

**Heritage Overlay No.:** 123  
**Citation No.:** 476  
**Place:** ‘Dalgook’ Farmhouse Complex

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**Other Names of Place:** Morton Homestead  
**Location:** Hume Drive, Taylors Hill. (Lot B PS 523563M).  
**Critical Dates:** 1906;2010  
**Existing Heritage Listings:** None  
**Recommended Level of Significance:** LOCAL



**Statement of Significance:**

*Dalgook*, Hume Drive, Taylor’s Hill, is significant as an unusual and predominantly intact example of a Federation style dwelling in a rural setting. Built in 1906 for H&N Fitzgerald as part of the Overnewton Closer Settlement Estate, the symmetrically composed timber dwelling features an atypical roof composition of a central hipped roof with flanking gables and encircling broken back verandah, a contextually elaborated recessed entrance porch with original doorpiece. .

*Dalgook*, Hume Drive, Taylor’s Hill, is architecturally significant at a LOCAL level (AHC D.2). It demonstrates unusual and intact qualities of a Federation style. These qualities include

the central steeply pitched hipped roof form punctuated by flanking gables and the skillion broken back encircling verandah, face brick chimneys with roughcast tops, square timber verandah posts with solid, panelled timber valance and curved solid timber brackets, timber verandah floor, and the central recessed entrance porch with contextually elaborate doorway featuring a panelled timber and glazed door, sidelights and highlights with Art Nouveau pattern leadlighting. Other intact or appropriate qualities include the symmetrical composition, single storey height, corrugated sheet metal roof cladding, paired full-length timber framed double hung windows, other timber framed double hung windows, and the roughcast gable infill with timber ventilators.

*Dalgook*, Hume Drive, Taylor's Hill, is historically significant at a LOCAL level (AHC A4). It is one of few remaining Melton Shire houses built as a result of the Closer Settlement Board's subdivision of prominent pastoralist William Taylor's Overnewton Estate into 79 small farms. The Overnewton Estate was one of the earliest, largest, and best-known of the estates created under the Closer Settlement Act 1904. It is expressive of one of the major themes of Australia's history - the contest between large pastoralists and small farmers for the land - and the abiding power of the yeomanry ideal well into the twentieth century. This is the most substantial of the houses built as part of the Overnewton and Exford Closer Settlement Estates in the Shire. The property was acquired by the Pecks in 1925, and its significance within the area is evident in the retention of the name Pecks Road for a nearby major road through a now suburban area.

The immediate rural setting, within a developing suburb, and its original farm context of a characteristic but now scarce Keilor Plains dry stone wall, with mature sugar gum and peppercorn trees, protecting a *circa* one hectare home paddock, with ornamental garden and farm sheds, is integral to the historical and aesthetic significance of the place. It is an extraordinarily intact example of a typical early twentieth century farmstead layout in the Shire.

In 2010, extensive renovations were undertaken by the Shire of Melton as part of redevelopment of the site for public use.

Overall, *Dalgook*, Hume Drive, Taylor's Hill, is of LOCAL significance.

### **Description:**

The immediate setting of *Dalgook* farmhouse is rural, although the surrounding area comprises a fast developing suburban estate. It is located on a small rise at the western end of Hume Drive, Taylor's Hill. The homestead is situated within a drystone walled home paddock of approximately one hectare, with mature sugar gum and peppercorn trees (*Schinus molle*, var. *areira*) planted on the inside of this wall. There are a number of young gum trees, together with considerable machinery debris of different age and condition, sunshine harvesters, balers, tractors, cars and trucks. Some of this machinery demonstrates the historical operation of an early twentieth century farm in the area.

There are garden beds around the dwelling. The ornamental garden area in front of the house features a prominent but not particularly old fan palm with a thin smooth trunk, likely to be a cabbage-tree palm (*Livistona australis*).

The unusual, symmetrical, single storey, horizontal aluminium clad weatherboard, Federation styled dwelling is characterised by a central steeply pitched hipped roof form punctuated by flanking gables and a skillion broken back encircling verandah. These roof forms are clad in

corrugated sheet metal. There is an introduced skillion kitchen addition at the rear. Two early face brick chimneys with roughcast rendered tops adorn the roofline.

