

Heritage Overlay No.: 001
Citation No.: 281
Place: ‘Eynesbury’ Homestead and Station

Other Names of Place: N/A
Location: Eynesbury Road, Eynesbury
Critical Dates: 1841, 1872, 1925, 1955
Existing Heritage Listings: Victorian Heritage Register H362
Recommended Level of Significance: STATE

Note: This citation contains only a statement of significance. It was commissioned after the heritage study had been exhibited. Eynesbury was included in the schedule to the heritage overlay prior to the heritage study being written.



Statement of Significance:

Eynesbury, Eynesbury Road, Eynesbury, is of State heritage significance. It was one of four properties into which Simon Staughton’s *Exford* station, established in 1841, was subdivided for his sons after his death in 1863. The *Eynesbury* station of approximately 20,000 acres was inherited by his second son, Samuel Thomas Staughton MLA. *Eynesbury* remained unsubdivided until redevelopment for residential purposes commenced in the early 2000s, at which time it was the largest pastoral property within 300 kilometres of Melbourne. It consequently retains an extensive collection of pastoral buildings and works, representing the different eras of *Eynesbury*’s long existence as a major pastoral property. Some buildings have been demolished, usually more recent places, such as two 1960s-1970s brick veneer houses, machinery and hay sheds, water tanks, windmills, and garages.

The early-mid twentieth century shearing complex is of Local heritage significance. Although dating to the twentieth century and situated away from the heritage core, this extensive shearing complex is integral to the heritage of a major sheep station. Remnant ‘Staughton posts’, such as those at the junction of Telephone Road and Springhill Road Parwan are of integral to the place and of high significance.

The original homestead is the two-storey bluestone building which forms the central core of the house. It was begun in 1872-5 for ST Staughton and in 1885 Melbourne architect Guyon Purchas was employed to undertake its remodelling, possibly due to his recently completed design for *Wirridgil* (1883-4) at Camperdown for Thomas Manifold. Wealthy pastoralists Staughton and Manifold, and Guyon's architect father Albert, were members of Melbourne men's clubs, which brought them into contact with each other. The homestead is set within a designed landscape and a complex of buildings has developed around this core. The front façade of the homestead is flanked on either by side single storey pavilions with polygonal bays added by Purchas in 1885. During this phase of construction the roof of the two storey core was raised and the centrally placed widow's walk constructed. Two single storey wings were also added to the rear of the building at this time, forming a three-sided service courtyard with concave verandah roof. Construction is in coursed bluestone with hipped corrugated iron roofs and stuccoed chimneys. Quoins, widows walk and the eaves detailing are other features.

A formal garden features mature fig, magnolia, silk, pyramid, silky oak cypress and eucalyptus trees, with radial paths encompassing three sides of the house within perimeter walls and a curved sunken ha-ha wall of quarried bluestone rubble. In addition to the 1885-6 alteration, various ancillary buildings were constructed on the extensive property from at least as early as the 1870s. Two substantial bluestone buildings located at the rear of the house originally contained staff quarters and stables. The former would appear to date from the 1885-6 addition and the latter from either the early 1870s building or the 1885-6 addition. Along with the main house these buildings enclose three sides of a grassed service quadrangle. The fourth edge is defined by the roadway. A rare and important private ornamental lake with island is situated to the north-west.

Many vernacular buildings were constructed over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Two buildings would appear to pre-date the homestead itself: the drop slab stables, which may date from the 1860s or earlier, and a small bluestone cottage to the north of similar age. A group of structures which were constructed to serve the homestead in the 1870s and 1880s includes a remarkably intact polygon shaped weatherboard meathouse with decorated bargeboards and finials, beside an early brick smokehouse, and a large and rare water header tank constructed of large section local grey box. There is an early dairy, a killing shed, a bag store shed, and stables. Two early-mid twentieth concrete silos demonstrate their formwork construction, with slip tie straps remaining in the concrete; their roofs, of corrugated iron, are octagonal in one case and gabled in the other.

To the north in the grey box forest is a large, altered, brick former shearers' quarters, c.1890s, with two tall corbelled chimneys, and a domed underground tank in front. The associated woolshed no longer remains, and the present shearing complex further to the north dates from c.1925 and c.1955. The early twentieth century timber woolshed is a four-stand shed of unusual arrangement, perhaps modified to work with the steel framed and press-metal roofed 1950s nine-stand woolshed to which it is linked. The sheds are situated in an intact complex of sheep races with intact ancillary features such as drencher, inspection shed, truck loading ramps, water tanks, and killing house. Adjacent is a highly intact complex of accommodation quarters for the shearers, consisting of weatherboard, galvanised iron, fibro-cement, and brick quarters, with a meat shed and other ancillary buildings.

To the north of the homestead is an early bluestone cottage, possibly pre-dating the homestead, and to the south is another small cottage contemporary with the homestead. A substantial weatherboard manager's house to the north-west was built c.1915; two identical prefabricated Myer houses were erected to the south by Baillieu after his purchase of the property in 1947. At the south-east of the property is a substantial cutting and causeway built to form a road that leads down to where a bridge crossed the Werribee river. It is believed that the bluestone cobbled road, cutting and bridge were constructed in the 1850s. The entrance to

the property from this road passes through an unprepossessing gate and enters an avenue marked by Canary Island palm trees, radiata pines, and natives thickened with sugar gums.

