

Citation No. 1 - Mount Cottrell Dry Stone Wall Precinct

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| Melton Dry Stone Walls Survey Nos: | (See description) |
| Location: | Mount Cottrell |
| Critical Dates: | Construction of Mount Cottrell Road walls, c.mid-late 1850s; construction of Wall F96, c.1876; construction of wall F100, c.1879 |
| Existing Heritage Listings: | HO111, HO104, HO110, HO105 |
| Recommended Level of Significance: | LOCAL |



Statement of Significance:

The Mount Cottrell Dry Stone Wall Precinct is a group of characteristic and distinctive Shire of Melton walls built c.late 1850s to 1870s. The precinct is significant at the LOCAL level for its contributory association with the geologically and historically significant Mount Cottrell; for its demonstration of rural settlement patterns; for its association with Victoria's seminal pastoral industry and in particular the Clarke family; for its association with several small farms whose wall styles and patterns contrast to those of Clarke; for its other historical associations, including post-contact conflict between the native and invading populations, gold-rush land speculators, Melton's first pound, and the issue of closed roads on pastoral estates; for its demonstration of skilled craftsmanship; and for its potential to provide both research and educative information regarding nineteenth century farming and pastoral practices on Melbourne's western plains. The precinct has significance for the views to and from the summit of Mount Cottrell over endangered volcanic grasslands, and remnant bushland to the west.

The Mount Cottrell Dry Stone Wall Precinct is historically significant at the LOCAL level (AHC A3, A4, B2, D2). It is associated with Mount Cottrell, a landmark for the Port Phillip explorers, named after one of the members of the Port Phillip Association, and was later infamous for the site of the murder of Charles Franks. The precinct demonstrates, in the arrangement of walls and farms, the early pastoral and farming settlement patterns of Melbourne's western plains. It is significant as probably the best collection of walls expressing the Shire's nineteenth century pastoral industry, and in particular the Rockbank station, part of the estate of WJT Clarke, and his son Sir WJ Clarke. Wall F96 is the most substantial dry stone wall associated with WJT Clarke. The Mount Cottrell Road walls are of historical significance for their association with George Scarborough, and the first pound in the Melton district which operated between 1854-57.

The precinct is also expressive of the role of gold-rush land speculators in the early development of the Shire; the walls constitute the only remaining evidence of the subdivision patterns established by these speculators. Most of the precinct's walls are composite stone and post & wire, and express the historical diversity of dry stone wall construction in Victoria, and are representative of the dominant type of wall in Melbourne's west. The partly dry-stone-wall lined dam on Mt Cottrell Road is a characteristic feature of the Shire of Melton.

The Mount Cottrell Dry Stone Wall Precinct is aesthetically significant at the LOCAL level (AHC E1). The commanding views from Faulkners Road and the summit of Mount Cottrell across the grassland plains to Port Phillip, is evocative of the C19th cultural landscape which drew settlers to the area. 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. Some of the individual walls, in particular Wall F96, on Faulkners Road, have excellent sculptural qualities, and are expressive of the skilled craftsmanship of their builders. Wall F96 is the most finely built and intact all-stone wall of orthodox construction remaining in the Shire. The broad slopes of Mount Cottrell are a dominating feature of the plains landscape as far away as Tarneit to the south and Melton to the north-west. The volcanic grassland plains and the dry stone walls preserve flora and fauna which is regionally rare and endangered. The remnant areas of bushland to the west in Bushes paddocks and Pinkerton forest, in combination with the grasslands and dry stone walls, preserve elements of the C19th pastoral landscape which is becoming increasingly rare.

The Mount Cottrell Dry Stone Wall Precinct is scientifically significant at the LOCAL level (A1, C2). The precinct demonstrates the volcanic origin of the landscape, and is associated with Mount Cottrell, which is the best example in Victoria of a lava shield volcano with a lava cone forming its summit. The walls have the potential to yield research information regarding wall construction techniques, nineteenth century rural settlement patterns and farm management, on Melbourne's western plains. The remnant volcanic grasslands and bushland retain landscapes which are under threat and preserve flora and fauna which is increasingly rare and threatened.

The Mount Cottrell 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 on Melbourne's western plains. Both Wall F96, and the former Scarborough farm complex on Mount Cottrell Road were identified as being of the highest significance in a pioneering 1990 heritage study of dry stone walls in Melbourne's west.

Overall, the Mount Cottrell Dry Stone Wall Precinct is of LOCAL significance.

The following extract from Council's GIS provides a list of all the walls in the Mount Cottrell precinct:

| WALL NO | NEAREST ROAD |
|---------|---------------------|
| C185 | Greigs Road |
| C49 | Mount Cottrell Road |
| C50 | Greigs Road |
| C51 | Mount Cottrell Road |
| C52 | Faulkners Road |
| C55 | Greigs Road |
| C56 | Faulkners Road |
| C57 | Faulkners Road |
| C58 | Greigs Road |
| C59 | Greigs Road |
| C60 | Faulkners Road |
| C61 | Greigs Road |
| C62 | Faulkners Road |
| C63 | Faulkners Road |
| C64 | Harrison Road |
| C65 | Greigs Road |
| C66 | Greigs Road |
| C67 | Greigs Road |
| F100 | Faulkners Road |
| F101 | Faulkners Road |
| F102 | Mount Cottrell Road |
| F103 | Mount Cottrell Road |
| F104 | Mount Cottrell Road |
| F105 | Mount Cottrell Road |
| F106 | Mount Cottrell Road |
| F107 | Mount Cottrell Road |
| F108 | Mount Cottrell Road |
| F109 | Mount Cottrell Road |
| F110 | Boundary Road |

| | |
|------|----------------------|
| F111 | Faulkners Road |
| F113 | Mount Cottrell Road |
| F112 | Mount Cottrell Road |
| F114 | Mount Cottrell Road |
| F182 | Boundary Road |
| F183 | Boundary Road |
| F184 | Boundary Road |
| F93 | Downing Street |
| F95 | Riding Boundary Road |
| F96 | Faulkners Road |
| F97 | Middle Road |
| F98 | Faulkners Road |
| F99 | Faulkners Road |
| G90 | Downing Street |
| G91 | Downing Street |
| G92 | Downing Street |
| K154 | Greigs Road |
| K157 | Mount Cottrell Road |
| K158 | Mount Cottrell Road |
| K159 | Mount Cottrell Road |
| K160 | Mount Cottrell Road |
| K162 | Mount Cottrell Road |
| K163 | Mount Cottrell Road |
| K167 | Mount Cottrell Road |
| K168 | Boundary Road |
| K173 | Mount Cottrell Road |
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| | |

Description:

The centre of the precinct, and the source of the fieldstone used in the construction of its walls, is Mount Cottrell, one of about 400 inactive eruption points that have been identified on Victoria's western volcanic plains. Although a very broad 'shield' volcano, like many of the volcanoes on these plains, which stretch from the Darebin Creek to near the South Australian border, Mount Cottrell lends a dramatic and distinctive character to an otherwise flat landscape. The precinct is characterized by the extensive views of grasslands to the south and east and rare remnant grey box forest to the west, which follow the pattern of lava flows.

Mount Cottrell itself was built up by a succession of lava flows over its life. These broad flows of lava radiated from Mt Cottrell in all directions, the longest being to the south. The lava flows changed the drainage lines and caused the present courses of the Werribee River to its west, and the Kororoit Creek to its north. The eastern extent of these lava flows is an unnamed gully which marks the boundary between the Mt Cottrell and the (younger) Mt Atkinson flows.¹ Its tongues of lava were effusive and slowly cooling, producing a denser basalt, in contrast to explosive eruptions, or quickly cooling flows, which produced a more vesicular scoria or tuff. While the vesicularity of the basalt extruded from Mount Cottrell varies, the dominant surface stone is a grey basalt,² which is evident in the round dense stones that feature in the dry stone walls of the precinct.

1 Stewart, G, 'The Newer Volcanics lava field between Deer Park and the Werribee River', *Geological Survey of Victoria, Unpublished Report 1977/26, 1977, pp.4, 7.*

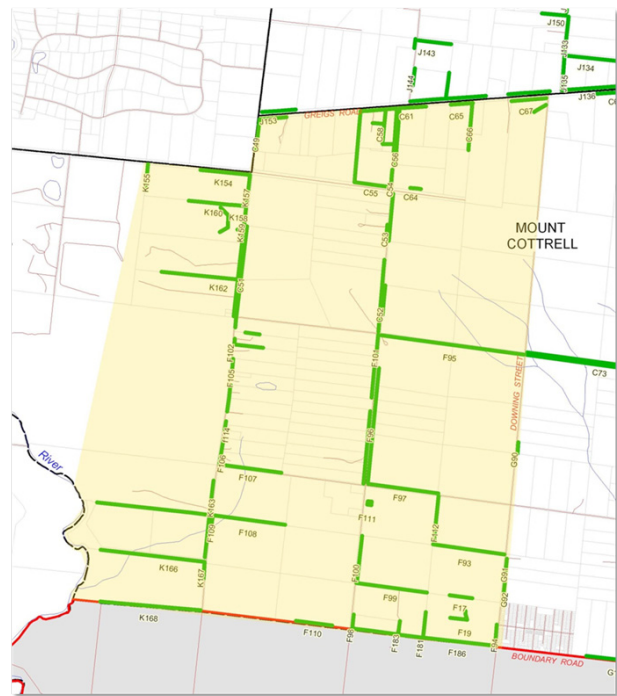
2 *ibid*

The British surveyors divided the extensive plains into square mile allotments, and created roads on a massive grid. Most of the area was eventually incorporated into the Clarke's vast Rockbank pastoral estate, which closed off many of these roads. Some (eg Faulkners Road) have since been opened, but the precinct includes several that are still closed. These roads – Middle Road and part of Greigs Road – intersect Faulkners Road, and are marked by dry stone walls.

Both Faulkners Road and Mount Cottrell Roads are aligned north-south over the lower slopes of Mount Cottrell, providing long views to the east and west. The views from Faulkners Road across the still essentially undeveloped plains of Port Phillip, to the looming skyline of the city whose creation was the consequence of these same sheep pastures, is an integral part of the cultural landscape. The grasslands to the west and south of Mount Cottrell are now rare and have been identified for protection. To the west of Mount Cottrell are two areas of remnant bush, which also have dry stone wall structures within them.

The precinct comprises most of the walls on Faulkners Road and some of those on Mount Cottrell Road, Some walls on the north side of Boundary Road and some to the south of Greigs Road. In common with most old dry stone walls on Victoria's western volcanic plains, while often retaining sections in near original condition, most walls are generally in a deteriorating condition. However there are two important exceptions in this precinct, which contain walls in good-excellent condition: the wall on the east side of Faulkner Road (Wall F96), and the former Scarborough farm, or the Mount Cottrell Road Stock Yards and Ruins complex.

Mount Cottrell dry stone wall precinct



History:

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

Historically, Mount Cottrell was a landmark for early explorers of Port Phillip. It was one of the points marked on Batman's plans, and was named after one of his sponsors, Port Phillip Association member Anthony Cottrell.¹

Charles Franks

Mt Cottrell was one of the early landmarks of John Batman in his trek from the Bellarine Peninsula across the area north of Melbourne and then back to the Yarra River in 1835. The volcanic peak assumed the name of Dr Cottrell, a member of the Port Phillip Association, to whom this area was later allotted by the Association.

As the scene of the murder of squatter Charles Franks and his shepherd by Aborigines in early July 1836 Mt

1 It is shown on 1835 maps associated with Port Phillip Association members JH Wedge and JT Gellibrand (JS Duncan, 'The Port Phillip Association Maps', *The Globe*, No.32, 1989); Governor Bourke referred to it in his journal account of his trip around Port Phillip in March 1837 (M Cannon (ed), *Historical Records of Victoria*, Vol.1, Victoria Government Printer, Melbourne, 1981, p.105).

