

HO 202 – She Oak Hill Dry Stone Wall Precinct

Melton Dry Stone Walls Survey Nos:	(See description)
Location:	Beatys Road, Ryans Road, and Diggers Rest – Coimadai Road, Diggers Rest
Critical Dates:	Construction and repair of dry stone walls: c.1850s-1920s
Existing Heritage Listings:	HO14, HO15, HO37, HO39, HO40, HO50
Recommended Level of Significance:	LOCAL



Statement of Significance:

The She-Oak Hill Dry Stone Wall Precinct is significant as a collection of characteristic and highly intact dry stone walls situated between two different types of volcanic eruption points; in an intact, rural setting in which the unbroken lengths of stone wall remain as a unifying feature of the landscape. The cultural landscape also features two substantial bluestone mid nineteenth century homesteads and associated farm complexes, and two other heritage dwellings dating to the 1880s and the 1920s. The walls are significant for their length and range of all-stone and composite types. It demonstrates nineteenth century rural settlement patterns and a now largely superseded type of fence construction, and has high potential to provide both research and educational information regarding mid-nineteenth and early twentieth century fencing practices within Victoria.

The She-Oak Hill Dry Stone Wall Precinct is historically significant at the LOCAL level (AHC A3, A4, B2, D2). It includes some of the major walls in the Shire, in terms of length and variety of wall types; the longest dry stone wall in the Shire (3.8 kilometres); high and long all-stone walls; one of the two best surviving examples of the most common style of wall in the Shire (composite stone and post-and-wire fences) composite walls (some with remnants of early post and rail tops); and walls with different stone types, ranging from the typical Melton heavy round lava

basalt, to a rare red hued wall with angled vesicular fieldstone near the She-Oak Hill scoria cone. The precinct demonstrates, in the arrangement of walled enclosures and paddocks, early farming settlement patterns of Melbourne's western plains. The cultural landscape includes four dwellings of heritage significance, ranging from substantial nineteenth century bluestone homesteads (Pinewood and Glencoe, HO 37 and HO 14), rare in the Shire; to a Federation era timber cottage (Angus Downs, HO 15); and an interwar timber bungalow (Kororoit Park Stud, HO 39). The precinct is historically significant for its association with the pioneer settler John Beaty and his family, who built (or commissioned) the construction of all but one of the walls.

The She-Oak Hill Dry Stone Wall Precinct is aesthetically significant at the LOCAL level (AHC E1). The dry stone walls which cross the landscape in regular enclosure patterns, make a fundamental statement about human interaction with the volcanic landscape of which they are a part. The precinct has views of two volcanic sources: the more vertical and conical shape of She Oak Hill to the south; and the broader shape of Aitkens Hill, a 'lava shield' volcano to the north. While the most publicly accessible walls are not high or dramatic, their original rural context is intact, ensuring that the walls are a prominent feature of the cultural landscape. The precinct affords beautiful pastoral views of farms, walls and wooded hills in the distance in undulating terrain, which contrasts to all the other very flat precincts. Numerous individual walls, including Walls R309 and R297 have excellent sculptural qualities and are expressive of the skilled craftsmanship of their builders.

The She-Oak Hill Dry Stone Wall Precinct is scientifically significant at the LOCAL level (A1, C2). The walls in the precinct demonstrate two different type of volcanic eruption points: She Oak Hill (a 'scoria hill' which emitted a more irregular vesicular stone); and Aitkens Hill (a 'lava shield' volcano which emitted a heavy round lava basalt). The walls also

have potential to yield research information regarding nineteenth century rural settlement patterns and farm management, and ways of life on Melbourne’s western plains. In particular they have high potential for research of mid nineteenth century wall construction techniques, and the early twentieth century modification of these for changing farming practices.

The She-Oak Hill Dry Stone Wall Precinct is socially significant at the LOCAL level (AHC G1). The precinct has the potential to educate the community in regard to wall construction techniques, and also nineteenth century farm management, settlement patterns, and ways of life.

Overall, the She-Oak Hill Dry Stone Wall Precinct is of LOCAL heritage significance.

The following extract from Council’s GIS records all the walls in the She-Oak Hill Precinct (Blackhill Road):

HO202	
Wall No.	Nearest Road
R194	Blackhill Road
R195	Blackhill Road
R196	Ryans Lane
R245	Diggers Rest Coimadai Road
R246	Blackhill Road
R247	Blackhill Road
R248	Blackhill Road
R301	Blackhill Road
R302	Blackhill Road
R303	Blackhill Road
R304	Blackhill Road
R305	Blackhill Road
R307	Blackhill Road
R308	Blackhill Road
R37	Blackhill Road