

**Heritage Overlay No.:** 100  
**Citation No.:** 274  
**Place:** Former Dairy, 1180 Exford Road

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**Other Names of Place:** Redden House and outbuilding  
**Location:** 1180 Exford Road, Exford (Lot 1 PS 514964)  
**Critical Dates:** Original construction: 1907-1911  
**Existing Heritage Listings:** None  
**Recommended Level of Significance:** LOCAL



**Statement of Significance:**

The dairy at 1180 Exford Road, Exford, is significant as a rare example of pise construction constructed between 1907 and 1911. It represents only one of two known buildings of this type of construction in the Melton Shire; the more substantial example being Exford Homestead, 255 Exford Road, Melton South. The dairy formed part the property initially owned by Exford Closer Settlement Estate selector Patrick Redden. The dairy appears to be in fair condition when viewed from a distance. A Late Victorian timber weatherboard dwelling is also located on the site is of historical significance and architectural interest. It is also significant for its representation of the Exford Closer Settlement Estate, and the historic break-up of Melton's pastoral estates in the early twentieth century.

The dairy at 1180 Exford Road is scientifically significant at a LOCAL level (AHC F.1). The dairy represents an unusual and now rare example of pise (rammed earth) construction in the Melton Shire.

The house and dairy at 1180 Exford Road are historically significant at a LOCAL level (AHC A4, B2, D2). They comprise good representative evidence of the break-up of the large pastoral estates at the turn of the twentieth century, which was a turning point in the history of Melton Shire. In particular they constitute a now scarce, and the most prominent and best remaining in-context example, of a farm homestead associated with the original Exford Closer Settlement Estate. The Exford Estate was one of the most prominent of the Victorian Closer Settlement Board's early estates, and with Colbinabbin Estate, the first to set apart part of the estate especially for British immigrants. The house and dairy constitute a good example of the turn of the century small farming way of life that flourished in the Shire, in their original open farm context. The house is also significant for its role as the Exford Post Office for eight years in the mid twentieth century.

The house at 1180 Exford Road has architectural interest. Although most of the verandah posts have been introduced, it still demonstrates some original design qualities of a Late Victorian style. These qualities include the hipped roof form, together with the hipped bullnosed verandah that projects towards the front. Other intact or appropriate qualities include the single storey height, horizontal timber weatherboard wall cladding, unpainted galvanised corrugated steel roof cladding, face red brick chimney with a corbelled top, narrow eaves, turned timber verandah post with decorative brackets, symmetrical composition of the front façade defined by the central timber framed doorway with four panelled door and highlight, and the flanking timber framed double hung windows, and the other timber framed double hung windows.

Overall, the house and dairy at 1180 Exford Road are of LOCAL significance.

**Description:**

The property at 1180 Exford Road, Exford, retains its original open farm setting. Its immediate context includes grassed areas and rear round galvanised steel water tanks. A single storey, horizontal timber weatherboard, Late Victorian styled house is situated on the site and is characterised by a hipped roof form, together with a hipped bullnosed verandah that projects towards the front. These roof forms are clad in galvanised corrugated steel. An early face red brick chimney with a corbelled top adorns the roofline. Narrow overhangs are features of the eaves. Other features include the front verandah (now mainly supported by introduced rudimentary posts on stone pads) with decorative brackets, early central timber framed doorway with four panelled door and highlight, and the flanking early timber framed double hung windows. The other timber framed double hung windows on the side walls are also early. The condition of the house was recently described as 'poor' by HLCD heritage architects.<sup>1</sup>

Of particular interest is the nearby modestly scale single storey dairy constructed of pise (rammed earth).<sup>2</sup> It has a gable roof form clad in corrugated sheet metal with a small timber framed window opening (now with introduced steel mesh over) and a single door opening have a vertical boarded door.

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<sup>1</sup> Letter, Helen Lardner, Director HLCD Pty Ltd to the Strategic Planner of the Melton Shire Council, 15 March 2006

<sup>2</sup> The pise (rammed earth) construction of the dairy at 1180 Exford Road has also been confirmed by HLCD, 15 March 2006.

## **History:**

### *History of the Place*

The present No.1180 Exford Road was Allotment No.15 of the Exford Closer Settlement Estate a block of 174 acres 3 roods and 20 perches located on the south-west corner of Exford and Eynesbury Roads. This was not one of those six blocks, formerly Staughton share farms, which had established houses cowsheds etc. There were no improvements on the block at all, but several ‘cultivation’ areas had been marked by the Board, which described the land as ‘good cultivation, loamy chocolate soil’. It was valued at £8 per acre.<sup>3</sup>

PJ Redden was granted the block. In his application to the Closer Settlement Board, he described himself as an unmarried 43 year old who had ‘been farming and dairy farming from my boyhood.’<sup>4</sup> He had a half share in 202 acres at Glenlyon near Kyneton, which he described as ‘unfit for cultivation or grazing’, as well as 22 cows, 3 horses, 3 pigs, farm implements (worth £70) and £100 cash.