Cotterell was to become notorious in the fledgling Melbourne settlement. Historians of early Port Phillip, Robert Spreadborough and Hugh Anderson, mapped the location of Franks' station on Faulkner's Road at the present dry stone walls.² Franks' murder appears to have been a watershed in Port Phillip's early European-Aboriginal relationships. Franks had only been on his sheep-run for a few weeks when he and his shepherd were found killed by tomahawk blows to the head; their supplies had been pilfered. The incident inflamed the community; the whole of the fledgling Melbourne settlement attending their funeral.³ For some time 'Mt Franks' was an alternative name for 'Mt Cotteril'.⁴

On 28th July, prominent squatter George MacKillop advised the Colonial Secretary that unless the Government intervened, he feared 'there will be a war of extermination at Port Phillip, like what took place here some years ago.'⁵ Although Spreadborough and Anderson map Franks' station on Faulkner's Road, there is no documentary source provided for this location.⁶ Given that Franks was only at Mt Cotteril for a few weeks the exact site of the murders may never be known, beyond having taken place 'near Mount Cotteril on the Werribee River'.⁷

2 Spreadborough, R, Anderson, H, *Victorian Squatters* (Red Rooster Press, Ascot Vale, 1983), map.

3 Anderson, H (ed), Gurner, HF *Chronicle of Port Phillip Now the Colony of Victoria from 1770 to 1840* (Red Rooster Press, Melbourne, 1978), p.30

4 See, eg, CPO Map Rail 19 (March 1856)

5 Canon, M (ed.) *Historical Records of Victoria, Vol.2A, The Aborigines of Port Phillip, 1835-1839* (VGPO, Melbourne, 1982), p.40

6 Robert Spreadborough died in the mid-1990s, and Hugh Anderson does not know the location of the Franks murder.

7 George Smith, in Cannon, *Historical Records of Victoria, Vol.2A*, p.43. This is the best description of the general location of the site by someone who had actually seen it.

Fencing in Nineteenth Century Rural Victoria

• Fencing the Wilderness, 1850s-1870s

The majority of dry stone walls in Victoria appear to have been built in the 30 year period from the 1850s to the 1880s.

In 1826 rural affairs commentator James Atkinson reported that he knew of no example of dry stone walling having been erected in the colony of New South Wales.⁸ Initially pastoralists employed shepherds to look after sheep. They guided the sheep to pasture during the day, and in the evening returned them to folds, constructed of wooden hurdles or brush fences, near their huts (or outstations). There are several dry stone walls on Melton's Kororoit Creek that are thought to have been associated with early pastoralists: an outstation associated with Yuille at Caroline Springs, and the remnants of a wall that are thought to have been associated with a shepherd's enclosure.⁹ Other fencing was used on the squatters' homesteads:- the 'home paddock' (likely for the squatters' precious horses) and the 'cultivation [or kitchen] garden'. Early fences were also required to separate stock for breeding purposes. These fences were usually of post & rail, vertical timber slabs or other primitive paling material.¹⁰ (However at *Greenhills* in Toolern Vale there are some remains of a dry stone wall that would appear to be the remnants of an original homestead garden.¹¹)

Two major and related events in the early 1850s radically changed this situation. Firstly, the exodus to the gold-rushes made it difficult and expensive for squatters to retain labour for shepherding. And secondly, the extensive survey, subdivision and sale of Crown land in the early 1850s provided security of tenure to pastoralists, and incentive for them to invest in major improvements, including permanent fences on their stations. Pastoralists were also encouraged to fence their land to ensure that neighbouring farmers didn't allow their stock to stray upon the open expanses of their stations.

8 Kerr, JS, 'Fencing, a brief account of the development of fencing in Australia', *Australasian Society for Historical Archaeology Newsletter*, Vol. 14.No.1, March 1984, pp.9-16.

9 Melton Heritage Study Place Nos. 467 and 81.

10 Kerr, *loc cit*; Allan Willingham, 'The Dry Stone Walls in the Corangamite Region: A Brief History', in Corangamite Arts Council Inc, *If These Walls Could Talk, Report of the Corangamite Dry Stone Walls Conservation Project*, Terang, 1995, p.44

11 Melton Heritage Study, Place No.055

Nevertheless, until the 1860s extensive fencing of properties remained the exception rather than the rule. The first boundary fences in the Barrabool Hills of Victoria were only erected in 1854, and boundary and paddock fencing 'only gathered momentum after the mid 1850s'.¹² This was no doubt due to the extensive sale of Crown Land as freehold in the 1850s, as well as the increasing availability of capital due to the gold boom, and the increasing availability of labour including professional stone wallers as alluvial gold declined in the late 1850s.

Slowly, fences began to replace shepherds on the pastoral estates. Early maps of Melton Shire show that pastoralists built walls and fences relatively sparsely – only on property boundaries and to enclose huge paddocks (about 5-10 square kilometres in the south part of Clarke's Rockbank estate).¹³ In dramatic contrast the same historical maps (and the mapping survey undertaken as part of this Study) show concentrated patterns of walled paddocks established on farms in the same areas at the same time. The creation of small paddocks enabled mixed farming, by securing crops and gardens from stock, and managing stock for breeding. This Study shows that, in the south of the Shire, virtually all of these fences were dry stone walls. Dry stone walls were also used to protect the homestead from stock, to construct stockyards, fowl houses and pigpens, and possibly, on a few of the larger farms, to provide aesthetic effect.¹⁴

Given the expense of establishing a farm from nothing in a wilderness, and the experience of many small farmers as agricultural labourers before coming to Australia, it is almost certain that the walls on all but the largest farms would have been constructed by farmers themselves rather than by professional wallers. For example, general hand William Ison and his wife arrived on a Werribee farm in the mid 1850s, and found there a small wooden cottage and a young German in charge,

'who had already done some clearing of the stones which covered the land ... We set to, and cleared about 10 acres, and had it fenced in with stones by the next sowing time.'¹⁵ The quality of wall construction would have depended on the experience of the farmers and their seasonal hands at the craft. William Robinson who settled in the Tarneit area in 1872, was a stonemason who turned his skills to fieldstone, building a house (which does not survive) of the material and numerous fences (some of which do survive along Robinsons Road).

The outbreak of the highly contagious sheep disease, 'scab', which reached epidemic proportions in the 1850s, hastened enclosure of the pastoral estates.¹⁶ Western District squatter Neil Black quickly enclosed his Glenormiston run, and in 1854 George Russell ordered five miles of wire: '...the importance of fencing is becoming every year more apparent.'¹⁷

Likewise, the appearance of pluro-pneumonia in Australian cattle in the early 1860s impressed cattle-men of the need to isolate their properties from travelling or straying stock.¹⁸ That 'dreadful disease' also encouraged the erection of property fences by Melton dairy farmers (and was responsible for less use of local Commons by Melton's farmers).¹⁹

The construction of fencing that was encouraged by sheep scab and cattle pleuro pneumonia was also fostered by legislation. At the beginning of the pastoral period in Victoria, common law held that, generally, a landowner was under no obligation to construct or maintain boundary fences, or fences adjoining a public road. However, as a result of Australia's rapidly expanding pastoral industry, trespass of stock, and the need for security, the Victoria's *Fences Statute 1865* gave landowners the right to claim equal contribution towards the construction or repair of boundary fences from the owners of adjoining lands.²⁰

12 Kerr, *loc cit*

13 Shire Map Series (1892); Army Ordnance Map, 1916: 'Sunbury'.

14 Alan Marshall, asking an old waller why the walls on a particular property were so high, was told that ostensibly the reason was to keep steers in (they jumped fences), but the real reason was 'just so that he could say he had the best walls in the Western District, the biggest and the best, and bugger you.' (cited in Corangamite Arts Council, 1995, p.114). On Melbourne's western plains district however, such finely constructed walls were generally associated with formal gardens on only the largest properties, such as the Ha Ha walls on the Eynesbury (Melton Shire) and Werribee Park (Wyndham Shire) pastoral estates, or Greystones (Moorabool Shire).

15 Murray, E, *The Plains of Iramoo*, Henwood & Dancy, Geelong, 1974, p.111. (Murray notes that in 1974 these walls were still standing.)

16 Kerr, *loc cit*

17 Willingham, *op cit*, p.45

18 Kerr, *loc cit*

19 Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 1864, p.94 ; John Chandler, Michael Canon, *Forty Years in the Wilderness* (Loch Haven, Main Ridge, 1990), p.175

20 Lawlink: New South Wales Law Reform Commission website: 'Report 59 (1988) – Community Law Reform Program: Dividing Fences'; Parliament of Victoria website: Law Reform Committee, 'Review of the Fences Act 1968'

By 1876 the presence of 'substantial stone walls' appears to have been hallmark of a good farm in the Melton district, the *Australasian's* 'Travelling Reporter' making sure to note these on the farms of Ralph Parkinson, George Missen, John Moylan and Isaac Gidney.²¹ However little is known of dry stone wallers who worked in the Shire at the time: Irish brothers John and George Funston worked in the Toolern Vale area from the 1850s; Patrick Connor worked on Mount Aitken in the 1860s; and Dick (the mason) Mitchell, and Arcoll (Arkell) worked in the Mount Cottrell area before 1872.²²

• Types of Fencing in the Nineteenth Century

The great variety and combination of nineteenth century fencing arose 'as much from material shortages and the need to use what was procurable as from a desire to improve the utility and durability of fencing.'²³ As is the case with the rest of the Shire, most of the walls in the Mount Cottrell precinct are 'composite' stone and post & wire, rather than all-stone.

The *Fences Statute 1874* lists numerous types of fences, including 'walls' (stone walls) and 'combination' type fences. Walls that divided properties had to be a minimum of 4 feet high (1.22 metres), with a base of 'not less than 2 feet wide at the bottom', and '9 inches at the top.'²⁴ Although the specifications for road boundary fences were not given (the Crown being exempt from the legislation) it could be expected that the walls on these public boundaries would be at least as high as those that divided neighbouring properties.

Post and rail fences were the most common early fence type in Australia, no doubt due to the prevalence of forests and woodlands, in contrast to stony land, across Victoria. They appeared early and were prominent in the study area. In 1854 William Westgarth, on his way to the goldfields Royal Commission in Ballarat, recorded that he 'struck west through post and rail fences onto the Keilor Plains.'²⁵ By the 1860s timber fencing, probably

from the Grey Box forest in the west and south-west of the Shire, was common in the vicinity of Melton. But as local farmer John Chandler recorded, such fencing was prone to loss in the bushfires that swept south from the ranges over the plains.²⁶ Even in the volcanic area near Aitkens Hill to the north of the Shire, nearly 80% of squatter John Aitken's fencing was either 'post & rail' (either 2 rail, the most common, or 3 rail), or 'post & 2 rails with (2 or 3) wires', or 'post & rail with 5 foot palings'. The balance was 'stone walls.'²⁷ These figures might reflect squatters' early preference for timber fencing, and an early dearth of professional dry stone walling skills, not remedied until after the gold rushes. In 1868 on the same property Henry Beattie erected much more stone walling, but also built nearly twice as much '3-rail fence' in the same year.²⁸

Post and wire fences were first introduced into Victoria in the 1850s, but the price of the metal posts (which could often not go down into the dry hard ground in Victoria) made them 'exceedingly expensive.'²⁹ The very thick and soft 'black bull wire' was soon superseded by galvanised steel wires which, with droppers to keep the wire stable, allowing greater distance between fence posts, reducing the costs.³⁰ With progressive improvements, including local production of wire, use of timber posts, and winding and straining devices, by at least the early 1870s wire was the cheapest type of fence.³¹ The invention of barbed wire in the 1870s, and its widespread use in Victoria in the 1880s meant that it could secure cattle as well as sheep, and it became the standard fence type from this time.³²

21 The *Australasian*, October 1876.

22 Bilszta, JA, 'Dry Stone Wall: Faulkners Road, Mt Cottrell, Shire of Melton', 9/9/1990, unpublished paper

23 Kerr, *loc cit*

24 The Fences Statute 1874 (Fences Amendment Act, November 1873), Clause 4 (i-xi). Other types of early fencing are described in Michael Cannon's *Life in the Country: Australia in the Victorian Age: 2*, Nelson, West Melbourne, 1978, pp.89-90; and Graham Condah's *Of the Hut I Buildded*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1988, p.89.

