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## HO38 - Stone Cottage



Cottage

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### Location

189-193 Blackhill Road TOOLERN VALE, Melton Shire

### Municipality

MELTON CITY

### Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

### Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO38

### Heritage Listing

Melton City

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### Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

The Cottage at 189-193 Blackhill Road, Toolern Vale, is significant as an altered example of a Victorian vernacular style small cottage, one of few surviving buildings in the Shire associated with the Selection era, and possibly also a rare place associated with the earlier squatting era. The building dates from at least the 1860s, and may be as early as the 1840s. The Cottage at 189-193 Blackhill Road is of architectural interest. Although altered, the cottage still demonstrates some original design qualities of a Victorian vernacular style. These qualities include the simple gable roof form, random rubble wall construction, single storey height and the modest scale. Other intact or appropriate qualities include the random stone chimney breasts, single door and window openings and the location and form (if not the extent) of the front skillion verandah. The corrugated profile sheet

metal roof cladding is also appropriate, although not original or early. The Cottage at 189-193 Blackhill Road is historically significant at a LOCAL level (AHC A4, B2, D2). It is a scarce example of a surviving building in Melton Shire associated with the Selection Acts, and a rare example of a reasonably intact stone dwelling from that period. There is some evidence that the building dates to the earlier period (1840s) of John Aitken's *Mount Aitken* squatting run. Aitken has been credited as being Victoria's first inland settler. He was the second settler (after John Batman) to bring sheep to Port Phillip, and was the colony's leading flockmaster in its early decades, revered for having improved merino sheep more than any other. The timber portion of the dwelling was destroyed in a fire c.1945, and the remaining stone portion is testament to the major role of bushfire in the Shire's history and heritage. An incomplete ring of stone walls that survives, in poor condition (some non-professionally repaired) around the crown of the hill to the south (on an adjacent property), associated with either the selection or pastoral eras, is contributory to the significance of the place. The Cottage at 189-193 Blackhill Road is socially significant at the local level (AHC G1). It was identified as a place of heritage significance to the local community in a community forum held as part of this heritage study, and was visited in an early Melton and District Historical Society excursion. Since c.1970 its heritage values have been recognised by successive owners, who have conducted various repairs to the place, and by photographers and artists. The Cottage at 189-193 Blackhill Road is scientifically significant at a LOCAL level (AHC C2). The cottage and dry stone walls may provide archaeological evidence of local historical significance regarding early pastoralism.

Overall, the Cottage at 189-193 Blackhill Road, Toolern Vale 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	1860, 1970,
Other Names	189-193 Blackhill Road, Toolern Vale (Lot 1 LP135563), 'Shepherd's Cottage', Foard's Shepherd's Cottage,
Hermes Number	30013
Property Number	

## Physical Description 1

### Physical Description -

The small Foard's Shepherd's Hut, at 189-193 Blackhill Road, retains its open rural setting, with uninterrupted views of the surrounding pastoral land. The cottage garden is surrounded by a recent timber post and rail fence with random rubble corner and gate piers, which have been constructed in the past two decades. The fence is approximately 1400 mm high and there is a tubular steel gate with scrolled top. The garden is rudimentary, largely comprising open grassed areas punctuated by a few plantings, including agapanthas towards the rear.

The single storey, random rubble, Victorian vernacular styled cottage is characterised by a simple gable roof form, with an introduced wide skillion verandah at the front. These roof forms are clad in recent corrugated Colorbond. The gable end on the western end has a wide overhang, suggesting that the roof originally extended to form another space at this end. Other early features include the single door opening (although the door has been introduced) and a small window opening flanking the doorway on the east side. This facade is unusually asymmetrical, again suggesting that a western space has been demolished. Further evidence is found in the western wall that appears to have been reconstructed, as indicated in the variation in mortar colour and texture and the mortar joints at the front corner. The random rubble chimney breasts and fireplace may be early, although the face brick chimneys appear to have been introduced, replacing earlier stone chimneys.

The interior of the building consists of a single room, to which a loft has recently been added, making use of an existing small window at the eastern end.

An original underground tank, now excavated to its original depth of over three metres, remains near the cottage. There are some stone foundations of outbuildings that were burnt in the c.1945 fire that swept through the district.

Partly on the site, and across the boundary of the adjacent property, around the crown of the hill, is an incomplete ring of dry stone walling, forming a ring some 150 metres in diameter. This is mostly in poor to ruinous condition, but portions have been rebuilt by the owners in recent decades. Part of the wall appears to have been professionally constructed conventional double wall. Some parts appear to have been extended to c.1 metre wide at the base; this is likely to be the result of later clearing of paddocks (ie, the wall is partly a 'consumption' wall).

## **Historical Australian Themes**

*Shire of Melton Historical Themes: 'Pastoral', 'Farming', 'Water/Fire'*

## **Integrity**

Integrity - Altered

## **Physical Conditions**

Physical Condition - Fair-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 source.*

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