Redden had applied for another block, but took Allotment No.15, site unseen, on the recommendation of the Board. Upon inspection he found ‘no water on it and no natural catchment for a dam’, and requested to withdraw. Alternatively, he requested that as it was late in the season, the Board put in 50 or 60 acres of crop for him while he undertook the necessary fencing. Although it was elsewhere reported that the Board was sowing down land for immigrants on the Exford Estate, the Board replied that it could not undertake ploughing for lessees in the estate. On 1<sup>st</sup> May 1907 Redden was granted a conditional lease for the allotment, which he would be entitled to pay off in £42 half yearly instalments over 31.5 years.

In 1911 his statement of compliance with the performance covenants of the lease showed that he had erected a permanent ‘four room dwelling house’ of ‘wood’, valued at £145. Among his many farm improvements was listed a ‘concrete’ dairy<sup>5</sup> valued at £30. He declared that he had resided on the property for ‘the whole of the period of the lease except the first 3 months’, suggesting that his dwelling may have been erected in 1907. The total value of his improvements at this time was £553.10.0.

A letter Redden wrote to the Board in 1916 requesting a 25% reduction in the valuation of his property provides some insights into his situation, and that of other Exford Closer Settlement Estate farmers. ‘In common with the other settlers on this side of the river’, he said, ‘I have always found it a difficult and arduous task to make ends meet and fulfil my obligations to the Board’. He had deprived himself of the ‘comforts of life’ in order to pay his rent punctually, but now found that:

‘... my financial position is worse now than when I took the Block, and the little capital I had then has dwindled away and at times I’ve had to borrow money from my friends to meet liabilities. I had a nice dairy herd on coming here and they have mostly all died from cripples showing the ground is not adapted for dairying pursuits.’

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<sup>3</sup> The *Weekly Times*, 23/3/1907; and Land Victoria, Historical Plan: D62(b) (1907) ‘Exford Estate acquired under Closer Settlement Act 1904’

<sup>4</sup> PROV, VPRS 5714/P0/1364 (Application No.730/49).

<sup>5</sup> It is not surprising that the dairy was listed as ‘concrete’ as opposed to pise or rammed earth given the relative rarity of this construction technique and its similar appearance to concrete construction.

His Block was the same as the adjoining No.16 which, he informed, ‘with several others in the district has been considerably reduced, and I believe justly so.’ Redden also alleged that ‘the seasons here have not been as represented’ (apparently in the Board’s original advertising of the estate), and added his old grievance that Allotment No.15 ‘was not the Block I applied for, nor had there been any other applications for it.’<sup>6</sup>

While an officer of the Closer Settlement Board noted that 7 allotments, one third of the Exford Estate allotments to the west of the river, had had their original valuations reduced, he reported that in his opinion Mr Redden had not been overcharged for the allotment. The Board advised Redden that his land ‘is not too highly valued’, and rejected his request.<sup>7</sup>

The financial situation of Redden apparently improved, as he applied for and was granted freehold possession of the land after just 13 years, on 4<sup>th</sup> May 1920. (Most of the other Exford settlers also settled about the same time.<sup>8</sup>) At this time his improvements were valued at £832.10.0. The major contributor to the increase over the 1911 total valuation of £553.10.0 was a ‘6 room’ house of ‘wood’, ‘42 x 30’, which was valued at £350.0.0, compared to the 4 roomed wooden house valued at £145.0.0 in 1911. The house was the only structure or improvement to his farm whose value was shown to have increased since 1911, so it would seem that this was either a new house, or a substantial extension of the original. In his 1920 application Redden had put the value of his improvements in 1913 as £600, only a little more than they had been in 1911, so the new house or extension to his original house must have occurred between the years 1916 and 1920.

A house shows on a 1916 map of the area.<sup>9</sup> Tom Arandt, son of original Closer Settlement settler W Arandt (Allotment No.12), tells that Pat Redden shifted the present house onto the site when he took up the block.<sup>10</sup> The present owners, Alan and Norma Nicol, tell that other early settlers in the district said that the house was built by Pat Redden on the site c.1905/06.<sup>11</sup>

In 1920 Redden’s ‘dairy’ is described as ‘9 x 12, concrete’, and is still valued at £30.