25 Lack, J, Ford, O, 'Melbourne's Western Region: An Introductory History' (Melbourne's Living Museum of the West Inc,

Melbourne Western Region Commission, 1986), p.27

26 Chandler, J, *Forty Years in the Wilderness*, Loch Haven, 1990, p.174

27 Map, 'Index of Fences' on John Aitken's Mount Aitken property (after Crown Land sales). PROV 460/P0/39365. (The stone walls would appear not to survive.)

28 Beattie, Steward K, *The Odd Good Year: Early Scots to Port Phillip, Northern Australia, Gap, Gisborne and Beyond*, Southwood Press, Marrickville, 1999, p.63

29 Willingham, *op cit*, pp.45-6

30 Cannon, 1978, *op cit*, pp.89-91

31 Survey of 21 Selectors in the Holden – Mount Cottrell districts.

32 Willingham, *op cit*, p.46; Kerr, *loc cit*; Cannon, 1978, *loc cit*

• Dry Stone Walls

In 1856 a government agricultural reporter travelling through the eastern part of Melton Shire (the Parish of Maribyrnong) commented that: 'A few good stone fences the only improvement worth noting.'³³

A dry stone wall was the best solution: - 'Where stone was abundant, timber scarce, transport of fencing material expensive, skilled labour available, and where cheaper alternatives were unavailable.'³⁴ From about the mid-late 1850s, when freehold ownership exploded and the price of labour declined, and through the early 1860s when the price of labour remained cheap, the labour-intensive construction of stone walls remained very competitive.

Stone walls were built wherever stony ground made them possible, or necessary. While most farmers built their own walls to clear stony ground and manage stock and crops, pastoralists could afford professional wallers.³⁵ In the mid 1850s brothers John and George Funston, stone wallers and farm labourers from Ireland, are known to have been erecting walls on the Mount Aitken and Gisborne Park estates.³⁶ The Mount Aitken station accounts in 1868 showing the employment of a John Starkie for four weeks to help Henry gather and cart stones, and the engagement of 'Paterick [sic] Connor, Stone Wall Fencer' to erect 34 chains of stone walling at the very low rate of only 8 shillings per chain.

The popularity of stone walls with farmers is evident in the Lands Department files relating to the 1860s Selection Acts, which record the type, length and price of fencing 'improvements' made by each selector. A detailed examination of 21 selections in the Mount Cottrell, Rockbank, Mount Kororoit and Diggers Rest- Holden areas reveals that stone walling constituted by far the largest proportion (60%) of the 32.3 kilometres of fencing built on those properties by c.1875, despite the fact that it was the most expensive. Post & wire fences, one of the cheapest types of fencing then available, comprised only 6% of all fences erected. Post & rail fences, a little cheaper than the best stone walls,

and a little dearer than the cheapest, constituted 9% of the fences. (Note that many other 'composite' varieties of fences were constructed from these three primary materials. There were also a small number of 'stub' or picket, and 'log' fences.³⁷)

Stone walling resolved two problems: the need to clear the land of rocks, and the need for fencing. Unquestionably, as was the case elsewhere, the key reason for the preference for dry stone walls on Melbourne's western plains by selectors was the need to clear stony land to enable cropping and grazing (dairying).³⁸

Apart from the relatively small areas that were sold under the Selection Acts, there were many other areas of dry stone walling in Melton Shire. It is estimated that there were 23 miles of fencing on the Moylan brothers' Mt Kororoit property by 1876, and from the extensive walls that survive today it is evident that much of this was dry stone wall construction.³⁹ Property sale advertisements in the local paper suggest that the properties on the Keilor Plain east of Toolern Creek were almost entirely walled.⁴⁰ Advertisements for stone wallers in the Buttlejork, Diggers Rest and Rockbank areas appeared regularly until 1890. Between Toolern Vale and Diggers Rest the Beaty family built many kilometres of medium sized stone walls along boundaries, and a few larger walls inside their properties for stock. Other walls, including one of substantial composition (on the former Campbells' *Toolern Park* property), are scattered lightly around Toolern Vale. The highest concentration of walls is situated in the southern plains of the Shire: the 1850s small farming communities of Mt Cottrell and Truganina, and the paddock and boundary fences of WJT Clarke's *Rockbank* station.

33 Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 'Statistics of Victoria for 1856', Appendix No.1, p.46

34 Vines, G, 'Comparative Analysis of Dry Stone Walls in Victoria, Australia and Overseas', in Corangamite Arts Council, 1995, op cit, p.56

35 Ann Beggs-Sunter, 'Buninyong and District Community News', Issue 211, August 1996

36 Judith Bilszta, Melton Heritage Study Research, Place No.029 (3/8/2005)

37 Research of PROV VPRS 625 (Selection Act files) for the Keneally, Slattery, Reddan J, Reddan M, Tate, Rhodes C, Rhodes, McKenzie, O'Brien P, McLeod, O'Brien J, Moloney, White, Mangovin, Carrige, Moylan Mary, Moylan Margaret, Parry, Moylan, MP, Moylan T, and Watts selections. This sample is primarily of selectors on stony country, Hannah Watts, in the forest off Chapmans Road Toolern Vale being the only exception; interestingly, the cost of her post & rail fences were half the price of the others, no doubt reflecting the relative proximity of materials, with none of the other properties having ready access to local timber. Another possible bias of the sample is the over-representation of Moylan properties. But it remains a good sample of fences built in stony country in the period late 1860s to mid 1870s.

38 Selectors were in fact obliged under the Selection Acts to cultivate 10% of their land area.

39 *The Australasian*, 28th October 1876

40 Bilszta, 1990, op cit.

According to Vines the dry stone walls of the Keilor-Werribee Plains 'form a reasonably distinct regional style quite different from either the interstate examples or the Western District walls'. This regional style is characterised by:-

*'... walls constructed using the local rounded, smoothly weathered, basalt field-stone of variable size. They are generally fairly low walls, averaging 1.2 metres with a width at the base of an average of 0.83 metres and battered sides on a slope of about 5-10 degrees off the vertical. Coursing is uncommon although coping is almost always found on intact walls and through stones can usually be identified at regular intervals of about one metre. The coping stones are often quite large, rounded boulders of a maximum dimension of 400-500 millimetres. Because of their rounded shape the stones are rarely suited to the close-fitting construction seen on the Western district walls, either for the main part of the wall or the coping. As a result, the rabbit proofing techniques involving close plugging, overhanging coping, or other methods are never found in this region.'*⁴¹

These regular round stones lack interlocking, and often surface friction, and were never the ideal building material. The author of the 1848 'Rural Cyclopaedia' considered round stones objectionable 'as they are ever rolling off'. The small wedge stones which held these round stones in position were easily dislodged.⁴² Similarly, the 'round stone fence' surmounted by turf was described in Loudon's 1857 guide to British agriculture as a 'very indifferent fence', whose only apparent benefit was that it cleared the land of stone and could be built by labourers. It was found to be unstable when built to a standard wall height. Stock could easily dislodge its copings, and 'great trouble and expense are annually required to keep it in repair.'⁴³ Despite this, as can be seen in an apparently scarce example of this type in Corangamite (the Foxhow Road Wall), a sturdy wall of very respectable height could be built by careful selection and coursing of stones, and the use of copestones and extensive plugging.⁴⁴

The Fences Statute's specification of walls to be a

41 Corangamite Arts Council, *op cit*, p.58

42 Willingham, *op cit*, p.41

43 Loudon, JC, *Encyclopaedia of Agriculture*, 5th Edition (Longman Brown Green Longmans and Roberts, London, 1857), p.496

44 Corangamite Arts Council, *op cit*, p.28

minimum 4 feet (1220 mm) high seems to have been the 'average paddock height' for which tenders were called in sheep country.⁴⁵ Walls in cattle country were built higher 'to discourage the cattle from leaning over to reach greener pastures and dislodging coping stones'. While numerous Western District dairying walls are higher, 'walls enclosing cattle were generally at least 1.4 metres (4 feet 7 inches) high.'⁴⁶ This standard also seems to have been applied in Melton, where the Moylan's high walls on Mount Kororoit Farm measure 1400 mm.

Although there is no conclusive evidence of it in Melton Shire, elsewhere boundary walls were built higher than internal walls. Vines states that: 'In almost all the dry stone wall regions in Victoria, the ... most substantial walls are located along the boundaries of properties. Subdivision of properties into fields was evidently a secondary consideration once the property had been fenced. Additional stone walls would be constructed to subdivide the property into paddocks if the field stone was so abundant as to allow these.'⁴⁷ Perkins (whose stone wall education was in Britain) states similarly that: 'Inner boundaries however were not built as high as the boundary fences, which are also known as March Dykes.'⁴⁸

• Composite Walls

In the study area, and Melbourne's western plains area, most of the remnant early fences are a combination of low stone walls with split timber post with wire above (or more rarely, timber rail). Many, perhaps the majority, of 'half walls' in Victoria were constructed because of limited availability of fieldstone.⁴⁹

Peel states what is likely to be the primary reason for their construction:-

'With increasing distance from a timber supply, less timber was used in fence construction and wire fences, or stone walls in the stony country, became more common. Again, where less stone was available, stone

45 Willingham, *op cit*, p.41. (The 1300 mm height was chosen as one of the categories for Study field survey. Almost all of the walls in the Shire had a base width of 700-800 mm.); Corangamite Arts Council, *op cit*, pp.49, 113

46 *ibid*, pp.17, 21, 130; Rod McLellan, 'The Dry Stone Walls of Victoria's Western District', *Historic Environment* Vol 7 No 2, 1989, pp.28-32

47 Corangamite Arts Council, *op cit*, p.60

48 *ibid*, p.130

49 Corangamite Arts Council, *op cit*, p.80

walls and wire fences were combined, with the stone wall portion consisting of anything from a single row of stones to a substantial wall three or more feet high with only one or two wires on top.⁵⁰

For example, says Peel, timber for the Sunbury vicinity was sourced from the Mount Macedon area, but as Sunbury was also at the edge of stony country, split timber, stone and wire were all used, commonly in the same fence.⁵¹ And, as Vines has shown, the 'combination' fencing is also common on the Keilor and Werribee plains.⁵² The reason for part stone wall - part wire fences of the Melton Shire study area relates to the quantity of stone in the area. And so the most typical stone fence of the study area is a vernacular construction which reflects the particular geography and history of the Melton Shire.

Many other of Victoria's composite stone walls would appear to be the remnants of original all-stone walls that were later repaired by part-demolition and incorporation of post & wire fencing, or else just built up to a 'workable height' by the addition of post & wire fencing (perhaps to accommodate a transition from sheep to cattle).⁵³ Mitchell states that 'Stone walls ... have since been electrified or had post and wire worked into their construction'.⁵⁴ Other examples of such walls have been recorded.⁵⁵

Some 'composite' stone walls were definitely not built as such. Farmers sometimes gathered 'floaters' as they appeared, stacking them under fences, making a rubble stone fence, rather than a professionally built 'dry stone wall'. Melton farmer Mary Tolhurst had stone walls on her childhood property, but also tells how, prior to sowing a crop, the men would take the horse and dray and pick up stones and place them along and under the property's post & wire and post and rail fences.⁵⁶

However the construction of half stone walls was not always simply an accidental by-product of the amount

of fieldstone available, or deterioration of original walls, or need to increase wall height, or the need to progressively clear land. An 1861 treatise on fencing by a Scottish manufacturer includes a diagram showing wire fencing on top of stone walls.⁵⁷ And experiments with combining fencing materials to most economic effect were undertaken early in Australia. In 1851 John Learmonth in the Western District erected a boundary fence in which the lowest rail was replaced by a stone dyke (or wall).⁵⁸ It appeared to Learmonth: 'that in some part this would add little to the expense, and at the same time would add to the durability and safety from fires.' Contracts for the same fences were being deliberately let in 1927; where a 'two foot walls with cope stone on a 2'6" base, with barb wire' was built at *Turkeith* near Birregurra.⁵⁹

In the Shire of Melton 'half-stone walls' – with the stone less than 18 inches high – were also built deliberately. The exact reasons are probably lost to time, but present farmers know that they had benefits in terms of preventing sheep crawling under the lower wire, and in preventing draught horses from scratching itch mites in the hairs of their legs.⁶⁰

Many of the Melton composite stone and wire walls have neat coping stones intact. These all appear to have been built in the traditional manner in relation to base width and double wall construction (perhaps to comply with the Fences Act definition of a 'sufficient' wall). Other composite walls are less neatly constructed. These generally have a higher percentage of round-shaped stones, and consequently a higher wall batter and a more pyramidal, less vertical, shape. While some of these have obviously had posts inserted into them, it is also possible that some might have always been composite walls. The relative instability of stone walls built with the 'round stone' that predominates in Melton Shire may also have encouraged the original wall constructions to have been kept low, and topped up with wire.⁶¹

Our natural association of 'the richest areas for dry stone walls'⁶² with areas where fieldstone is most abundant is not the complete explanation for the different extent

50 Peel, LJ, *Rural Industry in the Port Phillip Region 1835-1880*, MUP, 1974, p.108

51 Peel, *op cit*, p.108.

52 Vines, G, *Built To Last; An Historical and Archaeological Survey of Dry Stone Walls in Melbourne's Western Region* (Living Museum of the West Inc, 1990).

