

**Heritage Overlay No.:** 103  
**Citation No.:** 288  
**Place:** Farm Dairy & Trees, 30 & 35  
Hickey Road, Exford

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**Other Names of Place:** N/A  
**Location:** House site: 30 Hickey Road, Exford (Lot 8 LP 92043); Shed: 35 Hickey Road, Exford 3338 (Lot 4 LP 92043)  
**Critical Dates:**c. 1895-96  
**Existing Heritage Listings:** 'Local Interest' (Rural Heritage Study)<sup>1</sup>  
**Recommended Level of Significance:** LOCAL



**Statement of Significance:**

The former Hickey Farm at 30 & 35 Hickey Road, Exford, is significant as a late nineteenth / twentieth century small farm property with an intact example of a Late Victorian styled milking shed on the opposite side of the road. Built in the mid 1890s, the building is key evidence of the development of dairy farming at the end of the nineteenth century, the progressive stance taken by Harry Werribee Staughton in developing share farming in the

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<sup>1</sup> Johnston, C, 'Rural Heritage Study: Western Region of Melbourne' (Context Pty Ltd, Melbourne Western Region Inc, 1994), Site M8, pp.34, 117, 120, 121

1890s, and the Exford Closer Settlement Estate of 1907. On the opposite side of the road are peppercorn trees which are associated with the Late Victorian house of the Hickey farm.

The milking shed at 35 Hickey Road, is architecturally significant at a LOCAL level (AHC D2). It demonstrates original design qualities of a Late Victorian vernacular style. These qualities include the gable roof form clad in galvanised corrugated steel and the horizontal timber weatherboard wall cladding. Other intact or appropriate qualities include the projecting structure within the site and the small opening in the gable end that faces the road. The flanking mature peppercorn trees also contribute to the setting of the place.

The former Hickey Farm at 30 & 35 Hickey Road, Exford is historically significant at a LOCAL level (AHC A4, B2, D2). The two sites contribute an unusual and evocatively rural visual character to Hickey Road, expressive of the small farming era at the turn of the twentieth century. These historically and visually related sites, constitute unique evidence of the break-up of the large pastoral estates in the Shire of Melton at the turn of the twentieth century, which was a major turning point in the history of Melton. In particular they represent the late-nineteenth century revolution in the dairy industry, the progressive approach of Harry Werribee Staughton to changing political and economic circumstances, and the role of government legislators in facilitating small farm ownership through the Exford Closer Settlement Estate. The Hickey milking shed and associated farm plantings constitute a rare surviving dairy farm of the eleven built by Harry Werribee Staughton as part of his complete change from sheep grazing to share farming on *Exford* from the mid 1890s. The property is also a now-scarce remaining original farm associated with the Exford Closer Settlement Estate, one of the most prominent of the Victorian Closer Settlement Board's early estates.

The farm is also significant for its association with the Hickey family, who subsequently farmed a large part of the Exford Estate, from the Melton Weir in the north to near Exford Road in the south.

Overall, the former Hickey Farm at 30 & 35 Hickey Road, Exford is of LOCAL significance.

### **Description:**

The former Hickey farm at 30 and 35 Hickey Road, Exford has a rural setting comprising peppercorn trees and other plantings. Very close, on the opposite (north) side of the road, now on a different property, is the milking shed that was also part of the property. The two properties contribute an unusual and evocatively rural visual character to Hickey Road, expressive of the small farming history of the early twentieth century.

Opposite the house site is the milking shed. This single storey, modestly scale (although elevated), horizontal timber weatherboard, Late Victorian vernacular styled building is characterised by a gable roof form clad in galvanised corrugated steel. There is a small opening in the gable end. Other early parts of the structure project within the site. The wall cladding is in poor condition, having suffered considerable weathering.

### **History:**

#### *Contextual History*

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

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>2</sup> As a result three owners - Clarke, the Chirnsides, and Staughton - soon dominated the whole Port Phillip district.<sup>3</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 1, Parish of Mooradooranook, 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 Mooradooranook, 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>4</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 farming, and declared he was keen not to 'disappoint public expectations' he said.<sup>5</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>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Peel, LJ, *Rural Industry in the Port Phillip Region, 1835-1880* (MUP, Melbourne, 1974), pp.56,133.

