

HO 205 – Selection Wall, Western Highway

Melton Dry Stone Walls Survey No.:	N224. (The Gidney Wall)
Location:	2344-2412 Western Highway Rockbank; 1031-1085 Beattys Road Rockbank; 986-1008, 1010-1024, 1026-1040, 1042-1060 Leakes Road, Rockbank. Crown Allotments 2, 3, 5, Section 7, Parish of Kororoit
Critical Dates:	Original construction 1867-68; progressive (non skilled) repair and reconstruction
Existing Heritage Listings:	None
Recommended Level of Significance:	LOCAL



Statement of Significance:

The dry stone wall between the Western Highway and Beattys Road, Rockbank, is significant at the LOCAL level. Built c.1867-68, it is now an early and rare vestige of the opening up of the Rockbank commons for Selection in 1867. It is one of the longest walls in the Shire. It is the only example of the significant heritage of dry stone walls of the Shire of Melton that is visible to city-bound traffic on one of Victoria's major highways.

The dry stone wall, also known as the Selection Wall between the Western Highway and Beattys Road, Rockbank, is historically significant at the LOCAL level. (AHC A4, B2, D2) The wall is expressive of early farming practices on Melbourne's western plains. The wall is an early, rare, and one of the most substantial surviving structures of any sort associated with the Rockbank selections in the 1860s and 70s; the only building known to survive from this selection period is the (much altered) former Rose & Crown Hotel, (HO 121) built 1875; other extant dry stone walls from the Rockbank selection era are very much remnants of the originals. The wall comprises the most substantial surviving evidence of Isaac Gidney's Spring Farm, and his trade of horses and chaff for the India army, an enterprise engaged in by some large

farmers in the Melton – Werribee districts. The wall is also associated with Digby Tarleton, a local farmer and Newmarket stock dealer, whose family still lives in Melton, and who married the daughter of celebrated Melton midwife Hannah Watts.

The dry stone wall between the Western Highway and Beattys Road, Rockbank is aesthetically significant at the LOCAL level. (AHC E1). It is one of the longest walls in the Shire, and one of only 13% of all walls that were recorded as being over 1300 millimetres in height. Its construction is representative of a typical style of wall in Melton Shire and Melbourne's west. It is one of the most prominent walls in the Shire by virtue of its location on the Western Highway. It is perpendicular to the highway, and is the only dry stone wall in the Shire of Melton that is in any way conspicuous to city-bound travellers on the Western Highway. Its visibility is greatly enhanced by its rural context of flat farmland and the virtual absence of buildings in its immediate vicinity.

The dry stone wall between the Western Highway and Beattys Road, Rockbank is scientifically significant at the LOCAL level. (A1, C2) It demonstrates the volcanic origin of the landscape. Its stone is generally smooth, round and dense with little surface friction, typical of Melton's dry stone walls. The wall has the potential to yield research information regarding wall construction techniques, nineteenth century rural settlement patterns, the impact of the Selection Acts, and ways of life on Melbourne's western plains.

The dry stone wall between the Western Highway and Beattys Road, Rockbank is socially significant at the LOCAL level (AHC G1). It 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. As the only dry stone wall in the Shire of Melton that is effectively visible to

city-bound traffic it has considerable potential for restoration and public education / interpretation regarding the important dry stone wall heritage of the Shire of Melton.

Overall, the dry stone wall between the Western Highway and Beattys Road, Rockbank is of LOCAL significance.