53 Vines, 1995, *op cit*, p.60

54 Mitchell, H, 'Building Dry Stone Walls', *Grass Roots*, No.48, April 1985

55 Richard Peterson, Daniel Catrice, 'Bacchus Marsh Heritage Study', 1994

56 Mary Tolhurst, February 2002.

57 Willingham, *op cit*, p.46

58 Kerr, *op cit*. (Dyke was the Scottish word for stone wall.)

59 Mary Sheehan (author of Colac Otway Heritage Study), 11/8/2005

60 Personal conversations, John Morton, and Charlie Finch.

61 Loudon, *loc cit*

62 Eg, Vines, 1995, *op cit*, p.58

and quality of stone wall construction in different areas. While the availability of stone is the 'supply' side of the equation, there is also a 'demand' side: the need for fencing; and the economic feasibility of clearing land and building walls.

As mentioned previously, both historical and present maps of dry stone walls in Melton Shire show strikingly greater densities of walls in farming areas than on large pastoral properties. This is despite the fact that in this Mount Cottrell Precinct (in the Parish of Pywheitjorck) and also in the adjacent Parish of Derrimut, both the pastoral and farming land-uses are situated in exactly the same volcanic landscape. So, while the greatest numbers of extant walls in the Shire were built as part the Clarkes' vast Rockbank pastoral estate, the greatest concentrations are situated on medium and small sized farms. Another contrast between pastoral and farming properties evident in the fieldwork undertaken for this Study is that in all but one case (Clarke's boundary wall No.F96 on Faulkners Road) the most substantial stone walls – the most 'all-stone' and the highest walls – are also to be found on farms and small grazing properties rather than on the large pastoral estates.

Farms had a greater need for fencing, in order to separate stock from crops, and for construction of dairy yards, small dams, pigsties and cowsheds, than did large sheep-runs, which only required fencing of boundaries and large paddocks. This more intensive use of the land would also have meant that it was worth investing more in the land, including clearing the property of fieldstone. Whereas land needed to be cleared for crops, and to maximise grass for cattle on small farms, less complete (if any) clearing of land was required to make huge flocks of sheep economical. For example, in the 1890s parts of the Chirnsides Brothers great Werribee Park pastoral estate were let to tenant farmers: 'The Chirnsides retained the "rocky" country, which was not fit for cultivation, but which was quite good grazing country, growing a nice quality of wool.'⁶³ And there was comparatively little demand for fencing on the vast paddocks in the southern part of the Clarkes' Rockbank estate. While the evidence of the nearby small farms indicates that there was sufficient stone to build at least some substantial all-stone walls, it was not economical (or perhaps necessary) to build such walls for sheep paddocks.

63 Morris, G, 'Centennial History, Werribee', extract obtained from *Werribee Banner*, 5th April 1962.

The situation was different for farmers. At least three of the 21 selectors examined in the district (the Holden area) had stone coverage that was too expensive to clear. The Land Department inspector reported on Ellen Slattery's selection, which appears to have been the worst: 'I consider the land to be unfit for cultivation; it would cost from £20 to £30 per acre to clear some part of it, as it is a mass of rock.'⁶⁴ While most of the volcanic plains would have cost much less than this to clear, even with a very conservative estimate of only £1 or £2 per acre, stone clearing would still have been a substantial cost likely to have been economical only for the more intensive land uses; that is, for farming rather than pastoralism.⁶⁵ Being unskilled work, farmers (and their sons and itinerant labourers) would also be in a position to do it themselves cheaply.

So even if there was sufficient fieldstone to build substantial stone walls, it was not always economical to clear it. In Australia the comparatively large size of landholdings, the high cost of fencing from scratch, and the predominantly pastoral land use, is likely to have had a significant influence on the form of stone wall built. Whereas in Europe there is a high proportion of high all-stone walls, in Australia paddocks with enough stone to build high all-stone walls may not have been economical to clear.⁶⁶ In the Melton Shire exceptions to this occurred in the larger and more successful mid-nineteenth century farms and small grazing properties (such as the Moylan, Beaty and Hopkins properties), on which some substantial stone walls (generally near the homestead) were constructed. The other major exceptions in Melton are the large and finely built Clarke dry stone wall dams. These, together with the magnificent boundary walls built by the Manifolds in the Western District to protect against rabbits, also support a conclusion that the use of stone was related not just to its quantity (the supply), but also to the special needs of the owners (the demand): for farming; or to countervail the peculiarly dry climate on Melton plains; or to combat the devastating rabbit plague on the Stony Rises. Cultural circumstances, for example, the local pool of skills in the Western District, and local traditions (such as belief in stone walls as a fire

64 PROV VPRS 625 Unit 304 (20712), Inspector Yeoman, 10/9/1875

65 Figures provided by selector Alexander McLeod, whose density of rocks appears to have been unremarkable and may have been light, suggest that he spent approximately £1-2 per acre on 'clearing stone and sundries' (PROV VPRS 625, Unit 273 (18276)).

66 Gary Vines, posting in Heritage Chat, 11/8/2005

retardant), no doubt also played a part.⁶⁷

Analysis of the 21 Selection Act files provides some grounds for arguing that the composite walls, such as 'post & wire and stone', may in fact have been particularly associated with the Melton district. The printed forms upon which selectors were asked to mark the improvements to their properties included 11 types of fences. However, these 11 options did not include categories for the most common type of fence in the district:- the composite 'post & wire & stone' (or 'post & rail & wire & stone') fences. Yet at least 5 of the 21 selectors in the district describe these types of fences on their selections, marking additions such as 'stone bottom' to the 'post and wire' category (Patrick O'Brien). It is likely that the lack of category meant that others again (in addition to these five) simply selected one of the given types to describe their composite walls; some probably called their 'half stone' fences either 'stone walling' or 'post & wire' or 'post & rail' fences. (As such, it is likely that much of the fencing described as 'stone' and other categories was actually composite post & wire and stone. The price of the different type of walls would support the possibility that some 30% of the fencing built by these selectors was in fact post & wire and stone.)

One conclusion that could be drawn from the Selection Act pro-formas is that, composite 'post & wire and stone' and 'post & wire & rail and stone' walls/fences were variants that were particularly associated with Melbourne's western plains. Alternatively, they may have been variants that became more common throughout the whole of Victoria around the time of the Selection Acts.

Composite stone and post & wire walls appear to characterise Melton Shire in a way that they do not elsewhere. But they are not confined to Melton Shire or Melbourne's western and northern plains. Examples

67 While it has not been analysed, it would seem that many of the large stone walls in the Western District (eg, the Kolora, Derrinallum and Purrumbete areas) were built by farmers c.1900 (Corangamite Arts Council, 1995, pp.76-142 and *passim*). The primary reason for the farmers' high walls, no doubt, was the amount of stone on the properties. But the 'demand' side may also have contributed. This was a period when dairying was transforming from a cottage to an export industry: the quality of the soil, or the rainfall, might have made this investment in the land worthwhile at this time, whereas it did not in Melton Shire. This is clearly very speculative, but perhaps demonstrates a need for more general research on the relationship between economics of farming and fence construction.

are to be found in virtually all of the stone wall districts of Victoria, although they would appear to be small minority in some districts. There are also known to be many in New Zealand's Otago area, at least some in North America, but virtually none in Europe. The questions that remain, and can only ultimately be answered by further studies in other regions, is whether they are in fact the most common type of fence in Victoria as some claim, and whether they are more concentrated and numerous in Melton Shire and the Melbourne fringe than elsewhere.

The Rockbank Estate

On the 24th August 1850, WJT 'Big' Clarke, through the administration of Port Phillip into turmoil by applying to purchase 20,000 acres of Sunbury land under a previously unused statute of the Imperial Land Act. He gained control of most of the stations of earlier squatters in the whole Melton region from Diggers Rest to Konagaderra, and set about adding to this estate at the 1850s Crown land sales in the Shires of Melton and Wyndham. He came to be described as the largest landholder in Australia. Clarke apportioned this vast estate into different stations including *Bollinda Vale*, *Red Rock* (including *Rupertswood*) and *Rockbank*. The *Rockbank* station had originally been established in the early 1840s; the headstation of its previous owner, WC Yuille, had been at the Beatty's Road crossing of Kororoit Creek, the location of the former Rockbank Inn.

Over the next 30-40 years Clarke and his son WJ Clarke (later to become Australia's first baronet) added greatly to their estate by buying adjacent properties, many of which had been abandoned by impoverished farmers during times of droughts or agricultural disease. Upon Big Clarke's death in 1874 WJ Clarke inherited his Victorian estate, including 136,310 acres in the Melbourne vicinity, stretching in an arc from about Sunshine, Tarneit, Balliang, Rockbank, Diggers Rest, Sunbury, Bolinda Vale and across to the Hume Highway.⁶⁸ By 1892 Sir WJ Clarke owned the vast majority of the Parish of Pywheitjorrk, which together with his similarly extensive Parish of Derrimut landholdings, comprised most of the southern part of his immense *Rockbank* estate.⁶⁹

68 Peel, *op.cit.*, pp.130-1; Michael Clarke, *'Big' Clarke* (Queensberry Hill Press, Melbourne, 1980) Clarke (1980), opposite p.247

69 SLV Map 821.1A (1892), Parish of Pywheitjorrk; also PROV VPRS 460/P0 (35850).

But by the end of the nineteenth century historical changes were afoot. In addition to new taxes and the inherent difficulties of the pastoral industry, a new generation of farmers was restlessly surveying the vast pastoral estates about them. In the 1860s local Melton farmer Anders Hjorth had observed that ‘the village was surrounded by large pastoral estates on three sides.’⁷⁰ There had long been a belief in Melton that these estates were thwarting the development of the town. As early as 1883 the situation enraged radical liberal politician John Quick:

*‘What a monstrous and barbaric law that must be, under which the splendid land between Melbourne and Sunbury, and between Melbourne and Geelong, capable of giving homes and existence to a teeming population, is locked up in pastoral solitudes ...’*⁷¹

As the 1890s depression deepened popular discontent intensified, with calls for the repurchase of good pastoral lands for subdivision into small farms. The language was as it had always been: ‘the plough’ versus ‘the sheepwalks’. The ‘yeoman ideal’, and the associated wrestle for the land between the rich and the poor had been a long-running and major theme in Australian history, evident in the diggers’ movements to ‘unlock the land’ in the 1850s and 60s, the ‘Closer Settlement’ Acts at the turn of the century, and the early-mid twentieth century ‘Soldier Settlement’ Acts.

In fact, financial pressure on the grand lifestyles of many of the landed gentry had been building from the late nineteenth century as Victorian radicals introduced death duties (1870), land tax (1877) and income tax (1895). These were augmented by new Commonwealth taxes and duties in the early twentieth century. These taxes had considerable impact in breaking up large estates over a long period, ‘particularly during times when rural incomes fell out of balance with the assessable worth of the properties.’⁷² The pressure built as a result of a drought, which began in 1895 and lasted for seven terrible years.