In around 1941 George and Mary Arandt became owners of the property. Their daughter Norma married Alan Nicol, and the couple still occupy the house. Norma Nicol advises that the house served as the Exford Post Office in the years c.1953-1961. She assumed the role of postmistress when she and her husband moved into the house in 1961.<sup>12</sup> The house handled the local mail, and party telephone lines.<sup>13</sup>

The *Overnewton*, *Exford* and the *Werribee* (Chirnsides) estates were the only rural Closer Settlement Schemes close to Melbourne.<sup>14</sup> The Shire was transformed by the Closer Settlement and Soldier Settlement Acts of the early twentieth century. New roads were surveyed and ‘macadamised’, and the occasional bridge was thrown up (eg, the Bridge Road concrete bridge south of Melton). The establishment of new primary schools at places such as

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<sup>6</sup> Letter, PJ Redden to Closer Settlement Board, 9<sup>th</sup> July 1916.

<sup>7</sup> Closer Settlement Branch notes, 11/7/1916; Letter CSB to Redden, 10/8/1916.

<sup>8</sup> Parish Plan, Parish of Mooradooranook

<sup>9</sup> Army Ordnance Map (1916): ‘Sunbury’.

<sup>10</sup> Mr Tom Arandt, personal conversation, 19/12/2001 (Mr Arandt was 91 years old).

<sup>11</sup> Alan Nicol, personal conversation, 25/5/2006.

<sup>12</sup> HCLD, 15/3/2006. There is some confusion in the community regarding these dates as No.1055 Exford Road (now demolished) also served as the Exford Post Office for a period (Mrs Joan Miles, personal conversation, 19/12/2001.)

<sup>13</sup> Mr Alan and Mrs Norma Nichols, personal conversation, 19/12/2001

<sup>14</sup> VPP, 1908, Vol.2, pp.31-42

Exford, Melton South, Sydenham West, and Melton Park reflect the emergence of whole new communities. Some of Melton's most historically celebrated residents, such as international trap shooter Hector Fraser, were amongst the new settlers. Other sons of the new farmers are commemorated on memorials of the world wars.

### *Contextual History*

The sale of vast areas of previous pastoral leases in the 1850s exposed those pastoralists without the capital to retain their pastures. But those who had accumulated capital could acquire much larger areas once freehold became available.<sup>15</sup> As a result three owners - Clarke, the Chirnsides, and Staughton - soon dominated the whole Port Phillip district.<sup>16</sup>

Simon Staughton and WJT Clarke were by far the largest owners in the Melton Shire. Staughton was fortunate in that he had arrived, cashed-up, at Port Phillip during the depression of the early 1840s, and purchased the 'Brisbane Ranges and Exford' pastoral lease 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.

The allotment on which the property is situated, Section 16, Parish of Mooradoranook, was originally purchased by Simon Staughton at the Crown land sales of the 1850s. Staughton purchased all but two allotments in the entire Parish of Mooradoranook, part of his vast Exford sheep grazing estate.

By the time of Simon Staughton's death in 1863 the *Exford* estate was said to be approximately 100,000 acres in extent.<sup>17</sup> His freehold now included land to the east of the Werribee River. At his death, this property was divided between his four sons. Apart from *Exford*, the home station, two of these new estates were situated in the Shire of Melton: *Eynesbury*, and *Brooklyn/Nerowie*.

The contest between pastoralist interests and popular legislators for the land had climaxed in the 1860s Selection Acts, the product of a movement by gold diggers to 'unlock the lands' dominated by the squatters. The success of these Acts in distributing Victoria's unalienated Crown Lands was mixed, and by the 1890s popular discontent revived, this time calling for the repurchase of much of these alienated Crown Lands which appeared too fertile to be wasted as 'sheep walks'. These should be subdivided and redistributed as small farms in fulfilment of the 'yeoman ideal'.

The beginning of the twentieth century marked a major new era in the history of Melton. It saw the subdivision and sale of thousands of acres of the Staughton, Clarke, and Taylor pastoral empires, and after the First World War, of smaller pastoral estates such as *Melton Park*, *Mount Aitken*, and *Green Hills*.

By 1898 the changes were abroad. To add to the inherent difficulties of the pastoral industry (when all William Taylor of *Overnewton*'s pastoral mortgages were discharged after his death in 1903 his estate was in deficit), the next generation of farmers restlessly surveyed the vast pastoral estates surrounding them. In 1897 the new owner of the Clarke empire, Sir Rupert Turner Havelock Clarke Bart had mused in Parliament about cutting up 40,000 acres of his estate to lease to dairy farmers. He was under some local pressure to make land available for

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<sup>15</sup> Peel, LJ, *Rural Industry in the Port Phillip Region, 1835-1880* (MUP, Melbourne, 1974), pp.56,133.

