

**Heritage Overlay No.:** 099  
**Citation No.:** 272  
**Place:** ‘Warrawong’ Shearing Shed

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**Other Names of Place:** Exford Shearing Shed  
**Location:** 1182 – 1250 Exford Road, Eynesbury (Allot. 22 Sec.A, Parish of Mooradoranook)  
**Critical Dates:** Construction c.late 1850s  
**Existing Heritage Listings:** None (Identified in Western Region Rural Heritage Study, Context Pty Ltd, 1994)  
**Recommended Level of Significance:** STATE



**Statement of Significance:**

The Warrawong Shearing Shed at 1182 - 1250 Exford Road Exford is significant at the STATE level as a rare and unusual surviving Victorian styled bluestone shearing shed that once formed part of the major nineteenth century pastoral property of *Exford*. The woolshed most likely dates to the mid - late 1850s. The most comparable shearing shed in the Melton Shire is the bluestone building at *Deanside*, which forms part of a nineteenth century complex of pastoral buildings and is included on the Victorian Heritage Register. The building appears to be of moderate integrity. Nearby the woolshed are mid twentieth century mortared random rubble (fieldstone) gate piers, troughs and cattle ramps that contribute to the significance of the place. Adjacent to the shearing shed three large concrete silos are of

*Consultants: David Moloney, David Rowe, Pamela Jellie (2006) Sera Jane Peters (2007)*

LOCAL significance as a legacy of the changing farming practices in the twentieth century and are comparable to the silos at *Eynesbury* Homestead, Melton South, that is also included on the Victorian Heritage Register. They are significant as the most striking evidence of the historic change of use of the property from a major sheep-run, to small farming; and also for their relatively early date (pre-1935), their use of corrugated formwork, and their association with prominent Melbourne industrialist JW Derham. Alterations to the shearing shed also demonstrate this historic change.

The *Warrawong* Shearing shed is architecturally significant at a STATE level (AHC D.2, E.1). It demonstrates original and unusual design qualities of a Victorian style for a nineteenth century pastoral structure. These qualities include the symmetrical composition and particularly the narrow elevated gable roof form with lower flanking skillion wings, coursed random bluestone wall construction, galvanised corrugated steel roof cladding and the tapered bluestone pinnacles adorned with crosses on the main gable end. Other intact or appropriate qualities include the window opening with vertical iron bars, double door opening at the side, and the timber framed window in the upper gable end. The nearby bluestone gate piers, together with the adjacent concrete silos, although of a different period of construction and function, also contribute to the significance of the place as a legacy of the transition from pastoral to farming use in the twentieth century.

The *Warrawong* Shearing shed is historically significant at a STATE level (AHC B2, H1). It is an early example of a superior quality stone shearing shed in Victoria, most probably built in the mid to late 1850s, by Simon Staughton, one of Victoria's most successful and notable squatters. With other pastoral dynasties – principally the Chirnsides and Clarkes – Staughton and then his sons dominated the ownership of the plains and uplands north-west of Port Phillip. With WJT Clarke he was by far the largest landowner in the Shire of Melton. His family became noted contributors to numerous Melton public causes.

The property is also historically significant as an exemplar of the historic early twentieth century transition, throughout rural Australia but particularly in Melton Shire, from large pastoral estates to small farming holdings. This transition was begun by Harry Werribee Staughton, and culminated in the Closer Settlement Board's 'Exford Estate', a famous and early estate of the Board. This association is demonstrated on the property by the evidence of conversions of the woolshed, the 1930s concrete grain and ensilage silos, and later water troughs and random rubble fence and gatepost construction, all evidence of the progressive farming that occurred on the property. The property also gains significance through its associations with several of its owners in this period, notably the internationally prominent early Australian woman racing driver Joan Richardson, and prominent early twentieth century industrialist JW Derham.

The property may retain archaeological evidence of the original *Exford* sheep washing complex, and sheep drafting yards, which would constitute rare evidence of important early pastoral practices, but at this stage there is insufficient evidence to locate this with accuracy.

Overall, the *Warrawong* Shearing shed at 1182 – 1250 Exford Road, Exford is of STATE significance.

### **Description:**

The outstanding building on the *Warrawong* property is the former *Exford* shearing shed, built of bluestone, about 51m in length and 12m in width.