After Sir WJ Clarke’s death in 1897, his son Sir Rupert Turner Havelock Clarke inherited his title, estate and seat in Parliament. In that year he mused in Parliament about cutting up 40,000 acres of the Clarke estate to

lease to dairy farmers. He was under some local pressure to make land available for farming, and declared himself keen not to ‘disappoint public expectations.’⁷³ 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.⁷⁴ The State also played a major role through the Closer Settlement Acts, which enabled the Crown to repurchase pastoral estates and subdivide and sell them (on terms over 30 years) for small farms. William Taylor’s Overnewton Estate, and HW Staughton’s Exford Estate, were two of the Closer Settlement Board’s earliest and best known estates.

This early twentieth century ‘break-up’ of the large estates was a milestone in Australia’s history. It 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 boomed. In 1901 there were 42,000 rural properties in Victoria. By 1914 this number had jumped to 70,500, and by 1923 to a peak of 80,500.⁷⁵

And so the beginning of the twentieth century marked a watershed in the history of Melton Shire. In c.1900 Sir RTH Clarke began subdividing and disposing of the vast *Rockbank* estate (and most of *Rupertswood-Red Rock* and *Bolinda Vale* estates) that had been so carefully acquired and tended by his grandfather and father.⁷⁶ While much of his land was purchased by established neighbouring farmers and smaller graziers, it also provided the opportunity for new farming families to make a living in the district.⁷⁷

73 *Sunbury News*: 31/7/1897, 7/8/1897, 4/9/1897.

74 *Victorian Municipal Directory*, 1898, and following years.

75 Dingle, *op cit*, p 193.

76 Clarke (1980), *passim*; Sir RTH Clarke Bart. sold the vast section of the Rockbank Estate that lay south of the Western Highway in November 1906; it would appear that he sold the northern portion about a year earlier. (PROV VPRS 560/P0, 35850); also CT Vol.3211 Fol.642206, pertaining to an 8000 acre portion south part of this estate; and also Shire of Melton Ratebooks from 1905-06 which record local farmers as owners of parts of the *Rockbank* estate.)

77 Melton gained one of its most famous sons, Hector Fraser, international trap shooter, when his father John Fraser came to

70 Hjorth, *op cit*. Also, MDHS (1905 Melton Express), *op cit*, which refers to these three stations, plus Taylor’s *Overnewton* Estate.

71 Cited in Lack, Ford, *op cit*, p.32

72 Cannon, 1978, *op cit*, p.145

Most of the new farms carved out of the pastoral estates were small, and many double fronted weatherboard homes typical of the period were built over the central and northern parts of the Shire as a result. In the dry south however, allotments were sold in much larger parcels, and the rural properties that established were typically sheep grazing properties.

On Saturday 17th November 1906 the southern part of the *Rockbank* estate, comprising 21,306 acres (over 33 square miles, or c.85 square kilometres) was put up for auction by agent WS Keast & Co on the property at Deer Park.⁷⁸ Grazier and investor EV Goller purchased two square miles (1280 acres) on the west side of Faulkners Road (later acquired by the Holden family of graziers, and developed as the *Mount Cottrell* homestead and shearing shed). Seven parcels of the cheaper land on the east side of Faulkners Road, a total of nearly 5000 acres, were purchased by William, George and James Troup. William Troup built a homestead, now known as *Stoneleigh*, on east side of Troups Road, near Boundary Road.

History of the Place

Virtually the whole of the Parish of Pywheitjorrk was sold by the Crown in 1854. All of the land on both sides of Faulkners Road was sold in February of that year.⁷⁹ WJT Clarke bought 8 of the 19 parcels of land fronting Faulkners Road at these sales; by 1892 he owned 12 of these 19 properties.⁸⁰ The parcels that Clarke acquired included Crown Allotments 1, 3 & 5, Section 8, on which Wall F96 is now situated. A W.O'Neill had purchased these allotments from the Crown on 2nd June and sold them to Clarke 13 days later, no doubt at a significant profit.⁸¹ Section 8 was obviously of considerable strategic value to Clarke, who owned virtually all of the surrounding land.

the area 'when the Rockbank station was cut up into farms (Alex Cameron, 'Melton Memoirs', Melton & District Historical Society, unpublished typescript, nd, p.20)

78 PROV VPRS 560/P0 (35850)

79 Parish Plan, Parish of Pywheitjorrk

80 Shire Map Series (1892), Parish of Pywheitjorrk

81 VPRS 460/P/35850. Schedule of Documents attached.

• Dry Stone Walls on the Rockbank Estate

The estates of the pastoralists – particularly the Clarkes, Staughtons, and Taylor – dominated Melton Shire in the nineteenth century. Of the 165 kilometres of dry stone walls identified in the Shire in this study, 73.7 kilometres, some 45%, appear to have been erected by the Clarkes' (WJT Clarke, Sir WJ Clarke, and Sir RTH Clarke) on the *Rockbank* Estate. There are almost no drystone walls remaining that were associated with the Staughtons or William Taylor.

Little is known of when most of the Clarke walls were constructed.¹ Most of the information presently available constitutes the documents associated with RTH Clarke's applications for Torrens titles in preparation for selling the land in the early years of the twentieth century. In particular, statutory declarations attached to these applications (held at the PROV) sometimes describe the age and position of existing fences, and field notes for survey plans (held at Lands Victoria) often mark the walls and fences. Also, from the first edition of the *Bacchus Marsh Express* newspaper in 1866 until about 1890, there were periodic advertisements seeking stone wallers for specified lengths (miles) of walling. For example, in 1880 Clarke advertised for 'Stonewallers on Rockbank Station'; applicants were advised to apply at either the Raglan or Monmouthshire Hotels.² These advertisements – 'apply Monmouthshire Hotel Diggers Rest' or 'Rockbank Inn', or 'Rockbank Estate' – appear at regular intervals, together with warnings that trespassers pulling down walls would receive summary justice.³ Although some walls are known to have been built later, it is likely that most stone walls on the *Rockbank* estate were built between the late 1850s and the early 1880s, after which period post and wire fencing would have been the major type of fencing built throughout area, as it was throughout the State.

Unlike farming properties, the vast majority of Rockbank estate walls erected were boundary walls. There were relatively few internal paddock walls. It could be conjectured that *Rockbank* estate boundary walls such as Wall F96 were more substantial due to their purpose in providing security. However a more detailed study

1 Any Clarke family papers relating to the period might include such information in the form of account records, correspondence between managers and owners, maps, photographs etc. Such papers have not been located at this stage.

2 The *Bacchus Marsh Express*, 6/3/1880

3 Bilszta, 1990, *op cit*.

would be required to confirm this. Indeed most of the boundary walls are of much less quality than Wall F96. In fact the style and quality of dry stone walls on the Clarke estate varies considerably. This would be related at least in part to the range of wallers used over the long period of their construction, and to the availability and quality of stone on different parts of the estate.

- **The Clarke Wall on Faulkners Road (F96)**

During the 1860s many of the surveyed roads on the square-mile grid on the southern plains had been closed, incorporated into the immense *Rockbank* estate. In 1871 the only open roads were Boundary Road, Greigs Road, Mt Cottrell Road, and Mt Atkinson Road.⁴ In the Parish of Pywheitjorrk alone there were 23 miles (35 kilometres) of enclosed roads by 1877.⁵ The small Mt Cottrell community was isolated, remote not only from the nearest railway (Melbourne-Geelong), but cut off further by the closed roads on pastoral estates.

In 1878 a Royal Commission into Closed Roads had been established following ‘public uproar’ over widespread closure of roads by squatters.⁶ Closure of roads had caused considerable inconvenience to travellers, including drovers with livestock, who had to pass through systems of multiple gates. A farmer giving evidence to the Royal Commission attested that to get to his rented farm there were ‘seventeen gates to open, I and my boys going with young horses whether it is day or night!’⁷ Alternatively, if the gated fences were many miles apart, travellers (especially strangers) invariably became lost, as the roads were unmarked by fences.

Farmers in neighbouring Wyndham Shire who gave evidence to the Commission (Melton Shire was not one of the 22 municipalities investigated by the Commission) also complained of more serious problems. These included long detours to markets, and of being denied access to water reserves and other public reserves by the closed roads of the Chirnsides (primarily) and the Staughtons.⁸

The primary beneficiaries of closed roads were the large pastoralists, who would ‘escape the cost of fencing

their property, which would in most instances amount to very large sums, and would also involve a heavy annual charge for maintenance and repairs’; and who also obtained ‘free use of the grass growing on the road reserve.’⁹ But they had allies in their municipalities, which were of the view that opening the roads would significantly increase their expenditure in making the roads passable, and that most closed roads were not required by the public in any case. On the other hand farmers gave evidence to the Commission alleging that the pastoralists had inordinate influence over Wyndham Council (of which two Chirnsides were members), and also over Wyndham ratepayers, a great many of whom rented land from or were employed by the Chirnsides, or were allowed to graze a few cows or horses on their land for free especially prior to municipal elections.¹⁰

The Royal Commission into Closed Roads agreed that local government was inordinately influenced by large pastoralists, who had a conflict of interest in regards to closed roads. It could not see why large landowners were not required to fence their road boundaries, as were small farmers. It recommended that the Minister of Lands not sanction the use of gates on public roadways; squatters were then forced to permanently fence off many road reserves, at great expense.¹¹

In 1907 RTH Clarke, and also retired neighbouring farmer Alfred Austen (or Austin) who had lived nearby for 40 years, made statutory declarations relating to the fencing on the *Rockbank* estate. Sections 4, 7 & 8, Parish of Pywheitjorrk, they attested, ‘form one paddock and are enclosed together by stone walls’. Wall F96 is situated on Section 8, Parish of Pywheitjorrk, and formed the western boundary of this huge three square miles (7.8 square kilometres) single paddock. The stone walls and fencing being the boundaries of this paddock had been ‘erected and maintained’ for ‘upwards of 31 years’, said Clarke and Austin.¹² Access to the paddock was by means of slip panels and gates.

Wall F96 was then built c.1876, most likely as part of the opening of Faulkners Road by Clarke, a few years prior to the establishment of the 1878 Royal Commission

4 Ford, *op cit*, p.236, 239

5 Ford, *op cit*, p.236

6 If These Walls Could Talk, *op cit*, p.51

7 Royal Commission into Closed Roads, Progress Report (containing minutes of evidence etc), Victorian Parliamentary Papers 1878 (No.72), p.22

8 *ibid*, pp.14-23

9 *ibid*, p.viii

10 *ibid*, pp.8-23. (It should be noted however that in Melton Shire WJ Clarke had a statewide reputation as friend of the needy, and Councillor HW Staughton was also a beneficiary of various local causes.)

11 If These Walls Could Talk, *loc cit*

12 PROV VHRS 460/P/35850: Statutory Declarations, Sir RTH Clarke, 5/3/1907, and Alfred Austen, 19/2/1909.

into Closed Roads. But as the Commission reported, from the time the subject engaged the attention of the Victorian Parliament ‘a large number of roads hitherto closed have been opened’¹³; Faulkners Road may have been one of these.

The Faulkner’s Road Wall F96 then was erected in the pastoral period. The three square mile paddock described by Clarke stretches between Faulkners Road in the west and Troups Road in the east. Most of its walls survive today, although none in such good condition as the Faulkners Road portion.

The wall towards the southern end of Faulkners Road is also associated with some interesting historical sub-themes of the district.

- **Gold Rush Land Speculation**

When prices of everything including land soared during the gold-rush of the early 1850s, speculators purchased lands at Crown sales, apparently anywhere they could, including on the shallow soils of the flat, treeless, dry and isolated Melton-Werribee plains. They were particularly busy in the parishes of Pywheatjorrk and Derrimut. Travelling on the badly marked road from Geelong to Melbourne in 1854, William Westgarth encountered only 7 people (most near Melbourne), but was glad to see the plains in the process of survey. While hoping that men of modest financial means would be able to acquire it, he remained sceptical: ‘Already the speculators are pouncing upon it – buying it all up as fast as it is sold, and letting it lie in hope of an augmented price.’¹⁴ But many of the speculators were not content to let their blocks ‘lie’, instead conjuring up audacious schemes to expedite and inflate their returns. The present day Boundary and Greigs Roads, and the Western Highway, as minor alternative routes between Melbourne and Ballarat, inspired the boosters to subdivide villages along them, creating so-called townships such as ‘Middleton’, ‘Staughtonville’, and ‘North Uxbridge’. Scores of allotments, of size ranging from about half to five acres (2 hectares), were created in these subdivisions.