There are also a number of objects of significance associated with the place. These include:- a lever wool press marked 'Humble & Son 'Ferrier' brand, No1331, Made in Geelong' c.1903, located under the north east verandah of the old Shearer's Quarters; a horse drawn tipping scoop c.1890 marked 'Gaston Bros Pty Ltd Makers, Kensington Vic. No.146' located 3 metres west of c.1860s horizontal slab shed; a harvester and associated parts marked 'TR Robison Company, Victoria, Harvester 'The Federal' No.15582, 12/5/20' inside the horizontal slab shed; a billiards table and associated fixtures, c.1886, in the homestead billiards room pavilion; the interior of the homestead meathouse retains fittings and early graffiti; the water header tank retains fixtures such as float measure and ladders; and the shearing complex has remnant line shafting with deisel and electricity power sources, wool classing tables, bale stencils, wool bin, lectern, killing gallows and platforms, meat chopping blocks, and other fittings and furnishings. In addition to one of the most extensive grey box forests on private land in Victoria, the *Eynesbury* volcanic plain also supports remnant stands of casuarina. While the eastern, Eynesbury Road, portion of a composite dry stone wall and post and two-rail fence has been demolished, an extensive part of this wall passes through the northern portion of the grey-box forest in an east-west direction.

Eynesbury, Eynesbury Road, Eynesbury, is aesthetically and architecturally significant at the State level (AHC E1). The homestead complex, consisting of the homestead, the formal garden, staff quarters, stables and quadrangle, is of architectural and aesthetic significance as a complete planned precinct of buildings of the same period, and of high integrity. The *Eynesbury* homestead itself is of architectural significance as a distinctive large bluestone building, Colonial Georgian in character and constructed in two phases. It is also of architectural significance as one of the most important works of Melbourne architect Guyon Purchas, together with the Camperdown homesteads at *Wirridgil* (1883-4) and additions at *Purrumbete* (1901). The *Eynesbury* homestead formal garden and ha-ha wall is of aesthetic significance as a rare and intact example of a formal garden design, which integrates the axial design of the homestead with a spoked path pattern and a ha-ha wall. The trees of the inner homestead form a strong aesthetic link with the greater pastoral landscape of the outer property and are an essential part of the garden's layout and understanding. The fully executed ha-ha wall is a rare example, with a specially created ditch and affiliated retaining wall, allowing unimpeded views from the homestead. The prefabricated Myer houses are historically and architecturally important as rare and highly intact examples of one of the many prefabricated houses constructed by the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation and marketed by the Myer Emporium during the world-wide shortage of housing following the Second World War.

Eynesbury, Eynesbury Road, Eynesbury, is historically significant at the State level (AHC A4, B2) as a large and highly intact rural estate which has operated continually as a working pastoral and farming concern from the squatting era in Victoria until the turn of the twenty-first century. It is also illustrative of the pastoral industry which once dominated the Melton district. Physical evidence of many phases of development of the property are evident, the most significant being the phase following the separation of the property from the parent station *Exford*. This resulted in the homestead complex of the 1870s and 1880s and a number of ancillary buildings and structures. Some other individual features and works, such as the cutting and road to Staughton's bridge, the timber header tank, and the ha-ha wall are of particular historical interest. Most of the buildings and works on the property are important as representative rather than as outstanding examples of their type and contribute to *Eynesbury* as an exceptional representation of pastoralism since the early years of European settlement in Victoria. Accordingly the buildings and works associated with the twentieth century, which constitutes by far the longest era of *Eynesbury's* history, are also an integral part of the heritage significance of the place. This includes, in particular, the highly intact

early and mid twentieth century shearing complex, which is of Local historical significance. The mid twentieth century shed and other improvements are also expressive of the rural investment which resulted from the 1950s wool boom. The c.1930s grain silos are expressive of the changes in rural land-use at the beginning of the twentieth century, and also the later change from hay to grain farming in the district; they are of Local historical significance. The *Eynesbury* homestead complex is also of historical significance for its long association with the Staughton family, one of the largest owners of freehold land in colonial Victoria, only rivalled in this region by the Clarke and Chirnside families.

The Staughton family were residents who played major roles in the local community. Samuel Staughton contributed to the community through his role on the first Road Board (1862), as a member of the Shire Council (President in 1867), as a magistrate and Justice of the Peace and finally as a Member of the Legislative Assembly for Bourke from 1883 until his death in 1901. From 1947 until its current redevelopment it has been associated with the Baillieus, a prominent twentieth century business and political family. The grey box forest on *Eynesbury*, which constitutes the most extensive vestige of a forest which once covered a broad part of western Melton Shire, is also of cultural and historical significance, having:- been a formidable natural barrier to early surveyed roads; provided shelter for brigands during the gold-rushes; created ancilliary income for farmers; and after the construction of the Melbourne to Ballarat Railway, created a significant firewood and fence-post industry at Melton. Similarly, the stands of casuarina on the *Eynesbury* volcanic plain are a vestige of a species which originally (with the volcanic eruption points themselves) was the only remarkable feature of the Keilor-Werribee Plain, but which is now virtually absent east of the Werribee River having been consumed for fuel and, during the gold-rush years, fodder for bullock teams.

Eynesbury, Eynesbury Road, Eynesbury, is scientifically significant at the State level (AHC C2). It has potential to provide information regarding the pastoral settlement and development of Victoria, and considerable potential to educate regarding rural history.

Eynesbury, Eynesbury Road, Eynesbury, is socially significance at the Local level (AHC G1). It is widely recognised in the Shire of Melton as the major mansion and pastoral estate associated with the pastoral foundation of the municipality.

Overall, *Eynesbury*, Eynesbury Road, Eynesbury, is of State heritage significance.