The shearing shed has a rural, farm setting off Exford Road, Exford. Nearby the shearing shed are a ruinous hipped dairy outbuilding, three concrete circular silos with gabled roof forms (pre 1935), random rubble bluestone stock ramp, troughs, and timber post and rail fences (with bluestone gate piers) dating from the mid-twentieth century. In the paddocks circular stone troughs provide water for stock, with smaller troughs once used for salt licks. The gate entranceways are a feature of the property being constructed in similar style to the troughs. There is also the remains of a cleared terrace area, garden sheds, pond and remnant trees of the former Richmond homestead (ca. 1900?) with views over the Werribee River, to the east of the weatherboard house.

The symmetrical, coursed random bluestone, Victorian styled shearing shed is characterised by a narrow elevated gable roof form with lower flanking skillion wings. These roof forms are clad in galvanised corrugated steel. To one side is a broad skillion addition constructed of vertical timber palings. Internally the woolshed is in three levels.

An early and unusual feature of the design (for a farm building) are the tapered bluestone pinnacles adorned with crosses (or *fleur-de-lys*) on the main gable end. These are very similar to the pinnacles (topped with orbs) on the some of the bluestone buildings, most notably the detached bluestone guesthouses, on *Exford*. Other early features include the narrow window opening with vertical iron bars, double door opening at the side, and timber-framed window in the upper gable end.

There is evidence of some alterations to the bluestone wall construction, particularly noticeable in the main gable end. The single door opening in the main gable end may have been introduced.

The interior of the woolshed has been adapted for dairying and general farming since the beginning of the nineteenth century. There is a concrete floor and cow bails at the north end for dairying and a raised besa block and concrete shearing stand in the centre of the shed.

There is evidence of the original floor level of the shed in the large posts, and a gate to access this underfloor level at the south end. These alterations constitute evidence of the historic changes in rural land use from this time. Three concrete silos constitute the most prominent evidence of these changes.

Early (1850s) survey maps also show several other Exford station sites on the property:- a ‘sheep drafting yards’ (probably to the north of the existing homestead); and ‘sheep washing yards’ on the river, probably just north of a gully. None of these features are extant, archaeological evidence of them may survive. Any evidence of the sheep wash in particular has the potential to be significant, as there is very little surviving evidence in Victoria of this once important type of place.

There is archaeological evidence of the early homestead gardens, terracing and outbuildings to the east of the weatherboard home.

The property has panoramic views over the Werribee River, Exford Reservoir and Toolern Creek Valley, to the Exford property.

A large weatherboard homestead has been constructed on the top of the rise in recent years.

## History:

### *The Pastoral Period*

The *Warrawong* woolshed is situated on the original Crown Allotment 16, Parish of Mooradoranook, originally part of the huge Exford pastoral estate. The Exford and Brisbane Ranges pastoral leases 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.<sup>1</sup> As a result three owners – WJT Clarke, the Chirnsides, and Staughton – soon dominated the Werribee and Keilor plains area in the freehold era.<sup>2</sup> By the time of Simon Staughton's death in 1863 the *Exford* estate was said to be approximately 100,000 acres in extent.<sup>3</sup> Simon Staughton and WJT Clarke were by far the largest owners in the Melton Shire. According to economic historian EA Beever, 'Staughton was one of Victoria's most successful and notable squatters.'<sup>4</sup>

Upon Simon's death the station was worked together by his four sons until 1870, when it was divided between them.<sup>5</sup> The eldest, Harry Werribee Staughton, inherited the original *Exford* homestead part of the property; Samuel Thomas acquired 20,682 acres that became to be 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* (and later *Nerowie*).

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 Staughtons joined the trend, engaging 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.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>

However Harry Werribee Staughton did not significantly upgrade the original *Exford* homestead. It is less likely then that the substantial and exotically embellished stone outbuildings on the property, including the woolshed, were built during his period of sole ownership (1870-1927). While the immensely significant *Exford* homestead can be dated reasonably confidently to c.1843, the only other building on the property that can

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

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*, pp.129-131.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*, p.61.

