

Victorian Heritage Database Report

Report generated 01/04/20



HO31 - Glen Elgin



Glen Elgin



Glen Elgin



POW-built cottage



POW-built cottage



Underground water tank



Algerian Oak and Bunya Bunya Pine



Monterey Pines and drystone wall

Location

766-858 Gisborne-Melton Road TOOLERN VALE, MELTON SHIRE

Municipality

MELTON CITY

Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO31

Heritage Listing

Melton City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

Glen Elgin, 766 Gisborne-Melton Road, Toolern Vale, is significant as a surviving and substantial example of a late nineteenth and early twentieth century farm complex comprising a timber Federation styled main house (albeit altered), substantial brick stables, timber open shed, substantial stone-lined underground tank with a gabled galvanised corrugated steel roof, galvanised corrugated steel and timber shearing shed, two random rubble interwar cottages (one in poor condition), and cattle yard bound by timber post and rail fencing. The setting of the place, comprising a long drive having mature Monterey cypresses, is significant as are the mature conifers, palm tree and other plantings associated with the main and former house gardens. The property was originally established c.1855 by prominent Toolern Vale pioneer and Melton citizen Thomas Grant, and developed as a nationally celebrated Ayershire cattle study by his son, TA Grant, also a prominent local citizen. The date of the present house is unknown, but is likely to have been built for Grant son-in-law A Tedcastle c.1920. The rubble sedimentary stone cottages and another outbuilding on the property are significant for their association with Italian prisoners of war during the Second World War.

Glen Elgin, 766 Gisborne-Melton Road, Toolern Vale, is aesthetically and architecturally significant at a LOCAL level (AHC D.2, E.1). The complex of farm buildings, including the Federation styled main house (albeit altered), substantial brick stables, timber open shed, substantial stone-lined underground tank with a gabled galvanised corrugated steel roof, three-stand shearing shed, two random rubble interwar cottages and similar shed, cattle yard bound by timber post and rail fencing, together with the long drive with Monterey cypresses, the main house garden with mature conifers, palm tree and other plantings, the Algerian Oak, Bunya Bunya Pine and Osage Orange in the vicinity of the original homestead, and the seven English Oaks spaced along the road boundary, demonstrate those significant architectural and visual qualities.

In particular, although altered, the main house demonstrates some design qualities of a Federation style. These qualities include the complex of gable roof forms clad in galvanised corrugated steel, asymmetrical composition, two storey height, horizontal timber weatherboard wall cladding, timber framed windows, brick chimneys with rendered tops, timber framed windows, timber bargeboards, and the return verandah supported by timber posts.

The brick stables demonstrates original design qualities that include the elongated steeply pitched gable roof form and skillion wing clad in galvanised corrugated steel, hand-made brick wall construction, brick chimney with a corbelled top, timber framed window and door openings (except the large opening at one end) and the timber loft door.

The two random rubble cottages demonstrate original design qualities of an interwar vernacular style, including the gable roof forms, galvanised corrugated steel roof cladding, timber barge boards, stone and red brick chimneys, modest eaves with exposed timber rafters (small cottage), timber framed window and door openings and the single storey height.

Glen Elgin, 766 Gisborne-Melton Road, Toolern Vale, is historically significant at a LOCAL level (AHC A4, B2, H1). It is situated on the site of an important early 1840s outstation of the *Green Hills* pastoral station, at that time the largest and most developed in the Shire. The hills of this area, stretching to Gisborne and towards Sunbury, are also of wider significance in the history of Victoria's settlement, as the meeting place of the two streams of Port Phillip's European settlers, the 'overstraiters' from Tasmanian and the 'overlanders' from New South Wales. This upper Toolern Creek valley, between Bensons Road and Toolern Vale, then became a rich part of the farming history of the Shire. The place is a contributory part of a cultural landscape that contains a concentration of early farm dwellings and structures (including dry stone walls), now mainly ruinous due to

bushfires and the passage of time, and views from Gisborne-Melton Road over the rich farmlands and attractive valley to the ranges and plains beyond. The ruin is also a now-scarce relic of the 'first farming' period of the Shire: on farms purchased from the Crown in the 1850s, rather than the later the Selection Acts, or created in the break-up of the large pastoral estates in the early twentieth century.

Glen Elgin also testifies to the prominence of Scottish settlers in the farming history of the Shire, particularly in early Toolern Vale. It was associated with Scotsman Thomas Grant, pioneer and leader of the Toolern Vale community, councillor of the Melton Roads Board, treasurer of the Melton Agricultural Society and, with his wife Janet, greatly involved in the local Presbyterian church. In the period of his son Thomas Alexander *Glen Elgin* became a nationally known Ayreshire stud property. TA Grant was a contributor to local causes, in particular the establishment and ongoing success of the Toolern Vale Mechanics Institute and, with his wife Mary (nee Blackwood), the local Presbyterian church.

Glen Elgin is also significant for its association with the Italian Prisoner of War farm labourer scheme 1943-47. This scheme was the result of the victories of the Australian infantry in the Western Desert Forces during the Second World War with the consequent high number of Italian prisoners, and the war induced rural labour shortage in Australia. Italian POWs employed on *Glen Elgin* constructed the three random rubble sedimentary stone buildings on the property for their own accommodation and other purposes. Bhutan cypresses near one of the cottages are also likely to date to this period.