An early feature of the design is the encircling verandah. It is supported by square timber posts having a solid, panelled timber valance and curved solid timber brackets. There is also an early timber verandah floor which is unstable and needs new posts.

The symmetry of the design is accentuated by the central recessed entrance porch. It features an early doorpiece having an early timber framed doorway with central panelled timber and glazed door and flanking sidelights, and highlights above. The door, sidelights and highlights have early Art Nouveau pattern leadlighting. The entrance porch is also adorned with a large timber arch and fretwork.

Other early features of the design include the paired full-length timber framed double hung windows, other timber framed double hung windows, and the roughcast gable infill with timber ventilators.

The internal arrangement of rooms and preservation of the original fixtures is outstanding. There is original linoleum, fireplace surrounds, wood panelling and leadlight windows. The house is currently still furnished with Morton family effects and furniture. Together with the intact nature of the farm sheds, dairy and garages, it provides opportunities for interpretation of twentieth century farming in the district.

The dairy building to the west of the homestead is an exceptional example of vernacular construction, being made of bush pole timbers and beaten iron cans. It contains a substantial amount of machinery and equipment associated with the running of the farm under the Morton family.

### **History:**

#### *Contextual History: Overnewton Estate*

*Dalgook* was the product of one of the major themes in Australia's history, the struggle between pastoralist interests and popular legislators for the land. It was a movement which reached its height in the 1860s Selection Acts which were a result of agitation 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 the good land which was being wasted as the 'sheep walks' on pastoral estates. These should be subdivided and redistributed as small farms in fulfilment of the 'yeoman ideal'. The Closer Settlement Act under which this property was created was the realisation of this movement; it would be adapted and revived after both the World Wars as Soldier Settler Acts.

Scotsman William Taylor, upon whose pastoral estate this farm was created, was an archetypal squatter. He arrived in Victoria in 1840 and was the first pastoralist north of the Glenorchy, taking up a run of 206,000 acres in the Wimmera (Longerenong) with Dugald McPherson. After pushing into the Mallee, in 1849 he married and purchased the *Overnewton* estate at Keilor, upon which he built his distinctive Scottish baronial 'castle'. (In this he joined the Clarkes, Chirnsides and numerous smaller graziers who maintained larger up-country pastoral estates but built great mansions and substantial homes on Melbourne's north-western fringe, within the pale of civilisation, and accessible to business and political interests.) He retained substantial pastoral interests in the Lower Darling District and other NSW and Queensland stations. He was at different times MLC for Wimmera, and MLA for Creswick, a leading

member of the Keilor Shire Council, and maintained many other business interests and patronages, including Ormond College.<sup>1</sup>

But by 1898 changes were abroad. To add to the inherent difficulties of the pastoral industry (when all Taylor's pastoral mortgages were discharged after his death in 1903 his estate was in deficit), the next generation of farmers restlessly surveyed the pastoral properties that surrounded them. In 1897 the new owner of the Clarke empire, Sir Rupert Turner Havelock Clarke Bart 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>2</sup> The Victorian Municipal Directory 1898 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>3</sup>

This 'break-up' of the large estates coincided with major developments 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.

And so 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 Clarke, Taylor, and Staughton pastoral empires, and after the First World War, of smaller pastoral estates such as *Melton Park* and *Green Hills*.

State legislators fostered this change. 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 the scheme really developed. 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 commenced operations in 1905.