<sup>4</sup> EA Beever, 'Exford, Victoria', in *Historic Homesteads of Australia* (Cassell / ACNT, 1969), p.149

<sup>5</sup> Starr, J, *Plains of Promise* (Shire of Melton, nd, c.1985), p.56

<sup>6</sup> JF and PW Staughton, 'The Staughtons of Eynesbury' (family typescript, nd, c.1980s), p.27

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*

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accurately be dated is the huge bluestone coachhouse / barn, with its keystone inscribed 1856. EA Beever believes that the other bluestone structures ‘are almost certainly of a similar vintage’.<sup>8</sup> The architectural features of the building would support this conclusion. The rounded-arch windows of the coachhouse are replicated on some of the windows of the cottages, which also have the bluestone corner pinnacles of the *Warrawong* woolshed. The orbs that top these pinnacles, although different from the *fleur-de-lys* of the woolshed pinnacles, are the same motif that was used for timber gate and fence posts on the *Exford* property (and present *Eynesbury* property), some of which survive, and which must therefore pre-date the division of the property between the brothers in 1870, and may belong to the Simon Staughton, pre-1863, era. Also, although the woolshed does not have round arch windows, its windows also feature the vertical iron bars of the coachhouse.

Early surveyors maps of the area also provide evidence regarding the date of the property. Several maps, most undated, but two dated 1854, show similar information regarding the *Exford* station. While the homestead was on the east side of the river, the ‘sheep dipping yards’ (sic), ‘sheep drafting yards’, the ‘sheep washing yards’<sup>9</sup> and the ‘woolshed’ were all situated on the west side of the river, on or near the present *Warrawong* property. In addition, the woolshed is shown in plan form on a map dated 20<sup>th</sup> December 1854, on Crown Allotment 15, some 1.5 kilometres west of the present woolshed, on the west side of the *Eynesbury* road.<sup>10</sup> This is the date the map was traced from an earlier map, so this is likely to be the original *Exford* woolshed. This woolshed also appears on an undated but primitive and presumably early map.<sup>11</sup> This and another map show an early east-west track passing the woolshed, and another north-south ‘dray road to *Exford*’ nearby.<sup>12</sup>

So the present woolshed was not built before 1854. This would fit a building program in period c.1856, when the coach-house is known to have been constructed.

Two of the other early pastoral features were situated on the present *Warrawong* property. The ‘sheep drafting yards’ appear to have been situated about 300 metres north-west of the present shearing shed. The ‘sheep washing yards’ were situated on the bank of the river, probably on the north side of a gully. Although it is unlikely, any surviving archaeological evidence of these early activities, particularly sheep washing, would be highly significant. Sheep washing was an early practice that was a point of controversy in pastoral circles until the latter part of the nineteenth century: the question was whether it was more economical to wash the sheep or export the clip to London ‘in the grease’. Because it is an early practice, because associated structures were flimsy, and because of their location beside streams, little evidence of the practice is known to survive, and our knowledge of the practice is far from complete.

The construction of a new woolshed in its present location appears to have been more strategic, in terms of its proximity to both the east-west and north-south dray tracks. It also put it right in the centre of the complex of drafting yards, sheep dip, and sheep wash.

In 1876 the buildings on *Exford* station are described by the *Australasian’s* Travelling Reporter as being of a:

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<sup>8</sup> Beever, *op cit*, p.148

<sup>9</sup> Lands Victoria, Put Away Plan, ‘M 175’, ‘Mr Staughton’s Home Station and Adjoining Lands, 1854’.

<sup>10</sup> Lands Victoria P/A Plan ‘M177 (2)’, traced by A Martin, 20/12/1854.

<sup>11</sup> Lands Victoria, Historic Map, ‘Sydney M3 (ii)’, nd.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid*; Lands Victoria, P/A Plan ‘M177’, nd.

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‘... superior description. No expense appears to have been spared in their erection, and they are more substantial and commodious than are generally to be found on sheep or cattle stations.’

The woolshed on the opposite side of the river was described as:

‘... a large substantial looking stone building, with an iron roof, in which provision is made for 14 shearers and 700 sheep at one time.’<sup>13</sup>

### *The Farming Period*

Around the end of the nineteenth century the political and economic conditions of pastoralism were changing dramatically. The ‘break-up’ of many large pastoral estates in the early twentieth century, greatly encouraged by the Closer Settlement Board, 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 the Staughtons’ and other sheep-runs were holding back development was popular 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.<sup>14</sup>

In 1909 cousins Samuel Frederick Staughton and Stephen George Staughton decided to sell their respective *Staughton Vale* and *Brooklyn/Nerowie* properties, the former specifically because of on-going clashes with the Government and the 1906 Closer Settlement Board.<sup>15</sup>

By this time some 8000 acres of the *Exford* property been handed over to the Closer Settlement Board for subdivision. However the property’s move away from a sheep-run to more intensive use as small farms had begun in the 1890s. In 1905 the *Bacchus Marsh Express* included a long article on the historic changes at *Exford*, which were about to be consummated by the Closer Settlement Board, whose surveyors were then at work. The coming of the Melton railway (opened 1884) had been influential, first in the growth of the local timber cutting industry (firewood to Melbourne), which had cleared much land that was now arable. Secondly, the railway had made farming more economically feasible by providing convenient and easy transport of farm materials and produce.