<sup>16</sup> Peel, *op.cit.*, pp.129-131.

<sup>17</sup> Peel, *op.cit.*, p.61.

farming, and declared he was keen not to ‘disappoint public expectations.’<sup>18</sup> In 1898 the Victorian Municipal Directory entry for Melton Shire made the first of a series of unprecedented reports on movements by big local landholders such as Rupert Clarke, Harry Werribee Staughton, and Harvey Patterson to sell and lease (often under the ‘share system’) large portions of their estates to small farmers and graziers.<sup>19</sup>

This ‘break-up’ of the large estates coincided with the major developments that were occurring in farming in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, as new science, technologies, fertilisers, transport and markets enabled huge productivity increases. With inventions such as the Babcock separator, the development of local co-operative creameries and butter factories, and advances in refrigeration creating new export markets, dairying in particular suddenly boomed.

The house and dairy at 1180 Exford Road are the product of these major changes in Australia’s history. In August 1905 the *Melton Express* reported on the local developments. While at that time the Closer Settlement surveyors were busy partitioning about 4000 acres of Harry Werribee Staughton’s *Exford* estate into farms, much of this property was already being farmed under the share system.<sup>20</sup> The arrival of the railway at Melton South in 1884 had changed the local economy, most notable being the development of the timber cutting industry, wherein the high quality heavy box forest on *Exford* was cut and railed to Melbourne for fuel. ‘Staughtons Rail Siding’ was established nearby for this purpose, in an area that had described as ‘forest’ in 1841, and ‘grey box and she-oak’ in 1907.<sup>21</sup>

The clearing of the timber enabled the land to be ploughed. For the ‘first few seasons’ the crops had not turned out so well, ‘but latterly the returns have been good, and during the time of the South African War the prices were exceptionally good’, reported the *Express* in 1905. Mr Staughton had also provided eleven dairy farms on his land under the share system, with the farmers providing the ‘labour, vehicles and horseflesh’, ‘Mr Staughton providing the ‘farms, houses and cows’, the profits being divided. Each tenant had to crop a specified amount of land in order to feed the cows in dry weather, with any surplus being sold and the profit divided. Much more money was made in this intensive farming than when the property was a sheep station. ‘Some of these tenants are old servants of Mr Staughton, to whom he had given a helping hand to do for themselves and families growing up.’<sup>22</sup>

Whereas *Exford* had originally shorn 17-18,000 sheep, in 1905 it had no sheep at all. A large dairy had been built at the homestead, and the shearing shed (*Warrawong*, Place No.272) converted to a dairy.<sup>23</sup>

State legislators fostered these changes. The Closer Settlement Act was a revival of the Selection Acts, and it would be adapted after both the World Wars as Soldier Settler Acts. The Land Act 1898 had established the ‘closer settlement’ branch of the Lands Department, but it was not until the Closer Settlement Act 1904 that things really got moving. This Act introduced the possibility of compulsory acquisition by the government, and increased five-fold the amount that the Closer Settlement Board could expend on repurchasing land. The scheme only commenced operations when the Board was appointed on 16<sup>th</sup> January 1905. The Board’s

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<sup>18</sup> *Sunbury News*: 31/7/1897, 7/8/1897, 4/9/1897.

<sup>19</sup> *Victorian Municipal Directory*, 1898, and following years.

<sup>20</sup> *The Bacchus Marsh Express*, 19/8/1905

<sup>21</sup> Historical Plan: D/60A (28/2/1841) ‘Plan of the Lands in the Werriby [sic] District for sale under the regulations of March 1841’; *The Weekly Times*, 23/3/1907

<sup>22</sup> *The Bacchus Marsh Express*, 19/8/1905

<sup>23</sup> *ibid*

second scheme was the repurchase of William Taylor's *Overnewton* in the north and east of Melton Shire in 1905.

