

Heritage Overlay No.: 109
Citation No.: 341
Place: Old Rockbank Middle Road
(Cobblestone Road)

Other Names of Place: Neale Road
Location: In public reserve, in The Bridges, Caroline Springs
Critical Dates: Route likely to date to pre-gold period;
construction of surface: unknown but likely to date
to the early twentieth century.
Existing Heritage Listings: None
Recommended Level of Significance: LOCAL



Statement of Significance:

The Old Rockbank Middle Road (Cobblestone Road) cobblestone paving is significant as a scarce surviving remnant of early composite Telford and Macadam style stone road construction techniques, in use until the early decades of the twentieth century, after which developments they were superseded by asphalt and the advent of motorised traffic. Probably built in the early years of the twentieth century, the road is of a style that appears to have been particularly associated with the western and northern volcanic outskirts of Melbourne; the dozen or so remnants of such paving in Melton Shire would appear to be one of the larger collections of such roads. Unlike most of these roads, Old Rockbank Middle Road (Cobblestone Road) is not subject to threat from future roadworks.

The Old Rockbank Middle Road (Cobblestone Road) road paving is historically significant at a LOCAL level (AHC A.4, B2, D2). The route itself was likely part of an early alternative route used by squatters situated on the Kororoit Creek to the lower crossings of the Maribyrnong River. It was formally proclaimed in the Parish of Derrimut survey c.1852. In the late nineteenth century all the land along the road was route acquired as part of the massive Clarke Rockbank pastoral estate, and it is unlikely that there would have been any need for a paved road until the break-up and sale of the estate for farming allotments in the first decade of the twentieth century. The making of 'knapped' roads (as they were known) was common practice in the Shire around this time.

The Old Rockbank Middle Road (Cobblestone Road) road paving is scientifically significant at a LOCAL level (AHC C2). It is one of a small group of early knapped or cobbled basalt roads that survive in the Shire of Melton. These roads have the potential to be a significant repository of knowledge regarding early road construction, not only in the locality, but in Victoria. Old Rockbank Middle Road (Cobblestone Road) was identified as being of potentially high scientific and historical significance in an early study, and has since been subject to more detailed archaeological studies and conservation. It demonstrates a construction technique that is today both rare and, despite its relatively recent date, primitive in style. The volcanic areas to the west and north of Melbourne appear to have had a particular prominence in variations of this Telford style of construction, in which basalt was hand-hewn into rectangular shapes that were then wedged into a prepared earth foundation, with larger basalt blocks as edges, the whole being covered with crushed rock or 'metal'. While over a dozen of these roads were identified in this study, Old Rockbank Middle Road (Cobblestone Road) is one of only two that would appear not to be under threat of destruction by future road works. It is also the only one which has been subject to archaeological investigation, and has the potential to provide comparison with other stone based roads that may be subject to similar investigation in the future.