If, as some proposed, the intention of the subdivisions was to facilitate the establishment of small yeoman farmers, these floats proved utter failures. No evidence of actual development, and only the barest fragments of their histories, remain today. It is highly likely in fact that many purchasers of the small rural and township blocks so created were themselves aspiring speculators. Most probably bought their properties on the strength of the representation of the ‘developer’, without having bothered to actually visit the properties. The boom appears to have amplified each whisper from every plausible source into an urgent din that many urban professionals and small businessmen found difficult to resist.

All the evidence is that purchasers lost heavily. Some, apparently visiting their blocks for the first time, dispensed of them within weeks of purchase. As the years passed blocks invariably ended up being sold into the *Rockbank* estate. But most purchasers just walked away.

The Faulkners Road subdivision of Crown Allotment 3 (and also part of CA2), Section 3, Parish of Pywheatjorrk, was advertised as being near (to the east of) the ‘Township of Staughtonville’. CA 3, a little over 100 acres, was granted by the Crown to TH Jones on 29th May 1854.¹⁵

The Faulkners Road subdivision would have been abandoned by the late 1850s, as soon as the major gold-rushes ended and the land boom went bust. Its small blocks were progressively incorporated into the adjacent dairy farm of James Kerr, and also the Clarkes’ adjacent *Rockbank* empire. (Kerr rented some parts that had been acquired by Clarke.) His ‘extensive’ dairy farm at Mt Cotterill also included Allotments 4 & 5 of Section 3, on which the ruins of his homestead, dry stone walls, dairy and dams, are extant.¹⁶ The walls that he built reflect the property boundaries and land subdivision pattern established by the gold rush era property speculators.

13 Royal Commission into Closed Roads, *op cit*, p.ix

14 Cited in John Lack & Olwen Ford, ‘Melbourne’s Western Region: An Introductory History’ (Melbourne’s Living Museum of the West, Melbourne Western Region Commission, 1986), p.30

15 PROV 460/P/35380 (Torrens Application 35850). Application to bring Land under the operation of the Transfer of Land Act: Schedule of Documents Included.

16 Melton Heritage Study, Place No.359

- **Subdivision on the south-east corner of Greigs Road and Faulkners Road.**

Although situated on Greigs Road, this subdivision is within the Mt Cottrell Dry Stone Walls Precinct. Crown Allotment 8, Section 19 Parish of Pywheitjorrk was one of two adjacent allotments purchased by John O'Grady in February 1854. O'Grady's partner W.Craig had purchased the two adjacent Greigs Road allotments on the west side.¹⁷ Although we only have information relating to one of these allotments, it is possible that all four were subdivided into small allotments during the mid 1850s.

At least one unnamed road, running north-south, was created in the subdivision of CA 8 Section 19. Like most of the many speculative subdivisions that occurred at this time, relatively few of the small allotments appear to have been sold. One hundred years afterwards surviving allotments were in the order of 3-6 acres in size, although these may have been amalgamations of smaller original allotments.¹⁸ This was amongst the first land purchased by local identity Mark Paine in the district 1863;¹⁹ it is possible that the small speculator's allotments provided Paine with his initial opportunity to settle in the district. He later built a bluestone dwelling on the allotment diagonally opposite and became a long-serving Councillor of the Shire of Braybrook.

- **The Kerrs: Life on the Melton Plains**

When the Mt Cotterell School opened in 1865 five of the Kerr children were enrolled; in 1868 six Kerrs were enrolled (with exceptional attendance records). A few years later there was only one Kerr at the school.²⁰ In 1868 James Kerr, aged 11 years, had drowned in a dam on the property.²¹ Then further tragedy struck at Christmas 1870. The newspaper of 1870 recounts:-

'A very distressing case of that fatal disease diphtheria occurred this week between here and Wyndham when four children, being a majority of the family of a farmer named Kerr, fell victims to its remorseless claims. One of them was buried in Melton cemetery on Friday last and the other

*three on Tuesday, leaving an interval of only four days between the whole of their deaths. Their ages were respectively 16, 7, 5, 2½; two others of the same family were taken to the Melbourne Hospital dangerously ill from the same complaint, whereupon at their arrival, it was discovered that the father was also affected and he was detained to be treated with his children although having left his wife and an infant 3 weeks old on a bed of sickness at home. The family was attended by Dr Figg of Williamstown.'*²²

The four are buried in the Presbyterian section of the Melton cemetery. The day of the funeral the rain poured down and flooded into the grave. Less than two weeks later the paper carried another report on the family:-

*'Two more of Mr Kerr's unfortunate family have succumbed to the effects of diphtheria, being the infant who was only three weeks old and the boy who was taken to the Melbourne Hospital. The mother also, from sheer exhaustion and other complaints connected with the loss of her family, had to be taken to the above institution where now are lying the whole of the remaining members of a once prosperous and happy family who are now absent from home.'*²³

The newspaper reported that neighbouring families, Minns and Shaw, had gratuitously undertaken to manage the Kerr's dairy, which was 'by no means a limited one'.

The melancholy scene of the multiple funerals became part of the memory of the Melton community.²⁴ Two children whose names do not appear on the Melton Cemetery grave are thought to be buried on the farm. A relative visited the property in the 1980's and from family papers was able to identify the gravesite.²⁵

Diphtheria was one of the most common causes of death in children in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. There were further cases, and deaths from diphtheria among Mount Cotterell families in 1875, including consecutive deaths of two children in each of the Moloney and Wood families. The Killeen family to the east also lost four children under the age of 6 years, and two aged about 19 years (although the causes of

17 Parish Plan, Parish of Pywheitjorrk

18 Lands Victoria, Survey Plan, TA 52279 & TA 29390

19 Ford, *loc cit*

20 Ford, Olwen, 'Voices From Below: Family, School and Community on the Braybrook Plains 1854-1892' (M.Ed Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1993), p.240.

21 The Bacchus Marsh *Express*, 7/3/1868

22 Melton *Express* 13-12-1870

23 Melton *Express* 24-12-1870

24 Recorded in Cameron's memoirs, for example.

25 Judith Bilszta, Melton & District Historical Society.

these deaths are unknown).²⁶

In addition to the very limited understanding of the disease at the time, the isolation of the Mount Cotterell farmers from medical help appears to have been a component of the tragedies. A local explained later that it was not realised at the time how dangerous diphtheria was, and that as there was 'no doctor near' the Kerrs, they and other parents in the area hoped that it would clear up.²⁷ Further, a contemporary noted that there had been several cases in Mt Cotterell 'where the medical men had refused, unless their fees were paid in advance, to attend patients who had subsequently died.'²⁸ The inconvenience to doctors and others in travelling to the isolated Mt Cotterell community, especially at night, can be gathered from the frustration of school inspector Sasse as he travelled the area in 1871:- 'It was 2 o'clock when I left the Cambridge [Rockbank] school No.919, after travelling 9 miles on an indifferent road having to open and shut gates I found myself at the door of the Mount Cotterell school.'²⁹

In statutory declarations given in 1918 and 1919, the Kerrs' two surviving daughters Mary Cropley and Helen Pitson declared that the boundary fences of Allotments 1 and 3 of Section 3 had been erected by James Kerr about 40 years ago (ie in c.1879), and maintained by him until he sold those allotments to Stephen Volant the elder in 1896, after which time Volant maintained them. Stephen Volant junior also attested this, as did Walter J Minns, who recalled chatting to James Kerr while he was repairing the wall in 1882.³⁰

So the fences on the east side of the south of Faulkners Road (Wall F99, F100) were built by James Kerr in c.1879, just a few years after Wall F96 had been built by Clarke. This date supports the likelihood that it, and all the Faulkners Road walls, were built as a consequence of an opening of Faulkners Road in the late 1870s, which in turn was likely associated with the general agitation in the colony regarding closed roads.

26 PROV VPRS 460/P/36721; Ford, *op cit*, p.233-34

27 Cameron, *op cit*, p.8

28 Ford, *op cit*, p.245

29 Cited in Ford, *op cit*, p.236

30 PROV 460/P/43186 (Torrens Application 43186). Statutory declarations.

• Greigs Road to Faulkners Road

The corner of Greigs Road and Faulkners Road, part of Crown Allotment 8, still retains today a number of dry stone walls. The entire Greigs Road frontage of this block was drawn as a stone (or part stone) wall in 1905,³¹ and marked as 'stone wall' in 1921,³² and 'post and wire and rock fence' in 1977.³³ Remnants of this fence survive today as Wall Nos. C50 and C59. In 1893 the Faulkners Road end of the Greigs Road wall (C59) was marked as 'low stone wall and posts', indicating that it was a composite stone wall and post & wire fence.³⁴ These plans indicate that this frontage was a composite stone and post & wire fence at least by 1893, and probably built c.1850s-70s.

The frontage of Faulkners Road near Greigs Road was described in 1893 as a 'stone wall and fence', clearly another composite wall. This is today's Wall C56. The western and southern boundaries of this allotment (Crown Allotment 8, Section 19, Parish of Pywheijorrk) were described in 1893 as 'stone wall'. These walls survive today as Wall C55.

There were also five internal walls in Crown Allotment 8 in 1893 which were described as 'line of stone'.³⁵ In 1955 two of these walls survived, at that time described as 'post & wire & stone fence'. This plan also makes clear that the position of these fences was determined by an early subdivision.³⁶ This subdivision, which contained at least one unnamed road, was a mid-1850s creation of notorious speculators John O'Grady and his partner W Craig who in 1854 had purchased from the Crown all of the allotments to the south of Greigs Road between Mt Cottrell and Faulkners Roads.³⁷ These walls survive today as Wall Nos. C58 and C311.

The origin of the other internal walls in CA 8 – Wall Nos. C57 and C185 – is not certain, but they may date to the late twentieth century. They may appear in the rather unclear 1893 plan, but definitely do not appear in the very clear 1955 plan.

While the western three quarters of these properties were owned by the Clarkes' in 1892, the allotment

31 Lands Victoria, Survey Plan TA 35817

32 Lands Victoria, Survey Plan, TA 44367

33 Lands Victoria, Survey Plan, TA 57226

34 Lands Victoria, Survey Plan, TA 29390

35 *ibid*

36 Lands Victoria, Survey Plan, TA 52279

37 Parish Plan, Parish of Pywheijorrk

bordering Faulkners Road was owned by Mark Paine.³⁸ It is likely that most of the surviving walls were built by Mark Paine, and perhaps other owners who acquired land at the time of the original speculative subdivision. The Faulkners Road walls were probably not built until the road was opened in the 1870s.

- **Faulkners Road to Downing Street**

In 1893 the east side of Faulkners Road near Greigs Road was described as 'stone wall'.³⁹ It is also marked as a stone wall in 1904. Most of this wall survives today as Wall C60. The Greigs Road frontage is described as 'stone wall' in 1904, and again in 1921.⁴⁰ Parts of this survive today as Walls C61, C65 and C67.

Wall C64, on Harrisons Road, similarly appears to be a relic of the 'stone wall' marked in 1904.⁴¹

Wall C66 also appears on the 1904 survey plan.⁴² It is of interest as the eastern boundary of the 1850s suburban allotment subdivision of the notorious speculator TH Jones.⁴³

The walls on the western part of this section of Greigs Road were likely built by farmers, particularly Mark Paine, who acquired the land after the departure of the 1850s land boomers. The Faulkners Road walls were probably not built until the road was opened in the 1870s.

Wall C67 was situated on land that was in the ownership of the Clarkes from 1854 until the early twentieth century, so would have been built as part of the Rockbank estate. Wall C66, the perpendicular wall between the original Clarke purchase and TH Jones, was also likely to have been built by Clarke, perhaps shared with Jones or a later farmer. Wall C68 does not appear on any of the historical documentation found at this stage. It may be associated with the early twentieth century Rockbank Beam Wireless Station (MHS Place No.311).