By 1907 the surveyors at Exford had done their work and the Board was ready to put the much larger *Exford* estate of Harry Werribee Staughton up for sale.<sup>24</sup> Some 8000 acres, divided into 40 farms, was described as 'well adapted for cereal growing and dairying', with permanent water available from the Werribee River and the Toolern Creek, and the railway line adjacent. The property also contained 'dams and tanks and three bores.' There was a saw mill in full operation, and ample timber for fencing and firewood.<sup>25</sup>

At its Exford scheme the Closer Settlement Board was experimenting with new ideas. Here and at Colbinabbin it set aside 5700 acres especially for British immigrants. To prevent the loss of a season while awaiting their arrival, the land was 'put in a productive condition by sowing down 1825 acres at Exford, and fallowing 3947 acres at Colbinabbin.'<sup>26</sup>

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

*Melton Historical Themes:* 'Farming'; 'Community'

*Known Comparable Examples:*

Historically, 1180 Exford Road Exford is most comparable with other farm houses established as a result of the Closer Settlement Board's subdivision of the Exford Estate. Known surviving examples identified in this study are:-

- Place No. 195: House at 56 Exford Road Melton South (former *Glenloth*). Is an original house of one of the most successful local farms. No longer retains its rural context. Recommended for planning scheme controls.
- Place No. 276: House at 865 Exford Road is a late Edwardian style house that was relocated to the site early on. Retains a rural context. Recommended for planning scheme controls.
- Place No.288:- (30 Hickey Road) although within the Exford Estate, pre-dated the CSB subdivision and is not directly comparable historically. Retains a rural context. Recommended for planning scheme controls.
- Place No. 298: former Cochrane house on Mt Cottrell Road, 1907-1914. Retains a rural context. Recommended for planning scheme controls.
- Place No. 271: House on Exford Road, opposite Exford main gate. Only moderate integrity. Retains a rural context. Not recommended for planning scheme controls at present.
- Place No. 273: House, 1055 Exford Road, built from parts of different houses, and reclad in false brick. Not proposed for planning scheme controls. Recently demolished. Original handpump beside underground tank may remain.

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<sup>24</sup> Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 1905, Vol.3(1), 'Report of the Lands Purchase and Management Board'

<sup>25</sup> *The Weekly Times*: 16/3/1907, 23/3/1907

<sup>26</sup> VPP, 1907, Vol.2, pp.175-186

There were originally 28 houses in the Exford Closer Settlement Estate. No.1180 Exford Road is one of seven original or early Exford Estate identified in Stage One of the Melton Heritage Study, six of which now remain, and five of which have been subject of citations in this heritage study with a recommendation for planning scheme controls.

#### *Building Construction of the Dairy*

Pise (or rammed earth) construction is an ancient and most sophisticated method of building construction, being widespread overseas but less numerous in Australia and New Zealand.<sup>27</sup> Pise de terre is a form of earth construction and like concrete, the raw material is placed in a timber formwork.<sup>28</sup> The raw material is a dry gravelly loam which is physically rammed into place in about eight centimetre layers.<sup>29</sup> Some of the earliest examples of pise constructed in Australia are in Tasmania, including ‘Wanstead Park’,. Near Campbell Town, built in 1827.<sup>30</sup> This type of construction became fairly rare in the later nineteenth century.

Technologically, the dairy at 1180 Exford Road represents one of only two of pise-constructed structures in the Melton Shire. It is not surprising that the other known example in the Shire is the nearby and more substantial Exford Homestead, Exford Road, Melton South. It has immense architectural significance as one of the earliest surviving residences in Victoria (built in c.1843) and high scientific significance for its pise construction. The homestead is of State significance and is included on the Victorian Heritage Register H316.<sup>31</sup>

Other structures constructed of pise that are included on the Victorian Heritage Register are:

- Pise Cottages, Zumstein’s Recreation Centre, Mount Victory Road, Halls Gap, H1049, built in 1908.<sup>32</sup>
- Killeen Homestead, Longwood-Mansfield Road, Longwood, H1908, built in 1850.<sup>33</sup>

#### **Condition:**

- Dairy:- Fair – there is evidence of rusting in the roof cladding, wall cracks and deterioration in the window opening (including sill, framing and glazing).
- House:- Poor<sup>34</sup>

#### **Integrity:**

Moderately intact

#### **Recommendations:**

Recommended for inclusion in the Melton Planning Scheme Heritage Overlay.

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<sup>27</sup> M. Lewis, *History of Building Construction: Study Guide*, Deakin University, 1997, p.26.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *ibid*, p.29.

<sup>31</sup> ‘Exford Homestead, 255 Exford Road, Melton South’, Victorian Heritage Register Online, H316, 26 May 2006.

<sup>32</sup> ‘Zumsteins Recreation Centre, Mount Victory Road & Near McKenzie River, Halls Gap’, H1049, 26 May 2006.

<sup>33</sup> ‘Killen Homestead, Longwood-Mansfield Road, Longwood’, H1908, 26 May 2006.

<sup>34</sup> HLCD, 15/3/2006



Recommended Heritage Overlay Schedule Controls:

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



*The Late Victorian timber weatherboard dwelling on the property.*