointed ‘chapel’, and its lack of original kitchen and other basic amenities, it was probably the second of the two homesteads, built later to provide additional amenities. The two buildings would have been either directly connected, or connected by a walkway, perhaps enclosed.

The building has two main rooms: the ‘chapel’, and a parlour / loungeroom. Between them is a long room, without windows whose original purpose is unknown. It may have been a cloak room for both. The purpose of the wide passageways / halls running around the north and west perimeters of the building is a mystery: perhaps extensions were envisaged.

The distinctive, chapel-like, room is also something of a mystery. The owners of the property prior to 2001, Dale and Dawn Craig, had been told by the Davis family (their relations, who had purchased the property in the early 1940s) that the room had been built as a chapel, and its herring-bone timber ceiling had been brought out from a church in England.³³ The inclusion of an apse, which incorporates gothic stained glass windows, strongly supports this story. The placement of a fireplace in the centre of the apse, and the lack of religious iconography in the stained glass, is somewhat confounding. Similarly the Staughtons’ Church of England faith does not gel with the statue niches on either side of the apse (a characteristic of Catholic churches). The ornamental style of the room would not fit it having been a radical evangelical or non-conformist chapel.

Other possible uses of the room include a lodge. The Staughtons’ loved horses, and were keen participants in English traditions such as polo and hunting, which were popular amongst pastoralists, farmers and others in the district.³⁴ (Eynesbury continued to be used by the Oaklands Hunt Club until very recently.) It is possible that the room was used to provide repasts for such gatherings of sportspeople. There is some evidence that Stephen John Staughton or someone in the family was an amateur musician, his ‘music’ and ‘musical instruments’ being placed highly in terms of the personal artefacts for which he made provision in his will; if so the room may have been used for recitals.³⁵ It may also have been a billiard room (the ceiling would need to be checked for evidence of top lighting).

³² Peter Staughton, personal conversation, 13th September 2008.

³³ David Burr, the current owner, personal conversation, 3rd September 2008.

³⁴ Peter Staughton, personal conversation, 13th September 2008.

³⁵ PROV, VPRS 7591/P00003 Unit 175, ‘Last Will and Testament, SJ Staughton’. However neither Peter Staughton who knew the family, or Marian Staughton, married to SJ Staughton’s descendent, is aware of any musical history in the family.

The most likely explanation of the room is provided by Peter Staughton, pioneer heritage architect, National Trust identity and former Historic Buildings Council member. He explains that it was common practice for pastoralists to make their homesteads available for religious services. The homesteads, isolated from towns, were sometimes visited by travelling pastors and priests, who would stay in the homestead. The homesteads had rooms that could be converted to a chapel on a Sunday. This was common in the early days, before a church had been built in a district, and the tradition continued where homesteads (and their resident workers and neighbours) were relatively remote from population centres. The church services in these homesteads were not weekly occurrences, but depended on the arrival of a pastor or priest, some of whom were famous for their horseback travelling. The clergyman stayed at the homestead, which would then become a gathering place on the Sunday. A permanent chapel was not warranted, but many homesteads were designed with an appropriate room, likely a drawing room (which occasionally even included an ‘apse’ into the plan), which could accommodate a congregation. Furniture would be swung around to convert the room to a chapel, and a harmonium, or a piano, or occasionally a pipe-organ, would accompany hymn singing.³⁶

These ‘homestead chapels’ were used for Anglican, Presbyterian, Catholic and other services. Sectarianism was much mitigated in rural areas, as sparse, isolated and mutually dependent populations confront their common adversaries: drought, flood and fire.³⁷ There is regular evidence of different religious denominations collaborating generously with one another in rural areas, generations before the ecumenical movement. This might explain the statue niches in the room, which could be used for Catholic religious services, while at other times accommodating secular pieces (such as the ‘two bronze statues, horses and warrior’ mentioned in Stephen John’s will³⁸) when the room was invaded by a ravenous hunt party.

While *Nerowie* is hardly remote in Australian terms, at approximately 16 kilometres from the nearest town (Melton) it was the most remote of the Staughton properties (Exford, Brooklyn, and Eynesbury), and about on a par with the more westerly Staughton Vale (the homestead of Peter Staughton forebears), which had also been designed to accommodate church services.

The evidence then suggests that the room was intended for use as a chapel, but likely also for other uses as well, such as a lodge for hunt or other sporting groups.

The architect of the building is at present unknown.³⁹

³⁶ Peter Staughton, personal conversation, 13th September 2008.

³⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸ PROV, VPRS 7591/P00003 Unit 175, ‘Last Will and Testament, SJ Staughton’.

³⁹ No reference was found in Lewis, Miles, *Australian Architectural Index*, 2nd Edition, Melbourne University Department of Architecture and Building, 197-?.

Thematic Context / Comparative Analysis:

Shire of Melton Historical Themes: ‘Pastoralism’

Comparable Places in Shire of Melton:

A comparable Victorian Picturesque styled dwelling in the Melton Shire is the house at Melton Park, 812 Bulmans Road (Place Id. 8), Melton. This dwelling is constructed of horizontal timber weatherboard wall cladding and has two steeply pitched gable roof forms, decorative bargeboards and unusual decorative gable infill. A comparable variant of the Victorian Picturesque stylistic type is the dwelling Kipenross at 42 Bulmans Road (Place Id. 177), Melton. This polychromatic Late Victorian Picturesque styled house is characterised by hipped roof forms, together with a minor gable that projects towards the front and an encircling verandah. The gable end features elaborate timber work, pendant and turned timber finial. Generally, the Victorian Picturesque design of Melton Park is unusual in the Melton Shire.

Comparable Places with Chapel Elsewhere:

In relation to the inclusion of a chapel in a homestead, only one example on the Victorian Heritage Register could be found: H1168, Yarrowee Hall, 1 Darling Street Redan, Ballarat. However this is situated within Ballarat, and is not a comparable pastoral homestead; presumably this freestanding chapel was for the private purposes of the Serjeant family which lived in Yarrowee, or for the congregation of a small denomination of which they were part.

In relation to pastoral homesteads, Mr Staughton advises that his forebears homestead Staughton Vale incorporated multi-purpose / convertible spaces, for religious and other meetings. The Manifolds’ Wiridgil also appears to incorporate an apse-like plan.

No distinct chapels in Victorian pastoral homesteads, in the tradition of those of a grand country house in the United Kingdom, have been identified.⁴⁰ Further research might reveal that *Nerowie* is of higher, perhaps State level, heritage significance in terms of multi-purpose ‘chapel’ rooms in Australian homesteads.

Condition:

Good.

Integrity:

Substantially Intact.

⁴⁰ Dr Kerry Jordan, personal conversation.

Recommendations:

Recommended for inclusion in the Shire of Melton Planning Scheme Heritage Overlay

Recommended Heritage Overlay Schedule Controls:

External Paint Controls:	<i>Yes</i>
Internal Alteration Controls:	<i>Yes</i> (the ‘chapel’ located at the south end of the building)
Tree Controls:	<i>Yes</i> (Stone Pine shelter plantation in Shire of Moorabool)
Outbuildings and/or Fences:	<i>Yes</i> (the weatherboard dairy in Shire of Moorabool)

Other recommendations:

- Further research needs to be carried out and a more detailed architectural and photographic analysis to determine its significance and past uses. Further research of the use and design of pastoral homesteads as chapels might also necessitate a review of its level of significance.



Interior of structure



Dwelling to the rear