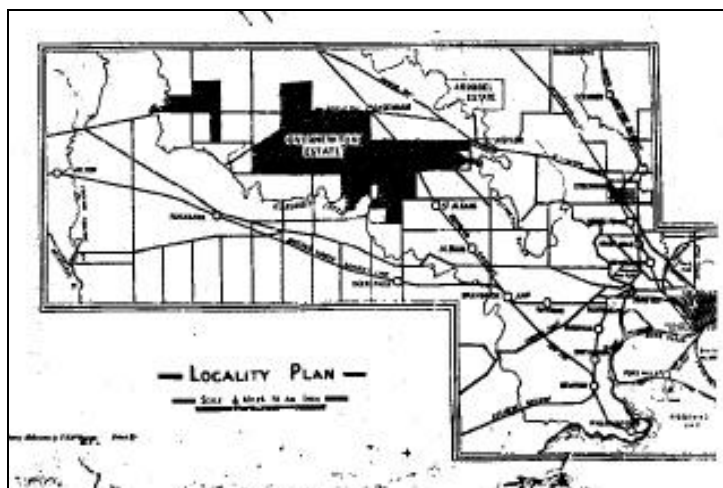
The regulations under the Act had only just been gazetted when, in May 1905, the Board purchased the 11,336 acre *Overnewton* estate of William Taylor, which included much of the area between Mt Kororoit and Sydenham. This was one of the Board's earliest and largest purchases, and the first of several massive purchases by the Board between Keilor and Werribee, which included the *Exford Estate*, and then *Werribee Park*.

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<sup>1</sup> Most of this information is from J Ann Hone, 'William Taylor', in Serle, G, Ward, R *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.6 (MUP, 1988), pp.249-250.

<sup>2</sup> *Sunbury News*: 31/7/1897, 7/8/1897, 4/9/1897.

<sup>3</sup> *Victorian Municipal Directory*, 1898, and following years.



**Map of Overnewton Estate c.1905.<sup>4</sup>**

(William Taylor also had other smaller holdings on Mt Cotterell Road in the south of the Shire that were also sold as Closer and Soldier Settlement Estates.)

*Overnewton* was amongst the earliest, largest, and most important of the Closer Settlement Board's estates. It was acquired in May 1905, the fourth and second largest CSB estate (after Wyuna, an irrigation estate on the Goulburn River, more closely related to the concurrent emergence of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission).<sup>5</sup> Although soon to be overtaken by the *Exford Estate*, it was at the time the largest dry-land farming estate purchased, and the closest to Melbourne. This seems to have made it something of a showcase, and perhaps test case, of the scheme. Local media referred to its first stage (the Arundel Estate near Keilor) as Premier Bent's 'golden haired girl'.<sup>6</sup>

In 1906 the CSB reported optimistically that the Minister for Mines had put a new boring machine to use at the Overnewton Estate 'where an almost unlimited supply of good stock water of fair quality for domestic use has been obtained at a depth of 210 feet, which will materially enhance the value of this property.'<sup>7</sup> A year later it reported that 12 bores had been put down and windmills erected at *Overnewton* - providing water that was 'mostly excellent for stock', and some good for domestic use - at a cost of £1,847.<sup>8</sup> In keeping with Australia's tradition of 'Colonial Socialism', the state government had stepped in to sponsor infrastructure development. But this was still a tiny outlay compared to the expenses undertaken in providing irrigation channels, dams, railways, roads and swamp drainage (Koo Wee Rup), and even house construction (Boisdale) in other Closer Settlement estates.

When applications were invited for its 53 farms in October 1905, the *Overnewton Estate* was described as 'good agricultural and grazing land', with 'good railway facilities - Sydenham Station is on the property', with 'good roads'.<sup>9</sup> By mid 1907 the CSB reported that already 129 residents were living on the Estate, with 3451 stock and 1454 acres cultivated. 'A number of houses are exceptionally well-built, and the fencing generally is substantial ... The planting of

<sup>4</sup> Lands Victoria, Historical Plan, PROC (2) 40

<sup>5</sup> Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 1905, Vol.3(1), 'Report of the Lands Purchase and Management Board'

<sup>6</sup> Moloney, D, Classification Report, 'Arundel Road Bridge' 23/7/1991), National Trust of Australia (Victoria).