38 Parish Plan: Parish of Pywheitjorrk; Shire Map Series (1892): Parish of Pywheitjorrk

39 Lands Victoria, Survey Plan, TA 29390

40 Lands Victoria, Survey Plans TA 35850 and TA 44367

41 Lands Victoria, Survey Plan, TA 35850

42 *ibid*

43 Parish Plan, Parish of Pywheitjorrk; Lands Victoria, Survey Plan, TA 52279

- **The Walls to the North of Faulkners Road and on Greigs Road**

The greatest number of speculative subdivisions in the Shire occurred along the Greigs Road – Western Highway goldrush route. The four southern portions of Greigs Road between Faulkners Road and Mt Cottrell Road were purchased from the Crown c.1854 by two of the most notorious speculators in the Shire: W Craig and John O'Grady. The easternmost of these, on the corner of Faulkners Road, Crown Allotment 8, Section 19 Parish of Pywheitjorrk, was one of two adjacent allotments purchased by O'Grady in February 1854.⁴⁴

At least one unnamed road, running north-south, was created in the subdivision of CA 8 Section 19. Like most of the many speculative subdivisions that occurred at this time, relatively few of the small allotments appear to have been sold. One hundred years afterwards surviving allotments were in the order of 3-6 acres in size, although these may have been amalgamations of smaller original allotments.⁴⁵ This was amongst the first land purchased by local identity Mark Paine in the district 1863;⁴⁶ it is possible that the small speculator's allotments provided Paine with his initial opportunity to settle in the district. He later built a bluestone dwelling on the allotment diagonally opposite and became a long-serving Councillor of the Shire of Braybrook.

While the western three quarters of these properties were owned by the Clarkes' in 1892, the allotment bordering Faulkners Road was owned by Mark Paine.⁴⁷ It is likely that most of the surviving walls were built by Mark Paine, and perhaps other owners who acquired land at the time of the original speculative subdivision. The Faulkners Road walls were probably not built until the road was opened in the 1870s.

- **The Other Walls on Faulkners Road**

All except the most northerly walls, which were on Mark Paine's property, were associated with the Clarkes who owned three quarters of the length of Faulkners Road. All of the walls on both sides of the middle and northern parts of Faulkners Road had been built by 1905.⁴⁸ The

44 Parish Plan, Parish of Pywheitjorrk

45 Lands Victoria, Survey Plan, TA 52279 & TA 29390

46 Ford, *loc cit*

47 Parish Plan: Parish of Pywheitjorrk; Shire Map Series (1892): Parish of Pywheitjorrk

48 Lands Victoria, Field Notes of survey Claude Purchas associated

Paine walls likely date to the 1850s sale of the land by the Crown, and its establishment for farming purposes soon after.

At the south of Faulkners Road, and further south again in the Werribee Shire – a small island within the vast *Rockbank* estate – was a group of small farms which comprised the 'Mount Cotterell' district. While in 1871 the only open roads in the parish are said to have been Boundary Road, Greigs Road, Mt Cottrell Road, and Mt Atkinson Road, by 1905 Mt Atkinson Road had been closed, while Faulkners Road had been opened and all its walls built. This change appears to reflect the density of adjacent farming populations, and no doubt occurred to provide better access for the Mount Cottrell farmers at the south end of Faulkners Road.⁴⁹

Apart from Wall F96, there is no documentary knowledge of the date of these walls, but it is very likely that they were built at around the same time (mid 1870s) for the purpose of opening Faulkners Road.

At the time of the Troup family's ownership, the land to the east of Wall F96 had apparently been a focus for the farm operation, with a yard, and apparently also a stable located there.⁵⁰ Sometime between 1916 and 1938 the Faulkners Road land which included Wall F96 was sold by the Troup brothers, apparently to Dr Heath, who built *Kintbury*.⁵¹ In about 1990 the northern part of Wall F96, about 400 metres of the original 1700 metres, was removed by its owner.⁵²

Around the turn of the twentieth century neighbouring farmer Stephen Volant purchased the small TH Jones subdivision allotments on Crown Allotment 3, Section 3 which Clarke had acquired over the years.⁵³ In 1920 JA Morton acquired CA 3, Section 3 under the Soldier Settlement Act.⁵⁴ (The complications of the title may have delayed the actual Volant transaction.) JA Morton's Volant relations later sold

with Torrens Application No.35850.

49 *ibid*.

50 Army Ordnance Map (1916): Sunbury; also personal conversation, Leo Tarleton, 2001.

51 Army Ordnance Map (1916): Sunbury; Army Ordnance Map (1938): Sunbury; personal conversation, Mr Rollo, 20/2/2002. Dr Heath was apparently a prominent early twentieth century abortionist.

52 Gary Vines, Note to National Trust, 7/7/1990; Bilszta, Faulkners Road, *op cit*, 9/9/1990

53 VPRS 460/P/35850. Statutory declaration by William Howat, 13/5/1907, and Certificate of Title Vol 3211 Fol 642206.

54 Parish Plan, Parish of Pywheitjorrk; personal conversation, J Morton, 22/2/2002

their surrounding holdings to him, and his son John still lives and farms the property, called *Peterleigh*, today.

• **The Former Scarborough Farm and Other Walls on Mount Cottrell Road**

The Mount Cottrell Road dry stone walls, stock yards, dam and bluestone house ruins are situated on Crown Allotments 2 and 3, Section 11 Parish of Pywheitjorrk, 222 acres purchased in September and October 1854 by a George Scarborough 'of Braybrook'.⁵⁵

George Scarborough was one of Melbourne's very earliest settlers, having arrived in the fledgling township of Melbourne in November 1835.⁵⁶ Early records show that he purchased land (CA 5 Sec.12, Town of Melbourne) at the first government auction on 1st June 1837.⁵⁷ He had obtained the position of the Yarra Yarra (Melbourne) pound-keeper by June 1840.⁵⁸ This was an important, and lucrative, position in a pastoral and farming settlement, and Scarborough is recorded as a respected and active citizen in various other realms of society over the following years

Until all the boundary fences of the new freehold rural landholdings had been constructed, straying stock remained a problem. Reserves for impounding stray stock had been established early: 'by early 1851 a poundkeeper's hut or house and a couple of fenced paddocks near a water supply had been established at more than forty inland sites.'⁵⁹ Pounds became gathering places, frequented by bullock drivers, carriers and pastoralists in search of strayed beasts.

Government Gazettes show that in 1854 George Scarborough 'of Mount Cottrell' was appointed the Melton pound-keeper.⁶⁰ As impounded stock would have needed water, it is possible that the stone beached dam on the property dates to this period. Scarborough resigned in 1857, and the pound was moved to nearer

55 Registrar General's Office, General Law Memorial of land purchases (in AP 108758K). These two allotments have been a 'pair' - held by the same owners - until very recent times.

56 Date given with his signature on the Loyal Address presented by the 'Victorian Pioneers' to the Duke of Edinburgh in 1867. (All of Scarborough's pre-Melton biographical details have been researched and provided by Mr Ken Smith of the Port Phillip Pioneers.)

57 Registrar-General's Office, Memorial 'Sydney 319'.

58 *Port Phillip Gazette*, 20/6/1840

59 Priestley, Susan, *The Victorians: Making Their Mark* (Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, McMahons Point, 1984), pp. 68-9

60 Government Gazette 1854

to Melton (The *Willows* homestead) following agitation from local farmers.⁶¹

Although they had no stream frontage, Scarborough's Mount Cottrell allotments had not been cheap, purchased as they were at the height of gold-rush inflation, and in competition with big pastoralists. Immediately to his west was Simon Staughton's preemptive right, and Simon Staughton had purchased the property on his southern boundary and all the land to his east (across Mt Cottrell Road). The allotment to his north had been purchased by WF Tulloh as part of his *Strathulloh* estate. WJT Clarke and his son Sir WJ Clarke soon acquired all the land on the opposite side of Mt Cottrell Road, and much land to the south of Scarborough, as part of the massive *Rockbank* estate.

The large pastoralists may have made Scarborough offers for his property, but he was one of very few farmers in the whole Parish of Pywheitjorrk to remain on the land throughout the nineteenth century. With M Moloney and I&A Moss, both to his south, he was probably the only original Crown grantee to remain on his land. Others in the 'Mt Cottrell' farming community who had managed to hold on and raise families in the area were James Kerr to the south-east (see above), and M Paine, G Missen and (the much larger) Isaac Gidney to the north.⁶²

In 1873 George Scarborough conveyed the 222 acre Mt Cottrell Road property to his son Henry for the nominal sum of £200.⁶³ George died on 23rd September 1880. Local memorialist Alex Cameron records that Henry and his wife Mary Ann carried on 'dairying and grazing for many years at Mt Cotterell, before moving to Melbourne.'⁶⁴ By 1888 (the oldest extant ratebook for this site) the 222 acre property is recorded as having been 'fenced' (no doubt with the dry stone walls that remain today on the property boundary); its 'House etc' was leased to a James Walker 'dealer'.⁶⁵ Walker may have been associated with the nineteenth century Newmarket stock agent JC Walker & Co.⁶⁶ He occupied the property until at least 1892,⁶⁷ although he may have lived elsewhere.

By 1910 Henry Scarborough was again paying the rates for the property, although by this time his residence was 'Frankston'.⁶⁸ Other information reveals that he had lived in Flemington before taking up a farm in Cranbourne Road, Frankston. In 1918, shortly before his death, he was still listed as being a 'farmer' in Frankston.⁶⁹ He was over 80 years of age when he died, and together with a former Brunswick Councillor William Fleming JP, was thought to have been one of the oldest two native born residents in Victoria at the time.⁷⁰ From various General Law land records it can be deduced that Henry died sometime between the years 1918 and 1923, so he would have been born c.1840.

The house would appear then to have been untenanted when in 1911 Scarborough sold the 222 acres, with 'house etc', to John and Patrick Francis Murphy for £1554.⁷¹ The continued presence of the house on the property at this time is confirmed by a 1916 map.⁷² On 22nd August 1918 Patrick Murphy died 'at his residence, Rockbank'. The probate papers show his property to have included 'crops, livestock, farming implements, carriages, harness and saddlery, plant tools etc', and an interest of the brothers' ownership of the 222 acre property.⁷³

Amongst the small crowd gathered at the bedside of the dying Murphy were F Charles Holden JP (the owner of the c.1400 acre 'Mt Cottrell' property on the opposite side of the road), and Stephen Volant, a farmer to his south (by this time the owner of James Kerr's former property). They later made affidavits declaring that they knew Murphy well, and that his Will stated his intention to leave all of his property to his 'wife and children', and for his brother John to be sole executor.⁷⁴

It appears that in December 1918, when probate on Murphy's Will was granted, John Murphy sold the property to Frederick Charles Thomas Holden for £1970.⁷⁵ In 1923 Holden mortgaged the 222 acre property for £1700.⁷⁶

61 Government Gazette 1858

62 Parish Plan, Parish of Pywheitjorrk; and SLV Map 821.1A (1892), Parish of Pywheitjorrk.

63 RGO, General Law Memorial: Book 235, No.25.

64 Cameron, *op cit*, p.13.

65 Shire of Braybrook Ratebook, 1888-89.

66 Peck, HH, *Memoirs of a Stockman* (Stock and Land Publishing Co, Melbourne 1972), pp.18, 25-26.

67 Shire of Braybrook Ratebook, 1888-92.

68 Shire of Braybrook Ratebook, 1910-11.

69 RGO, General Law Memorial: Book 457 No.299; Book 517 No.904.

70 Cameron, *op cit*, p.13.

71 RGO, General Law Memorial: Book 457 No.299; also Shire of Braybrook Ratebook, 1910-11.

72 Army Ordnance Map: 'Sunbury', 1916.

73 PROV, VPRS 28/P3, Unit 870 (160/765)

74 *ibid*; and PROV VPRS 7591/P2, Unit 592 (160/765)

75 RGO, General Law Memorial: Book 517 No.905; also Shire of Melton Ratebook, 1918-19.

76 RGO, General Law Memorial: Book 517, No.906

Throughout this time the ratebooks describe the property as having a 'house', or sometimes, 'buildings'. It may or may not have been occupied; Holden would have lived in the Mt Cottrell property opposite, and while the ratebooks record that he did not lease the property, he may have let the house out (without the land), perhaps to one of his farm workers.