Glen Elgin, 766 Gisborne-Melton Road, Toolern Vale, is socially significant at the Local level (AHC G1). It was identified as a place of heritage significance to the local community in the community forum held as part of this study.

Overall, *Glen Elgin* off the Gisborne-Melton Road is of LOCAL significance.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Melton - Shire of Melton Heritage Study phase 2, David Maloney, David Rowe, Pamela Jellie, Sera Jane Peters, 2007;
Construction dates	1876, 1921, 1944,
Other Names	766 Gisborne-Melton Road, Toolern Vale,
Hermes Number	29992
Property Number	

Physical Description 1

Physical Description -

Glen Elgin off the Gisborne-Melton Road, Toolern Vale, consists of a small complex of farm buildings in rural surroundings including the main timber house, open timber shed, two random rubble cottages and a similar shed, brick barn/stables, timber and galvanised corrugated steel shearing shed, very large sedimentary rubble stone-lined underground tank with gabled galvanised steel roof, early cattle yards bound by timber post and rail fencing and recent drystone walls. The elevated main house has outstanding views down the Toolern Creek valley towards Melbourne.

Also significant at *Glen Elgin* is the extensive use of *Cupressus macrocarpa* (Monterey cypress) hedging along the driveway and as protection around the homestead, and the seven *Quercus robur* (English oak) widely spaced along the highway boundary.

The two storey, asymmetrical, horizontal timber weatherboard, altered Federation styled main house is characterised by complex gable roof forms clad in galvanised corrugated steel. The irregular nature of the design

suggests that it has been altered and extended over time. Other early features include the brick chimneys with rendered tops, timber framed windows, timber bargeboards, and the return verandah supported by timber posts.

A large ornamental setting featuring mature conifers and a palm, together with other plantings, as well as a pool and a terrace that may originally have comprised a tennis court.

One of the more substantial outbuildings is the brick stables, constructed of hand-made bricks and now part of an equestrian complex. It has an elongated steeply pitched gable roof form and skillion wing clad in galvanised corrugated steel, brick chimney with a corbelled top and early timber framed window and door openings. A larger window and door opening has been introduced at one end, although the early timber loft door survives above.

The open timber shed also has an elongated gable roof form and skillion wing clad in galvanised corrugated steel, with horizontal timber weatherboard wall cladding. This building is structurally unsound and is on a noticeable lean. It is supported by timber posts.

West of the homestead are the interwar vernacular styled random rubble cottages, and small shed. The smaller cottage has a gable roof form clad in galvanised corrugated steel and a red brick chimney with a soldier coursed top. There are early timber bargeboards in the gable ends and modest eaves with exposed timber rafters. Other early features include the timber framed window opening and the single timber framed door opening with a vertically boarded door. Adjacent to this cottage is a plantation of *Cupressus torulosa* (Bhutan cypress); the age of the trees and their location suggest the likely relationship between the two.

The second, larger cottage is in poor condition. It has an elongated gable roof form, with a substantial proportion of the galvanised steel roof cladding missing, exposing the timber rafters and battens to the weather. There are early timber framed window and door openings and an early stone brick chimney that is centrally located on the rear longitudinal wall.

The old three-stand shearing shed also features an elongated gable roof form and a skillion wing, clad in galvanised corrugated steel. The skillion wing also has horizontal timber weatherboard wall cladding.

There are a number of mature exotic trees to the south and west of the house which indicate the location of the original *Glen Elgin* homestead. These include very fine specimens of *Quercus canariensis* (Algerian oak), and an *Araucaria bidwillii* (Bunya bunya pine). The Bunya bunya (from Queensland) was a popular signature plant around Western District homesteads where it adapted well; it is most unusual to find an example in this district. Nearby is a mature *Maclura pomifera* (Osage orange) a rarely planted tree that was used in the early days as a protective hedge for it was relatively fast growing and tended to sucker.

The metal and timber cattle yards are said to hold evidence of a stone hut. There is said to be a ships bell associated with former owners on the property.[1]

An Alston windmill survives at the gully near the entrance to the property.

The seven *Quercus robur* (English oak) widely spaced along the Melton-Gisborne Road boundary also contribute to the significance of *Glen Elgin*.

[1] Susannah Downes, interview, 8/2/2001

Historical Australian Themes

Shire of Melton Historical Themes: 'Pastoralism', 'Farming', 'Horses, Hounds and Hares'.

Integrity

Integrity -

Overall complex - substantially intact.

Main House - altered (moderate-low).

Brick Stables - substantially intact.

Open Timber Shed - substantially intact.

Shearing Shed - substantially intact.

Small Stone Cottage - substantially intact.

Larger Stone Cottage - moderate integrity.

Small Stone Shed - good.

Physical Conditions

Physical Condition -

Main House - good.

Brick Stables - good.

Open Timber Shed - poor.

Shearing Shed - fair.

Small Stone Cottage - good.

Larger Stone Cottage - fair-poor.

Small Stone Shed - good.

This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place data owner.

For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>