In addition to the cropping farms, in the 1890s Staughton also established eleven dairy farms on *Exford* on the share system. He provided the farms, houses and cows, and the profits were divided. Many of the tenants were ‘old servants of Mr Staughton, to whom he had given a helping hand’. Staughton used his influence to have a school erected for his tenants at *Exford*.

The revolution was not limited to the establishment of share farms: Staughton had also moved into farming:

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<sup>13</sup> *The Australasian*, 18<sup>th</sup> November 1876.

<sup>14</sup> *Victorian Municipal Directory*, 1898, and following years.

<sup>15</sup> The Staughtons of Eynesbury, *op cit*, p.13; Starr, *loc cit*  
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‘At the old Exford homestead there is a dairy on a large scale, where the overflow of town supply milk can be separated and the cream marketed. There is much more money made out of the land now than when it was a sheep-run and wool growing was the staple product.’

And the symbol of the pastoral industry, the *Warrawong* shearing shed was not spared:

The old wool shed has been turned into a milking shed, and there are no sheep now running on the one time Exford station of old days, where they used to shear 17,000 and 18,000 sheep. The few they had of late years used to be taken to Eynesbury to have their wool taken off, but even that is all past and gone.’

The reporter concluded by articulating the exciting new vision for the district:-  
‘If this estate and others become studded with farm houses the original Melton township will benefit, and probably a small township will grow up at the railway station.’<sup>16</sup>

The Shire ratebooks show that the *Warrawong* property was let to a tenant, Charles Field, in the period 1900-1909.<sup>17</sup> A plan of the allotment associated with the sale of the Exford Estate in 1907 shows a ‘homestead’ (not extant) considerably to the west of the present homestead and shearing shed.<sup>18</sup> This is marked as ‘cottage’ on another map of the same year, which also shows ‘yards’ between it and the woolshed, and a small ‘shed’ in about the location of the present house.<sup>19</sup>

The Closer Settlement Board’s Exford Estate subdivision excised the woolshed from the *Exford* homestead. Plans show that it became Allotment 22, acquired by F Richmond.<sup>20</sup> The property was acquired by Frances Staughton, the daughter of Harry Werribee Staughton, and her husband John Richmond. Their original homestead, erected of bluestone and believed to have been of two storeys with a balcony, was destroyed in a fire sometime later.

John Richmond was the son of James Richmond of Kippenross, Drumblane, Scotland. The couple married at Toorak in 1898 and resided in Melbourne and at *Warrawong* until John’s death at the age of 46 years in 1917. The *Melton Express* records his participation in sporting activities in the district over a number of years.

Their daughter Joan was the first Australian to compete in the Monte Carlo rally in 1931. In 1932 she shared the winners’ crown with an English woman competitor in the 1,610 kilometre race at Brooklands to become the first woman to win a major international race and probably the third Australian to win after Selwyn Edge in 1907 and Captain Arthur Waite in 1923. She was the first Australian to compete in the Le Mans 24 hour race when she drove as a member of Captain George Eyston’s team of MG PB Midgets in the 1936 classic.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *Bacchus Marsh Express*, 19/8/1905

<sup>17</sup> Shire of Melton, *Ratebooks*, 1900-1910

<sup>18</sup> *The Weekly Times*, 23/3/1907, p.9. This map also shows two woolsheds on the property, one near the ‘homestead’ site. Perhaps this may have been the original Exford woolshed. If so it would be considerably further east than indicated in the 1850s plans; or it might have been relocated to this site.

<sup>19</sup> Lands Victoria, Put Away Plan, Parish of Mooradoranook, D62 B (1907)

<sup>20</sup> Parish Plan, Parish of Mooradoranook.

<sup>21</sup> Information from Royal Historical Society of Victoria, ‘Newspaper Cuttings Collection’.  
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The Melton community remembered of one of its former achievers:- ‘Joan Richmond, a well known woman racing motorist of about 1926, was daughter of an old Melton family, the Staughtons.’<sup>22</sup> Older members of the Exford community also remember Mr Richmond, whom they say died a hero. He had contracted pneumonia after a night spent stopping traffic from crossing the old bridge near the property, which was about to be washed away after flood.<sup>23</sup>

*Warrawong* was sold to the Robertson family following John’s death in 1917. In October 1932 Clive Robertson, a polo player of international standard sold the property to JW Derham, leading member of the Victorian manufacturing industry and Managing Director of the Swallow and Ariel Biscuit Company.