<sup>3</sup> Peel, *op.cit.*, pp.129-131.

<sup>4</sup> Peel, *op.cit.*, p.61.

<sup>5</sup> *Sunbury News*: 31/7/1897, 7/8/1897, 4/9/1897.

<sup>6</sup> *Victorian Municipal Directory*, 1898, and following years.

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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 Hickey farm and milking shed 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>7</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’, established for this purpose was only a few hundred metres away from Thomas Hickey’s farm, in an area that had described as ‘forest’ in 1841, and ‘grey box and she-oak’ in 1907.<sup>8</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>9</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>10</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 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 even larger *Exford* estate of Harry Werribee Staughton up for sale.<sup>11</sup> Some 8000 acres, divided into

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<sup>7</sup> The Bacchus Marsh *Express*, 19/8/1905

<sup>8</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>9</sup> The Bacchus Marsh *Express*, 19/8/1905

<sup>10</sup> *ibid*

<sup>11</sup> Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 1905, Vol.3(1), ‘Report of the Lands Purchase and Management Board’

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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>12</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>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 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.

### *History of the Place*

The 1907 Closer Settlement Board advertisement noted that ‘Five of the six homesteads already on the property have milking yards etc attached, and all are of substantial character and good repair.’ The accompanying map shows that ‘Hickeys Homestead’ was one of these.<sup>15</sup> Another map produced by the Closer Settlement Board in this year marks the improvements to the Hickey property in detail. They include a ‘house’, ‘cowshed and yards’, and a ‘tank’ beside the house, which is connected by a ‘pipe track’ to the Werribee River some 600 metres away, where there was a ‘steam pump.’ Several ‘cultivation’ areas had already been identified, and the land was described as ‘good cultivation land, chocolate soil stony in parts’.<sup>16</sup> The next month the *Weekly Times* reported successful applicants for the allotments, amongst whom were ‘T Hickey, 254 acres’ (his homestead allotment), and nearby ‘WJ Hickey 212 acres’.<sup>17</sup>

It is clear then that Thomas Hickey was in possession of his dairy farm by 1907, and was almost certainly one of the 11 dairy farmers for whom it was reported in 1905 that HW Staughton had built a farm, to be operated on the share system. This had occurred considerably before the Boer War (1899-1902), and by the time that the Municipal Directory reported that Staughton was cutting his estate into share farms (1898). It would appear that the share farms would have commenced in the mid 1890s. If, as is likely, Hickey was an ‘old servant’ of Staughton, it is possible that the house was earlier.

Another early plan shows that the Hickey house was adjacent to the main track (now Telephone Road) between the *Brooklyn* mansion (demolished) and *Eynesbury* and *Exford* homesteads of the Staughton brothers.<sup>18</sup> ‘Old Tom Hickey’ is remembered as pumping water from the

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<sup>12</sup> The *Weekly Times*: 16/3/1907, 23/3/1907

<sup>13</sup> VPP, 1907, Vol.2, pp.175-186

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

<sup>15</sup> The *Weekly Times*, 23/3/1907

<sup>16</sup> Land Victoria, Historical Plan:D62(b) (1907) ‘Exford Estate acquired under Closer Settlement Act 1904’

<sup>17</sup> The *Weekly Times*, 20/4/1907

<sup>18</sup> Land Victoria, Put-Away Map: D62 (a).

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Werribee to the railway camp at Staughton's Siding. Bill Hickey (no doubt WJ Hickey, the other successful applicant for an Exford Estate block) and his brother Patrick (an 'old Irishman') established Hickey farms from the Weir in the north to near Exford Road in the south.<sup>19</sup> Thomas Hickey 'farmer' (of 'Parwan') is also recorded in the Shire of Melton ratebooks as owning a small block (20 acres) of land on the opposite side of the Werribee River / Djerriwarrh Creek.<sup>20</sup>

Of the improvements shown in the 1907 plan, the house and cowshed remain in their original positions, but the tank and cattle yards do not appear to survive. The pump at the river may have been removed prior to the creation of the dam, but any vestige of the pipe is unlikely to survive given the rural residential subdivision of the area in recent decades. In 1994 the Rural Heritage Study reported that:

'The milking shed and barn was surveyed in 1986, and can be described as a simple timber-framed buildings. The milking shed has a brick floor.'<sup>21</sup>

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

*Shire of Melton Historical Themes: 'Farming'*

*Comparable Places in Shire of Melton:*

Historically, the *Hickey* complex is most comparable with other farms established as a result of the Closer Settlement Board's subdivision of the Exford Estate. Other surviving examples identified in this study, and recommended for planning scheme controls, are:

- Place No. 276: 865 Exford Road, Exford. A smaller house, relocated early, and altered. Visible from the road.
- 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. Visible from the road.
- Place No.282:- *Glengallon*, Greigs Road, Exford. A larger and successful mid twentieth century model farm separated from most of the other farms by the Werribee River. It is not visible from the road.
- Place No. 298: former Cochrane house on Mt Cottrell Road, 1907-1914. Not visible from the road.

Examples identified in this study, and not recommended for planning scheme controls at present are:

- Place No. 273: House, 1055 Exford Road, built from parts of different houses, and reclad in false brick, was the most comparable site with *Hickey* until its recent demolition. This was the only other known surviving example of the 11 dairy share-farms built by Harry Werribee Staughton on his *Exford* estate in the mid 1890s. The original handpump and underground tank might remain. It had been the Exford Post Office

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

<sup>20</sup> Shire of Melton, *Ratebook*, 1907-08 (Allotment B6, Parish of Djerriwarrh).

<sup>21</sup> Johnston, *op cit*, p.120

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prior to the PO being moved to No.1180 Exford Road. It was constructed partly from a different Staughton house; it has been reclad with modern false-brick materials.

- Place No. 271: House on Exford Road, opposite Exford main gate. Only moderate integrity. Retains a rural context. Visible from the road.
- Place No. 478: *Riverside*, 105 Murphy's Road Exford. Barely visible from the road among plantings.

There were originally 28 houses in the Exford Closer Settlement Estate. No.865 Exford Road is one of nine original or early Exford Estate identified in Stage One of the Melton Heritage Study, eight of which now remain, and six of which have been subject of citations in this heritage study with a recommendation for planning scheme controls.

Architecturally, *Hickey* is a typical and predominantly intact example of a Late Victorian style; the design quality of the dwelling is unassuming. This appears to represent a common design quality for these building types throughout the Shire. Other comparable dwellings include:

- House, Leakes Road, Rockbank (Place No.403). Although altered with an introduced verandah and a carport at the side, this house shares a similar hipped roof form, scale and construction.
- Hickey, 30 Hickey Road, Melton (Place No.288). A more intact example, this house features a hipped roof form and a projecting front verandah with early timber fretwork valance (some components of the valance are missing however) and early timber posts.
- House, 1180 Exford Road, Exford (Place No.274). Another timber example of the type with a hipped bullnosed front verandah that has been altered. Only one of the early turned timber posts survive.
- House, 161 Bulmans Road, Melton South (Place No.174). A similarly constructed and designed dwelling, the front verandah has also been altered, with introduced timber posts and aluminium valances and brackets.
- House, 1374 Gisborne-Melton Road (Place No.030). A similarly unassuming Late Victorian example, the verandah has also been altered.
- House, 911 Melton Highway, Sydenham (Place No.127). A more intact example of the Late Victorian type, although of unassuming design quality.
- House, 32 O'Neills Road, Melton (Place No.230). A less intact example of the Late Victorian type, the building features a similar hipped roof form, although there the front verandah is bullnosed. The front windows have been altered.

**Condition:**

Poor – milking shed

**Integrity:**

Substantially intact milking shed and house site

**Recommendations:**

Recommended for inclusion in the Melton Planning Scheme Heritage Overlay.

Recommended Heritage Overlay Schedule Controls:

External Paint Controls:	<i>No</i>
Internal Alteration Controls:	<i>No</i>
Tree Controls:	<i>Peppercorn trees – east wall of house, front of house, front of shedding and flanking milking shed</i>
Outbuildings and/or Fences:	<i>Milking shed on opposite side of road</i>

Other recommendations:

- Given the perilous state of the timber milking shed, it is recommended that a photographic analysis of this building be prepared.