<sup>7</sup> VPP, 1906, Vol.2, 'Report of the Lands Purchase and Management Board'

<sup>8</sup> VPP, 1907, Vol.2, 'Report of the Lands Purchase and Management Board'

<sup>9</sup> Land Victoria, Historical Plan: PROC (2) 40

*trees is being carried out on many of the farms, and when grown, will afford shelter for stock.*<sup>10</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 Sydenham West, Melton Park, Exford and Melton South 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*

*Dalgook*, as the homestead is named in maps of 1916 and 1938, situated on Allotment No.18 of the Closer Settlement Board’s 1905 Overnewton Estate, of 284 acres and 18 perches, taken up by H Fitzgerald.<sup>11</sup>

The Shire of Keilor ratebooks describe the owner of allotment 18 as ‘Norah’ Fitzgerald.<sup>12</sup> This is probably the ‘H’ (Honorah) Fitzgerald who was granted title to the property in 1919. Until 1909 the ratebooks also confuse Norah Fitzgerald with ‘JJ’ (John James) Fitzgerald, who was purchasing the abutting allotment 16, of 288 acre 2 rood and 27 perches, from the Closer Settlement Board. Allowing for this mistake, the ratebooks show that in 1905-06 Norah Fitzgerald, ‘married woman’, took up Allotment 18, with a Net Annual Value of £75, and that there was no house on the property in that year. In the following year the property had a NAV of £96 and was described as ‘house and 284 acres’.<sup>13</sup>

Over the next several decades the ratebooks change their description of Norah Fitzgerald ‘married woman’ to Norah Fitzgerald ‘farmer’, living at Sydenham. John James Fitzgerald, ‘farmer’, on the abutting allotment 16, was also living at Sydenham, but there was no house on his property. He may have been a relation (eg a husband or brother) of Norah Fitzgerald who was living with her at *Dalgook*.

After 14 years, on 28<sup>th</sup> May 1919, H Fitzgerald acquired freehold ownership of allotment 18 from the Closer Settlement Board. In March 1925 JJ Fitzgerald acquired freehold title to allotment 16. The likelihood that the abutting properties had been worked as one large farm (573 acres) by H and JJ Fitzgerald is supported by the fact that in the following year both properties had been sold to Frank and Harold Peck.<sup>14</sup>

The property was quite isolated, the only house accessed by the long road running north south to the Sydenham Station, and then Hume Drive, running west to *Dalgook*.<sup>15</sup> This long north-

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<sup>10</sup> VPP 1906, *op cit*.

<sup>11</sup> Parish Plan, Parish of Maribyrnong; see also the report of Biosis Research Pty Ltd, ‘An Archaeological Survey of a Proposed Development Site, Gourley Road, Moreton’ (September 1998), *passim*.

<sup>12</sup> This part of the Parish of Maribyrnong was then part of the Shire of Keilor; it became part of the Shire of Melton sometime between 1949-1959

<sup>13</sup> Shire of Keilor Ratebooks, 1905-1907

<sup>14</sup> Shire of Keilor Ratebooks, 1925-26

<sup>15</sup> Army Ordnance Maps (‘Sunbury’): 1916, 1938

south road is now named Pecks Road, so presumably the Pecks were associated with the property for many years. The nearest neighbours were nearly 2 kilometres away to the north and south, about 1.5 kilometres on the west, and further again to the east. There are fewer neighbours in 1938 than in 1916, and it is possible that some of the neighbours were amalgamated into the *Dalgook* property.<sup>16</sup>

The property was acquired by developers and the Morton family moved out, leaving most of their possessions in the scattered sheds or house. The property is now to be taken over by the Shire of Melton to be used as a community facility for the residents of Taylors Hill. A plan is currently being formulated for the re-use of the building.