By 1935, Derham had introduced new farming methods for *Warrawong*. He constructed three grain silos of reinforced concrete each holding 125 tons of ensilage. At the foot of the silos a machine had been installed to break up maize and force it up into the silos by fan.

Two large water tanks supplied by water pumped from the Werribee River had been constructed, and 12 cowbails based on the Lowden system, with milking machines were in use. The milk passed through water-cooled pipes into a brine cooler before being pumped into milk cans and collected. The farm had its own sterilizing plant where all dairy utensils were steam cleaned. The dairy was provided with electric light and hot water. The daily cow milk output from a herd of 60 pure Guernsey cattle was recorded.

An irrigation system had also been installed on the property, supporting a crop of maize and four cuttings of lucerne per year, as well as other green feed. In 1935 a Mr Wood was the manager of a profitable dairy farm.<sup>24</sup>

The random rubble, or mortared fieldstone, constructions on the property - gateposts, stock watering troughs, cattle ramp and other improvements – unite and contribute to the appearance of the farm. They date to the mid twentieth century.<sup>25</sup> Around this time the property was a grazing property known as ‘Staughton Vale’.<sup>26</sup>

In 1985, the silos were reported to hold 11,500 bushels of grain and were serviced by a modern tower auger.

The relatively recent weatherboard homestead of 33 squares is situated on top of the rise. The only evidence of the original homestead site (with stone cottage) on the river east of the present house is the cleared terraces, fish pond and garden sheds, with views over the Werribee River.

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

*Melton Historical Themes:* ‘Pastoralism’, ‘Farming’, ‘Horses, Hounds and Hares’.

*Known comparable examples:*

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<sup>22</sup> ‘Some Facts About Melton’ (1954), in M&DHS Newsletter, May 2001.

<sup>23</sup> Mr Tom Arandt, personal conversation, 19/12/2001

<sup>24</sup> *Melton Express*, 13/4/1935

<sup>25</sup> Personal conversation, John and Miles Little, property owners, 19/12/01.

<sup>26</sup> Albert Evans, ‘From the Early Settlers to the 1969 Fires’, unpublished manuscript notes of his memories of local farms.

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Within the Melton Shire are other nineteenth century homestead properties that are included on the Victorian Heritage Register. *Warrawong* shearing shed was originally part of the much larger Exford Homestead property (VHR H316).

#### *Eynesbury Homestead Shearing Shed*

At *Eynesbury Homestead*, Eynesbury Road, Melton South (VHR H362), there are numerous nineteenth century and later buildings that form part of the homestead complex. The large ten-stand shearing shed is rudimentary in design and constructed of galvanised steel. It is a twentieth century structure and is therefore not part of the original development of the homestead, unlike the shearing shed at *Warrawong* which formed part of the early development of *Exford Homestead*, as depicted in the design, bluestone construction and unusual pinnacles. Also at Eynesbury are two concrete silos very similar in construction and date to those at *Warrawong*.

#### *Deanside (Rockbank) Woolshed Complex*

The *Deanside* woolshed is comparable to the shearing shed at *Warrawong*. A very large, 16-stand, coursed random bluestone structure built in 1864 possibly to a design by Reed and Barnes, Melbourne architects. The building is among the earliest substantial bluestone shearing sheds in Victoria and has been partially restored. The *Deanside* woolshed is also significant as part of an early complex of related nineteenth century buildings including the shearers' quarters, boundary riders' hut, manager's house, cookhouse, stables and remains of a two-roomed hut. In this respect, the *Deanside* woolshed is more intact, although the actual building does not feature the elevated gabled form and highly unusual pinnacles that characterise the *Warrawong* building.

#### **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- bluestone woolshed building</i> |
| Internal Alteration Controls: | <i>No</i>                               |
| Tree Controls:                | <i>No</i>                               |
| Outbuildings and/or Fences:   | <i>Yes- three concrete silos</i>        |

#### **Other Recommendations:**

- That preliminary archaeological investigation be undertaken in regard to the sites of the original Exford sheep wash prior to any proposed development in the vicinity of this site.

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- Given the ruinous nature of the twentieth century dairy and adjoining tank-stand, it is recommended that a photographic record of this structure be carried out. There is no expectation for the structure to be restored.