The depression may have been responsible for the next change of ownership. Holden repaid his mortgage on the Mt Cottrell property (and probably others) in March 1930.⁷⁷ On the same day as he discharged its mortgage he sold the 222 acre property to Bertie Albert Thomas, of 'Deer Park', 'grazier', for £2775.⁷⁸

In 1945 when Thomas, described as a 'grazier and wholesale butcher', sold the property, his address was still Deer Park.⁷⁹ Thomas then did not live at Mt Cottrell Road. Although a 1933 map still shows a house on the site, it would have been very old by this time, and may not have been occupied at all, or perhaps occasionally by Thomas (on visiting the property) or a tenant.⁸⁰ While the property was still listed in the 1931 ratebook as including 'buildings', by 1938 the ratebook no longer referred to any building or house on the property.⁸¹ The house may have been derelict, and perhaps demolished, during this period.

In July 1945 Thomas sold the property to Mt Cottrell Road farmer William Collins for £2220, considerably less than he had paid for it in the depression years.⁸² Throughout this period the Shire rate books did not list any buildings on the 222 acre allotment.⁸³ William Collins died on 24th May 1973, and in 1993 Allotment 2 (111 acres) was sold by his family to Oupan Resources, who immediately conveyed it to Darra Exploration Pty Ltd.⁸⁴ Readymix Holdings Pty Ltd obtained an interest in the property in 2003.⁸⁵

The dam and associated dry stone walls on the property has previously been identified as a possible sheep wash or sheep dip.⁸⁶ Sheep washing was an early pastoral practice, and our knowledge of sheep washes is far from complete. If it was the remains of a sheep wash, it would be of very high significance on the grounds of rarity alone. But also significant because the question of 'washing' (rather than shearing 'in the grease'), together with 'breeding', were the two great subjects debated by nineteenth century pastoralists.⁸⁷

It is possible that the site was a small sheep wash, perhaps established by the Scarboroughs before a later change to dairying (as occurred throughout the Shire in the early 1870s). But circumstantial evidence does not support this possibility:- except for the Holden ownership c.1918-30, there is no evidence that the property was ever associated with a pastoral property of a size that would be expected to practise sheep washing; sheep washing was an early pastoral practice which had died out in the late nineteenth century and unlikely to have been practiced at the time of Holden's ownership; and, although the dam is situated on a drainage line, there is no creek or stream on the property, as was ordinarily associated with a sheep wash. At this stage no historical evidence has been found of a shearing shed having been built on the property adjacent to the sheep wash as would be expected. Mrs Mary Collins, of the family that owned the property c.1945-1973, is reported to have advised that in her time the property had simply been sheep yards rather than a sheep dip or wash; sheep-washing was not practised in the area in the twentieth century.⁸⁸

While it is possible that the original Scarborough fencing was post and rail (from the nearby Box Forest), it is more likely that the present boundary walls on the property date from Scarborough's first occupation of the property in the mid 1850s. Not only was boundary fencing one of the very first improvements undertaken

77 The 1929-30 Shire of Melton Ratebook shows that he was living on a c.300 acre property elsewhere in Rockbank.

78 RGO, General Law Memorial: Book 533 No.619.

79 RGO, General Law Memorial: Book 580 No.359

80 Army Ordnance Map, 'Sunbury', January 1933.

81 Shire of Melton Ratebooks, 1930-31, 1937-38.

82 RGO, General Law Memorial: Book 580 No.359. Note: former local Albert Evans, in an annotated sketch map of the Rockbank - Truganina area 'To the 1969 fires', provides different information on the site in this period. His annotation for what appears to be this site is: 'Mick Cochrane general farming, sold out during the war'.

83 Shire of Melton Ratebooks, 1945-46, 1950-51

84 RGO, General Law Memorial: Book 894 No.95; Book 895 No.496

85 Titles Office, AP108758K

86 Johnson, C, *Rural Heritage Study; Western Region of Melbourne* (Context Pty Ltd, Melbourne Western Region Inc, 1994), pp.117, 124-126. There is a little confusion as to whether this is actually the site considered in this study as M12, 'Stone Yards & Sheep Wash'.

87 Allom Lovell Sanderson Pty Ltd and Jessie Serle, 'Werribee Park Metropolitan Park: Conservation Analysis' (MMBW, December 1985), pp.115-117

88 John Beaty, personal conversation, 8/5/2002. John also suggested that William Collins sons may have built the walls. Also John Morton, personal conversation, 19/7/2006.

by farmers, but the use of the property as a pound would have made good fencing absolutely necessary. Scarborough was not an average farmer, and may have employed a professional to build his walls.

The reason for the unusually configured dry stone wall stock yards is not known. Archaeological investigation and further research among local farmers or descendants of owners of the site would likely reveal more information. The historical evidence to date is that the property was used for grazing, dairying, and perhaps cropping at different stages. It is likely that the long stone-lined dam at the end of a long stock race was simply a dam, built over a shallow gully below Mt Cottrell, and essential for the survival of pound stock or later dairy cattle on a property without stream frontage. The unusual stock race may have been necessary to control stock access to the dam, and perhaps link it with stock yards or milking shed near the home site.

Some of the internal dry stone walls appear to have been repaired (and possibly built originally) with roughly squared stones, and split stones, that may have been recycled from original buildings on the site. Neighbour Mr John Morton suggests that Bob Barkley, who lived about 400 metres south of the property, did a lot of stone wall repairing in the district around the 1950s (although not a trained or professional waller), and is likely to have had a hand in any work done about this time.⁸⁹ In 2006 a 10-15 metre length of one of these walls was repaired as part of a Workshop held as part of the present Study.

89 *ibid*

Thematic Context / Comparative Analysis:

Shire of Melton Historical Themes: 'Pastoral', 'Farming', 'Transport', 'Water'.

Comparable Places in Shire of Melton:

In a 1990 submission on behalf of the Shire of Melton to attempt heritage controls for the wall, Judith Bilszta on behalf of the Melton and District Historical Society regarded the wall as the 'longest extant section of wall remaining in the district, being more than ½ mile in length, in good to excellent repair and ... an outstanding example of the dry stone waller's craft.'¹ The current survey confirms that the wall is indeed the longest and best example of an all-stone wall in the district.

In Vines' 1990 study of dry stone walls in the nine municipalities of Melbourne's western region, five walls were identified as being of the highest significance. The first two of these are in this Mount Cottrell Precinct: Place No.011 ('East side of Faulkners Road'); and Place No.012 ('Mt Cottrell farm' walls).² In this study these walls are identified as Wall No. F96 (the Faulkners Road wall), and the Mount Cottrell Road Stock Yard and Ruins (or the former Scarborough Farm, Place No.293 in the Shire of Melton Heritage Study, and Wall Nos.K172, 154, 155, 157, 158, 159,160, 161, 162, 172 in this Study). The other walls in the precinct are of contributory significance.

In a letter to the National Trust in July 1990 Vines wrote that Wall F96 was under threat of destruction. He described it as '*by far the most intact and elaborately constructed of the farm perimeter walls which I have found in the region. [Melbourne's Western Region] A few homestead and garden walls are of a similar or higher standard but among the farms walls nothing like it has been found. It compares favourably to the walls of Yandoit and the Western districts in its sophistication of construction. When last seen (about April 1990) it was intact for a length of nearly two kilometres ...*'. He also noted that '*The significance of the wall is very high. On soley stylistic and technical grounds it is among the finest of its type within 100 km of Melbourne and the best constructed of the walls on the newer volcanics of the*

1 Bilszta, 1990, *op cit*, p.2

2 Vines, G, *Built to Last: An historical and archaeological survey of Dry Stone Walls in Melbourne's Western District*, Melbourne's Living Museum of the West, 1990, pp.5-6

*Keilor and Werribee Plains. As the smooth rounded stone of this district is very different to the vesicular basalt of the Western District it is not relevant to compare walls here with those of, say, Purrumbet.*³ The present Study confirms that Wall F96 is indeed one of the few substantially intact, long, and finely-built all-stone walls remaining in the district; it compares with the best Moylan all-stone walls, which are however very unusual in construction, and is thus the best traditionally constructed all-stone wall remaining in the Shire.

The comparable precincts of walls in the Shire of Melton are those centred on eruption points:- the Mount Kororoit Precinct, the Mount Atkinson Precinct, and the She-Oak Hill Precinct. It is also comparable, to a lesser extent, to the 'gateway' precincts, in particular the Greigs Road Precinct, the Western Highway Precinct, the Melton Highway Precinct, and the Robinsons Road Precinct.

Condition:

Overall the walls in the precinct are in Fair-Good condition.

Integrity:

The integrity of the walls in the precinct varies, from low, moderate to high. The extent to which many dry stone walls have been altered over their long life may never be known. The southern part of Wall F96 appears to have been subject to major repair, probably in the early twentieth century. One of the walls in the Scarborough complex in Mount Cottrell Road was half rebuilt in the Workshop undertaken as part of this Study.

Recommendations:

Individual walls are recommended for inclusion in the Melton Planning Scheme Heritage Overlay.

The precinct is recommended for inclusion in the Melton Planning Scheme Significant Landscape Overlay.

³ Gary Vines, 'Dry Stone Wall under threat: Note to National Trust Landscape Committee, 7/7/1990. Vines had not surveyed the former Moylan walls on Mt Kororoit.

Other Recommendations:

- Wall F96 is now the road boundary of four adjacent rural residential allotments. The full settlement of these lots will put the wall seriously at risk of partial demolition, and inconsistent and inappropriate maintenance. In addition, new plantations of trees along the different sections of the wall associated with the new rural residential allotments are already beginning to break down its unity. They will also severely damage the cultural landscape - the view over the plains to the city - and threaten the structure of the wall itself. This is one of a handful of the most important walls in the Shire of Melton: planning controls are critical if it is to survive.
- The walls in the precinct, especially the most significant examples, should be identified by the Shire of Melton as a high priority for future conservation works.
- The thick umbrageous planting on the Council reserve (east side of Faulkners Road) is out of context with the open landscape. If this became the norm, the present open grass plains and clear silhouette of Mount Cottrell – a landscape of geological and historical significance – will be obscured and largely lost. A more sympathetic landscape plan is recommended.

Wall K159. Mt Cottrell Road boundary wall of Scarborough's Mount Cottrell Road farm.

The wall is well built and in good condition. The timber posts are likely to have been added later.



Wall F96 (Faulkners Road, east side).

Detail showing construction. The rounded fieldstone (disparagingly called ‘potatatoes’ by todays dry stone wallers) make it difficult to maintain rough coursing and throughstones; however the stones on this wall are quite vesicular, contributing to the friction that has contributed to the wall’s stability and vertical batter. The wall also incorporates unworked split stones. The uniform sized coping stones sit on a flat surface.



Wall F100 (Faulkner’s Road, east side, south end).

The contrast with the professionally built F96 is evident in this wall built by farmer Kerr. Stones have been piled up rather than laid. Its present condition is also a product of 130 years of repairing a less stable original wall. The post & wire is likely to have been incorporated as part of this regular maintenance. Such walls are an historically significant type in the Shire of Melton, and a major relic of the early small farmers on the plains.



Wall F96.

The professional construction of the wall is clear in this view, which shows its perfect original alignment, and its consistent, relatively smooth and almost vertical wall face.



Wall F97 (perpendicular to Faulkner’s Road, east side).

This is a typical Rockbank estate internal wall; part of a three square mile paddock. Although protected from stone theft by passers-by, it is in relatively poor condition. It was traditional practice for internal walls to be less substantial than boundary walls, and this seems to have occurred in the Rockbank estate.



Wall C53 (west side of Faulkners Road, north end).

This Clarke boundary wall is not as fine as CF96, but its appearance is significantly diminished by being partially obscured by roadside grass.



Wall C63 (Faulkners Road, east side).

Another Rockbank estate boundary wall, lower than F96, with post & wire added. Although its condition varies, intact portions of coping stone are visible in this view.



Wall C53.

The same wall seen from above.



Cultural Landscape relating to the foundation of European settlement in Port Phillip. View looking east from the lower slopes of Mount Cottrell, overlooking the stone walls on Faulkners Road, and across the open plains (still substantially intact) that were the subject of reports by Hume & Hovell and John Batman, and which in turn led to the settlement of the 'village' of Melbourne, which looms in the background.