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

*Melton Historical Themes: ‘Farming’*

*Known comparable examples in Melton Shire:*

Historically, *Dalgook* is a scarce remaining example of houses built in the Shire as part of the Overnewton Estate Closer Settlement Act, three of which are proposed for heritage controls in this study. The houses that are proposed for heritage controls in this study are:

- Place No.127, 911 Melton Highway. An unassuming example of a typical small farmhouse associated with the break-up of the pastoral estates in the period. With Place No.119 it is one of two houses on the Melton Highway - the major concentration of Overnewton Estate farmhouses in Melton Shire - for which heritage controls are proposed.
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The Overnewton Estate houses that are not proposed for heritage controls in this study are:

- Place No.439, *Bonnie View*, Tarleton’s Road. The now derelict Tarleton house, which retains old farm machinery.
- Place No.122, *Roseview*, 1498 Melton Highway (1907). Significantly altered (and perhaps relocated) small farmhouse.
- Place No.123, *Shirley*, 1646 Melton Highway (c.1906). Altered (and perhaps relocated) small farmhouse.
- Place No. 126, *Noorie/Greenleigh*, 868 Melton Highway. Significant alterations to house. Farm complex retains early outbuildings, cobbled roads, and drystone walls.

*Architecturally, Dalgook* is the largest, and the most impressive of any of the Shire of Melton houses associated with the Closer Settlement Boards’s Overnewton or Exford Estates. Its

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<sup>16</sup> Army Ordnance Plans (‘Sunbury’): 1916, 1938

typical early twentieth century farmstead layout is also extraordinarily intact. Squares of eucalyptus (early twentieth century sugar gum) shelter belt planting (sometimes with a brick chimney in the centre, the remains of a fire-destroyed weatherboard homestead), are a characteristic feature of rural areas in the Shire. The eucalyptus shelter planting of this property is intact, and greatly enhanced by the associated dry stone wall which (although in varying condition) strongly defines the home paddock and everything that went in it (garden, sheds, old machinery). With spreading suburbanisation of the area, there are also now relatively few dry stone walls remaining on the Keilor Plains. The possibility that *Dalgook* and its farm context might be able to be fully protected by Council ownership sets it apart even further.

Architecturally, *Dalgook* may be compared with other similar timber Federation styled houses in the Melton Shire including:

- *Stoneleigh*, 196 Sinclairs Road (Place No.435). An altered example of this Federation stylistic type, *Stoneleigh* is asymmetrically composed and features hipped and gable roof forms, and a return bullnosed verandah. The roof forms are clad in deep red painted galvanised corrugated steel. Early face brick chimneys with corbelled tops adorn the roofline and there are modest eaves. A flat roofed verandah porch and door opening, and some corner windows have been introduced.
- Main house at *Cornwell Park Stud*, Diggers Rest – Coimadai Road, Toolern Vale (Place No.018). This house has also been altered and extended, and features a prominent elongated gable roof form that traverses the site, with a substantial gable that projects towards the rear and a minor verandah gable that projects towards the front and continues along the side and towards the rear. Most of the roof forms are clad in deep red corrugated Colorbond, although the gabled verandah that extends along the side and to the rear is clad in early slate tiles. Two prominent, face brick, strapped and corbelled chimneys adorn the roofline and there are modest eaves. The dwelling features early timber verandah posts with projecting capitals and decorative solid timber curved valances and there is also a rectangular bay window.
- Homestead, 63 Griegs Road (Place No.372). This house has a gambrel roof form, together with the broken back encircling verandah and two minor gables within the main roof that project at the front and comprise rectangular bay windows below the verandah. Other intact or appropriate qualities include the single storey height, symmetrical composition, deep red painted galvanised corrugated steel roof cladding, horizontal timber weatherboard wall cladding, three face brick chimneys with rendered bands and multi-corbelled tops, turned timber verandah posts with projecting capitals, decorative brackets and timber fretwork valances, timber framed casement windows, timber framed door openings, stuccoed gable infill and the timber truss decoration in the projecting gables at the front.

*Dalgook* is therefore a representative and unusual example of this Federation style type in the Melton Shire. Compared with the examples above, it is modest in scale compared to houses like the homestead at 63 Griegs Road, but it is substantially intact.

**Condition:** Good



**Integrity:** Substantially Intact, undergoing extensive refurbishment and renovation and adaptation to public use.

**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>Yes: shelter planting associated with the dry stone wall of the home paddock.</i>
Outbuildings and/or Fences:	<i>Yes: dry stone wall of the home paddock, dairy building to the west.</i>